

Mark

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? A biography of Jesus tailored for Gentile readers.

WHO WROTE IT? John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas and traveling companion of the apostle Paul.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? Mark wrote this (some say with the help of the apostle Peter) sometime between A.D. 50 and 70.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? The events in Mark take place at the beginning of the new era that started with Jesus.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapter 1: Jesus begins his ministry
- Chapters 2–8: Jesus ministers in Galilee
- Chapter 9: Jesus ministers north of Galilee
- Chapter 10: Jesus travels toward Judea in the south
- Chapters 11–15: Jesus' last week, from triumphal entry to crucifixion
- Chapter 16: Jesus' resurrection

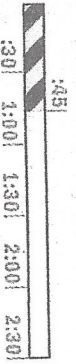
KEY CONCEPTS

- "Son of God" (Mark's favorite title for Jesus)
- "Immediately" (Mark moves quickly from event to event)
- "Kingdom of God" (Mark uses this phrase instead of Matthew's "Kingdom of Heaven")

SCORECARD

- **Jesus:** The number one personality in the book
- **John the Baptist:** Desert preacher who prepared the people for Jesus
- **Herod Antipas:** Jewish ruler of Galilee and Perea who executed John the Baptist
- **Pilate:** Roman governor of Judea who sentenced Jesus to death

READING TIME



WORTH MEMORIZING

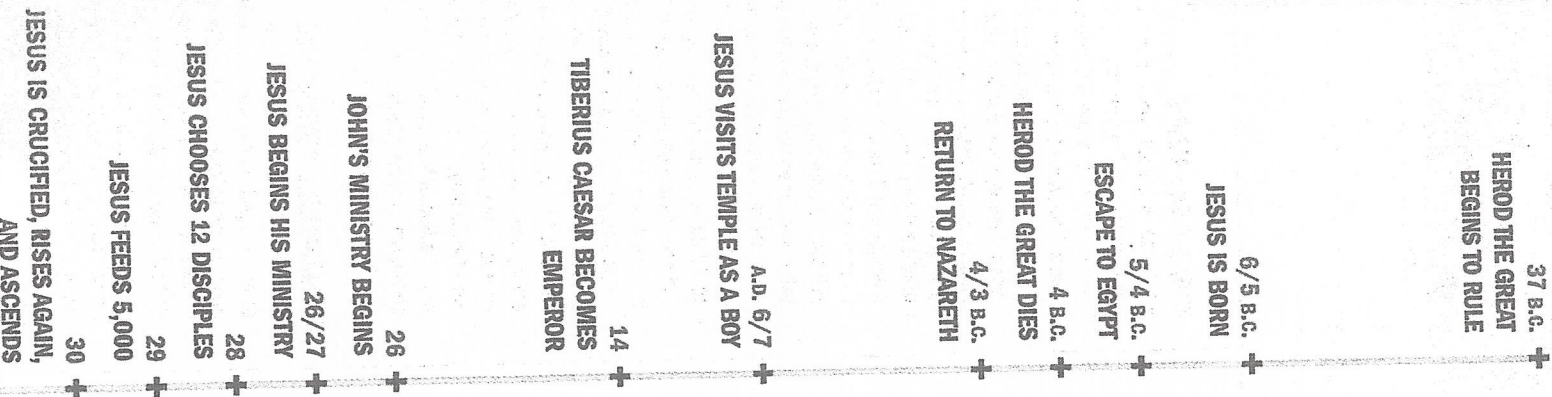
- **7:20-23** "It is what comes from inside that defiles you. For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you."
- **9:36-37** Then he put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me."
- **10:42-45** Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

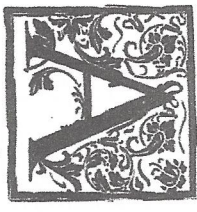
THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

- **RESPONSIBLE ACTION.** Mark is an active, energetic book, and many men prefer action to long study. Jesus is a mover and shaker, seldom standing still. He had a busy, full life. There was work to do, and he did it. But he didn't burn himself out. He took time to recharge through rest and prayer. And he made time for children and needy people.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF
Mark?
+++
Jesus does
more than talk;
he makes
things happen.

Timeline





business leader recently wrote a book about urgency, because, he said, most people are complacent and don't realize it. If anything is going to happen for the better, he wrote, it must be tackled with urgency.

That's a good way to describe the Gospel of Mark. This book is short and to the point—an approach reflecting the attitude of Rome's culture. The Roman world of Mark's day was focused on getting things done—*now!* So Mark used words like *immediately* and *quickly* almost fifty times to describe the urgency and immediacy of Jesus' mission and message.

Mark had been a teenager in Jerusalem during the ministry of Christ. He was caught up in the events of our Lord's death and resurrection; and his mother's home was probably the location of the Upper Room where Jesus met with His disciples and, later, where the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost.

As a young man, Mark faltered on Paul's first missionary journey, but he later became a respected leader and, according to tradition, a close associate of Simon Peter. His Gospel likely reflects Peter's action-packed record of Christ's life.

Mark wrote his Gospel during a time when everything dear was being swept away by marching armies, mindless persecution, injustice, and death. His Gospel helped the Roman world focus like a laser on the story of Jesus. So it is today. The more chaotic our world, the more urgently we must proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.



KEY THOUGHT:

The Son of God had supreme power, which He used to serve others with urgency and to sacrifice His life for the world.



KEY VERSES:

"Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant . . . For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
Mark 10:43, 45



KEY ACTION:

When we become disciples of Jesus Christ, we're seized with urgency as we serve others and share His Good News with a needy world.



KEY PRAYER:

Lord, may I be a servant of all and thereby glorify Your name!

BASIC SURVEY

MARK

AUTHOR: Not stated, but traditionally John Mark, companion of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:25) and associate of Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

DATE: Probably AD 50s or 60s, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

Jesus is God's Son, a suffering servant of all people.

DETAILS, PLEASE

This second Gospel is believed by many to be the first one written. The book of Mark is the briefest and most active of the four biographies of Jesus. Mark addresses a Gentile audience, portraying Jesus as a man of action, divinely capable of healing the sick, controlling nature, and battling the powers of Satan. Mark's theme of the suffering servant comes through in Jesus' interaction with hostile doubters—the Jewish leaders, who want to kill Him (9:31); His neighbors, who take offense at Him (6:3); and even His own family members, who think He's crazy (3:21).

QUOTABLE

- > "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men" (1:17 NKJV).
- > "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (10:25 KJV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Many believe the unnamed spectator at Jesus' arrest was Mark himself. "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked" (14:51–52 KJV).

SO WHAT?

Suffering and loss aren't necessarily bad things—in fact, for Christians, they're the pathway to real life (8:35).

READ MARK 1:1–20 AND 4.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 189. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 189. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 184. →

LIFE LESSONS: Make time for prayer (1:35). A relationship with Jesus is stronger than any human relationship on earth (3:35).

In the Word
This Gospel focuses more on the activities and miracles of Jesus and the reactions of the people rather than on his teachings.

MARK DID YOU KNOW

In and Out

Mark became the subject of a controversy (see Acts 13:13) and caused such a dispute that Paul and Barnabas eventually parted ways for a time (Acts 15:36–41). Paul later requested Mark's company and said, "[Mark] is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11), indicating an eventual reconciliation.

► Only five of the parables Jesus told are documented in the book of Mark.

► Throughout the book of Acts and in Paul's letters, Mark is mentioned at various times as ministering with Paul, Barnabas and Silas. He was also a cousin to Barnabas.

TARGET AUDIENCE
It is generally believed that Mark was targeting the Romans and other Gentiles with his Gospel. He referred to Jesus as the Son of Man 14 times but as the Son of God only 3 times.

BY THE NUMBERS

16 CHAPTERS
678 VERSES
13,839 WORDS

LIFE LESSONS: Faith in Jesus gives believers access to God's healing, transforming power (5:21–43).

CLOSER LOOK

POWER OVER THE DEVIL

At the very beginning of His ministry, “the Spirit...compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan for forty days” (Mark 1:12–13 NIV). The devil tried to tempt



This fresco of Jesus resisting the devil is located in Antwerp, Belgium.

Jesus to use His power for His own benefit, but Jesus resisted all his deceitful tricks (Matthew 4:1–11). Having passed these tests, Jesus then launched His ministry. As John declared: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8 NASB).

Repeatedly, “people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed...and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons” (Mark 1:32, 34 NIV). “Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, ‘You are the Son of God!’” (Mark 3:11 NASB). One day in a synagogue, a demon-possessed man tried to defy Jesus, “but Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’ And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him” (Mark 1:25–26 NKJV).

One of the most dramatic confrontations happened on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus met the man possessed by a huge multitude of demons, and the man fell down before Jesus and begged Him not to torment him. Jesus cast the demons out, and they entered a herd of two thousand swine that immediately rushed down a steep bank and drowned in the sea (Mark 5:1–20).

READ MARK 5:1–20 AND 9:1–29.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 185. →

CLOSER LOOK

LEGALISM AND THE SABBATH

Repeatedly in the Gospels we see Jesus running afoul of the religious authorities because He wasn’t super-scrupulous about keeping the Sabbath. (See examples in Mark 2:23–27; 3:1–6; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6; John 9:1–16).

Now, Moses’ Law commanded, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work” (Exodus 20:8–10 NKJV). And there was a serious penalty: “Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people” (Exodus 31:14 NIV).

Now, for the *most* part, Jesus and His disciples did faithfully and gladly rest on the Sabbath, along with the rest of the Jewish nation. For example, He only healed multitudes of people *after* the Sabbath ended at sundown (Mark 1:21, 32–34). But the Pharisees had added thousands of tiny rules to Moses’ Law, redefining perfectly harmless, good activities as “work.” Then, because Jesus didn’t follow their legalistic interpretations, they argued, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath” (John 9:16 NASB).

Because Jesus sometimes healed the sick on the Sabbath, His critics confidently stated, “We know this man is a sinner” (John 9:24 NIV). And because the Law advocated the death penalty for those who “profaned” the Sabbath, they felt justified in hating and persecuting Him—and eventually killing Him.

READ MARK 2:23–3:6 AND JOHN 9.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 186. →

CLOSER LOOK

GREATNESS IN SERVING

One time, after Jesus and His disciples entered Capernaum, He asked, “What were you discussing on the way?” But they were too embarrassed to answer, because they’d been arguing about which of them was the greatest. Jesus turned the concept of ruling and reigning on its head when He told the Twelve, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:33, 35 NASB).

Later on, two ambitious disciples, James and John, forgot Jesus’ admonition and boldly requested to sit on His right and left hand in His kingdom—thoroughly upsetting the other ten apostles—and Jesus once again taught, “Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43–45 KJV).

Unbelievably, they still didn’t get the point. At the

Last Supper, while Jesus was focused on His coming suffering and death, the Twelve were once again arguing which of them was the greatest. Once again Jesus pointed them to His own example, saying, “I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:27 NKJV). And despite the fact that He was their Lord and Master, He washed their feet like a common servant (John 13:1–16). He made it clear by His own example the kind of humility that His disciples should pursue.



Paolo Veronese (1528–1588) painted *Jesus Washing the Feet of the Disciples*, which illustrates Jesus' humility and willingness to serve others.

READ MARK 9:30–50 AND 10:1–45.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 189.



HIDDEN TREASURE

JESUS FORGIVES SIN

Once when the people heard that Jesus was in a house, such large crowds gathered that no one could enter by the door. Four men brought a paralyzed friend, but when they couldn't get in, they broke through the ceiling and lowered him by ropes on his mat. Jesus looked upon the paralyzed man and declared, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5 NIV). Some scribes were scandalized, thinking, “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7 NKJV). However, to prove that He had authority to forgive sins, Jesus immediately commanded the man's healing—and he was healed! Jesus, like God, can forgive sins because He is the Son of God, *one* with His Father (John 10:30).

READ MARK 2:1–22 AND 6.

HIDDEN TREASURE

RAISING THE DEAD

When Jesus was asked if He was the Messiah, His proof was that “the dead are raised” (Luke 7:22 NKJV). Jesus had just finished raising a dead man in the village of Nain. Just as He had arrived there, a funeral procession came out, carrying a man to his tomb. Jesus commanded, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” (Luke 7:14 NIV). He immediately returned to life. Later, in Capernaum, Jairus begged Jesus to come heal his dying daughter, but by the time Jesus arrived she had already died. Jesus took her by the hand and said, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” (Mark 5:41 NIV). Immediately her life returned, and she arose.

READ MARK 5:21–43 AND LUKE 7:1–23.

Mark

BOOK INTRODUCTION

John Mark lived in one of the most exciting yet terrifying eras in human history. In his brief time on earth, the whole world changed—and Mark had a front-row seat as everything unfolded.

Although he was not one of the original disciples of Jesus (he may have been just a teenager at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry), Mark certainly became caught up in the events of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. And he was present at the birth of something the world had never seen—the church of Jesus Christ. The early church gathered to pray at Mark's mother's house in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), just after Pentecost. And it may have been there, just after Peter and John were arrested by the Jewish Sanhedrin for preaching the gospel, that the very room was shaken by the power of God after the church prayed for boldness (Acts 4:31). Imagine this young man's reaction to such sights and sounds under his mother's roof!

Bible scholars believe Mark wrote his account of the ministry, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus between AD 65 and 70, at a time of nearly incomprehensible turmoil for the young church. Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed by General Titus's Roman army, but its end was inevitable. Earlier in AD 64, Nero had accused the Christian community of setting fire to the city of Rome. With that pretext, the emperor loosed a tidal wave of persecution against those who claimed allegiance to Jesus Christ. In the resulting bloodbath, the apostles Peter and Paul—both of whom had a strong relationship with John Mark—were martyred.

Amid this era of fear, rampant rumors, grief, hardship, and the constant threat of death, Mark wrote his good news: "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Without a doubt, he wanted to use the life and example of Jesus Christ to instill fresh courage and hope in his readers. Some scholars think the Gospel of Mark may have been the first of the four Gospels to be written, serving as an outline and foundation for the longer accounts written by Matthew and Luke. In any case, it is one of the earliest records of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The early church historian Eusebius, in his *History of the Church*, quotes Papias on the origin of the Gospel of Mark. Papias, who lived before AD 150, states that Mark had followed Peter and interpreted for him. (And Peter's reference to Mark as "my son" in 1 Peter 5:13 suggests that, years before, Peter had led Mark to Christ and nurtured him in the faith.) After Peter's death, Mark wanted to

record everything that the apostle had taught. It is likely that his fellow Christians in Rome also wanted something more than their memories of Peter's oral teachings about Jesus. Perhaps they too encouraged Mark to create a written record of Christ's ministry.

Mark's Gospel certainly fits such a scenario. It is short, muscular, and to the point—an approach that echoed the attitude of Rome's culture. The Roman church consisted mostly of Gentiles, so there was no need for Mark to invest a lot of words explaining Jewish traditions or proving the messianic prophecies of the OT. What impressed the Romans was power. Thus Mark demonstrates how the Son of God used His power to serve others and how Jesus had power over creation, death, and the devil. Rome was also focused on getting things done—*how!* So Mark uses words like *immediately* and *quickly* almost 50 times to describe Jesus' movements throughout Palestine.

WHAT IT SAYS | *A Gospel Tailored for Action*

Mark focuses less on Jesus' lengthy teachings and more on His actions, structuring His Gospel around Jesus' travels, which culminated in Jerusalem with His crucifixion and resurrection. Missing from Mark are the discourses in Matthew, the details in Luke, and the proofs of divinity in John. Mark's Jesus would have appealed to the Roman mind-set, yet Mark starkly contrasts Him with the power-bound rulers of Rome.

Tracking the story of Jesus' life from His baptism to His final days on earth, the second Gospel in the NT moves rapidly from one action scene to another, like an adventure movie. However, Mark made sure to include Jesus' words about suffering for one's faith, for those would have been vital for the Gentile audience living through Rome's intense persecution (8:34–38; 13:9–13). He also recorded Jesus' words about leadership (10:41–45), probably with the Roman worldview in mind.

Rome was the leading nation in the world, a mighty empire maintained by the edge of the sword. But Jesus had a new message—one that shifted the paradigm and shook the culture. It would challenge those in power for the ages: the greatest leaders are those who serve others.

WHAT IT MEANS | *Snapshots of the Messiah in Action*

The themes of Mark's Gospel are movement, activity, strong commitments—and a divine Savior who came to serve.

- **Service and Commitment:** In the culture of Mark's day, service to the powerful was provided by slaves, but Jesus turns that idea on its head by demonstrating that the most powerful person on earth is a servant to all (10:45). Mark also emphasizes Jesus' words on the cost of following Him (8:34–9:1).

- **Messiah and Man:** For centuries, Israel had awaited her Messiah, and within the pages of this Gospel, He comes in the person of Jesus. The true God does not live only in heaven, however. He came to earth. Jesus is both man (1:1:2) and God (1:1:5; 7:12:1–11; 15:39).

- **Urgency:** By his frequent use of words conveying action and immediacy, Mark communicates the urgency of Jesus' mission and message. Nothing stood in the way of Rome's grand designs to rule the earth, and nothing will stand in the way of God's desire to save it (1:18, 21).

- **Teaching:** Roman culture followed the Greek tradition of revering teachers, so Mark positions Jesus in that category. Although Mark's Gospel contains fewer of Jesus' actual teachings than the other Gospels, his words reveal Jesus to be a great teacher.

Mark wrote his account of Jesus' life and ministry at a time when his whole world and that of his church seemed to be coming apart at the seams. So much that had been dear and familiar to him was being swept away by marching armies, mindless persecution, gross injustice, and death. What a moment for Mark to pen his Gospel!

Yet even in such a time, this Gospel would have helped readers across the Roman world to focus like a laser beam on the story of Jesus. So it is today. The more confused, fragmented, and chaotic our world becomes, the more the good news of Jesus Christ brings focus and clarity to our lives. Reading the Gospels—whether for the first time or the thousandth—brings light into dark circumstances and peace in the most unsettled times because they tell us about Jesus, our Light, our Peace, our Hope for troubled times.

MARK 8:23

PERSONAL STORIES

Josh McDowell: Jesus Was More than a Carpenter

As a young man, Josh McDowell considered himself an agnostic and believed that Christianity was worthless. After being challenged to intellectually examine the claims of Christianity, Josh discovered compelling and overwhelming evidence for the reliability of the Christian faith. After believing in Jesus Christ, Josh's life changed dramatically as he experienced the power of God's love.

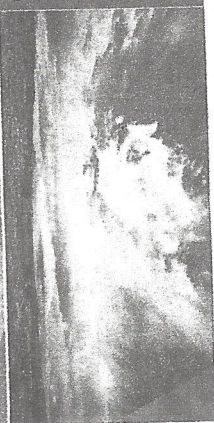
After his conversion, his plans for law school turned instead into plans for seminary and for telling a doubting world the truth about Jesus Christ. He earned a degree at Wheaton College and later attended Talbot Theological Seminary where he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Master of Divinity degree.

In 1961, Josh joined the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ International. Not long afterward, he founded The Josh McDowell Ministry with a vision of reaching young people worldwide with the truth and love of Jesus Christ.

Well known as an articulate speaker, Josh has spoken to more than 10 million young people through over 24,000 talks in at least 118 countries. His best-selling book, *More Than a Carpenter*, has reached millions in over 85 languages.

Looking back, Josh realizes that faith and facts go hand in hand. Jesus was more than a carpenter. No mere man or myth, Jesus is Messiah and Savior of the world. This fact changed his faith and has made all the difference in his life and the lives of those he has reached.

KEY FACTS



Religious Pluralism

1. Religious pluralism says all religions are equally valid paths to God.
2. The law of non-contradiction says two mutually exclusive claims to truth cannot both be true. Religious pluralism falls this law of logic. Two mutually exclusive religious claims cannot both be true.
3. All roads are equally valid paths to God only if God is an impersonal Being. But if God is personal and has communicated truth to us, then how we respond to that truth really matters.
4. Jesus Christ said He is the only way to salvation. Thus, it becomes imperative that we answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mk 8:29).

1:16-20 We are not sure how many times Jesus had to call Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow him. On two other occasions, a similar call went out to these four fishermen (see Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-42). Their response to Jesus' call on any one occasion, as here, seems to have been immediate. But it seems that they soon went back to their old occupation and way of life. Our faith in God will grow over time, at uneven rates, with uncertain steps. Each step of faith we take requires that we drop whatever else we are doing and follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

1:21-28 God's power to change lives was demonstrated as Jesus cast out an evil spirit. If Jesus has the power to cast out evil spirits, he certainly has enough power to free us from the sins that entangle us. We need to recognize our problems and sins, confess them honestly, and call out to him for help.

1:35-39 If Jesus, the Son of God, took time from his busy schedule to pray to his Father, how much more do we need to do so. By placing a priority on prayer, Jesus was able to persevere in his ministry and keep from burning out. We who seek spiritual growth for ourselves, and redemption for others, can hardly get by without prayer. The busier the day ahead, the more we need to meditate on God's Word and pray for his strength and wisdom.

MARK

Gospel author Mark gets to the point quickly. He roars into chapter 1, verse 1 as follows: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

There you have it. This is the story of the Good News of the Son of God. Here we go!

Mark's Gospel was the first of the four to be written. While he wasn't one of Jesus' 12 disciples, Mark (also known as John Mark) apparently was a follower of Jesus and had been close to the action of the events he described. For example, only this Gospel describes "a certain young man" in the Garden of Gethsemane at Jesus' arrest who with "a linen cloth wrapped around his naked body, was following Him. They [the arresting mob] caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked" (1:4:51-52). Many have speculated that Mark was that young man.

John Mark and his family also show up in the book of Acts.

When Peter was miraculously set free from prison, he went straight "to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many had assembled and were praying" (Ac 12:12). Mark traveled with Saul (Paul) and Barnabas (Ac 12:25), but later ended up being a cause of contention between them because during one trip he abandoned them and returned home (Ac 15:36-40). The bad blood between Paul and Mark did not last, however, for we read in Paul's very last letter that he told Timothy: "Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry" (2Tm 4:11). Clearly, beyond writing this Gospel, Mark worked hard in spreading the message of salvation in Jesus.

Mark wrote to a Roman audience; his main purpose was to show beyond a doubt that Jesus, though in appearance a man, was also God Himself. So Mark dove right into the action and recorded many of Jesus' miracles. While various scholars and writers have tried over the years to explain away the miracles recorded in Scripture, clearly

the eyewitnesses of Jesus' life on earth understood them to be exactly what they were—miraculous acts of God given to help people believe.

While the other Gospels spend more time on setup and background, Mark jumped right into Jesus' ministry. Jesus cast out demons from people (Mk 1:21-28; 5:1-20; 9:14-29) and healed many who were sick (1:29-34). He cleansed a leper (1:40-44) and completely restored men with paralysis (2:1-12; 3:1-6).

Even nature obeyed Jesus. Mark 4:35-41 records how "even the wind and the sea obey Him!" He can feed crowds of people with minimal resources (6:30-44; 8:1-10) and He can walk on the water (6:45-52).

We worship a miracle worker: Jesus. And yet we should remember that He worked miracles only to draw every eye to His heavenly Father.

We may not have miraculous powers, but we do know a miracle-working God. When we're serving others, we should always be pointing them toward our Savior.

It's what Mark would have done.

Author: John Mark

Date: Written around A.D. 55-65, the Gospel of Mark covers events from the ministry of John the Baptist through the ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus

What in the world is going on?

- ca 300 B.C.-A.D. 100 The Chicanel, an early Mayan civilization in the Late Formative period, flourishes in the lowlands of Guatemala
- ca 247 B.C.-A.D. 224 The era of the Parthian Empire (established by Arsaces) in what is now Khorasan, Iran)
- 206 B.C.-A.D. 220 Han Dynasty in China (an era interrupted by the Xin dynasty in A.D. 9-25); the Silk Road, a trading route that connected China to western countries, was in use especially during the era of the Roman Empire
- 200 B.C.-A.D. 500 A Native American culture known for its burial mounds thrives at Hopewell, in southern Ohio
- ca 200 B.C.-A.D. 68 The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in 1947-1956, date from this era
- 44 B.C. Julius Caesar is assassinated on the Ides of March (March 15)
- 37-4 B.C. Herod the Great is king of Judea
- 27 B.C.-A.D. 476 The era of the Roman Empire

MARK

- A. JESUS PREPARES FOR SERVICE (1:1–13)
- B. JESUS SERVES THROUGH WORD AND DEED (1:14—13:37)
 - 1. Jesus Serves in Galilee (1:14—9:50)
 - 2. Jesus Serves Beyond Jerusalem (10:1–45)
 - 3. Jesus Serves in Jerusalem (10:46—13:37)
- C. JESUS SERVES THROUGH SELF-SACRIFICE (14:1—16:20)

Essential Facts

PURPOSE: To encourage us to continue trusting and serving God, even through life's difficulties.

AUTHOR: John Mark.

AUDIENCE: The Christians in Rome.

DATE WRITTEN: Probably between AD 55 and 65.

SETTING: The known world was united under the Roman Empire, and its common language made conditions ideal for spreading the gospel in written form.

KEY VERSE: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45).

KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS: Jesus with his disciples, especially Peter.

SPECIAL FEATURES: A fast-paced narrative characterizes the Gospel of Mark.

THE BIG PICTURE

When we desire spiritual renewal, we are usually looking for something that will make a real difference in our lives. Perhaps we were raised in a church or a godly family and know all the rules of godly behavior, but have never felt God's power in our daily lives. The Gospel of Mark is written for people like us, giving us a glimpse of a powerful God who wants to help us.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' power is displayed again and again. He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, restored deformed limbs, made lame people walk, cast out demons, healed incurable skin diseases and quieted stormy waters. Though Mark is the shortest of the Gospels, it records more miracles than the other three Gospels. Mark shows us Jesus as a powerful Savior who is more than able to help suffering people.

Mark also emphasizes Jesus' desire to help us. By recording a rapid succession of vivid pictures, Mark shows us Jesus in action, spending his energy to the point of exhaustion in order to heal those who came to him for help. Jesus came to help us too. And this truth is driven home by Jesus' willingness to suffer a painful death to free us from our bondage to sin.

Jesus has power over sin, demonic powers and nature. He demonstrated this power when he walked on earth, and he possesses the same power today. Whatever problems we may face or needs we may have, Jesus has the power to help us. We only need to look to him and admit that we need his help.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

JESUS AS THE SERVANT

True spiritual renewal should encourage us to be servants and to share our experience with others. Greatness in God's eyes is measured by a willingness to serve and to sacrifice for others. Jesus didn't come to earth as a conquering king; he came as a servant. He chose to obey his Father and die for us. Following Jesus' example, we must not let personal ambition or a hunger for power control our lives. Instead we should humbly seek to follow God's will and serve others.

THE POWER OF GOD

The Gospel of Mark is filled with amazing events that display the awesome power of God in Jesus' life. Mark recorded more of Jesus' miracles than his sermons, thereby emphasizing God's power in action. The more we believe

that Jesus is God, the more we will witness his power and love in our own lives. Jesus' greatest miracles are still those that involve forgiveness, healing of relationships and restoration. The power we see in Mark's Gospel is still available to us.

SHARING THE MESSAGE

Discipleship and spiritual growth take place within relationships. There is no such thing as a secret disciple or private spiritual growth. As we share the joys and struggles of our own spiritual growth, we encourage others in theirs. Such a message transcends national, racial and economic barriers, reaching out to those who seek God and surrender to him. God's Good News and the message of our spiritual renewal are meant to be shared with others.

SPOTLIGHT

HOW MUCH WATER?

Both the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee are famous backdrops for the activity of Jesus. Just how big are they? Take a guess:

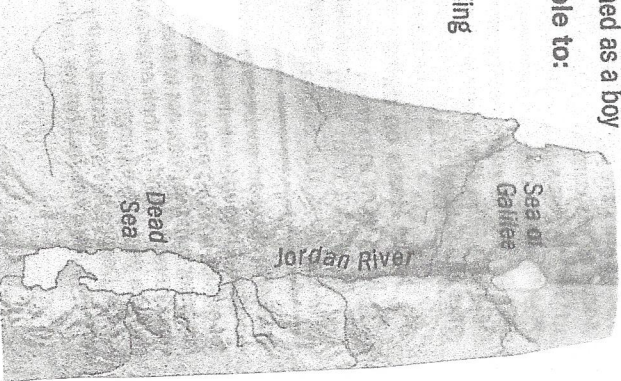
The Jordan River is comparable to:

- a. A major waterway like the Mississippi or the St. Lawrence
- b. A regional river like the Potomac or the Hudson
- c. The modest stream where you fished as a boy

The Sea of Galilee is comparable to:

- a. Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, etc.
- b. Utah's Great Salt Lake
- c. Your favorite place to go water-skiing

sejllm 8 qy sejllm 13 jstif ljygnre acie si seajllm 10 j,sej. The. Ussace sdrak 55 unq thq nwer newu pue deap teq 10 q: 3 wqj suni wqjloq ehl.,"3,,"cases yqoq in SEJERSWNSW



MARK

THE MESSAGE OF MARK'S GOSPEL is captured in a single verse: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (10:45). Chapter by chapter, the book unfolds the dual focus of Christ's life: service and sacrifice.

Mark portrays Jesus as a Servant on the move, instantly responsive to the will of the Father. By preaching, teaching, and healing, He ministers to the needs of others even to the point of death. After the Resurrection, He commissions His followers to continue His work in His power—servants following in the steps of the perfect Servant.

The arcaic title for this gospel was *Kata Markon*, "According to Mark." The author is best known by his Latin name *Marcus*, but in Jewish circles he was called by his Hebrew name *John*. Acts 12:12, 25 refer to him as "John, whose surname was Mark."

WATCH WORDS

- repentance (change of mind; turning away from sin)—1:4
- sin (missing the mark; a violation of God's will)—3:28 (also 4:12)
- hypocrite (someone whose actions are opposite of his words)—7:6
- leaven (yeast; an invisible, pervasive influence)—8:15
- watch (pay attention; be alert!)—13:33

MARK 16:2

MARK 16:17-18

Twisted

Based on these verses, some churches—primarily in the Appalachian Mountain states in the eastern United States—have included the handling of poisonous snakes and scorpions as part of their worship services. Praying with fire and drinking poison is also practiced by some of these churches, and they teach that God commands such daring faith. Not surprisingly, people have died doing these things. For this reason several states have banned snake handling. Far from winning approval from God, testing God through such practices is sinful (Mt 4:7). Besides the theological error and the obvious physical dangers, there is a textual problem with these practices; verses 17-18 may not be authentic Scripture, for Mark 16:9-20 is not found in the earliest and most accurate NT manuscripts. This problem arises only very rarely in modern Bible translations, and where it does arise it is best that we not base any belief or practice on these verses. Finally, while it is true that Paul survived a snakebite that would normally kill a man (1ac 28:3-9), there is no evidence that churches before the 1900s ever encouraged worshipping with poisonous snakes or drinking poison.

INTRODUCTION TO
MARK

BACKGROUND

The Gospel of Mark was written to a Gentile audience to explain that Jesus was the Son of God. The early church attested that Mark wrote this Gospel. Since Mark's readers probably knew little about Old Testament theology or Jewish traditions, he emphasized different topics than did Matthew, omitting the genealogy of Jesus, fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy, and references to the Jewish law and certain Jewish customs.

After the resurrection of Jesus, Mark (also called John Mark, John, or Marcus) was a companion of Peter and Paul. Peter was Mark's primary source of information on the life of Jesus. In his first epistle, Peter refers to him as "my son" (1 Pt 5:13).

Mark accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). Mark left that trip early, which led to an argument between Paul and Barnabas on the second journey. Mark and Paul later reconciled (2 Tm 4:11).

MESSAGE

Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four Gospels. It includes no nativity narrative

OUTLINE

- I. The Servant Is Announced
 - A. Baptism and temptation
 - B. Calling the disciples
 - C. Healings, teachings, miracles
 - D. The transfiguration
 - E. Healings, teachings, miracles
- III. The Servant Submits
 - A. The final week
 - B. Signs of the end of the age
 - C. Anointing and betrayal
 - D. Jesus on trial
 - E. The crucifixion and burial
- IV. The Servant Rises Again

and only a short resurrection account. Though Mark frequently refers to Jesus as a teacher, the text gives more attention to his miracles than his parables or discourses. Mark highlights eighteen miracles, demonstrating Jesus' power, authority, and compassion. Though the Gospel opens with a declaration that Jesus is "the Son of God" (1:1) and the same testimony is given by a centurion at the crucifixion, in Mark's Gospel Jesus often tells people to keep his life-changing miracles secret.

Mark shows Jesus as a Suffering Servant whose death is his ultimate act of service. At his death the veil in the temple was "rent in twain" (15:38), providing open access to God through the atoning work of Christ.

TIME

Mark's Gospel seems to be the earliest written account of Jesus' life and ministry. The destruction of the temple is mentioned only prophetically (13:2), so it should be dated before A.D. 70, when the prophecy was fulfilled by the Romans. The probable date for this book is A.D. 55-65. Tradition says it was written in Rome, the final home of Peter and Paul.

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1:1-8 | 1:1-8 |
| 1:9-13 | 1:9-13 |
| 1:14-20 | 1:14-20 |
| 1:21-9:1 | 1:21-9:1 |
| 9:2-13 | 9:2-13 |
| 9:14-10:52 | 9:14-10:52 |
| 11:1-12:44 | 11:1-12:44 |
| 13:1-37 | 13:1-37 |
| 14:1-52 | 14:1-52 |
| 14:53-15:15 | 14:53-15:15 |
| 15:16-47 | 15:16-47 |
| 16:1-20 | 16:1-20 |

Jesus Feels Our Pain

Mark 5:21-43

A FATHER'S DESPERATE LOVE for his dying daughter and a woman's chronic suffering set the stage for two of Jesus' most personal miracles.

Jairus, a leader in a local synagogue, was one of many Jewish believers attracted to Jesus. He approached Jesus in the midst of a crowd and made an appeal for his ailing daughter: "Heal her so she can live" (Mark 5:23). Jesus started to go with Jairus, but the crowds interfered, making progress difficult.

In the crowd was another person in desperate need of Jesus' healing touch: a woman who had endured a hemorrhage for 12 years. Though worn down in body, she was determined to touch Jesus' robe, believing that the mere touch of his garment would be enough to heal her.

As it turned out, she was right. She grasped Jesus' robe, and the results were immediate. Her faith in Jesus' healing power was justified—she was healed! Jesus knew immediately that power had gone out from him, and when he sought out the frightened woman, he calmed her with his gentle love. "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well" (5:34).

Meanwhile, Jairus's heart was broken. His daughter had died during the delay. But this was not the end of the story. "Just have faith," said Jesus (5:36). When he got to Jairus's house, he raised the little girl from the dead.

Two wonderful truths about Jesus come to light through these two miracles. First, Jesus does not simply dispense miracles impersonally like a divine vending machine. He reaches out to individuals, attending personally to their needs. Second, Jesus Christ is never too busy to pay special attention to the pain of those who call on him.

Demons and Dogs

Mark 7:24-30

JESUS' ENCOUNTER with a Gentile woman contains two important lessons that will escape us unless we temporarily abandon our 21st-century assumptions and travel back in time to the culture of Jesus' day.

The first lesson involves the woman who approached Jesus claiming that her daughter had been possessed by a demon. Many psychiatrists today, of course, would dismiss her claim as a form of silly superstition. "Didn't belief in demons disappear with burning witches and dowsing for water?" they would sneer.

But unlike these, Jesus saw our world for what it truly is: a combination of physical and spiritual forces that interact in mysterious but powerful ways.

The second lesson concerns Jesus' attitude toward Gentiles and his use of the phrase "throw it to the dogs." Why did Jesus compare Gentiles (non-Jews) with dogs? Was Jesus a racist? Absolutely not! The truth is much more complicated than that.

Jesus' initial calling was to the people of Israel, not to people outside the Jewish faith. But where most Jews would have dismissed out of hand any request from a Gentile woman, Jesus had compassion on her. Instead of brushing her off, Jesus tested her faith. He didn't close the door on her request but simply waited to see if she would aggressively open the door herself.

After seeing the woman's zeal for God, he replied, "Good answer!" He didn't reject her because of her ethnic origin or her gender. He responded to her humble plea by healing her daughter of the demonic possession that had afflicted her. In the end, she got exactly what she had been seeking from a merciful Savior. Today, non-Jews all over the world have hope in this same Savior, who came first to save the Jews but died so that all who believe in him might live.

A Marriage NOT Made in Heaven

Mark 12:18-27

THE SADDUCEES WERE a tricky bunch. They knew that Jesus was familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and they could plainly see he was popular with the masses. How, then, could they trip him up and expose him as a fraud?

The approach they chose was one that has been popular with tricksters for thousands of years: They asked a hypothetical question that was more complicated than it seemed.

Earlier the Pharisees had done something similar, asking a trick question about taxes. Jesus' wise answer was as slick as the question: Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. This time the Sadducees asked Jesus a question about marriage in heaven.

Today, a woman who married seven brothers in succession as each of them died would likely become the subject of a criminal investigation. In Jesus' time, however, it was standard practice for a man to marry his brother's widow as a means of providing economic security for her. But the Sadducees' query wasn't really about marriage at all. Rather, since they didn't believe in the resurrection at all, they were trying to trigger a misstep in Jesus' theology.

Jesus gave a straightforward answer to the question: "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage" (Mark 12:25).

This answer may disappoint people hoping to be reunited with their spouse after death. But Jesus didn't say there wouldn't be a reunion. He merely stated that our relationships in heaven would be different from relationships on earth.

Meanwhile, his main point was expressed in verse 24: "Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God." In other words, the Sadducees were two-time losers. To understand and accept the resurrection they needed a far better grasp of the Bible, and they also needed to appreciate God's omnipotence.

AN INTRODUCTION TO
MARK

This book was written by John Mark, a young man who wrote down the stories Peter told him about Jesus. John Mark described events from

Jesus' life to the people of the Roman Empire. He wanted to show them what Jesus was like. Mark shows us that Jesus was a man of strength and courage who was also gentle and loving. Jesus is our Lord.



Headlines

- PARALYZED MAN WALKS AWAY**
Mark 2:1-12, page 1370
- JESUS' CLOTHES STOP BLEEDING**
Mark 5:21-34, page 1375
- JESUS DIVIDES AND MULTIPLIES**
Mark 8:1-10, page 1379
- JESUS SAYS, "I'LL BE BACK!"**
Mark 9:30-32, page 1382
- A TAXING QUESTION**
Mark 12:13-17, page 1388
- JUDAS TURNS TRAITOR!**
Mark 14, page 1390

WHAT COULD MAKE JESUS ANGRY? SEE MARK 11:15-19.

Heart of a Healer

Jesus was no ordinary religious teacher. His miracles showed he was truly the Son of God. But Jesus' miracles showed more than his power. By healing so many sick and needy people, Jesus showed how much God cares about people.

Some, like the diseased man in Mark 1:40-45, were people no one would even touch! Jesus did more than feel sorry for such people. Jesus reached out and touched them to let them know he cared.

We may not be able to do miracles like Jesus did. But like Jesus, we can show that we care. We can pray for the sick. We can comfort the lonely or hurting. By reaching out to others, we show what Jesus is like.

Children Are Important

Adults sometimes treat children as if they don't matter. Mark 10:13-16 tells about a time when some people brought their little children to see Jesus. The disciples tried to send the children away. They thought Jesus was too busy and too important to be bothered with little kids. But to Jesus, children are just as important as anybody else. He called the children back and blessed them one by one. When you feel that no one pays attention to you, try praying to Jesus. He always has time for you.

What's In It For Me?

- WHAT DID JESUS DO? ...
- JESUS, GOD'S SON, BECAME A HUMAN BEING FOR ME.
- JESUS BROUGHT ME THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION.
- JESUS HAS OFFERED TO FORGIVE MY SINS.
- JESUS SUFFERED PAIN AND INSULTS FOR ME.
- JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE FOR ME.
- JESUS ROSE AGAIN TO GIVE ME ETERNAL LIFE.
- JESUS WILL COME AGAIN TO TAKE ME TO HEAVEN.

HUMOR

Why did Jesus calm the storm?
He didn't want to rock the boat.
(See Mark 4:35-41.)

How did Jesus feed five thousands?
He knew how to stretch a meal.
(See Mark 6:30-44.)