

## Introduction to Mark's Gospel

**Introduction:** Today I want to begin our study of the Gospel according to Mark. As you come to the New Testament in Scripture, the first four books are known as the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are commonly known as the Synoptic Gospels. This simply means “to see together.” The first three Gospels share many of the same accounts. The word gospel means “glad tidings or good news.” These books reveal the good news and glad tidings associated with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Each of the Gospels present Jesus from a particular perspective with a specific audience in mind. Matthew presents Jesus as **The King of the Jews**. His Gospel was written to a Jewish audience. Luke presents Jesus as **The Son of Man**, reaching out to the Greeks. John presents Jesus as **The Son of God**, written to the world at large. Mark presents Jesus as **The Servant of Men**, written primarily with a Roman audience in mind.

**Author:** It is universally accepted that John Mark is the author of this Gospel. We commonly know him as Mark, but that was actually his surname. His common name was John. We find much detail concerning the life and ministry of John Mark in the Acts of the Apostles and various New Testament epistles. We know he was a cousin to Barnabas ([Col.4:10](#)), who traveled with Paul and Barnabas on his first missionary journey, ([Acts 12:25](#).) During that missionary trip, John Mark left Paul and Barnabas, returning to Jerusalem, ([Acts 13:13](#).) Having left them in the midst of the first missionary journey, Paul refused to allow John Mark to accompany them on the second missionary journey. This caused a major disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, and they decided to go in different directions. Barnabas took John Mark, going into Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas to accompany him, ([Acts 15:36-39](#).) Paul and Mark were later reconciled and Paul regarded him as profitable to the ministry of the Gospel ([2 Tim.4:11](#)), and as a fellow laborer ([Philemon 24](#).)

The early church fathers recognized Mark as a companion of Peter. *Some commentators claim that Peter furnished much of the material for the Gospel, whereas others say that Mark made notes of Peter's preaching and later used the notes to write the Gospel. Papias says: "Mark, who was Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully all that he remembered of what Christ had said or done, though not in order. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been His disciple; but afterwards, as I said, he had been Peter's disciple..."*<sup>i</sup> While Mark did not walk with the Lord as He lived and ministered upon the earth, his writings were inspired of the Spirit and prove consistent with the other Gospels.

**Date:** Although an exact date is uncertain, it is widely accepted that Mark wrote his Gospel AD 67-70. The fall of Jerusalem happened in AD 70, and it appears this hadn't yet happened, [Mark 13](#).

**Background:** As we have discussed, Mark's Gospel was written with a Roman audience in mind. He sought to reveal the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. It is apparent that he was writing to those who were unfamiliar with Jewish terms, customs and laws because he is continually explaining those to the reader. It does appear that he expected the reader to be familiar with Christian history and terms though. He does not seek to define or explain these events or terms within the text.

**Theme: Jesus is the Servant of God with authority and power.** Mark emphasized the servanthood of Christ as He ministered among men, possessing complete authority and power over mankind and creation. He described the humanity of Christ as He walked upon the earth. While Mark emphasized the role of Jesus as a Servant among men, he also declared His deity as the Son of God. This was affirmed in the opening statement of the Mark's Gospel – [The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God](#). God the Father affirmed Jesus' deity at His baptism, [Mark 1:11](#); the demons declared Him the Holy One of God, [Mark 1:24](#); and the Centurion admitted Jesus was truly the Son of God as he stood at the foot of the cross, [Mark 15:39](#).

**Key Verse:** [Mark 10:45](#) – *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

**Overview:** It appears that Mark had an audience in mind that lived outside of Israel, not accustomed to the Jewish way of life. He wrote to those who would not have witnessed the life and ministry of Jesus. This Gospel can be looked at from several vantage points:

- **A Tangible Gospel** – Mark focused more on the actions and life of Jesus than the words He spoke. He dealt with the facts of His daily life and encounters, with little additional interpretation.
  
- **A Gospel of Action** – The narrative within Mark's Gospel moves quickly from one stirring account in the ministry of Jesus to another without interruption. It paints a vivid, day-to-day account of the dramatic life of Christ. This rapid pace of life can be seen through the frequent use of the Greek word *euthéōs*. This word is translated "*straightway, immediately, and straitly*" some forty times. The Gospel moves rapidly through the life of Jesus, heading toward the ultimate climax of His substitutionary death on the cross and glorious resurrection.

- **A Gospel of Jesus' Humanity** – As Jesus is portrayed as the Servant of men, His humanity is obviously in view. *Jesus is the carpenter* ([Mark 6:3](#)); *He was moved with righteous anger* ([Mark 3:5](#); [Mark 8:33](#); [Mark 10:14](#)); *He became weary* ([Mark 4:38](#)); *He marveled at the people's unbelief* ([Mark 6:6](#)); *He became tired and needed rest* ([Mark 6:31](#)); *He was moved with compassion* ([Mark 6:34](#)); *He sighed* ([Mark 7:34](#); [Mark 8:12](#)); *He looked and loved the rich young ruler* ([Mark 10:21](#)); *He hungered* ([Mark 11:12](#)).<sup>ii</sup> As believers we know that Jesus was fully God and fully man, but this is a fundamental character one must embrace in order to receive salvation in Christ. It appeals to our humanity, knowing we serve One who experienced life as we do, feeling the same emotions, and dealing with the same struggles. His humanity adds to our dependence and devotion to the Lord. He knows where we are and what we are going through. He faced every temptation we encounter, and yet without sin, [Hebrews 4:15](#).
- **A Gospel of Eyewitness Accounts** – Mark adds numerous details to his account of the life and ministry of Jesus. These details could only have been provided by those who were actually there and witnessed the event, alongside Jesus. These eyewitness accounts certainly add color and interest to the story, but they also offer valuable insight to the life of the eternal God-Man, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Conclusion:** I am looking forward to our time in Mark's Gospel. It will be a study of many familiar accounts, but it will also serve to deepen our understanding, and hopefully renew our passion for the Savior we serve. As we move through these precious passages, verse by verse, I encourage you to keep the key verse in mind – [Mark 10:45](#) – **For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.** Jesus came with purpose – to give His life a ransom for many. He came to purchase our redemption, securing our salvation. He is the source of life, strength, and hope for all who believe!

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<sup>i</sup> Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Mark.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid