

The Gospel of Mark
Introduction to the New Testament
Class 7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The First Gospel

1. Matthew is first in the NT certainly because it was thought for some time to be the earliest gospel. Yet, NT scholarship today feels that the best explanation for the “synoptic gospels” (synoptic = “seeing together,” Carson) is that Mark wrote his work first, and then Matthew and Luke both refer to it. Whether there is another source (often called “Q”) is debatable, but it is used to explain the places where Matthew and Luke agree ‘against’ Mark (i.e., Matthew and Luke have material very similar that is not found in Mark).
2. Mark provides us with the *Galilee to Jerusalem* geographical flow, and the confession of Peter being the high-water mark that announces the turn toward to Jerusalem.

B. The Shortest and Sharpest Gospel

1. The word “immediately” (*euthus*) is famously abundant in Mark’s gospel (42 of its 59 total NT occurrences).
2. Comparing chapter 1 of each gospel reveals how different is Mark’s gospel, how determined he is to “get on with it.”
3. The overall impact of his brevity is to get us quickly to Christ’s saving work (through the prophecies of chapter 8, the importance of 10:45, the triumphal entry coming in chapter 11, the dominance of the suffering and death of Christ).
4. His skill as a storyteller can be seen in places like 16:8 where he leaves us in a lurch (seen as far too unfinished and so others came along and “finished” his work for him by adding 16:9-16). Or in details like when Jesus “looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart” (healing in 3:1-6).

C. Who and When?

1. The Author

- a. Unanimously the early church sees John Mark as the author. As just one example:

The Elder [apostle John?] said this also: Mark, who became Peter’s interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been one of his

followers, but afterwards, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs of his hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no mistake in thus recording some things just as he remembered them. For he was careful of this one thing, to omit none of the things he had heard and to make no untrue statements therein.

Papias, bishop Hierapolis (ca. AD 140)¹⁶

b. The man:

- 1) The "John Mark" of the New Testament.
- 2) First seen in Acts 12:12 when Peter goes to his house.
- 3) Accompanies Paul and Barnabas, but then returns prematurely to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25; 15:37).
- 4) Cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
- 5) Co-worker of Paul and then Barnabas (Acts 12:25; 15:37, 39).
- 6) Affirmed by Paul (Col. 4:10) and especially in 2 Tim. 4:11, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry."
- 7) Peter calls him "my son" (1 Peter 5:13).

2. The Date

- a. Mid- to late-50s (though others date it into the 60s).
- b. Hans Bayer in the ESV Study Bible argues for such a date based on the writing of Acts in the early 60s. If Luke precedes Acts, and Luke borrows from Mark, then Mark must have been written early enough to enable all this to happen.¹⁷
- c. Carson says similarly (leaning toward late 50s because of assumptions about Luke-Acts) but acknowledges that 60s date (following Peter's death) is the majority view.¹⁸

¹⁶ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* citing Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote this in approx. AD 140. (cited in Walter Wessell, *Mark, EBC* [1984], 605).

¹⁷ *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway), 1889.

¹⁸ D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1992), 99.

3. The Audience

- a. Often argued that Mark is writing for a Gentile audience because of comments like 7:3-4:

(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴ and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) (Mark 7:3-4)

- b. Whether it is more specifically a Roman audience (“with the wild beasts” in 1:13 sounds like a gladiator battle) is probably less clear, but still plausible. *What is certain is that he is writing for a non-Christian audience in the hopes that they will become Christians.*

D. Outline

1. (1:1-15) The Prologue
2. (1:16-8:26) Introduction to Jesus as the Christ (Galilean Ministry)
3. (8:27-10:52) Christ on the Road to Jerusalem
4. (11-13) The Stone the Builders Rejected (Triumphal Entry and Rejection in Jerusalem)
5. (14:1-16:8) The Son of Man Must Suffer and Rise from the Dead
 ***(16:9-16) Appendix: Material Added to Mark’s Gospel at a Later Date *not by Mark* (though still early)

II. The Cross in Mark

Mark’s entire Gospel becomes essentially a passion narrative with an extended introduction...Consequently, Jesus is set forth as the Son of God in the first half of Mark’s narrative (1:1–8:26) while he emerges as the suffering Servant in the second half (8:27–16:8).”

Andreas Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell¹⁹

- A. “Who do you say that I am?” and 3 Predictions
- B. Mark 10:45 – The cross as a “ransom”
- C. Mark 13:27 – The cross as the fulfillment of Scripture
- D. Mark 13:36 – The cross as the fulfillment of the Father’s will
- E. Mark 15:38 – The cross as the completion of our redemption
- F. Mark 15:38 and 16:1–8 – Two Signs that Everything Has Changed

¹⁹ Andreas Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell, *Biblical Theology* (Crossway, 2023) 433.