

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 41 – “Mark”
November 9, 2008

The Gospel According to Mark: Some Background Information

The author is John Mark, a relative of Barnabas and an associate of Peter who had been a missionary companion of Paul. John was his Hebrew name. Mark was his Latin name.

Most scholars believe that Mark’s Gospel was the first of the Gospels written. It very likely was written from Rome in about the year A.D. 63 or 64. Mark’s Gospel is believed to be based on the preaching of Peter.

Mark’s Gospel was addressed primarily to a Roman (gentile) audience. This is evidenced by the writer’s use of many “Latinisms” as well as the fact that Jewish customs are explained. There also are far fewer Old Testament references than in Matthew or Luke.

Mark’s Gospel is the shortest of the four gospels. It contains no introductory genealogy or birth narrative. It begins abruptly with the launch of Jesus’ public ministry.

The Gospel of Mark is more biographical than theological. Matthew emphasizes what Jesus said whereas Mark emphasizes what Jesus did. Mark, in particular, places great emphasis on Jesus’ supernatural power. The Gospel of Mark depicts 18 miracles, but only 4 parables of Jesus, and only one major discourse (Mark 13).

The Gospel of Mark is one of action. It is fast-paced. Mark’s language is vivid, forceful and descriptive. The key word in Mark’s Gospel is the Greek word translated “*straightway*” or “*immediately*” which appears no less than 40 times. This is more than it is used in the rest of the New Testament.

Mark depicts Jesus as the Suffering Servant. The key thematic verse is Mark 10:45. Mark’s Gospel is written under the shadow of the cross. It is dominated by Jesus’ movement toward the “final showdown” in Jerusalem. Over 1/3 of the book is devoted to the events of Passion Week—the 8 days from the triumphal entry to the resurrection.

The Gospel of Mark has a very practical orientation. It is more than a book about Jesus. It is also a book about what it means to be a true disciple (follower) of Jesus.

The Gospel According to Mark: An Outline

1. The Ministry of the Servant. 1:1-8:26

- **The Preparation for Jesus’ Public Ministry. 1:1-13**

- Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist. 1:2-8
- Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. 1:9-11
- Jesus' temptation by Satan. 1:12-13
- **The Inauguration of Jesus' Public Ministry. 1:14-8:30**
 - Jesus' kingdom message. 1:14-15.
 - Jesus calls His apostles. 1:16-20; 2:13-17; 3:13-19; 6:6b-13
 - Jesus exercises authority over demons and disease. 1:21-2:12
 - Jesus runs into conflict with the religious powers-that-be. 2:18-3:5
 - Jesus experiences rejection. 3:6; 3:20-35; 6:1-6a; 6:14-29
 - Jesus uses parables to teach about the nature of God's kingdom. 4:1-34
 - Jesus reveals His sovereignty through miraculous works. 4:35-5:43; 6:30-8:26
 - Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. 8:27-30

2. The Sacrifice of the Servant. 8:31-15:47

- Jesus foretells His suffering, death and resurrection on 3 different occasions. 8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34
- Jesus teaches that true discipleship involves servanthood and sacrifice. 10:35-45
- Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly. Chapter 11
- Jesus teaches about the kingdom and about the end times. Chapter 12-13
- Jesus goes to the cross, thereby fulfilling His mission. Chapters 14-15

6. The Sovereignty of the Servant. Chapter 16

- The resurrection of Jesus. 16:1-8
- The post-resurrection epilogue to Mark's Gospel. 16:9-20