

Introducing Mark August 26, 2012

Introduction

It is interesting that when asking a Christian which is their most beloved gospel, Mark is usually not mentioned. In fact, up until the 19th century, the Gospel of Mark was barely mentioned or studied except as a support for Matthew or Luke. There wasn't much enthusiasm for studying Mark. It is probably because very little of Jesus' teaching is found in this gospel. The Gospel of John portrays masterfully the divinity of Jesus Christ through His words and miracles. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are full of His instructions such as the Beatitudes, the Prodigal Son, etc. Mark doesn't have much teachings of Jesus. There are snippets here and there, but Mark focuses primarily on the action of Jesus Christ.

Why do we need to study Mark? His work is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, moved into writing the words upon paper. This is a study of the history of our Lord Jesus' works rather than His sayings. Mark writes in a terse and fast-moving manner. It was written to be read out loud because many of the people in the Roman empire were illiterate. Mark is also very detailed by adding information that Matthew and Luke do not provide. Mark is the most chronological of the gospels (along with John—but John focuses on the discourses of Christ rather than the action, but he still puts it in chronological order).

Who is Mark this writer of the gospel? What is his purpose in the gospel?

Background

Note: Peter was the dominant figure from **Acts 1 to 12** and then Luke shifts the focus to Paul as the dominant preacher. Luke directly uses Jesus' words in **Acts 1:8** as the structure for the book of Acts. First to the Jews in Judea and Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the earth—where the Gentiles live.

Note: Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great who killed the babies at Bethlehem, is the king at this time. He is playing politics with the Jews, having no love for them, but wanted to make sure that they don't cause any problems.

Note: Chapter 11, the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to help the church in Jerusalem because the Holy Spirit told them that there was to be a famine in the area.

Acts 12:1-17 *Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. ²Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.*

⁵*Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.*

⁶*And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.*

⁷*Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.*

⁸*Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me."⁹So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.*

¹⁰When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

¹¹And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

¹²So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. ¹³And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. ¹⁵But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

Note: This is the first mention of Mark in the NT. Peter knew Mark at this time. John Mark is a believer, learning under the disciples. Peter knew where his house was and went there.

Meeting Mark

Acts 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

Note: Paul and Barnabas go back to Antioch with John Mark. Why? We know in Colossians 4:10 that Mark is Barnabas' cousin. Mark is obviously a Christian.

Acts 13:1-2 Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Note: Mark is not a teacher or preacher. He is just a helper...a member of the church.

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Note: God appointed Paul and Barnabas as missionaries and they brought Mark with them on the journey. Again Mark is not a teacher or preacher.

Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

Note: For whatever reason, Mark leaves them. He might have been scared or might have been weary of the whole trip. We are not given any information except that he leaves Paul and Barnabas and goes back to Jerusalem.

Acts 15:36-40 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." ³⁷Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

Note: Paul says that Mark deserted them. He could not trust Mark to continue the work. Paul felt that Mark lacked courage and commitment to the ministry. It was a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas that they left each other. This is the last we hear of Barnabas and John Mark in the book of Acts. Mark shows up again in Paul's prison letters from Rome.

The Deserter turned Servant

Colossians 4:10-11 *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.*

Philemon 23-24 *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.*

Note: Mark became Paul's companion, staying with him in Rome. He becomes Paul's closest friend and trusted helper! Paul trusts him so much that he is willing to send him on his behalf to Colossae.

2 Timothy 4:9-11 *Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.*

Note: How long did this relationship last? The next time Paul is in prison in Rome, he knows that his time is over. He writes to Timothy and asks him to bring Mark. What had happened? Previously, Paul did not trust Mark, but then something happened between the time he leaves Paul to the time he is with Paul that he becomes one of Paul's closest companion along with Luke and Timothy.

1 Peter 5:13 *She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.*

Note: Peter is in Rome and guess who is with him? Mark! Note the words "my son". Mark is not Peter's physical son, but he is Peter's spiritual son, a true son of the faith. Peter had spent time with Mark, teaching him and helping him grow in the faith that Mark was dramatically changed! What privilege to serve under two Apostles! God uses such people—the defectors, the outspoken, foot in mouth disciple, murderers, thieves, etc because there are only such people, sinful unqualified people who are forgiven and used by Him.

Note: In fact, Peter is Mark's main eyewitness when he wrote the gospel. The early church fathers said that the gospel of Mark is the memoirs of Peter.

Mark's Purpose

- Son of God

Note: Mark's main goal is for you to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Structurally, Peter's confession at **8:29** is the pinnacle theme of the book. Mark wants to show the readers (and listeners) that from **1:1** to **8:29**, there is confusion about Jesus' identity...in

fact, the only one who were not confused about His identity were the demons. He shows that He is the Christ through His words and works. The second half of the book focuses on Jesus' death and resurrection as the proof of Him being Christ, the Son of God. From the middle on to the end, there is hostility to Jesus' work.

Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Mark 8:29 *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."*

Mark 15:39 *So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"*

- Discipleship

Mark 8:34-35 *When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."*

Mark 10:42-45 *But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Note: Mark wrote the gospel to Roman Christians who were experiencing intense persecution by the Roman government. People were being killed for their faith at the enjoyment of the Roman citizens. Mark's task was to strengthen the Christian faith by telling them that Jesus experienced the same situation—betrayal, suffering, and death. But the victory is found in the resurrection of our Lord and Savior.