


The Gospel of Mark
Part 1
Introduction

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's overview of Mark's gospel interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Following are all of the passages in the New Testament which mention John Mark. What do we learn?
 - Acts 12:12 & 25 _____
 - Acts 13:5 _____
 - Acts 13:13 _____
 - Acts 15:37-39 _____
 - Colossians 4:10 _____
 - Philemon 23-24 _____
 - 2 Timothy 4:11 _____
 - 1 Peter 5:13 _____
- **Very quickly** scan the chapter and/or paragraph headings throughout the Gospel of Mark. What is your overall first impression of the entire book?
- The word "immediately" appears 42 times in Mark's gospel. Circle each occurrence in your Bible:
 - 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43 (and "straight" in 1:3 and "just then" in 1:23—same Greek word!)
 - 2:8, 12
 - 3:6
 - 4:5, 15, 16, 17, 29
 - 5:2, 29, 30, 42 (2x)
 - 6:25, 27, 45, 50, 54
 - 7:25
 - 8:10
 - 9:15, 20, 24
 - 10:52
 - 11:2, 3
 - 14:43, 45, 72
 - 15:1
- Compare the opening verse (1:1) with the concluding verses (16:19-20) of the gospel. What do you observe?

Besides the fact that things happened quickly, what do you observe about Mark's message?

Sermon Summary

As we begin a study of the Gospel of Mark, we'll consider the questions, **who?**, **what?**, **when?**, **where?**, **why?** and **how?**

When? Many scholars believe that Mark was the first of the four gospels written, somewhere around AD 67-68. Mark records Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (13:2) but mentions nothing about its fulfillment. Since the temple was destroyed in AD 70, scholars assume Mark wrote before then. Some ancient testimonies suggest that it was written after Peter's death (which was ca. AD 64-67) while other testimonies place its composition during Peter's lifetime. Perhaps Mark began writing it during Peter's last years but completed it after his death.

Who? While none of the gospel accounts directly identify their authors, all of them have strong historical evidence pointing to their authors. As early as AD 130, and by unbroken tradition, multiple sources regard it as the work of John Mark, one of Paul's co-workers (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11). And, **who** was the original audience? Again, earliest tradition says that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome to a predominantly Gentile audience, and internal evidence agrees: Jewish customs are explained (7:2-4; 15:42), Aramaic words translated (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22), and contrary to other gospels, Latin words appear. Mark's gospel shows special interest in persecution and martyrdom, which Christians were suffering throughout the Roman empire under Caligula and Nero (8:34-38; 13:9-13). **Who** was John Mark, as a person? His Hebrew name was John, his Greek/Roman name was Mark (Acts 12:12, 25). He also had a nickname: "stumpy fingers"! (We learn this from a prologue attached to an ancient copy of Mark's gospel.) His mother Mary was a well-known believer in Jerusalem in whose house the church sometimes met (Acts 12:12). It is very possible that it was there that the Last Supper was celebrated. Many commentators believe that Mark was the unnamed man who fled half naked from the garden of Gethsemane on the evening when Jesus was arrested there (14:51-52). Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Colossians 4:10) who accompanied him and Paul on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). For some unnamed reason, he abandoned them on the trip and later on, when Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them on a second missionary journey, Paul refused (Acts 15:37-40). So Barnabas took Mark and sailed away to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and they went a different way. The good news is that Paul and John Mark later reconciled and became faithful friends and co-workers (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24). Mark also became Peter's companion and co-worker (1 Peter 5:13).

What? Mark's purposes in writing appear to be to encourage persecuted Christians, to aid in evangelism and discipleship, to preserve an accurate account of Jesus' life and to combat the rise of false teaching. And **how** is Mark's gospel unique? Mark's gospel differs from the other gospels in its vivid, detailed accounts. Mark also records the emotional responses that people had to Jesus—amazement (1:27), exceeding fear (4:41), scornful laughter (5:40), offense (6:3), and immeasurable astonishment (7:37). Jesus' own reactions include compassion, anger, grief, sorrow, warmth, distress, sympathy, and indignation (this shouldn't surprise us since Peter, Mark's source, was very emotive, feeling things deeply). For one thing, it certainly reflects Peter's temperament! Peter was a man of action—acting when others were cautious (nobody else walked on water). After Jesus' resurrection, Peter grew tired of waiting for Jesus to appear, so finally he said, "I can't wait anymore, I'm going fishing!" And he did! Then, recognizing Jesus on the shore, Peter jumped out of the boat and swam to shore leaving the others to bring the boat! As you read Mark, the word "immediately" keeps coming up (Mark uses it 42 times; the rest of the New Testament only 12 times). Mark was in a hurry to give us the facts of Jesus' life and ministry. Without question, Mark's gospel is the most vivid and most alive of the four gospels. Mark is distinctively "the Gospel of what Jesus did"; the focus is on actions, not words (many of Jesus' discourses, found in the other gospels, are absent in Mark). It is the shortest of the gospels, with no account of Jesus' birth or childhood.

Where? The high-point of Mark's gospel—thematically and geographically—is Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (8:29). Finally Jesus could speak about building his church (Matthew 16:18ff) and his intention to go to Jerusalem to die on a cross. (In his typical, impulsive fashion, Peter speaks before he thinks, and rebukes Jesus for talking about dying! 8:33) Peter could see nothing good coming out of Jesus' death (but we know the end of the story). Peter's accurate confession of Jesus' identity was followed by an accurate vision—of the transfigured Christ (9:3-7). Then, on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus predicts his imminent suffering, death, and resurrection three times (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). As the large crowds that had been following Jesus fall away, and Jesus focuses on teaching the Twelve what it really means to be his disciple (10:43-45), the Jewish religious leaders began seeking an opportunity to destroy him (11:18). It was pretty much downhill from there: Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples, was arrested, tried and crucified. Three days later he rose from the dead.

Well, that's the bird's eye view of Mark's gospel: Jesus came to serve (chapters 1-10; 3 ½ years) and to sacrifice (chapters 11-16; 8 days!). Next week we will get into the details. Your homework assignment this week is to read the Gospel of Mark at least once, but more if you have the opportunity. Every time I read it, I see new things!

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Monday—Read chapters 1-3 of the Gospel of Mark.

- As you read, keep in mind this schematic (to the right).
- How is Jesus' identity being revealed by what he does?
- How is service emphasized?
- How do you explain the growing opposition Jesus faced?

Tuesday—Read chapters 4-6 of the Gospel of Mark.

- As you read, keep in mind this schematic (to the right).
- What do you learn from Jesus' parables?
- Why did Jesus perform miracles?
- In what ways did Jesus develop his disciples?

Wednesday—Read chapters 7-9 of the Gospel of Mark.

- As you read, keep in mind this schematic (to the right).
- Explain the "pivot"?
- Why did Jesus wait until now to begin foretelling his death?
- Why did Jesus pivot from public ministry to training the twelve?

Thursday—Read chapters 10-12 of the Gospel of Mark.

- As you read, keep in mind this schematic (to the right).
- What characterized Jesus' ministry in Perea?
- Is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem what you expected? Explain.
- Why do you think Jesus experienced so much opposition?

Friday—Read chapters 13-14 of the Gospel of Mark.

- As you read, keep in mind this schematic (to the right).
- What do you learn about Jesus' second coming?
- Describe Jesus' final hours with his disciples.
- What surprises you about Jesus' arrest?

Saturday—Read chapters 15-16 of the Gospel of Mark.

- As you read, keep in mind this schematic (to the right).
- When, and for how long, do Jesus' trials take place?
- Describe the surprising turns in Jesus' trials.
- Who sees the risen Christ first?
- How do various individuals react to news of the resurrection?

