

Gospel According to Mark

Authorship: John Mark, son of Mary (Acts 12:12) and cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). Though not an original apostle he was a leader in the early church and was close friend to the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). It is most likely Mark wrote from Peter's first hand reports of Jesus' life and ministry. Mark traveled with the Apostle Paul and perhaps was the last to see him alive. (2 Timothy 4:11).

Date: Most scholars believe that Mark wrote his gospel account sometime between AD 70 - 90

Place in Canon: New Testament – Synoptic Gospels

Genre: Gospel

Distinctive Features:

- 1) **Abruptness in style** – The Gospel of Mark is characterized by an abruptness of style. Mark is very abrupt, very straightforward, very much to the point. This abruptness is probably why Mark was very popular early on and why it has been so widely translated into so many different languages and dialects. Mark moves very quickly from point to point. This is seen through the use of the key word, "immediately." Mark appears to have been very eager to tell his story. There is a sense of urgency illustrated through his style of writing.
- 2) **Loose Chronological Connections** – Mark does not tell us everything that happened to Jesus along the way. He summarizes. He simply gives glimpses of the things that Jesus experienced. The chronological connections between these glimpses are very loose. He does not give to us a travel diary. He does not give us a moment by moment account. He rapid tells us what appears to be of utmost importance to him at the time of his writing.
- 3) **Image of Jesus as a servant, lonely, abandoned, rejected** – The picture of Jesus that emerges from this gospel is that Jesus is lonely, misunderstood from the very beginning and finally rejected. This characteristic climaxes with his words from the cross, "My God, my God why hath thou forsaken me?"
- 4) **Abrupt Ending** – Through generations dedicated people have copied God's inspired Word and have produced thousands of manuscripts. Occasionally, a few differences crept into the text. Such is the case with Mark Chapter 16. Some manuscripts show an abrupt ending in Chapter 16. The most reliable manuscripts place the ending at verse 8. Scholars have concluded that there are 3 endings within Verses 9-20. The question arises which is the most accurate and authoritative ending of Mark's gospel? The easiest choice is the shorter ending at Verse 8. However, there is no reference to the resurrection and if the end is placed here the gospel ends on note of fear. Some believe that Mark may have been prevented to finish his gospel. It appears that the additional endings were added later to help Mark's readers better understand the gospel message.

Background & Historical Situation: Probably written from Rome to Gentile Christians living in Rome.

Purpose: The purpose of Mark's Gospel was to address the situations that his readers were facing. We know of three difficulties that Mark's readers were facing.

- 1) **Persecution** – Mark was writing to believers who were facing persecution at the hands of the Roman government.
- 2) **False Eschatology** – Mark's readers were faced with a false eschatology because of the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 and the suffering that they were facing due to the Roman government. Believers were tempted to withdraw and wait until Jesus returned. This went contrary to the teaching's of Jesus that involved engaging the world and sharing the hope of eternal life.
- 3) **False Christology** – Believers were embracing the miracle working ability of Jesus with little emphasis on His person and mission to save a lost humanity. The believers living in the 1st century had a problem (as we do today) equating following Jesus with suffering.

Major Themes:

- 1) **The Long Awaited Messiah has Come as a SERVANT!**
- 2) **Discipleship**
- 3) **Kingdom of God** - "Kingdom of God" the basic meaning is that God manifest His rule, His reign in human affairs.

Sources: Elwell, Walker A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998).
Jensen, Irving L. *Simply Understanding the Bible*. (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).

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OT Example of the “kingdom of God” though it is not called by name- The Exodus of Egypt - If were to ask you what the Exodus was about you would probably tell me that it was about a bunch of Hebrew slaves that were set free. If I asked as Jew he would say that God stepped into history and faced off with the Pharoah and the Pharoah blinked.

Now by the time of Jesus, when Jesus used the term “kingdom of God” there was one clear understanding and everybody would have immediately thought about it. The “kingdom of God” was this kingdom that was coming in the future.

So they thought of this “kingdom of God” as exclusively future. That is what Jewish apocalyptic is about. It is describing that future coming kingdom.

Turn with me back to Mark 1:15. ...the kingdom of God is come near...

When the people hear this what do the people do? They start looking over the clouds waiting for the heavenly soldiers to come. They look up to see the moon turn to blood and the stars fall to the earth. That was a universal understanding among the Jews.

Look what follows... No heavenly soldiers. No moon turning to blood. No stars falling to the ground. And going by the Sea of Galilee he sees to men fishing and he said, “Come and follow me.” Where is the kingdom? And going on, he saw two more brothers and said, “Come and follow me.” Where are the heavenly soldiers? Then he goes into a Synogue at Capernaum and there is a man with an unclean spirit and he cleanses him of that unclean spirit. Where is the kingdom? And then all these masses of sick and lame people, blind and demon possessed people come and crowds the way and he heals them. Still no earthly kingdom. Where is it?

The most radical thing that Jesus taught about the kingdom, now he talks about the future coming kingdom especially in Mark 13, but the most radical thing that Jesus taught about the kingdom, the most confusing thing about the kingdom is what is shown in these stories we just looked at following 1:15. You see Jesus talked about the rule of God is already present. What’s the hallmark of it? What’s the sure sign? The rule of God occurs when people are set free. Think about it, these four men were set free from their boats. We usually think just the opposite. They left the freedom of their profession to go into the bondage with Jesus. But that is just the opposite, they were set free from their boats. Set free from materialism. Look at this man at the Synagogue he is set free from the control of demonic powers. Look at these people who are sick they are set free from their diseases. The “kingdom of God” in its present manifestation always sets people free. We have a hard time with that because we ask the same questions that everybody else ask, and that is, “Where is it?” You will see it wherever you see people liberated. And I’m talking about liberation in the fullest sense of the word. Liberation from political, economic, ignorance, prejudice, etc. Not just liberation that occurs sometimes in church. In some places and in some ways we need the most liberation there. That may be the place of greatest bondage. The kingdom is not identified with the church. The church bears witness to the kingdom but the kingdom comes from God. And he can set people free wherever and however he wishes. He doesn’t have to clear it with us.

Illus. - Its undeniable to me that the fall of the Berlin Wall was a manifestation of the rule of God. Because people are set free.

But here is the problem with the present manifestation of the Kingdom, it is hidden. It can only be seen through the eyes of faith. There is nothing in the newspaper today that demonstrates that God is in control.

Illus. - Describe a Tragedy. Tell me the rule of God is manifest in that and I will debate you.

There is no visible evidence of the rule of God. But why are you here tonight? Probably there are some folks at home that wonder why you are here too. But why have you chosen to do what you are doing with your life? It is because you see something that they don’t. You see it is veiled but it is present. It can only be seen in the eyes of faith but remember one day faith will rise to sight.

In that passage from Philipians remember how it ends, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and has given him a name that is above every name so that one day, when that which is seen now only through faith will be revealed for all. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess. But they are one and the same kingdom.

Its present but it is only seen through the eyes of faith. You see, that is the most radical thing that Jesus taught about the kingdom because everybody was looking for this one.

Future Kingdom
Present Kingdom

So think about it.

The people go around and see a man who a demon has possessed his life and now he is in good health. They see a Gaderine demoniac who is suicidal, who is self-destructive, who has been given up on by his family, I mean a psychiatrist would have a field day with Mark 5, and they come back and they see him sitting down talking with Jesus, clothed in his right mind, wanting to follow Jesus. And they ask, Where is the rule of God? Where is it? You can always recognize it when people are liberated from the forces that bind them. That’s one thing that Liberation Theology has taught us, even though we haven’t learned it very well. They captured the notion that God is the liberator. The “Kingdom of God” is the expression of that liberation.

Wilmington’s Bible Handbook. (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1997).