

Introduction to Mark's Gospel

We will introduce the energetic and vivid Gospel of Mark as we start the week. Comparisons of the Gospels may cause you to think that Mark is somehow a plainer version of Matthew and Luke as if the literary crafting was all their doing. In reality, the Gospel of Mark is a powerful and well-crafted work of literary art designed to impact the lives of those exposed to it.

Peter Mead is the director of Cor Deo, a ministry training programme in Chippenham, England. He is also part of the leadership team of Trinity Chippenham, a church Peter helped to plant back in 2014. Peter is a lecturer for Union School of Theology. He studied at Multnomah Biblical Seminary before getting his Doctor of Ministry degree under Haddon Robinson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the area of expository preaching. Peter is the author of *Pleased to Dwell*, *Lost in Wonder*, and *Foundations* (Christian Focus) as well as *The Little Him Book* (10ofThose/10Publishing), and the preaching blog: BiblicalPreaching.net. He is married to Melanie and they have six children.

I. Historical Setting – Whose Gospel?

- A. Anonymous

- B. Attributed by Papias (ca. 125AD) to John Mark, companion of Paul (Col.4:10) and later, Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

II. The First Gospel, but not the Plain Gospel

- A. Dated around 65AD, a new form of literature!

- B. Lots of action, with two blocks of teaching (chs.4&13)

- C. Literary and theological sophistication:
 - 1. Mark the energetic story-teller (most sentences begin with “And...”, 41x he uses “immediately”, and 25x he uses “And again...”)
 - 2. Aramaic words of Jesus used 6x (eye-witness account)
 - 3. Jesus the Messiah is well developed: (1) The kingly Messiah, (2) God's suffering Servant, (3) The Markan secret
 - a. The demons are silenced (1:25, 34; 3:11-12)
 - b. The crowds are told to keep it secret (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26)
 - c. The disciples are told to keep it secret (Mk.8:30)
 - d. Those who should know, don't! (Family, Religious Experts, Disciples)

4. Mark and Isaiah’s New Exodus (Isaiah 35; 40-55):
- a. 1st sentence: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus the Christ, the King of Israel, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet . . .”
 - b. Jesus in Israel’s role: through water, then testing in the desert.
 - c. Mark quotes Isaiah (4:10-12; 7:6; 9:48; 11:17)
 - d. Jesus’ ministry in the language of Isaiah 53 (Mark 10:45)
 - e. The parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1-12; cf Isaiah 5:1-7)
 - f. Eyes that see but don’t perceive, ears . . . (Isaiah 6:9-10)
 - g. The long-awaited deliverer is come, but he has come to suffer before leading the people into the final promised land (Mk 13)
 - h. The Messiah’s mission includes the gathering of the Gentile nations (see Gentile narratives in 6:53-9:29; abolishing of food laws in 7:19; the temple repossessed in 11:17; Jesus referring to temple using Isaiah 56:7 “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations)

III. The Big Picture

1:1	8:29	15:39
“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”	“You are the Christ!”	“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
<i>Who is Jesus?</i>	<i>What does it mean to follow Jesus?</i>	
The Christ	The cross	

IV. The Prologue - Mark 1:1–15 (ESV)

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

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,
 “Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
 who will prepare your way,

³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
 make his paths straight,’ ”

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

V. Mark's Gospel: A Simple Overview

Prologue (1:1-13)

Part 1: Jesus goes public and announces the kingdom (1:14-3:6)

- Rapid-fire action, amazing the crowds, drawing opposition from leaders.

Part 2: Jesus builds his ministry through miracles (3:7-8:21)

- The crowds are amazed, the disciples are instructed, the leaders opposition grows.

Part 3: Jesus focuses his disciples on what the Messiah came to do (8:22-10:45)

- You can't have a Messiah based on miracles: he came to die, but they didn't get it.

Part 4: Jesus enters Jerusalem with wild crowds, but the King is executed (10:46-15:47)

Epilogue – Jesus is risen! (16:1-8)

Selected Reading:

R. Alan Culpepper. *Mark* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, S&H, 2007)

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R.T. France. *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC, Eerdmans, 2002)

Peter Orr. *The Beginning of the Gospel: A Theology of Mark* (New Testament Theology, Crossway, 2023)

Rikki Watts. *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Biblical Studies Library, Baker Books, 1997)

Joel Williams. *Mark*. (EGGNT, B&H Academic, 2020)