

Mark: *Following Jesus on the Way*

Introduction

Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. It has less unique material than any of the other Gospels. Approximately 92 percent of the material in Mark is paralleled in Matthew and about 48 percent in Luke. In Matthew and Luke combined, 95 percent of the material in Mark is present. He uses non-literary, everyday language.

I. The Author—John Mark, mentioned 8 times in the NT, penned the gospel under the guidance of Peter. Papias (A.D. 110) says, “*Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered.*” Irenaeus (A.D. 180) says, *Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed on his preaching to us in written form*” Mark’s gospel has been called the “memoirs of Peter.”

Barnabas was Mark’s cousin (Col 4:10). Mark was raised in Jerusalem with his mother Mary (Acts 12:12). He deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13), but was later restored to fellowship with Paul (2 Tim 4:11). John Mark was probably the young man in Mark 14:51-52 which means he was an eyewitness to some of Jesus’ life.

Application— God can use failures to accomplish His purposes.

II. The Audience—Mark is a Roman Gospel for a Roman audience. The following evidence from the Gospel itself supports this conclusion. 1) Mark explains Jewish customs (7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42); 2) There are several Latinisms and Latin loan words (legion 5:9, praetorium 15:16, centurion 15:39, speculator 6:27, flagellare 15:15, quadrans 12:42); 3) Aramaic words are frequently translated; 4) The Roman method of reckoning time is used. Mark speaks of four watches in the night rather than three which were traditional in Jewish reckoning (6:48; 13:35); 5) Simon of Cyrene is identified as the father of Alexander and Rufus (15:21; Rom 16:31); 6) The OT is seldom quoted; 7) The Gospel reaches its climax in the confession of Jesus’ deity by a Roman centurion (15:39).

A date later than A.D. 70 is highly improbable since the destruction of Jerusalem is not mentioned. A date earlier than 63 is improbable because Peter probably did not come to Rome until about that time. Nero set fire to Rome in the summer of 64 and this led to open persecution of the Christians. The Neronian persecution and death of Peter seem to be the background of this Gospel that focuses on the Suffering, Sovereign Servant. Taking these facts into account, a date between A.D. 65-67 is most probable. This was a tumultuous time for Christians in Rome.

Application—We live in troubled times when it’s becoming more and more difficult to stand for Christ.

III. The Aim—To reveal Jesus as the suffering, sovereign servant and call people to follow Jesus and embark on the journey of discipleship.

[Followers of Jesus in Rome would have been asking all kinds of questions: Is all this suffering normal? What does it really mean to follow Jesus? How will all this end?]

IV. The Arrangement

The way of discipleship is unfolded in 3 Acts:

Galilee 1:1-8:26 Discernment of His person

On the Way 8:27—10:52 Acceptance of His mission

Jerusalem 11:1—16:8 Faithfulness to Jesus

V. The Analysis

The final 40% of Mark's gospel focuses on the death and resurrection of God's Servant and the events the immediately precede it. Mark 1–10 is really an extended introduction to get to the death and resurrection of Christ

Mark is the Gospel of action—the “Go Gospel” of the suffering, servant Savior. The Gospel of Mark “marches.” For Mark, movement is more fascinating than discourse. The writing style is journalistic, vivid, forceful, and descriptive. It is written in a straightforward, simple style. Twelve of sixteen chapters begin with “and.” The historical present (present tense used to describe a past event) is used over 150 times. The adverb *euthys* “immediately” occurs 42 times. Mark gives the reader the impression he's listening to an “Eyewitness Newsbrief.”

Application—1) The world is unfriendly to believers. 2) We are slow to understand spiritual things. 3) Our calling is confessing and following Christ on the way.