Presenting Peter
Who is this man called Peter?

Wednesday Night Crew Summer Series
Presenting PETER
A study in Mark and the Letters of Peter
Who is this man whom Jesus Loved & Corrected & Taught & Trusted & Rebuked & Gave the Leadership of His Church to?
Come Join Pastor Orleen and the Wednesday Night Crew this Summer beginning 6/9th

Naming:

Name: Simon – Hearing or Obedient

- Aramaic:

Simon [sī-mun] (Σίμων = שמעון, diminutive of שמעואל, "God Has Heard")[1]

Popular Aramaic Name: 9 different Simons in N.T.
4613 Σίμων [*Simon* /**see**·mone/] n pr m. Of Hebrew origin 8095; GK 4981; 75 occurrences; AV translates as "Simon (Peter)" 49 times, "Simon (Zelotes)" four times, "Simon (father of Judas)" four times, "Simon (Magus)" four times, "Simon (the tanner)" four times, "Simon (the Pharisee)" three times, "Simon (of Cyrene)" three times, "Simon (brother of Jesus)" twice, and "Simon (the leper)" twice. **1** Peter was one of the apostles. **2** Simon called Zelotes or the Kanaites. **3** Simon, father of Judas who betrayed Jesus. **4** Simon Magus, the Samaritan wizard. **5** Simon the tanner, Ac. 10. **6** Simon the Pharisee, Luke 7:40–44. **7** Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross of Christ. **8** Simon the cousin of Jesus, the son of Cleophas. **9** Simon the leper, so called to distinguish him from others of the same name. *Additional Information:* Peter = "a rock or stone".[2]

- Greek: (si-moan)

sometimes written as (si-mee-on) as in
Acts 15:14(James, testifying to the fact that Simon had outlined how God called the Israelites out from a Gentile nation.). Uses Simeon (Greek derivative of Simon)

Significance = He was bilingual. He lived in a society that was heavily influenced by Hellenism.

So why does Jesus give Simon a new name UPON MEETING HIM?
Mark 3:16
He appointed the Twelve: To Simon, He gave the name Peter;

- Greek: Peter = Greek for Rock or Stone

- Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (ancestor of a multitude) Genesis 17:5
- Jacob (he who grasps the heel) to Israel (God Strives) Genesis 32:27-30 & Isaiah 62:2; 65:15)

Bedrock:
Base, basis, bottom, cornerstone, footing, foundation, ground, groundwork, keystone, root, underpinning, warp & woof

[1] Losch, R. R. (2008). In *All the People in the Bible: An A–Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture* (p. 560). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
[2] Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

Matthew 7:24-25
24 "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock.25 The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock.
Ephesians 2:20
18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.19 So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

His Name: Simon/Peter/Cephas
In the Synoptics = 75 times
In John – 35 times
Entirety of NT = 181
Saul/Paul = 177

Social Culture:

- Was he just an "ignorant' fisherman?

Acts 4:13
13 When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Galilean Fisherman
Home: Bethsaida – House of the Fishermen (John 1:44)

- Lays near a political border [inside the jurisdiction of Herod Philip but near Herod Antipas (Galilee).]
- Customs office
- Goods passing were subject to duty
- Tolls, tax and duty collectors present
- Along with Military to enforce they were paid

Bethsaida. Town NE of the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida was the home of three of Jesus' disciples: Andrew, Peter, and Philip (Jn 1:44; 12:21). Jesus announced that calamity would come upon Bethsaida because of its unbelief in spite of the mighty works he had done there (Mt 11:21, 22; Lk 10:13). A blind man was healed in Bethsaida (Mk 8:22–27), and nearby over 5,000 people were fed by the miracle of the loaves and fish (Mk 6:34–45; Lk 9:10–17).

Bethsaida is mentioned in several ancient sources, chiefly the writings of Josephus, a 1st-century AD Jewish historian. Two Bethsaidas, one on each side of the Sea of Galilee, were once postulated because the reference in Mark mentions the feeding of the 5,000 as happening across the lake from Bethsaida, whereas in Luke it seems to have taken place near Bethsaida. One solution is that the miracle occurred in the district surrounding Bethsaida, but that the quickest way to reach the city itself was to cross part of the lake. Such an interpretation questions the traditional location of the miracle (et-Tabgha on the west shore, nearer to Capernaum), but is preferable to the proposal of two Bethsaidas so close to each other.

Bethsaida was merely a fishing village until it was enlarged and beautified by Philip the Tetrarch (4 BC–AD 34), son of Herod the Great, after the death of Caesar Augustus. Philip was later buried there, according to Josephus. Bethsaida's name was changed to Julias in honor of Julia, daughter of Augustus. That city was defended by Josephus when he was its military commander during the first Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66–70).

Josephus wrote that Bethsaida was "at the lake of Gennesareth" but "near to the Jordan River." He also said that it was in lower Gaulanitis, a district that touched the northeast quarter of the Sea of Galilee. There is, however, no ancient "tell" or ruin fitting the size or description of the city near either the lake or the river. A suggestion that the small harbor of *el-'Araj* is the site of Bethsaida has little archaeological support, but et-Tell, located about two miles from the lake, shows evidence of extensive Roman occupation and building activity. At present, et-Tell seems to be the most satisfactory candidate for identification of Bethsaida.[3]

He freely associated with Gentiles as friends as well as in authority.
He led the revolution for allowing the Gentiles into the new "Christian" church
(Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:7-14)

Economic Culture:

Fisherman:
Simon Peter & Andrew owned a fishing business in partnership with the Zebedees'
Inherited through their father?

Matthew 4:18-22 The First Disciples

18 As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. 19 "Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for[a] people!" 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.
21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

Luke 5:7-10

7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.
8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!" 9 For he and all those with him were amazed[a] at the catch of fish they took, 10 and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners.
"Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people!"

They employed others (Mark 1:20; Matthew 20:1-16)
[rowing, handling sails, managing the dragnets, sorting fish)

There is no line nor hook.
Drag or Trammel net – Requires a boat and several people to operate.

The technique fishing on the lake involved the seine net and the drag or trammel net. Both were made of linen. The former could be operated by one person standing along the shore or from a boat. The net was cast by hand and had weights attached, causing it to sink and entrap feeding fish (Mt 4:18).

[3] Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Bethsaida. In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 291). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

The drag or trammel net, by contrast, required a boat and several people to operate effectively. After the boat moved offshore into deep water, a large net with floats on the top edge and weights on the bottom was let out and allowed to sink forming a nearly vertical wall from the surface to the lake bottom. The boat was then rowed, parallel to the shore, with the net trailing behind and forming a long wall. The boat was then brought in to shore, and tow lines attached at both ends of the net were used to drag the net ashore with its catch. Depending on the size of the net, this would require several people on both towlines. A variation on this arranged the trammel net in a large barrel formation out in the deep water to encircle any feeding fish. A floating net would then be arranged around the outer edge of the barrel on the surface in order to capture fish that tried to jump over the top of the barrel net. This is known as the verranda method. In addition, one could sail into the middle of the barrel and employ a cast net. In this case, one must dive into the water and remove the fish from the mesh by hand. The description of a miraculous draft of fish in Luke 5:1-11 sounds like the verranda and cast net techniques. The final step was labor intensive, requiring hand sorting to eliminate undesirable and inedible fish (Mt 13:47-50). There was a ready market for fish in the towns and villages of Galilee (Jn 6:9) in addition to the regions of Perea and Judea to the south.
“Life and Witness of Peter”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishing_net

Some types of fishing nets, like seine and trammel, need to be kept hanging vertically in the water by means of floats at the top. Various light "corkwood"-type woods have been used around the world as fishing floats. Floats come in different sizes and shapes. These days they are often brightly coloured so they are easy to see.

- Small floats were usually made of cork, but fishermen in places where cork was not available used other materials, like birchbark in Sweden, Finland, and Russia, as well as the pneumatophores of mangrove apple in Southeast Asia.[35] These materials have now largely been replaced by plastic foam.
- Subsistence fishermen in some areas of Southeast Asia make corks for fishing nets by shaping the pneumatophores of mangrove apple into small floats.[35]
- Across the Indo-Pacific ocean, many Subsistence fishermen utilise discarded flip-flops as floats. This is especially common in the Western Indian Ocean on drag nets made from mosquito nets. [36]
- *Entelea*: The wood was used by Māori for the floats of fishing nets
- Native Hawaiians made fishing net floats from low density wiliwili wood.[37]
- Glass floats were large glass balls for long oceanic nets, now substituted by hard plastic. They are used not only to keep fishing nets afloat, but also for dropline and longline fishing. Often larger floats have marker flags for easier spotting.
- Glass floats are popular collectors’ items. They were once used by fishermen in many parts of the world to keep fishing nets, as well as longlines or droplines afloat.

The area was owned by the Herodians (Herod and the Aristocracy)

- Taxes
- % of the catch
- Rental fees to use their ‘lake’
- Fishing licenses
- Harbor usage fees
- Green tax

- Environmental tax

[Many tax collectors mentioned in Mark 2:15]

Were they prosperous? Middle class? Poor? Was he a man in poverty?

Four to Seven of the Disciples were part of the Galilean Fishing Culture:
John 21:1-3
After this, Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way:
2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of His disciples were together.
3 "I'm going fishing," Simon Peter said to them.
"We're coming with you," they told him. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Philip was from Bethsaida (John 1:44)
Was Levi a tax collector from the area?

Fisherman were considered part of the Tradesmen culture.

Family Culture [Kinship]

Peter being related to Jesus?

Was Peter married?
Mark 1:29-31 **Healings at Capernaum**
29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them.
1 Corinthians 9:5
Don't we have the right to be accompanied by a Christian wife like the other apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas?

Any chance he would be married to one of Zebedee's daughters?
If so, his mother-in-law would be the mother of James and John.

She could be Salome, one of the woman mentioned at the cross
Matthew 27:56 *Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.*
Mark 15:40 *There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.*
Mark 16:1 *When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so they could go and anoint Him.*
John 19:25 *Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*

Was he related to JC? This would make him Jesus' cousin-in-law (married to Jesus' cousin, the sister of James and John)

The Role of Capernaum

Matthew 4:13 *He left Nazareth behind and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.*
Luke 4:31 *Then He went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath.*
Mark 1:29 **Healings at Capernaum** *As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John.*

Peter's House.

- Several families lived together in patriarchal fashion – sharing the same courtyard and the same exit.
- Jesus did not own a home (Matthew 8:20/Luke 9:58 Jesus told him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.")

What did this Family Culture ADD to the nascent, embryonic, incipient Church?

"LORD, where are you going?"
John13:36-38
36 "Lord," Simon Peter said to Him, "where are You going?"
Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later."
37 "Lord," Peter asked, "why can't I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You!"
38 Jesus replied, "Will you lay down your life for Me? I assure you: A rooster will not crow until you have denied Me three times.

"Walking in the Master's Steps" :

Beginning from the End: "The Life and Witness of Peter" by Larry R. Helyer (pages 56-67)

The Upper Room:

Luke 22:8-13
8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us, so we can eat it."

9 "Where do You want us to prepare it?" they asked Him.

10 "Listen," He said to them, "when you've entered the city, a man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him into the house he enters. 11 Tell the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover with My disciples?"' 12 Then he will show you a large, furnished room upstairs. Make the preparations there."

- Why did Jesus just not tell them where?
- What was it like to wait and wonder…did Jesus prearrange this?
- Peter just went and did it. He did it with John. Jesus trusted Peter.

13 So they went and found it just as He had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Luke 22:1-6
The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was drawing near. 2 The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Him to death, because they were afraid of the people. 3 ***Then Satan entered Judas,*** *called Iscariot, who was numbered among the Twelve. 4 He went away and discussed with the chief priests and temple police how he could hand Him over to them. 5 They were glad and agreed to give him silver. 6* ***So he accepted the offer and started looking for a good opportunity to betray Him to them when the crowd was not present.***

John 18:1-2 Jesus Betrayed
18 *After Jesus had said these things, He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and He and His disciples went into it. 2* ***Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with His disciples.***

From: **The Life and Witness of Peter by Larry R. Heyler**
Reflecting Peter's leadership role among the Twelve, Jesus assigns Peter and John the task of preparing a place in the city to observe the Passover meal (Lk 22:8-13).
15 This detail is important for understanding Jesus' later arrest.
16 Peter and John do not know the place where the supper is to be held until after they meet an anonymous man carrying a water jar just inside the city. They are instructed to follow this person to the home of the unnamed host for the supper and there make preparations (Lk 22:9-13). *None of the other apostles knows the location until they arrive later with Jesus. This secrecy allows Jesus to spend time with his apostles, instructing and preparing them for what is to follow without fear of arrest or interruption.* Luke tells us that Judas had already begun "to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present" (Lk 22:6). What Judas does know, however, is the location where they would all sleep that night, namely, the Garden of Gethsemane (Jn 18:2). After Judas leaves the upper room (Jn 13:21-30), he goes to the authorities and tells them where they can arrest Jesus when only his disciples are present. John's Gospel significantly augments the Synoptic accounts of the events leading up to the arrest. Especially meaningful for generations of Christians is the so-called Upper Room Discourse of John 13–17. Two episodes in this section feature the apostle Peter. The first is the famous foot-washing incident. In a deeply moving, symbolic action, Jesus assumes the role of a servant and begins washing the feet of each apostle. But when it is Peter's turn, Peter demurs: "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" (Jn 13:6).17 On being informed that he will understand what it means later (Jn 13:7), he adamantly refuses: "You will never wash my

feet" (Jn 13:8).18 Once again, Peter's distorted concept of the Messiah interferes with his understanding of Jesus' mission. For Peter, it is demeaning for Jesus the Messiah to assume the role of a servant; after all, he is the king of Israel! If there is to be any foot washing, let the apostles wash those of the Master, not vice versa. Jesus' gentle but firm response puts in sharp relief the symbolic meaning of the gesture and its theological significance. Jesus' action speaks of two realities: identification with him and imitation of him. To be the recipient of undeserved grace and mercy is the essence of being a member of the new covenant community. Accordingly, humility is the hallmark of membership and the pattern for mutual relations among family members. "For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:15). Self-giving love authenticates those who belong to Jesus: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). Peter did eventually get the point, as a thoughtful reading of his first letter eloquently testifies. In the letter, the voice of one who experienced self-giving love in action appeals to the reader to replicate the pattern (1 Pet 3:8; 4:8-10; 5:1-6). A second moment of high drama involving Peter occurs in the upper room. After the shocking disclosure that one of them would betray Jesus, Simon Peter signaled to "the one whom Jesus loved" and who "was reclining next to him" (Jn 13:23) to ask Jesus who the betrayer was.19 One may be fairly certain what would have happened had Jesus plainly told Peter who it was (see Jn 18:10). Judas' sudden departure did not arouse suspicion because he was the treasurer and some thought Jesus instructed him either to buy provisions for the feast or make a donation to the poor (Jn 13:29-30). Another unsettling disclosure follows. Jesus informs the apostles that he is leaving them. Simon Peter speaks for all the apostles: "Where are you going?" (Jn 13:36). When told he cannot follow Jesus now but will do so later, Peter inquires: "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you" (Jn 13:37). Then the bombshell: "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times" (Jn 13:38). All four Gospels narrate Peter's denial. Luke, however, adds unique material by informing us that Satan requested permission to test Peter's faithfulness, recalling the book of Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). Jesus prays that Peter's faith will not fail and then, knowing full well he will momentarily stumble, he
predicts Peter's full restoration to leadership (Lk 22:31-34). The Synoptics all narrate Peter's vociferous denial that he would ever deny knowing the Lord (Mk 14:29; Mt 26:33; Lk 22:33). In just a few short hours, Peter's emphatic resolve crumbled. Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane. During the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry, he daily taught the people and engaged in discourse and debate with the religious leaders. Things were clearly heading for a showdown. During the days leading up to the Passover sacrifice and meal, Jesus stayed with the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in the village of Bethany. Bethany is on the eastern slopes of Olivet, out of view from Jerusalem to the west. The religious leaders determined to arrest Jesus and put him to death. However, they had a problem: Jesus was very popular among the thousands of Galilean pilgrims who now flooded the city. Rather than risk a riot by publicly arresting Jesus, they tried to arrest him secretly. Since Jewish tradition specified that Passover night be spent within the environs of greater Jerusalem, and Bethany was beyond these limits, Jesus selects another place to sleep that night.20 The Garden of Gethsemane, just across the Kidron Valley, at the foot of Mount Olivet, had a dense olive grove and cave, providing a safe house within proximity to the Temple Mount. According to the Gospel of John, "Jesus often met there with his disciples" (Jn 18:2). After leaving the upper room, Judas reveals the location of this hideout to the authorities. He not only leads them to the spot but also identifies Jesus for them in the darkness of night by his infamous kiss (Mk 14:44-46). Peter's role in the ensuing events is less than stellar (Mk 14:32-50). Soon after Jesus arrives at the garden with his disciples, he requests the presence of the inner three and withdraws with them for prayer. In deep, inner turmoil, Jesus then withdraws from the three and requests that they watch with him in prayer (Mk 14:33-34). For their part, exhausted and unaware of imminent danger, they fall asleep. In Mark's Gospel, when Jesus returns and finds them asleep, he singles out Peter and reproves him: "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mk 14:37-38). Jesus withdraws once again for prayer. This sequence happens two more times (Mk 14:40-42), anticipating Peter's impending threefold denial. In keeping with Mark's less than exemplary depiction of the disciples, he

informs his readers: “their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to say to him” (Mk 14:40). I think we hear an echo of Peter’s failure to stay awake in his admonition to Christians in Asia Minor: “Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves. . . . Be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. . . . Discipline yourselves, keep alert” (1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). Once Peter realizes what is happening, he springs into action. Wielding a sword—there were only two swords among the entire group and, not surprisingly, he has one of them (Lk 22:38)—Peter lops off the right ear of one of the high priest’s servants, a man named Malchus (Jn 18:10). But instead of a melee breaking out, the Master squelches all resistance by a stern rebuke (“No more of this!” [Lk 22:51; cf. Mt 26:52]). According to John’s Gospel, the rebuke was directed at Peter: “Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (Jn 18:11). In keeping with what we have already seen, Peter has no idea what that cup entails. A suffering Messiah is not on his radar. Then, remarkably, Jesus proceeds to heal the ear of Malchus (Lk 22:51). Once the apostles realize Jesus is not going to resist, they escape into the night. This episode becomes paradigmatic (serving as a model) for Peter’s later understanding of how Christians should react to betrayal, persecution and opposition. What a different approach permeates Peter’s parenesis (exhortation) in his letter to believers under fire than the one he himself displayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (1 Pet 2:21-23; 3:13-17; 4:1, 12-19). Peter in the courtyard of the high priest. Peter and an unnamed disciple, whom I take to be John, double back and follow Jesus and his captors from afar to the home of the high priest (Mk 14:54; Jn 18:15-16). Throughout the early morning hours, however, as the reality of what is happening sinks in, Peter experiences a meltdown while sitting around a fire with the servants of the high priest. He vehemently denies even knowing Jesus. Luke poignantly portrays what happens after the third, decisive denial: “The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly” (Lk 22:61-62).21

Peter’s denial can never be taken back. It happened, and he had to live with the painful memory. But rather than letting his failure cripple him spiritually and emotionally, he used it as a means of building up the flock of God (cf. Paul in 1 Tim 1:12-16). He becomes a living illustration of forgiveness and a second chance. He possesses a degree of compassion and understanding for wavering believers that others, sometimes rather self-righteously, are incapable of showing. We hear a tenderness in Peter’s first epistle that springs out of a bitterly disappointing failure in his own life (1 Pet 5:1-11). Jesus’ prayer for Peter was wonderfully answered: “I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:32). These words prepare Peter for the missionary role he performs in volume two of Dr. Luke’s account of Christian beginnings.22 Believers in Rome and “the exiles of the Dispersion” (1 Pet 1:1) were greatly encouraged and comforted by the story of the big fisherman’s failure and subsequent forgiveness. Jesus appears to Simon on the first day of the week. We do not know where Peter went after his denial (Lk 22:62). He is not mentioned as being present at the cross, in contrast to “the beloved disciple” (Jn 19:26-27). Though perhaps he was among the “great number of people” who followed Jesus to the cross, more likely, he stayed away, especially in light of his overwhelming sense of failure at having denied the Lord.23 All four Gospels tell us that the women who discovered the empty tomb on the first day of the week and heard the angelic announcement about Jesus’ resurrection ran and informed “the eleven and . . . all the rest” (Mk 16:1-8 [the shorter ending of Mark]; Mt 28:8; Lk 24:9; Jn 20:2). Peter was among this group and, in company with “the other disciple” (Jn 20:3), ran to the tomb to see for himself (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:3-10). It may be that the home of John Mark’s mother served as a meeting place for the apostles. This may also have been the residence having a guest room, an upper room, in which the Last Supper was observed and served as a regular meeting place (Acts 1:6, 13-14).24 More important, however, is the early tradition that Jesus appeared to Peter and that this appearance was the first to an apostle (1 Cor 15:5). The gospel tradition is also quite clear that Jesus first appeared to women disciples, Mary Magdalene being the first believer to see the risen Lord (Mk 16:9 [the longer ending of Mark]; Mt 28:8; Jn 20:14-18). It has often been observed how remarkable this fact is given the generally low credibility accorded women as witnesses in Second Temple Judaism.25 This datum argues for the historicity

of the resurrection accounts in that one would hardly suppose the disciples invented the story.26 The fact that the Lord appeared to Peter before any of the rest of the apostles seems to have a twofold significance: it makes clear that Peter was truly forgiven for his denial ("But go, tell his disciples and Peter" [Mk 16:7]; "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" [Lk 24:34, italics added]), and it anticipates his future role as leader of the Jesus movement in which he will "feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-19). A mystery surrounds Jesus' appearance to Peter; we have no narrative account of the circumstances. According to Luke's Gospel, on the first day of the week, Jesus joins two disciples, one named Cleopas (Lk 24:18), on the road to Emmaus and spends a considerable part of the afternoon with them (Lk 24:29). After recognizing Jesus, they hasten back to Jerusalem to inform the disciples. On their arrival, however, the disciples who remained in Jerusalem confirm this report with their own joyous announcement: "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34). But if Jesus was at Emmaus, how could he have appeared to Simon? Surely, the anonymous disciple was not Simon, or Luke would have said so. Raymond Brown conjectures that this is a "stray item of kerygmatic proclamation that Luke has fitted awkwardly into his condensed Gospel sequence."27 But given that several morning hours were available for such an encounter, I hardly see how this counts as a problem. Jesus' appearance to Simon was probably not long after his appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden (Jn 20:11-18). In Jerusalem, the sun rises before 6:00 a.m. in the month of Nisan, and the women set out for the tomb before sunrise (Jn 20:1; Mk 16:2).28 The distance from the upper room to the holy sepulchre is only about half a mile.29 If we allow time for them to walk to the site and then return (hurriedly) to the disciples with their news and have Peter and John run to the tomb and then return, this could all have transpired before 8:00 a.m. This would allow for a period of several hours before Jesus appears at Emmaus (Lk 24:29). Since Jesus is now in his glorified state, distance is no longer a problem! Jesus' Appearance and Commission to Simon The final Gospel episode about Simon occurs back in Galilee, along the lake where his initial call took place (Jn 21). In this respect, his story comes full circle. But as it turns out, this is the beginning of a new phase—in his life as well as that of the Jesus movement. So, what happened on that momentous occasion? Seven disciples (Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two unnamed disciples) are together at the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 21:1). Most likely they are at Capernaum, where Peter and the sons of Zebedee lived. Perhaps Andrew is one of the unnamed disciples (Jn 1:40-41, 44; 6:8; 12:22). Peter suggests they all go fishing. What should we make of this? Many preachers and commentators chastise Peter and the others for slipping back into their old ways and forgetting their commission to preach the gospel. But this goes beyond what can fairly be inferred. Mark and Matthew make it clear that soon after his resurrection, Jesus instructed the apostles to meet him in Galilee (Mk 16:7; Mt 28:7, 10). After completing the Festival of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem, they return to Galilee in anticipation of meeting up with Jesus. This, according to Matthew, is precisely what happened (Mt 28:16, 17). It seems reasonable to assume that before the entire group assembled, there was some down time. What is more natural for these men than going back out on the lake and doing what they have done since their youth? Furthermore, there may have been some pressing financial needs in their families that a good catch could alleviate. As it turns out, they haul in a windfall, assisting them in the transition to full-time ministry.30 At first, however, the fish are not biting. In fact, the entire night nets nothing. As morning light dawns, Jesus suddenly appears along the beach and calls out to the weary fishermen: "Children, you have no fish, have you?" To their dejected report, Jesus orders them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat. When they do so, their nets suddenly ensnare a huge school of fish, including 153 large ones to be exact (Jn 21:11).31 Memories are activated; the story has come full circle (cf. Lk 5:1-11); the "disciple whom Jesus loved" told Peter, "It is the Lord!" (Jn 21:7).32 Peter, who had been working naked, put on his loincloth and swam to shore. The others row the boat in, dragging the net behind. When they all get ashore, Jesus has a fish breakfast, cooked over coals, already prepared for them. Jesus "took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish" (Jn 21:13). Once again, memories are jogged and the disciples remember the miraculous feeding of the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes (Jn 6:1-14). If there were any lingering doubts about how they will manage in the future, this incident vividly reinforces Jesus' earlier assurance: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about

your body, what you will wear . . . your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:25, 32-33). What next follows is the climactic moment of the episode. Jesus asks Peter, three times, if he loves him.33 The thrice-repeated question is not incidental; it is intentional, gently but painfully reminding Peter of his threefold denial. This time Peter does not swear or take an oath; his only recourse is to appeal to Jesus' extraordinary understanding of the human heart: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (Jn 21:17; cf. 1:48; 2:24-25). Each time Peter reaffirms his love for Jesus, Jesus counters by commissioning him: "Feed my lambs" (Jn 21:15), "Tend my sheep" (Jn 21:16), and "Feed my sheep" (Jn 21:17).34 The imagery of shepherd and sheep points to Peter's primary role as pastor of the emerging church. This is a deeply moving moment for Peter. He is forgiven and re-instated as leader. The Master has full confidence in him, and the ensuing history of the early church confirms that confidence was not misplaced. It is no accident that Peter's first epistle employs the same metaphor to remind the elders in the house churches of Asia Minor of their primary responsibility: "I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge" (1 Pet 5:1b-2a). There is another aspect of being a shepherd. In the words of Jesus, "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11). The last recorded conversation in John's Gospel is somber but inspiring: Peter will eventually follow Jesus in death by crucifixion (Jn 21:18-19). This fulfills Peter's earlier, vehement claim: "Lord . . . I will lay down my life for you" (Jn 13:37; cf. Lk 23:33). Jesus' revelation powerfully shapes Peter's consciousness. He knows in advance that he will imitate his Lord through death on a cross. "I know that my death will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things" (2 Pet 1:14-15). Though he lacked the courage the first time he faced this prospect, he will not fail a second time. In the upper room, Peter had asked Jesus, "Lord, where are you going?" To this question, Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward" (Jn 13:36, italics added).35 No wonder the shadow of the cross falls across Peter's theology. Peter then inquires about the destiny of the beloved disciple. Jesus' response is terse and enigmatic: "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" (Jn 21:21-22). An editorial comment implies that a misunderstanding of this saying was already widespread: Jesus did not affirm that the beloved disciple would live until Jesus' glorious return. The point of the saying is that the time of a disciple's death lies entirely in Jesus' hands and prying into such matters should not be a concern. What matters is being a faithful witness and resting in the Lord of life and death. Peter got the point: "Let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good" (1 Pet 4:19). This concludes my sketch of Peter's life as reconstructed from the Gospels. The next phase of Peter's life witnesses an extraordinary growth and expansion of the Jesus movement. In fact, under Peter's pastoral oversight, it begins to transform into a universal faith called Christianity.

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Introduction

Our first question must be: 'Why should we read Mark's gospel at all?' There is the obvious answer that it is there, and that we don't want to miss anything. There is further the now widely accepted fact that Mark's was the first of the New Testament gospels to be written, and was used by Matthew and Luke. But the other New Testament gospels are longer, and each has a more apparent distinctiveness—Matthew with the strongly Jewish background, Luke with his commitment to outcast groups, and John with the great I AM themes. What has Mark to offer by comparison with these?

It used to be thought that Mark was, by contrast, a simple, straightforward account of the story of Jesus, set out chronologically. That approach shouldn't be wholly abandoned, since in broad terms it remains true. It also safeguards some important insights into Mark's intention, not least the way in which he shows the shadow of the cross hanging over the ministry of Jesus from the very beginning.

Yet it is equally clear that Mark shows little interest in close or detailed historical linkage between one story and the next. Nor does he include material vital to a pure historian concerning Jesus' ancestry, birth or childhood. It is not a biography of Jesus. What happened after the resurrection is largely omitted too, if, as will be suggested later, the original version of Mark's gospel ended at Mark 16:8. He is equally free of pressure to provide exact geographical locations. Stories move from scene to scene without explanation. It is clear that something else concerns him much more. This 'something else' is the most important element in the introduction to the reading of the gospel itself. It uncovers the purpose of the writer and the prospect for the reader.

The best way to discover the intention of Mark is to read *his own expression of purpose*, wherever he has tried to make it plain. We can go on to examine *focal points of the teaching contained* in the gospel. What Mark emphasizes should help us to grasp his purpose more clearly. Then there is the task of *reading the stories* Mark tells, trying sympathetically to get into them, and to discern the reason for their presence in the gospel from within the account itself. Questions of *the materials on which Mark drew* are not unimportant, but they must not distract our attention from the texture of the gospel itself. We need to try also to *understand the people* who figure in the stories. They are important for a discovery of what the gospel is about. Other people are important, too. There are *those for whom the gospel was first written*. What we can know or surmise about their attitudes, experiences and needs will help us better to see how Mark's gospel related to them. And *we must not forget ourselves* as we, under the inspiration of the same Spirit who led the writer, seek to be addressed by him through the Scripture as we take it up now.

The task is not a simple one. It has some of the characteristics of solving a mystery! But it is deeply challenging and spiritually rewarding for all who are willing to commit themselves to it. The element of commitment will be constantly present.

Mark's purpose

There is no ambiguity here! The opening thirteen verses set it out with breathtaking clarity.

There is, first, the idea of 'The beginning of the gospel' (1:1). Something new is being launched. Much has been made of Mark's use, for the first time, of gospel as a way of tabulating the good news (which is what 'gospel' means) in a written form. There is something more significant even than that, however. The word 'gospel' had a meaning prior to that of either 'message' or 'written document'. It was originally used to describe 'an epoch-making event'. For example, the birth of the future Emperor Augustus was described as 'gospel', meaning a happening which would change world history. Mark certainly offers gospel as good news. Equally clearly he is presenting it for the first time as a whole account in written form. Perhaps most important of all however he is announcing an event after which the history of the world will never again be the same.

At the centre of this event is Jesus Christ. Mark makes it clear that the person at the heart of his story establishes continuity with God's previous activity in the world, hence the quotations from the Old Testament (1:2–3). There is also a testimony from John the Baptist, seen as the prophet promised in the Old Testament who would precede the coming of the Messiah—God's anointed who delivers Israel (1:4–8). After John, if he is properly regarded in Old Testament terms, the next will be the Messiah.

This is precisely what the voice from heaven, during John's baptism of Jesus, makes clear. The 'You are my Son' of 1:11 provides the closing bracket of the parenthesis which began with 'the Son of God' in 1:1. Mark could hardly be clearer about his view of who Jesus is.

We seem to be on the same track when Mark describes the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He announces nothing less than 'the kingdom of God'. Because it has drawn, or is drawing, near, people must repent and believe the gospel (1:14–15).

This picture of the Messiah sent from God is made even more compelling by the demonstration, beyond words of preaching, in the miracles Jesus performed. For the first eight chapters of this gospel there is a quite breathless presentation of one work of power after another. Mark needs to keep using the word 'immediately' because he is hurrying his readers along from one example of the release of divine energy to the next.

If this gospel was written as some kind of training material for new Christians, or for early Christian evangelists, as some have suggested, then the evidence so far is clear and convincing. The powerful Son of God overcomes all problems brought to him. The kingdom of God is focused on him. Those who come to him in need are taught, healed and delivered. 'We have never seen anything like this!' (2:12), becomes the appropriate response.

It is much too simple a conclusion, however, to assume that Mark's sole intention is to portray Jesus as the powerful Son of God. It is probably not even his main purpose. The high Christology of the first thirteen verses, and the excitement of the miracles in the first eight chapters, are increasingly seen in Mark's gospel as the necessary preliminary to something else.

The first hint about that 'something else' comes at the outset of Jesus' preaching ministry as Mark records it. People are called not just to hear that the kingdom of God is imminent, but to do something about it. They should 'repent and believe the good news'. We are justified in picking up that theme also as the gospel unfolds. Mark is pointing us to a double thrust in his message. It is about *who Jesus is*. It is also about *how people should respond* to Jesus. *These two themes run right through the Gospel of Mark*. They form the basic materials for the telling of the story of Jesus.

Neither of those themes stays the same as the gospel unfolds. What is more, the development of each points us towards a more accurate definition of Mark's purpose.

Who Jesus is

There has been a long tradition of noting the significant change in the tone and direction of Jesus' ministry in Mark's gospel after the accounts of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi 'You are the Christ' (8:27–30) and of the transfiguration of Jesus (9:2–13), where the emphasis is again on the identity of Jesus. 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!' Before this time the concentration is on addressing the crowds, with attention to who Jesus might be. After it there is more concentration on training the disciples, and the focal point about Jesus is not who he is but what he has come to accomplish. This is particularly encapsulated in three repetitive passages (8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34). There is great value in that perception of the way Jesus lovingly helped his disciples towards the truth about himself and his vocation.

What has also to be recognized, however, and what is perhaps even more germane to Mark's purpose in gathering the material together in this way, is that these two stories (at Caesarea Philippi and on the transfiguration mountain) also make a significant change in the presentation of the two key themes so far: namely, who Jesus is, and how we should respond to him.

What is noticeable about the *identity of Jesus* is the striking alteration of strategy in his ministry, without any loss in its authority. From Mark 8 onwards Jesus goes steadily on to the confrontation with the religious authorities, speaking as he goes about the inevitability of suffering, rejection and death for himself. The all-powerful healer and miracle-worker suddenly becomes the one who submits to the fate of crucifixion (8:31, *etc*.), despite protests from Peter about such a course (8:32). He knows the pain that will be involved (14:32–42). He does not even defend himself against false evidence at his trial (14:61).

Yet at no point does Mark give any impression of Jesus being anything other than in total control of the situation. The contrast is not between a time of self-assured success, followed by a period of uncontrollable decline. Jesus walks from one phase to the other with determination and confidence. He predicts what will happen. We are given to feel that even at his trial he knows better than anyone else what is happening. The demonstration of power in the first half of the gospel, and the lowly path to the cross in the second are part of the one process of doing the will of his Father, part of the one way of being who he is and of doing what he came to do. They belong inextricably together. That will be a vital clue as we try to discern Mark's message about Jesus and the kingdom of God.

The same point is made in a different way if we consider the *titles used of Jesus* in Mark's gospel. The two most significant are 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man'.

The background of *Son of God* is in Old Testament passages like 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalms 2:7 and 89:26–27. It is used sometimes of Israel's kings and sometimes of the messianic king who will come to deliver God's people. When the title is used in Mark the reader has to decide in the context which use is the more likely. The accounts of the baptism of Jesus, the transfiguration, and the trial before the Sanhedrin require a messianic interpretation. The comment on the text will argue that the same is true when the demon-possessed cry out and call Jesus 'Son of God'. There may be something more subtle about the use of this title towards the end of the gospel. At the crucifixion of Jesus, the centurion in charge of the soldiers remarks, 'Surely this man was (the/a) Son of God'. Whichever translation we prefer, it may still be that the centurion had a much more earthy view of Jesus when he used such language. But Mark could be making a point which will come out even more clearly below, namely, that those who have eyes to see will perceive that the soldier's words were more meaningful than he knew. If so, then we are very near to the heart of Mark's gospel. But that is to jump ahead.

Alongside the use of Son of God is the more frequent use of *Son of Man*. The background in the Old Testament is again varied. In Psalm 8:4 it refers to humankind. In Daniel 7:1 it refers to a heavenly figure honoured by God. In Ezekiel it is the prophet's way of being addressed by God.

Mark makes clear that this is Jesus' favoured way of describing himself. It occurs in the gospel at a number of points which bring together the two titles or variations of them. In 8:29 Peter affirms Jesus as 'the Christ' (meaning 'the Anointed One', the Messiah). He is praised for the insight. It is a true perception. At once, however, when Jesus speaks of his future, he uses, not Messiah, but Son of Man, and he speaks of the necessary suffering which lies ahead. The title Son of Man, with its much more lowly connotations than Christ, Messiah, Son of God, is being used to interpret the others. When, at his trial, Jesus admits to being 'the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One', he goes on immediately to interpret that confession in terms of the future of 'the Son of Man'. When seeking to make abundantly clear to his disciples where the way forward lay in the work of salvation he had come to achieve, Jesus uses Son of Man language to communicate it (10:45). At the centre of the gospel are the three prophetic statements about his death, each cast in terms of 'Son of Man'.

To jump ahead once more, it is noteworthy that words about Jesus' future are accompanied by sayings about the nature of discipleship in the kingdom. Again we are moving nearer to the central purpose of this gospel, 'like master, like servant'.

We come across the same emphasis by yet another route when considering the use of *kingdom of God* in Mark. Jesus begins by announcing that the kingdom is drawing, or has already drawn, near. The strong implication is that it has drawn near in him. As the story unfolds it becomes even clearer that he is the focal point of that kingdom. His power over disease, nature and demons celebrates the kingdom. He even assures people of divine forgiveness, to the chagrin of the religious leaders (2:1–12). People who show interest in coming to terms with the kingdom of God receive instruction in how to follow Jesus. Perhaps one can put it most accurately by saying that if he is not the king of the kingdom, since God is, he is at least the model of kingship. People can see in him God's way of being king.

If the disciples in any way perceived that, and Peter's affirmation at Caesarea Philippi suggests that they might have done so, then we can understand their horror, expressed in Peter's words straight after his testimony to Jesus, at the thought of Jesus going to death in Jerusalem at the hands of others. His picture of the future did not coincide with theirs, even though he affirmed their view of him as the Christ, the Son of God. It was not that the titles were wrong. He was warning them against the accretions of centuries, whereby the Messiah was seen in terms of the model of kingship developed by earthly kings.

Jesus allowed the use of the traditional titles, but recast their meaning through his own way of being king—certainly being in control and seeing to the heart of things, but also showing lowly submission to his Father, and eventually suffering so that the kingdom might be truly established in the lives of men and women.

We are right, therefore, to see the person and work of Jesus as a focal point of Mark's account. But we should also notice that as the gospel progresses the picture of Jesus changes from the all-powerful conquering centre of divine energy, to the lowly, unresistant, suffering one. What his followers, and the crowds, and his opponents found difficult to see, to which Mark wishes to draw his readers' attention, is that this also was a release of divine energy, far more significant than the power strategy which had preceded it, necessary though it was. We may have to confess that we, too, have difficulty with that, a point of great importance if discipleship means following our Master.

We have now looked at one of the main strands of Mark's account namely, who Jesus is. We have seen that this theme changes across the length of the gospel in two ways. 'Who Jesus is' moves from an emphasis on a miracle

worker to lowly dying servant, though without loss of authority. And 'who Jesus is' becomes, in the second half, the basis for concentrating on 'what Jesus came to do'.

The response to Jesus

Each of these variations of the theme is vital for the other main emphasis to which we now turn. We have already identified it as *how people should respond to Jesus*.

Mark indicates Jesus' stress on this element by recording his earliest exhortation. Because the kingdom of God is at hand, his hearers should 'repent and believe the good news' (1:15). Followed as it is by the series of miracles which Jesus performed, one would expect a welcome response to such an appeal, coming as it does from the person at the centre of the transformations taking place in people's lives. Here too, however, as with the portrayal of the person of Jesus, so with the response people make, there is a development of theme into something different from the initial portrayal.

To the question, 'How do people in Mark's gospel show faith in Jesus?', the answer, to put it bluntly, is that mostly they don't! His family misunderstand and try to deflect him from his course. His own townspeople are almost jealous of him and certainly refuse to accept his claims. The religious leaders are at first cool and later directly antagonistic to the point of seeking his death. The crowd follows, enjoying the teaching and being amazed by it, but in the end they do nothing to save him. Even his disciples, and not least Peter, struggle to understand without ever properly doing so, and get things badly wrong. Some of the women are at least faithful as far as the crucifixion, but even their faith fails them at the very end.

Only two groups seem to give anywhere near the expected response—the desperate and the demoniacs. The latter at least show signs of knowing who Jesus is; but they get no further because recognition leads to resistance, not faith, till they are delivered. The desperate alone are seen to be faithful. They have nowhere else to go, and no future to hope for without a cure. In the main they cast themselves on Jesus and find all that they need, and more.

One explanation of this phenomenon of unbelief is *the sinfulness of the human heart*. Mark makes this plain by drawing particular attention to what it means to follow Jesus. It is likely, as some commentators suggest, that the pattern of concentrating half the gospel on miracles and the other half on the passion is deliberate. The pattern is presented to underline the fact that discipleship is not an unending experience of supernatural power revealed in miracles and powerful teaching. Discipleship is also about lowly, costly obedience to the will of God, in facing the sinfulness and evil of human nature in the world. The disciples particularly illustrate how difficult it is for human beings to accept that side of the life of faith. They seem to enjoy all the wonderful works, but they recoil at the talk of the cost. They argue about who will have the seats of honour, both his and theirs. Peter, whose testimony may well lie behind much of what Mark writes, is a particular example both of the good intentions and of the dismal failures of those who were encountered by Jesus.

So one part of the mystery of unbelief is the power of sin in people's lives. That is not the only, nor even the most important, reason for lack of true discipleship in this gospel, however. There is a second development of the discipleship theme in Mark. Put simply, it is that the people in the story are not able to come to proper discipleship *because they do not yet know the full story*. They are faced by Jesus before his death and resurrection. If true discipleship is, as Jesus keeps on making clear, to carry our cross after him, and to discover God's care for us as we do, then they are bound to be unable to perceive its total meaning before he dies and rises, though those who are desperate enough seem to make the breakthrough.

Evidence that this is part of the intention of the gospel is seen in the way that, from the very beginning, the shadow of the cross hangs over the story. Mark is not alone in describing the baptism of Jesus by John, with all its implications for our understanding of the death of Jesus for our sins. It signifies his association with our sins, since he had none of his own. But in Mark there is also the early saying about not fasting while the bridegroom is with you, but only when the bridegroom 'is taken away'. Then there is the dramatic change in the middle of the gospel, marked by the repeated prophecy of death, with the resurrection also promised. And half the gospel is given to the passion, including the resurrection. When one adds the way that Jesus speaks of discipleship as taking up one's cross and following him, the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the model for discipleship becomes powerfully clear.

It is at this point that we can perceive part of the reason for seeing Mark's gospel as owing something to the theology of Paul. The reality and power of sin in the world is a pillar of Paul's teaching. So is the centrality of the death of Jesus as its solution. Above all, Paul sees the Christian life as a daily experience of dying and rising with

Christ, which is symbolized in baptism. Mark benefitted from Paul as well as from Peter, another reason why this gospel is so basic to the faith of Christians.

From the various roads towards an understanding of the purpose of the Gospel of Mark we have now looked at Mark's own declared intention. We have followed the presentation of the material and the way it develops. Attention has been given especially to major themes of the gospel: the identity and ministry of Jesus and the nature and demands of discipleship. The two have come together in the focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus as properly the climax of all that he came to do and as the secret of true discipleship. As we have covered this ground we have noticed the people in the story and the nature of their varied participation.

Mark's readership … and us

We may now ask about *those for whom the Gospel of Mark was written*. Here we are unavoidably faced with trying to discern from the text itself who they were and why they were the recipients.

Some outside evidence may be inferred from the content. Of the four suggested destinations (Egypt, Antioch, Galilee and Rome) the last would seem still to be the most likely. The people addressed include a majority of Gentiles, since Mark needs to explain Jewish customs. Yet he is not apparently writing to a church torn by Jewish-Gentile power struggles within its life. The spread of the Gospel of Mark, and its use by other gospel writers, suggests that a reliable and strong church stood behind it. The obvious relevance to the 'suffering' element in discipleship hints at a place and time of recent or current persecution. Rome under Nero certainly provides just such a scenario, and is supported by the likelihood that the gospel was written after the death of the apostle Peter, and probably of Paul too. Some time after AD 64 is indicated, and before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 which is still in the future in the gospel, taking the prophetic element of the gospel seriously.

If Rome is the place then the readership is a varied group. The need for some exposition of suffering in the Christian life would be important. Was there also a tendency in such circumstances to want a particularly powerful form of Christianity in order to counter, at a supernatural level, the persecution being experienced at the natural level? Or was there a view of Jesus which so emphasized his divine nature and power that awareness of his humanity and understanding of human need was deficient? Were so many Christians wondering why, with a Saviour who was Son of God, they should be suffering at all? The answers cannot reach any degree of certainty, but somewhere in that set of suggestions there is probably a fair account of some of the questions being asked.

In response Mark assures them of a strong and lowly Jesus, whose very suffering became an avenue of salvation (a point powerfully made by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:36–39).

The view of authorship taken here is that the writer was John Mark, to whom reference is found in Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37–39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24. He was evidently close to Peter and, after an initial failure, travelled with Paul. His pedigree is therefore strong!

It is clear that Mark did not try to present a chronological biography of Jesus, as a modern historian might. He had at his disposal material from spoken and written sources, and personal testimony from the apostle Peter. All this he sifted and presented in a way which enabled him to communicate those things he felt called to make plain. Such a view of the origin of this gospel in no sense diminishes the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring this part of Holy Scripture. It adds to the sense of purpose behind the gospel, and it acknowledges the vital part of the author. It lifts us healthily clear of views of inspiration which require nothing of the author but the capacity to write words received from heaven. At the other end of the spectrum, it delivers us from views of Mark stringing together isolated segments of tradition with very little purpose other than to include as many as possible. Above all, it concentrates our attention on the text itself, as speaking for itself. There is a mystery about the divine inspiration of human effort, and we do well to acknowledge it and receive Holy Scripture as it is, from the hand of God through the minds of human beings committed to be channels of his will.

How are we to receive and read Mark's gospel? Much in the cultural detail of the first century is strange to us. We need to work hard at understanding it and its significance for those described in the gospel, and for those to whom it first came. We must be conscious, too, of the traditions and thought forms and experiences which shape our perceptions as we read the Bible. These also need to come under the judgment of God the Spirit as we read. But at depth, as the Spirit who inspires the writer inspires the reader, we may perceive fundamental themes which challenge us as directly as they did the earliest readers. Such topics as the nature of the kingdom of God and our part in it; the identity and authority of Jesus our Lord; the centrality of his death and resurrection; their implications for our discipleship; and our own vision of and commitment to mission—all these strand out as part of Mark's

contribution to our spirituality and service. His direct and deep engagement with them, and with us, can enrich us immensely.[4]

In fact, surprisingly little personal information exists about any of the central figures of the earliest church. We do not know, for example, how many of Jesus' twelve principal disciples were married or the identities of any of their wives. In the book of Acts, our principal source of information, neither James the Lord's brother nor Peter are referred to as being married. Only a chance mention in the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and a story in the Gospel of Mark tells us that they were.[13] Nor do we know what role the disciples' families played in the emerging Christian community.

This lack of information on family relationships, usually noted only when scholars go searching for information on the role of women in the ministry of Jesus and in the earliest church, is even more remarkable given the crucial role that kinship played in first-century Mediterranean society. Kinship was one of the two basic institutions in antiquity (the other being politics). As New Testament scholar K. C. Hanson writes, "virtually no social relationship, institution, or value set was untouched by the family and its concerns."[15] Kinship ties interacted with wealth, occupation, politics, and religion, and most importantly in ancient Mediterranean culture, ascribed honor was derived from one's family. As I will show in this book, kinship played a key role in the conflict over leadership in the early church and between the church and Jerusalem's high-priestly hierarchy.[5]

MARK, GOSPEL OF Second book of the NT and shortest account of the ministry of Jesus.
Author The title "according to Mark" was added to this Gospel by scribes who produced the earliest copies of the Gospel. According to early church tradition Mark recorded and arranged the "memories" of Peter, thereby producing a Gospel based on apostolic witness. Although Mark was a common Roman name, the Gospel writer is probably John Mark. Mark became an important assistant for both Paul and Peter, preaching the good news to Gentiles and preserving the gospel message for later Christians. See *Mark, John*.
Readers Mark wrote his Gospel for Gentile Christians. He explains Jewish customs in detail for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with Judaism (7:3–4; 12:18). Mark translated several Aramaic expressions for a Greek-speaking audience (5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22). Gentiles would have especially appreciated Mark's interpretation of the saying of Jesus that declared all foods clean (7:19; cp. Matt. 15:17–20). Mark's Gentile audience may explain his omission of the genealogy of Jesus. Perhaps these Gentile readers were Roman Christians. Mark's Gospel contains many terms borrowed from Latin and written in Greek; consider "taking counsel" (3:6), "Legion" (5:9), "tribute" (12:14), "scourged" (15:15).

Early Christian tradition placed Mark in Rome preserving the words of Peter for Roman Christians shortly before the apostle's death (1 Pet. 5:13). According to tradition Peter was martyred in Rome during the Neronian persecution, which would place the date of Mark's Gospel about A.D. 64 to 68. Such a hostile environment motivated Mark to couch his account of the life of Jesus in terms that would comfort Christians suffering for their faith. The theme of persecution dominates the Gospel of Mark (Mark 10:30; cp. Matt. 19:29; Luke 18:29). Jesus' messianic suffering is emphasized to inspire Christians to follow the same path of servanthood (10:42–45). Roman Christians would be encouraged knowing that Jesus anticipated that "everyone will be salted with fire" (9:49 HCSB; 13:9–13). Dying for the gospel would be equivalent to dying for Jesus (8:35; Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24).
Style Mark has been called the "Gospel of action." One of his favorite words in telling the story of Jesus is "immediately." Jesus is constantly on the move. In one day, according to Mark, Jesus instructed the multitudes by the sea, traveled across the sea of Galilee and calmed the storm, healed the Gerasene demoniac, crossed the sea again, healed the woman with a hemorrhage, and raised a little girl from the dead (4:1–6:1). Mark apparently had more interest in the work of Jesus than in the words of Jesus. Thus he omitted the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught as He moved from region to region, using the circumstances of His travel as valuable lessons for His disciples (8:14–21). Geographical references serve only to trace the expansive parameters of His ministry. According to Mark's "motion" picture, Jesus moved quickly—as if He were a man whose days were numbered.

[4] English, D. (1992). *The message of Mark: the mystery of faith* (pp. 14–24). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
[5] Sivertsen, B. J. (2010). *The three pillars: how family politics shaped the earliest church and the gospel of mark*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock.

Good storytellers captivate audiences by using everyday language that provokes strong imagery. Mark's language is simple, direct, and common. His sometimes rough and unrefined Greek grammar facilitates his ability to communicate the gospel message by using familiar patterns of speech. When Mark told a story, he possessed a flair for the dramatic and an eye for detail. His description of events was replete with vivid images which evoke a variety of emotions in just one story (5:1–20; cp. Matt. 8:28–34). In the graphic account of Jesus' encounter with the demoniac boy, only Mark recorded the child's convulsion which caused him to fall on the ground and roll "around, foaming at the mouth" (9:20, 26 HCSB). Furthermore, Mark preserved Jesus' interrogation of the father as to the severity of the boy's condition and the depth of his own faith (9:21–24). Finally, only Mark recorded the actual words of Jesus' rebuke as well as the reaction of the crowd to the boy's lifeless body: "He's dead!" (9:25–26 HCSB).

Mark's concern for detail, sometimes to the point of redundancy (Mark 6:49–50 HCSB, "when they saw Him … because they all saw Him … He spoke to them and said"), demonstrates his reliance upon eyewitness testimony. Mark was careful to relate not only the words of Jesus but also His gestures, attitudes, and emotions (3:5; 6:34; 7:34; 8:12; 11:16). In the same fashion Mark recorded the reaction of the crowds, facial expressions of conversationalists, conclusions drawn by the disciples, and private remarks made by opponents (5:40; 10:22, 32, 41; 11:31; 14:40). Only an observant insider would relate stories with such pertinent information. Furthermore, the prominent role of Peter in the narrative (Peter remembered, 11:21; also 1:36; 14:37; 16:7) confirms early Christian tradition that Mark relied upon the recollections of the apostle when he produced "the gospel of Jesus Christ" (1:1).

Form Upon first reading the Gospel of Mark appears to be an arbitrary collection of stories about Jesus. After John the Baptist fulfilled his role as the forerunner to the Messiah (in a very brief appearance), Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee by preaching the "gospel of God" and collecting a few disciples (1:14–20). With these necessary introductions completed, Mark presented the life of Jesus by following a simple geographical scheme: from Galilee to Judea. The popular Galilean ministry of Jesus is recorded in chapters 1–9. The brief Judean ministry (10:1–31) serves primarily as a prelude to the approaching passion of Jesus. Over one-third of Mark's Gospel is devoted to describing the events of the last week in the life of Jesus (10:32–15:47). The story ends as abruptly as it began; Mark finished his Gospel account with the angelic announcement of the resurrection of Jesus the Nazarene (the earliest Greek manuscripts of the NT end Mark's Gospel at 16:8). Mark's chronology of Jesus leaves the reader with the impression that his only purpose in writing a Gospel was to preserve the oral tradition in written form. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent to the observant reader that Mark arranged the material in a more sophisticated fashion to convey truth on a higher level.

The stories of the cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig tree appear as isolated incidents in Matthew's Gospel, connected by chronological sequence (Matt. 21:12–22). In the Gospel of Mark, on the other hand, these two stories are interwoven to aid the reader in interpreting the parabolic activity of Jesus. Along the way to Jerusalem, Jesus indicated to His disciples that He was hungry and approached a fig tree to harvest its fruit. The tree was full of leaves, giving every indication of life, but it possessed no fruit. Mark recorded that Jesus "answered" the tree and announced, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" (11:14 HCSB). The disciples, who "heard it," must have been puzzled by Jesus' actions, for Mark recorded that "it was not the season for figs" (11:13 HCSB). Without explanation Jesus led His disciples into Jerusalem where He cleansed the temple. From a distance the daily activity of the temple gave every indication of spiritual life, but upon closer inspection Jesus found no spiritual fruit. Israel, the fig tree, was supposed to provide "a house of prayer for all nations" (11:17 HCSB). Instead, the religious leaders turned the devotion of worshipers into financial profit (11:15, 17). In essence, when Jesus "answered" the fig tree, he pronounced a curse on the Jewish religious leadership and demonstrated His divine displeasure by cleansing the temple. It should have come as no surprise, then, for Peter and the disciples, during their return trip, to find the cursed fig tree dead (11:21).

Mark's Gospel is not just a collection of stories about Jesus; his book tells the story of Jesus as a whole. Mark developed the unifying "plot" of the Gospel story by unveiling the hidden identity of Jesus. The messianic secret is part of the mystery of the kingdom of God, understood only by insiders—"to those outside, everything comes in parables" (4:11, 33–34 HCSB). Throughout Mark's Gospel Jesus sought to conceal His true identity. Jesus silenced demonic profession because they knew Him (1:34). He ordered those who witnessed miracles not to tell anyone what they saw, although silence was only a remote possibility (7:36). Even after the climactic profession of faith, when the disciples revealed that they had learned the secret ("You are the Messiah!"), Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about Him (8:30). Mark used the messianic secret to organize his story around the progressive revelation

of Christ and the faith pilgrimage of His disciples. Even Gentiles demonstrated that they belonged to the community of faith when they understood Jesus' parables and recognized Him as the Christ.

The literary form of Mark's Gospel is no accident. The arrangement of the gospel material gives every indication that a skilled literary craftsman has been at work. For example, Mark found irony in pairing the story of the disciples questioning the identity of Jesus after the stilling of the storm, "Who then is this?" (4:41 HCSB) with the account of the demons who are quick to shout, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God" (5:7). When the disciples finally offered their superlative confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi (8:27–30), they failed to understand the full implications of Jesus' messiahship (8:31–38). Mark depicted their partial spiritual vision by recording the unique miracle of Jesus healing the blind man in two stages (8:22–25). Although the disciples saw the messianic secret, their vision would not be focused until the resurrection. Beyond doubt, Mark's portrait of Jesus is a "painting" which can be appreciated both up close (style) and from a distance (form).

Message Jesus' favorite self-designation, especially in Mark, was "Son of Man." In Mark's Gospel Jesus is identified with humanity in title and in kind. Mark portrayed Jesus as a Man possessing every human emotion. Moved by compassion, anger, frustration, mercy, and sorrow (1:41; 3:5; 8:17; 14:6, 33), Jesus ministered among His own kind. Mark offered the full humanity of Jesus without reservation (3:21; 4:38; 6:3–6; 13:32); from the beginning of His earthly ministry (2:20) Jesus lived in the ominous shadow of the cross until the agony of Gethsemane almost overwhelmed Him (14:34). However, Mark penned a Gospel which was also designed to evoke faith in the deity of Jesus: the divine voice announced it from heaven, demons screamed it in agony, Peter professed it boldly, even a Roman soldier acknowledged, "This man really was God's Son!" (15:39 HCSB).

Outline

I. God Has Acted for His People by Sending His Son as His Agent (1:1–13).
II. The Appearance of God's Son as His Agent Signaled the Presence of the Kingdom (1:14–45).
III. The Old Order Failed to Recognize God's Agent or the Presence of the Kingdom (2:1–3:6).
IV. The Presence of God's Agent Provoked a Reaction from Others (3:7–6:6).
V. God's Agent Extended the Blessings of the Kingdom despite Opposition (6:7–8:30).
VI. God's Agent Exhibited the Kingdom Paradox: Suffering Precedes Vindication (8:31–10:52).
VII. The Presence of God's Agent in Jerusalem Intensified the Conflict between the Old Order and the Kingdom (11:1–12:44).
VIII. God's Agent Foresaw Impending Distress for Jerusalem and the Old Order (13:1–37).
IX. The Old Order Was Unified in Its Action against God's Agent (14:1–15:47).
X. The Resurrection of God's Agent Validated the Presence of the Kingdom (16:1–8).
XI. A Later Appendix: Proof of the Vindication of God's Agent (16:9–20).

Rodney Reeves

MARK, JOHN Author of the Second Gospel and an early missionary leader. John Mark, as Luke calls him in Acts, was the son of Mary, in whose house the church was meeting when Peter was miraculously freed from prison in Acts 12. Commonly called by his Greek name, Mark, in the NT, John was probably his Jewish name. Mark was a Jew, Barnabas' cousin (Col. 4:10), and a companion of Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. On the first missionary journey Mark ministered with the group on Cyprus, the home territory of Barnabas, and also a place with family connections for Mark. However, when they left for Pamphylia, Mark returned to Jerusalem.

Mark was the cause of the split between Paul and Barnabas when Mark's participation in the second missionary journey was debated (Acts 15:39). Barnabas sided with his cousin, while Paul refused to take Mark since he had left them on the first journey. Later, however, Paul indicated that Mark was with him (in Rome likely) as Paul sent letters to the Colossians (Col. 4:10) and Philemon (Philem. 24). Mark was also summoned to be with Paul in 2 Tim. 4:11. Whatever rift existed earlier was healed sometime and their friendship renewed. Mark is closely related to Peter. In 1 Pet. 5:13 Peter refers to Mark, his "son," as being with him in Rome (Babylon). Early church tradition supports the strong association between Peter and Mark. In the early second century, Papias mentioned that Mark was Peter's interpreter. Other early church figures associate Mark with Peter and note that the Gospel of Mark was based upon Peter's preaching.

Bill Warren[6]

How the Jews are presented in Mark:

[6] Reeves, R. (2003). Mark, Gospel Of. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 1077–1082). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Mark

The term Ἰουδαῖος (*Ioudaios*) appears seven times in Mark, five of which are found in the phrase "King of the Jews" (Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26). One occurrence is the singular form Ἰουδαία, *Ioudaia*; Mark 1:5), referring to the country of Judaea. In the only time Ἰουδαῖος (*Ioudaios*) refers to "the Jews" in a general sense in Mark, it is not in a polemical nature; instead, it is a reference to the Jewish practice of washing their hands before eating (Mark 7:3). In general, Mark's picture of Jews is consistent: the people respond to Jesus' teaching enthusiastically (Mark 1:22, 27), and large crowds come to hear Him (Mark 2:2; 6:33–34). Furthermore, they marvel at Jesus' miracles (Mark 4:41; 7:37) and bring the sick to Him for healing (Mark 6:54–56). Mark's depiction of the Jewish leaders, however, is vastly different. Wilson states, "Almost without exception they tangle with Jesus, challenge his authority, and plot to kill him" (Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 38).

Thus, Mark's antagonism is directed toward the leaders of the Jews, not against the Jews in a collective or general sense. For example, in contrast to Matthew's parable of the tenants, the parable in Mark is aimed directly at "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders" (Mark 11:27). Additionally, in Mark's Passion Narrative, the chief priests were responsible for provoking the crowd to call for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:11). According to Malbon, "The author of Mark seems to have taken care to portray Jesus' opponents as the Jewish leaders, not all the Jewish people—especially in contrast to the authors of Matthew and John" (Malbon, "Jewish Leaders," 279).[7]

You'll Find It in Mark

John the Baptist preaches a message of repentance.	**Mark 1:1–15**
Jesus calls Simon Peter and other fishermen to follow him.	**Mark 1:16–20**
Jesus speaks the parable of the sower.	**Mark 4:1–20**
Jesus heals a woman with a hemorrhage, and raises a girl from the dead.	**Mark 5:21–43**
Jesus feeds the 4, 000.	**Mark 8:1–10**
Jesus evicts the money changers from the temple.	**Mark 11:15–19**
Jesus praises a widow for putting two mites into the temple treasury.	**Mark 12:41–44**
Peter claims that he will not deny Christ—but does anyway.	**Mark 14:27–31, 66–72**
Jesus is condemned to death and crucified.	**Mark 15:1–26**
Jesus rises from the dead.	**Mark 16:1–8**

Author and Setting

The vivid, direct style of Mark's Gospel and its attention to detail provide a sense of authenticity and immediacy that could come only from an eyewitness to the events recorded. But Mark himself was probably not a participant in the story.

The book never mentions the name of its author. However, in about A.D. 125, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, stated that Mark created this Gospel by writing down Peter's recollections of Jesus' life. Subsequent tradition agrees with Papias in ascribing the book to Mark.

[7] Chambers, C. (2016). Jews in the New Testament. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

So possibly what we have here are the memoirs of Peter. Ministering to Christians in Rome, he may have recalled his memories of Jesus in order to create a Gospel for Christians under persecution by Nero, emperor of Rome (A.D. 54–68). If so, it's no wonder that the narrative reads so easily: as a fisherman, Peter was probably quite skilled in holding an audience with a good story.

Fortunately, Mark wrote it all down. Mark had not followed Jesus during His lifetime—though he may have been present at the arrest of Jesus, leaving an "anonymous signature" in the story of a young man who fled naked (Mark 14:51–52). Mark was a native of Jerusalem, and the church often met for prayer at his mother's house (Acts 12:12). Thanks to his cousin Barnabas (Col. 4:10), he was mentored in the faith (Acts 15:37–39) and became a valued associate of Paul (2 Tim. 4:11) and Peter (1 Pet. 5:13). Mark probably traveled with Peter to Rome, where tradition holds that he composed his Gospel in the early 60s.[8]

Why do some people say that Mark was the first Gospel written?

The theory that Mark's Gospel was the first to be written is based upon several arguments. Most of the material contained in Mark (about 93%) can be found in Matthew and Luke. It is easier for some to believe that Matthew and Luke expanded Mark rather than that Mark abbreviated Matthew and Luke.

Sometimes Matthew and Luke agree with Mark in the actual words used, but they never agree with each other when differing from Mark. This would seem to prove that both Matthew and Luke depended upon Mark to get their information.

The order of events in Mark seems to be original. Wherever Matthew's order differs from Mark, the Gospel of Luke supports Mark's order, and whenever Luke differs from Mark's order, Matthew agrees with Mark. This shows that Mark was composed first, and that Matthew and Luke are merely following his order, seeing that they never agree with each other against Mark.

Mark also reveals a primitive nature when compared to the other two Gospels. Mark, for example, uses the word *kurie* (Lord) only one time while Matthew employs it nineteen times and Luke sixteen times. This fact indicates an attitude of reverence which eventually developed in the later Gospels.

The above are some of the arguments that scholars use to suggest that Mark was composed first. However, upon closer inspection, these reasons are not as strong as some might think.

It is possible that Mark condensed his Gospel for reasons beyond our knowledge. The material which the Gospels have in common might be a result of a common oral tradition. It is entirely possible that Mark never did see Matthew or Luke before he wrote his Gospel, and it is also conceivable that none of the Gospel writers saw any of the other three writings before their works were composed.

As for Matthew and Luke never agreeing word for word against Mark in parallel passages, there can be found passages where they agree where Mark contains something different, showing non-dependence on Mark.

The idea of Mark's order being original is not as obvious as some imply. Mark may have worked from Matthew and Luke, following their order when the two agreed, but deciding to follow one or the other when they did not appear to agree.

The matter of *kurie* (Lord) being a reverential term is open to question, since Matthew uses it seven times when referring to a mere man (13:27; 21:29; 25:11, 20, 22, 24; 27:63), showing it was not a term used only for God.

This demonstrates that a chronology cannot be erected by the use or non-use of this term. To this can be added the fact that the early Church, which was closer to the situation, unanimously opted for the priority of Matthew's composition, there being no evidence that Mark wrote first.

Moreover, there are some telling reasons against the theory of Markan priority. Matthew was an eyewitness. It seems unnecessary to assume that he depended upon Mark, who was not an eyewitness, to gather his information on the life of Christ, including Matthew's own conversion!

[8] *Word in life study Bible*. (1996). (electronic ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

The theory also fails to explain why Luke omitted any mention of Mark 6:45–8:26 if he used Mark as a source. This is a very important section, and the easiest solution is to surmise that Luke did not have Mark's Gospel before him while composing his work.

The two-source theory does not adequately explain why Matthew and Luke agree in certain sections where Mark has something else.

The theory of the priority of Mark is anything but an established fact.

Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3rd rev. ed., Inter-Varsity Press, 1970
Simon Kistemaker, *The Gospels in Current Study*, Baker Book House, 1972
A.H. McNeile, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1953
Merrill Tenney, *The Genius of the Gospels*, Eerdmans, 1951

What is Q?

One of the most popular theories in New Testament study is that the Gospel of Mark was written first, and that both Matthew and Luke were based upon Mark and another source called "Q" which no longer exists. "Q" comes from the German word "quelle" meaning source, and it supposedly contained matters in Matthew and Luke that are not found in Mark.

The idea of a "Q" source is a relatively recent development in New Testament study. In modern times, Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been referred to as the "synoptic Gospels," since they take a similar view of the life of Christ.

Many presuppose that the extensive agreements between these Gospels indicate some type of literary collaboration, and for the last century New Testament scholars have been attempting to explain this phenomenon. One factor that complicates matters is that there are many instances in which one Gospel describes matters differently from either one or both of the other Gospels.

The quest for a solution as to how these similarities and dissimilarities occurred is known as the "synoptic problem," while "source criticism" is the field of study devoted to solving the problem.

The early church was not too concerned with this problem, assuming that the Gospel writers recorded their information from personal memory and firsthand reports as opposed to the need of copying each other or a common written source.

Matthew was the first Gospel to have been composed, according to the testimony of Eusebius, an early church writer. Eusebius relates that Matthew wrote down his Gospel as he was about to leave the land of Palestine. His account was largely drawn from his own experience as a disciple of Christ.

Clement of Alexandria says that Mark based his Gospel on the reminiscence of Peter, while Luke testifies that his work was drawn from a number of sources (Luke 1:1–4).

Even though there was almost universal testimony among the early scholars as to the priority of Matthew, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the theory of Mark being written first, or "Markan priority." Most books written on the synoptic problem today assert this theory. Thus the need arises for the two-source theory, Mark and "Q," to explain the material found in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark.

There is good reason to question this theory that Matthew and Luke used "Q" in the Gospel of Mark as sources. First, no such document "Q" has ever been found. Second, there is no agreement of exactly what sayings should be in "Q." Third, there is no historical testimony for the existence of a Q-type document by historian or writer. And fourth, as pointed out, the weight of historical evidence does not point to Mark as being the first Gospel written, which is imperative for this theory.

William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis*, Dillsboro, Western North Carolina Press, 1976
George Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*, Eerdmans, 1967
Simon Kistemaker, *The Gospels in Current Study*, Baker, 1972
Ned B. Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*, Eerdmans, 1963
Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3rd rev. ed., Inter-Varsity Press, 1970[9]

Mark

Mark's use of the Old Testament centers primarily on:

[9] McDowell, J., & Stewart, D. D. (1993). *Answers to tough questions*. Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

- The ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2–3; compare Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3)
- The Jews' rejection of Jesus' message and ministry (Mark 4:12; compare Isa 6:9–10; 7:6–7; 29:13)
- Jesus' being rejected and suffering (Mark 12:1; compare Isa 5:1–2; 12:10–11; Psa 118:22–23; 15:36; Psa 22:1)

While Mark was probably writing to a Gentile Roman audience, he grounds the key elements of the gospel firmly in the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus speaks all but one (the first) of the Old Testament citations. Jesus frequently introduces citations using the term γέγραπται (*gegraptai*, "it is written"; Mark 1:2–3; 7:6; 9:11–13; 11:17; 14:27; see also 7:10; 12:10, 26, 36), and identifies Moses (Mark 7:10) and David (Mark 12:36) as authors of Scripture. Jesus' use of the Old Testament in Mark communicates that He adheres to the Law, but that He—the new lawgiver—is superior to Moses; His pronouncements and interpretations are authoritative (Hooker, "Mark," 220–30).

In the opening citation, Mark combines quotations from Malachi and Isaiah (see also Exod 23:20), but only credits Isaiah (Mark 1:2–3; compare Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4–6). Through this quotation, Mark identifies Malachi's messenger as Isaiah's voice in the wilderness, asserting that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of both figures. Thus, at the very outset of his Gospel, Mark nurtures the expectation of a new exodus and a new return from exile, which is accomplished through the ministries of the Baptist and Jesus. Isaiah's reference to "the way" of the Lord also prepares for the later presentation of the way Jesus must travel to the cross and the way He calls His followers to traverse as well.

In contrast to Matthew, Mark does not place strategic weight on the fulfillment motif (only 14:49 uses the word πληρωθῇ, *plērōthē*). Mark 1:2–3 (citing Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3) alludes to the fulfillment motif; Hooker argues, "his story is good news precisely because it is the fulfillment of scripture" (Hooker, "Mark," 220). Most of Mark's Old Testament references are taken from the LXX, though some resemble the MT (Matt 6:34; 8:18; 11:9–10). Over half of Mark's references are to the Prophets, particularly Isaiah (especially Isa 40–66) and Daniel. Roughly a quarter each is to the Pentateuch and the Psalms. Mark's cites four psalms: Psa 2 (Mark 1:11; 9:7); Psa 22 (Mark 15:24, 29, 34); Psa 110 (Mark 12:36; 14:62); and Psa 118 (Mark 8:31; 11:9–10; 12:10–11). Virtually all of these references deal with the prospect of death in conjunction with the suffering of the Davidic Messiah.

All of the Old Testament quotations that Mark includes are also found in Matthew, although Luke omits several because of his selectivity and redactional activity. This likely supports Markan priority.[10]

The Ending of Mark's Gospel

Modern editions and translations of the New Testament take note of several important variations at the end of the Gospel of Mark. The manuscripts agree up to the point where the three women who received the announcement of Jesus' resurrection left the tomb but said nothing to anyone because they were afraid (Mark 16:8). The two oldest surviving Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark both end at this point. There is wide agreement that this conclusion represents the oldest recoverable form of the Gospel of Mark.

The majority of medieval manuscripts continue with Mark 16:9–20, now known as "the longer ending." These verses report three resurrection appearances, Jesus' instructions to preach the gospel, and a promise that spiritual signs will accompany faith. It seems that the longer ending originated in the first half of the second century, probably as a summary of gospel traditions. The author was apparently familiar with the other New Testament Gospels and the book of Acts. Adding these verses to the Gospel of Mark provided the book with a conclusion closer to those of the other Gospels.

The best evidence that the Gospel of Mark circulated from an early time without any additional ending is to be found in the New Testament itself. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke, whose authors are thought to have relied on Mark, diverge after Mark 16:8. The secondary nature of the longer ending is further confirmed by its distinctive vocabulary compared to the rest of the Gospel of Mark. Both Eusebius in the early fourth century and Jerome in the early fifth century recognized the problem of the varied endings in copies of the Gospel of Mark. Both church fathers accepted Mark 16:8 as the original conclusion of the Gospel based on the oldest manuscripts they could find. Many of the

[10] Köstenberger, A. J. (2016). New Testament Use of the Old Testament, Survey. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

medieval manuscripts mark the longer ending with signs or marginal notes to indicate the verses were not present in other copies of Mark.

It has been argued that it is impossible that the Gospel was meant to end at Mark 16:8, on a note of fear and silence. There is speculation that the author failed to finish the text or that the final pages of the original were somehow lost before it was widely copied. However, recent studies of literary patterns in Mark's Gospel suggest that Mark 16:8 is an appropriate ending for a book about the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1). The Gospel of Mark ends just at the point when it becomes possible to fully understand the assertion that Jesus is the Messiah who suffered, died, was raised from the dead, and will return as the Son of Man. Jesus privately gave the disciples this gospel message in the central section of Mark (Mark 8:29–31; 9:31; 10:32–33)—this message resembles Paul's summary of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3–7). After the figure in white at the tomb announces this "good news" (Mark 16:6–7), no further narrative is needed.

The Gospel of Mark was probably written at a time when many of the original followers of Jesus had died. Given this context, it appears Mark's Gospel seeks to establish its interpretation of the traditions of Jesus through a narrative that stands on its own authority. In other words, it does not rely on the testimony of the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection; rather, it looks forward. The abrupt conclusion of Mark at Mark 16:8 locates the audience within a larger narrative that will only find its conclusion when the Son of Man returns to gather His own (Mark 13:26–27). Until that time, those who read or hear Mark's Gospel know everything necessary to understand and preach the gospel of Jesus.

The longer ending of Mark was included in the text established by Erasmus and other Renaissance scholars, often referred to as "the received text." This version served as the basis for translations into modern European languages during the Reformation, including the Authorized Version or King James Bible. The Council of Trent affirmed the canonical status of the longer ending in the Roman Catholic Church.[11]

MARK, GOSPEL OF Second Gospel in the New Testament canon, but generally held to be the first composed. Traditionally ascribed to John Mark, who traveled with Paul and Barnabas. The Gospel of Mark was likely written to persuade Gentile readers in Rome that Jesus' death on the cross—a shameful form of execution in Roman society—did not invalidate his claims to messiahship and deity or his proclamation of the kingdom of God, but rather that his resurrection, miracles, and prediction of his death vindicated his claims.

Structure and Outline of Mark

There are two main sections in the Gospel of Mark. The first section (1:1–8:26) deals with Jesus' ministry in Galilee, while the second section (8:27–16:8) deals with Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and the events leading up to it. The outline of the book is as follows:

- 1:1–8:26—Jesus' ministry of preaching and healing in Galilee
- 1:1–13—Prologue
  - 1:1–8—Ministry of John the Baptist
  - 1:9–13—Jesus' baptism and temptation
- 1:14–3:6—Jesus' early Galilean ministry
  - 1:14–20—Initial announcement of the kingdom of God and call of the first disciples
  - 1:21–45—Miracles at Capernaum
  - 2:1–3:6—Controversies with the religious authorities
    - 2:1–12—Forgiving and healing a paralytic
    - 2:13–17—Call of Levi and eating with sinners
    - 2:18–22—Question about fasting
    - 2:23–3:6—Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath
    - 2:23–3:7—Plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath
    - 3:1–6—Healing on the Sabbath

[11] Stoops, R. F., Jr. (2012, 2016). The Ending of Mark's Gospel. In *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- 3:7–8:26—Jesus' later Galilean ministry
  - 3:17–19—Jesus' selection of the 12 apostles
  - 3:20–25—Controversies over Beelzebub and family
  - 4:1–34—Parables
    - 4:1–20—Sower, seeds, and soils
    - 4:21–25—Lamp
    - 4:26–29—Secretly growing seed
    - 4:30–34—Mustard seed
  - 4:35–5:43—Miracles
    - 4:35–41—Calming the storm
    - 5:1–20—Exorcism of legion from demon-possessed man
    - 5:21–43—Healing woman with hemorrhage and raising Jairus' daughter
  - 6:1–6—Rejection at Nazareth
  - 6:7–13—Galilean mission of the 12 apostles
  - 6:14–29—Beheading of John the Baptist
  - 6:30–8:26—Miracles
    - 6:30–44—Feeding the 5,000
    - 6:45–52—Walking on water
    - 6:53–7:23—Healings and defilement controversy at Gennesaret
    - 7:24–30—Exorcism on daughter of Syro-Phoenician woman
    - 7:31–37—Healing a deaf and mute man
    - 8:1–10—Feeding the 4,000
    - 8:11–21—Demand of Pharisees for a sign
    - 8:22–26—Healing a blind man
- 8:27–16:8—Jesus' journey to, suffering in, and triumph through Jerusalem
- 8:27–10:52—Activities on the journey
  - 8:27–33—Peter's confession of and failure to understand Jesus' messiahship; First passion prediction
  - 8:34–9:1—Requirements of discipleship
  - 9:2–13—Transfiguration
  - 9:14–29—Exorcism on boy
  - 9:30–50—Second passion prediction; childlike humility
  - 10:1–12—Condemnation of divorce
  - 10:13–16—Blessing of children
  - 10:17–34—Rich man and the kingdom; third passion prediction
  - 10:35–45—Request of James and John versus self-sacrificial service
  - 10:46–52—Restoring Bartimaeus' sight
- 11:1–16:8—Activities in Jerusalem on passion week
  - 11:1–11—Triumphal entry
  - 11:12–26—Symbolic destruction of the temple and literal destruction of the fig tree
  - 11:27–13:2—Debates in the temple
    - 11:27–33—Demand for a sign
    - 12:1–12—Parable of the wicked tenants of the vineyard
    - 12:13–17—Paying taxes to Caesar
    - 12:18–27—General resurrection
    - 12:28–34—Most important commandment
    - 12:35–37—David's son and David's lord
    - 12:38–13:2—Condemnation of the scribes and temple for shaming and impoverishing widow
  - 13:3–37—Olivet discourse
  - 14:1–2—Sanhedrin's plot against Jesus
  - 14:3–11—Jesus' anointing by Mary of Bethany and initial betrayal by Judas
  - 14:12–31—Last Supper
  - 14:32–52—Agony in Gethsemane, final betrayal by Judas, and arrest

- 14:53–15:20—Jesus' trial
- 14:53–72—Before the Sanhedrin
- 15:1–20—Before Pilate

- 15:21–47—Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial
- 16:1–8—Jesus' resurrection

Mark in Biblical Studies

In modern New Testament studies, the Gospel of Mark is considered the first and most important of the Gospels. However, this is a recent development in church history. Mark's Gospel received little attention from fifth century—the time of Victor of Antioch, the first commentator on Mark—until the beginnings of modern biblical criticism because: Mark was not attributed to an apostle; its style was rough and its language was ungrammatical; and it was widely regarded as a summary of Matthew.

Historical-Critical Method

In the 19th century, New Testament scholars using the historical-critical method concluded that Mark was the first Gospel to be written. They also concluded that Matthew and Luke independently used Mark as a major source for writing their Gospels. The "priority of Mark" is accepted by almost all contemporary New Testament scholars, as it solves more problems than any other theory.

Form Criticism

The next stage in the history of Markan scholarship is form criticism, which dominated studies from about 1919 to 1954. Spearheaded by the German scholars Rudolf Bultmann, Martin Dibelius, and Karl Ludwig Schmidt, form criticism demonstrated that the units of Gospel tradition circulated orally before they were written down. This explains why Mark is a string of literary units rather than a unified narrative: Each unit was originally a separate memorable oral tradition that Mark links together with conjunctions and adverbs, most often "immediately" (εὐθύς, *euthys*) and its synonyms. Such a structure makes Mark's Gospel fast-paced action rather than extended discourse and emphasizes Jesus' activities as the powerful and authoritative Son of God.

Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism—the latest direction in Markan studies begun by Willi Marxsen—stresses each Gospel as a whole and the unique way each evangelist composed his Gospel. As a result, redaction criticism created new interest in how the author of Mark's Gospel shaped the traditions he received to accomplish his particular theological aim. Where it is possible to discern pre-existing oral traditions, the author's theological emphases are shown by the revisions made to these traditions. Redaction criticism notes that Mark's key emphasis is the radical nature of discipleship. For Mark, the disciple must have an all-surpassing commitment to Jesus and His kingdom program, renouncing property, family, and life itself when needed.

Composition and Literary Issues

Authorship

It is likely that Mark is anonymous and originally circulated without the title "According to Mark," which may have been added by copyists in the second century. Martin Hengel and Richard Bauckham have recently argued that the title—which no manuscripts lack—is original to the Gospel, initially written on the outside of the scroll or on an attaching papyrus or parchment tag. In either case, about 60 percent of scholars believe that the Gospel was written by John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas described in Acts and several New Testament letters (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; Phlm 24; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13). It is possible that the Gospel of Mark is not merely technically but also literally anonymous—written by an unknown Christian who was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry and who belonged to a community undergoing persecution and experienced failure.

Both proposals are consistent with what can be detected about the author from the Gospel's contents. In Mark, features of Aramaic syntax influence the form of the Greek. For instance, verbs are frequently found at the beginning of sentences, clauses are placed together without the use of conjunctions (i.e., asyndeton), and clauses are joined with the conjunction "and" (καί, *kai*) in imitation of the ו (*w*)-consecutive in Aramaic (i.e., parataxis). This influence accounts for the rough, ungrammatical Greek often found in the Gospel. In addition, the Gospel employs

a simple and popular literary style, and it transliterates Latin words into Greek. This evidence suggests a native Aramaic-speaking, Jewish-Christian author who knew Greek as a second language and came to Rome from Palestine or Syria. Whether John Mark is taken seriously as the author depends on scholarly assessment of the historical credibility of Papias (writing around AD 101–108), the earliest witness to Markan authorship. In his *Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord*, Papias relates an earlier oral tradition (formulated ca. AD 80s) that Mark, though not an eyewitness, was Peter's interpreter in Rome and "wrote accurately, though not in order" what Peter preached concerning "the things said or done by the Lord." If Papias' tradition is accurate, then John Mark is the Gospel's author; if the tradition is inaccurate, then the Gospel's author cannot be specifically determined.

Date

Those who give credence to Papias' testimony understand that Mark wrote shortly after Peter's martyrdom at Rome (AD 64), thus placing the Gospel's composition between AD 65 and 70. The year AD 70 is normally taken as the latest possible date for Mark because of the Gospel's failure to mention the significant events of that year—the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, which a native Palestinian scarcely could have neglected.

Among those who doubt Papias' testimony, however, no consensus exists on the date of Mark, with possibilities ranging from as early as AD 55 to as late as 75. On the late end, those who opt for a date between AD 71–75 maintain that Mark's Gospel does include the temple's destruction (in a vague reference to "the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be"; Mark 13:14 NRSV). Since Matthew and Luke—both of which probably were written in the 80s—appear to have independently used Mark as a source, a date for Mark beyond AD 75 is implausible. On the early end are scholars who take Markan priority to an opposite conclusion. Noting that both Matthew and Luke show no knowledge of the fall of Jerusalem and so predate AD 70, scholars following in the tradition of John A.T. Robinson date Mark even earlier, around AD 55–59.

Audience

It is likely that Rome is where Mark's Gospel was addressed. The author employs Greek loanwords derived from Latin and expressions reflecting Latin grammar, suggesting a locale where Latin was spoken. There are parallels between Mark and Paul's letter to the Romans. For example, "[H]e declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19 NRSV) mirrors Rom 14:14: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself" (NRSV).

The Gospel's strong emphasis on the failure of the disciples to comprehend Jesus' mission and on their flight when Jesus was arrested implies the presence of a Christian community within the addressed locale that had failed under persecution. This appears to be a Roman persecution, for Mark 10:42 condemns those who rule over the Gentiles and lord it over them. While Christians were maltreated in various places, only the Christian community in Rome is known to have experienced major Roman persecution before AD 70, under Nero in AD 64. *1 Clement* 5:2–7 and Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) independently attest to the community's failure during that persecution, including Christian betrayal of other Christians.

Other locales for Mark's Gospel—Syria, the northern Transjordan, the Decapolis, and Galilee—are based on various presuppositions. For example, the Syrian proposal is based on the hypothesis that if both Matthew and Luke were written around Antioch, their independent knowledge of Mark would imply the Gospel being written in the area.

Genre

Scholarship since the 1990s has largely considered the Gospel of Mark closest in genre to ancient biography—that is, a "life" or *bios*. A *bios* displayed a historical interest in portraying truthfully the life of its subject. However, a *bios* differs in crucial respects from modern biography. Unlike modern biography, a *bios* was unconcerned with placing events in chronological order and had no intention of giving a sequential account of the subject's life from birth to death. Rather, a *bios* arranged its material in topical order, stressing anecdotes that painted the clearest picture of the subject's personality. Similarly, a *bios* had no interest in recording the subject's words verbatim; it was perfectly acceptable to employ a paraphrase or summary that preserved the sense of the subject's speech.

Textual Development

The Gospel of Mark is likely based on preexisting material—oral or written—in addition to the smaller units of oral tradition. For instance, there is likely a pre-Markan Passion Narrative beneath Mark 14–16. However, the high

probability that a pre-Markan Passion Narrative existed does not explain how to reconstruct it. Sources for smaller blocks of material also have been suggested:

1. Michael J. Cook and Joanna Dewey claim that the five controversies in 2:1–3:6 come from a common source.
2. Vincent Parkin postulates a source for the parables in 4:1–34.
3. Paul J. Achtemeier, Leander E. Keck, and T. Alec Burkill propose earlier sources for the miracles within 4:35–6:44 and 6:45–8:26.
4. N.H. Taylor maintains that Mark 13 is grounded in a pre-Markan apocalypse.

Markan Appendix

The Greek manuscript tradition contains four different endings to Mark:

1. The earliest and best manuscripts conclude Mark at 16:8; no manuscript up through the fourth century ends the Gospel differently.
2. Starting in the fifth century, the so-called Longer Ending or Markan Appendix (16:9–20) appeared and became dominant in the manuscript tradition, causing its inclusion in almost all later copies of Mark. The Markan Appendix became popularized in the English-speaking world via its presence in the King James Version (1611), translated from the 16th-century *Textus Receptus* (Received Text).
3. The fifth-century Freer or Washingtonianus Manuscript interpolates an addition to the Markan Appendix at 16:14 (see NSRV).
4. The so-called Shorter Ending (see NRSV between Mark 16:8 and 16:9) is attested by four manuscripts, none of which dates earlier than the seventh century.

Because of both the aforementioned external evidence and the internal evidence of non-Markan vocabulary and style, virtually all New Testament scholars regard the longer, freer, and shorter endings as inauthentic to the Gospel of Mark.

This situation leaves only two options: that Mark originally ended at Mark 16:8, or that the original ending to Mark has been lost.

Weighed on its own merits, the conclusion at Mark 16:8 is consistent with Mark's theology. Mark underscores fear as a response to the awesome and mysterious quality of Jesus' person and miracles (Mark 4:40; 5:15, 33; 6:50; 9:32; 10:32). Such a response would nowhere be more appropriate than when learning about Jesus' resurrection and upcoming Galilean appearances (Mark 16:6–7). Mark almost certainly intended the women's silence to be taken as temporary (i.e., they said nothing to anyone as they fled back to the other disciples) rather than permanent (i.e., they never said anything to the other disciples).

Robert H. Gundry, Craig A. Evans, and N.T. Wright argue that the last codex page of Mark was lost before it was disseminated by copyists (Gundry, *Mark*, 1009–12; Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 539–40; Wright, *Resurrection*, 617–24). This view contends that a proclamation of the good news concluding with the women saying "nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8 NRSV) is too disturbing for Mark to have intended; rather, such tension demands resolution in Jesus' resurrection appearances.

Major Issues and Themes

Radical Discipleship

Mark's Gospel insists that, for all persons, there are two requirements for discipleship: denying oneself and taking up one's cross to follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). In Mark, denying oneself does not connote denying oneself something. Rather, it connotes renouncing oneself (i.e., no longer making oneself the center of one's life and actions). This requires an essential reorientation of life in which God is at the center. Mark's Gospel is not generically portraying hardship in life. Rather, it portrays a condemned man carrying His cross to the execution site, as Jesus was forced to do. Therefore, to take up the cross is to follow Jesus. The Gospel admonishes that, by renouncing Jesus, eternal life will be lost, despite physical life being preserved. On the other hand, to surrender physical life by remaining faithful to Jesus is to be guaranteed eternal life.

The Gospel of Mark shows Jesus' passion (i.e., suffering and death). The way of discipleship is, likewise, shown to be the way of the cross. Hence about one-third of Mark is devoted to Jesus' passion. But this theme of suffering

is also evinced prior to the passion. Such allusions to suffering include Jesus' temptation in the desert among wild animals (Mark 1:12–13), the misunderstanding of Jesus' identity and mission by His own family and national leaders (Mark 3:21–35), and Jesus' forewarnings of persecution (Mark 10:30, 33–34, 45; 13:8, 11–13).

The Kingdom of God

In Mark, the concept of the kingdom of God is foundational to Jesus' teaching. It refers to the reign of God over all earthly affairs, whether social, political, economic, legal, or religious. This reign, which is both present and future, has a double-sided nature. Presently, God reigns in a very different way from the Roman emperor or any other human monarch. God reigns in Jesus by doing whatever is necessary to redeem those within His guardianship at all costs to Himself, seen most clearly in the cross. Consequently, the kingdom of God now advances when people lovingly place themselves beneath others, serving others at their own expense (Mark 10:42–45). However, at the end of the age, God will actively put down all opposition to His reign in the last judgment.

Messianic Secret

In his 1901 book, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (The Messianic Secret in the Gospels), William Wrede proposed that, prior to the early Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection, the idea of Jesus' messiahship had never occurred to anyone, least of all to Jesus. Once this idea took root, however, the believing community faced the problem of explaining why Jesus never, at least to anyone's knowledge, claimed to be the Messiah. For this reason, Mark invented the messianic secret by placing on Jesus' lips private declarations to His inner circle of apostles that He was the Messiah, coupled with prohibitions against publicly revealing this fact.

Recent New Testament scholarship has strikingly reinterpreted the messianic-secret motif as an authentic facet of the historical Jesus instead of a Markan creation. In other words, the historical Jesus *did* tell the apostles that He was Messiah but took pains to conceal this claim from His Jewish contemporaries at large; He knew that they would misunderstand it. First-century Jews conceived of the anticipated Messiah as a political and military deliverer who would liberate the Jews from the Roman Empire, restore the Davidic boundaries and national sovereignty of Israel, and cleanse Israel from all Gentile influence. Because Jesus' concept of messiahship not merely excluded these features but staunchly opposed them, Jesus carefully crafted His Messianic identity in parables and cryptic sayings, comprehensible only to those "with ears to hear" (Mark 4:9, 23 NRSV). Only after laying the appropriate groundwork did Jesus publicly make explicit profession of messiahship at the end of His ministry (Mark 14:61–62).

Selected Resources for Further Study

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MARK, GOSPEL OF, CRITICAL ISSUES Surveys milestones in scholarship on the Gospel of Mark and examines critical issues including: purpose, authorship and date, audience, location, genre, sources, and text.

Introduction

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest and likely the earliest of the four Gospels. The Gospel initially held major influence but eventually was overshadowed by the more stately Matthew, the polished and complete Luke, and the spiritual John. Thus, church history largely placed reduced emphasis on Mark, and ancient commentaries on Mark are scarce (Lane, "From Historian to Theologian," 601–17).

Most information in Mark can also be found in other Gospels. Around AD 400, Augustine declared that Mark followed Matthew "like a slave and seems his summarizer" (Augustine, *On the Agreement of the Evangelists* 1.2.4). This perception of Mark as Peter's scribe and Matthew's summarizer dominated much of church history (see Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method*, 2–8). Mark's prominence has returned during the last two centuries, however, as the Gospel has gained scholarly attention and experienced renewed use in the church.

Milestones in Markan Scholarship

Karl Lachmann and Markan Priority

During 19th-century debates about the Synoptic Gospels' sources, Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) observed that when Matthew and Luke preserved tradition found in Mark, the order of events in Matthew and Luke corresponded closely. However, no such correspondence existed when Matthew and Luke used material not found in Mark (Lachmann, "De Ordine," 570). Based on this observation, Lachmann proposed that Mark preserved the Gospel tradition at an earlier stage than Matthew or Luke.

C. H. Weisse and H. J. Holtzmann subsequently refined Lachmann's proposal and developed the so-called "Markan hypothesis"—the view that Mark was the earliest, most historical Gospel upon which the later Gospels drew. The Markan hypothesis particularly affected the quest for the historical Jesus: If Mark was the earliest Gospel, then perhaps it would contain the most reliable information about the historical Jesus.

The Markan hypothesis became the accepted scholarly position in the generation following Weisse and Holtzmann and remains the dominant position in New Testament scholarship. According to this position, while the later Gospels may reflect the early church's developing theology, Mark's primitive style and theology and his brief and uncomplicated presentation of Jesus was based upon early, well-attested, reliable tradition. Further, one could confidently reconstruct the plot and framework of the life and ministry of Jesus using the Gospel of Mark because it was the most realistic and least theological Gospel—and least shaped by the concerns and needs of the early church (Lane, "From Historian to Theologian," 602). Despite this position's continued prominence, historicity of Mark's presentation of Jesus has been subject to scrutiny (see Lane, "From Historian to Theologian," 601–17).

William Wrede and Mark the Theologian

Prior to 1901, most scholars believed that the narrative in Mark's Gospel reflected the actual circumstances of the life and ministry of Jesus, with some gaps (Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method*, 2–8). However, in 1901 William Wrede challenged this position in *The Messianic Secret*, advocating that Mark's Gospel reflected the author's own circumstances. Jesus' commands to secrecy were foundational for Wrede (Mark 1:34, 43–45; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9): He held that Mark created the literary device of the "messianic secret" to justify why Jesus was not recognized as Messiah during His lifetime. In Wrede's view, Mark is as much a theologian as the author of the Gospel of John: "Mark too is already far removed from the actual life of Jesus and is dominated by views of a dogmatic kind. If we look at Mark through a magnifying glass, it may well be that we find a type of authorship such as exhibited in John" (Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 145). Today scholars largely reject Wrede's conclusion regarding the messianic secret in Mark (see Evans, *Mark*, lxx—lxxii). Those to whom Jesus issued commands of silence often disobeyed, failing to align with Mark's supposed intent of showing that no one was aware of Jesus' messianic identity during His ministry.

The "messianic secret" may be better understood in light of another prominent theme in Mark: people's misunderstanding of Jesus' identity. Jesus does not want demons to proclaim His identity, as they will distort it (Mark 1:34); those who are healed are called to silence, as they are ignorant that His messiahship entails suffering and sacrifice (Mark 3:12). Even the disciples misunderstand the Messiah as a suffering one (Mark 8:30).

Recently, scholars such as Malina have argued that Jesus' commands to silence originate in the group-oriented ancient Mediterranean culture, where a person "evaluates himself or herself through other's eyes" and "the honorable person would never expose his or her distinct individuality" (Malina, *New Testament World*, 64). Others, like Kingsbury, have argued that the secrecy motif guides readers through a progressive unveiling of Jesus' identity (Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 20). Evans argues that the motif may have a "catechetical function" (Evans, *Mark*, lxxi).

While scholars today have largely rejected Wrede's conclusions, his work nevertheless profoundly impacted New Testament scholarship through the claim that the Gospels do not contain traditional portrayals of the historical Jesus but rather have their own theological agendas.

Form Criticism and Mark the Editor

With the rise of form criticism in the early 20th century, scholars such as Martin Dibelius, Rudolf Bultmann, and Karl Ludwig Schmidt began to regard Mark as an editor and compiler—rather than author—of the Gospel tradition. In their view, Mark invented the framework for outlining Jesus' life in order to produce a continuous account of Matthew and Luke; it has no historical or geographical value. According to Anderson and Moore, this view turned Mark into a "Scissors-and-Paste Man" (Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method*, 7). Dibelius asserts that "only in the smallest degree are the writers of the Gospels authors; they are in the main collectors, transmitters, editors" (Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 3). According to Bultmann, the early church's oral tradition was the true author of the Gospels; the authority of the Gospels was located in the faith of the early church, not the Gospels themselves nor in their authors (Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 372).

Willi Marxsen and Mark the Author

In the 1950s, as form critical approaches to Gospel studies flourished, Willi Marxsen supported viewing Mark as an author with a definite purpose and goal in his Gospel (Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, 15–22). Reacting against form criticism, which fragmented the text, Marxsen argued for the text's unity, a pioneering approach eventually known as redaction criticism. In Marxsen's view, Mark edited his Gospel with considerable control as he reworked traditions. Further, Marxsen argued that the Gospel was written in Galilee around AD 66 to persuade the Jerusalem church to flee the doomed city, go to Galilee, and wait for the return of the Lord.

While many doubt Marxsen's thesis, his methodology—separating tradition from redaction—impacted the subsequent generation of scholars on Mark (see Guelich, *Mark*, xxxviii—xl). In Marxsen's approach, Mark's theology assumed a particular strategy in response to a specific situation: In retelling the story, Mark had a double focus—the past story of Jesus and the current situation in his community. By contrast, redactional approaches in Gospel studies viewed the Gospels as mirrors that reflected the situations of the community. The impact of the work that Wrede initiated and Marxsen and many others refined—albeit with different conclusions and methodologies—continues today in the many studies on Mark (Telford, *Writing*, 45–208).

Markan Scholarship since the 1980s

The 1980s introduced further changes in scholarship on Mark with the rise of narrative literary method. Some scholars observed that scholarly focus on history and background, and redaction criticism's separation of redaction from tradition, resulted in a failure to read the Gospels on their own terms (see Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method*, 13). Narrative literary method, then, examined how Mark's story is told (through analysis of plot, characters, point of view, implied reader, implied author, etc.) and how his theology is tied intrinsically to the Gospel's narrative as a whole. Mark began to be regarded as a narrative thinker and narrative theologian. David Rhoads' and Donald Michie's 1982 work *Mark as Story* contributed greatly to the development of narrative criticism in studies of Mark (see Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*; Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*; Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*).

The social-scientific approach is another important recent development in studies of Mark. The historical-critical method did not extensively consider the social and cultural structures of the ancient world; according to this approach, reading the New Testament is a cross-cultural experience, one that requires readers to attend to first-century customs, language, rhetoric, economy, political order, social system, values, and ethos (see Malina and Roharbough, *Social-Science Commentary*, 171–277; Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*). While narrative and social studies continue to influence scholarship on Mark, topics such as the intertextuality, orality, theology, and

reception history of Mark are receiving increasing interest, along with ideological approaches to the text (for more on the current state of research, see Telford, *Writing*, 45–208).

Critical Issues

Purpose

Mark's purpose for writing his Gospel is a significant question in scholarship today. Mark 1:1 indicates that the evangelist aims to write the "gospel concerning Jesus Messiah, the Son of God." However, unlike John or Luke, the author does not explicitly state his purpose for writing (compare John 20:31; Luke 1:4). The traditional explanation—that Mark presented a faithful account of Jesus' ministry based on Peter's recollections and that Mark summarized Matthew—became unpopular with the rise of source, form, and redaction criticisms. With the exception of Wrede and a few followers, most scholars before Marxsen viewed Mark as a transmitter and a compiler; they focused on individual pre-Markan units and did not offer concerted conclusions regarding Mark's message, purpose, and theological motivation (see Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 100–02). After Marxsen's thesis (1956) that Mark wrote to persuade Jerusalem Christians to flee the impending doom and go to Galilee in anticipation of the *parousia*, subsequent studies also attempted to explain the purpose of Mark's narrative:

- Samuel G. F. Brandon (*Fall of Jerusalem*) argued that Mark wrote to conceal Jesus' role as a Zealot in order to show that the Christian community had nothing to do with the Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66–73).
- Theodore Weeden (*Mark, Evangelist and Theologian*) argued that Mark corrects false Christology and a false concept of Christian life.
- Ralph Martin (*Mark*) argued that Mark's emphasis on Jesus' humanity critiques gnostic emphasis on a spiritual Christ.
- E. Trocme (*Formation of the Gospel According to Mark*) thought that Mark was writing against the backdrop of the prominence of the Jerusalem church and attempted to correct its self-centeredness with the Gospel's emphasis on discipleship and service.
- Howard Kee (*Community of the New Age*) emphasized the Gospel's apocalyptic aspect and argued that Mark was writing to a community estranged from a society that needed to be evangelized as the end drew near.
- Ernest Best (*Following Jesus*) argued that the Gospel was not written by John Mark and does not address a particular historical event (i.e., Neronian persecution or the Jewish-Roman war). Rather, he purported that the Gospel was written by someone named Mark who adapted pastoral traditions about Jesus to show that true discipleship involves following Jesus in suffering, death, and mission.
- Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie (*Mark as Story*) argued that the omniscient narrator of the Gospel is in complete control of his material and expects "the ideal reader" to respond faithfully to the advent of God's reign in the ministry of Jesus, who journeys with the disciples to the cross.
- Augustine Stock (*Call to Discipleship*) argued that Mark fits in the genre of Greek tragedy and calls the reader to identify with Jesus' suffering.
- Jack Kingsbury (*Christology of Mark's Gospel*) argued that Mark's purpose is to present Jesus as a Davidic Messiah-King whose title "Son of God" referred to kingship as in the Old Testament and whose title "Son of Man" indicates His functional, polemic, and public role.
- Werner Kelber (*The Kingdom in Mark*) argued that Mark was written in Galilee after the Jewish revolt to correct the Christian community's association between the fall of Jerusalem and the *parousia*.
- Vernon Robbins (*Jesus the Teacher*) argued for a relationship between Mark and Graeco-Roman stories of disciple-gathering teachers whose integrity leads to their deaths but whose disciples continue the teaching.
- Ched Myers (*Binding the Strong Man*) argued that Mark's Gospel is a manifesto of early Christian discipleship, engaged in a war of myths with the dominant imperial power.
- Gerd Theissen (*Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien*) argued that the Gospel critiques worldly concepts of "Messiah" and issues the call to discipleship with Jesus' Passion as a model to the community caught between Jews and Gentiles facing numerous pressures.

- Rikki Watts (*Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*) argued that the New Exodus motif of Isaiah (particularly Deutero-Isaiah) is a hermeneutical key to Mark's Gospel and must be accounted for in discussing various aspects of the Gospel, including its theology and purpose.
- Craig Evans (*Mark 8:27–16:20*) saw the Gospel as apologetic, showing that Jesus, not Caesar, is indeed the Son of God, humanity's true Savior and Lord.
- H. N. Roskam (*Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*) argued that Mark is an apologetic writing reacting to the persecution of Galilean Christians and confirming them in their faithfulness.

Despite scholars' many suggestions regarding the purpose of Mark, no consensus has been reached. The proposed eschatological, christological, apologetic, polemical, ecclesiological, and pastoral concerns have both strengths and weaknesses. Many have merits and have contributed to the discussion of purpose; however, many tend to interpret Mark in terms of one theme or emphasis—a problematic endeavor in light of Mark's complexity. This inability to provide a concrete answer may confirm the traditional view—that Mark wrote to preserve the gospel tradition where Jesus inaugurates God's reign, through His power and passion. Additionally, Mark may not have had a single purpose but rather a composite set of purposes.

Authorship and Date

The early church unanimously attributed the Gospel to the John Mark of Acts. In modern scholarship, some have proposed alternative theories due to issues with the claims of Papias, a second-century bishop and the earliest source identifying John Mark as the author. Whether the title reflects a different Mark from Acts or a pseudonym, or the Gospel was a product of a community's composition, these theories present more questions than answers. The Gospel has been dated anywhere from the AD 40s to 70s, with the late 60s holding a slight majority.

For further discussion regarding authorship and date, see this article: Mark, Gospel of. (Also see Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 92–99.)

Audience

The identity of Mark's audience is debated. Since the rise of redaction criticism, the prevailing view has held that an evangelist addressed his Gospel to the community to which he belonged. However, in 1998, *The Gospels for All Christians* (edited by Richard Bauckham) challenged this consensus view. Bauckham and his coauthors argue that the Gospels were not written for a specific church or group of churches but rather for an unspecified Christian audience—for "any and every Christian community in the late-first-century Roman Empire" (Bauckham, *Gospel for All Christians*, 1). Bauckham's arguments proceed as follows:

1. The common solution to the Synoptic problem indicates that Mark circulated among other communities and was not restricted to a particular audience.
2. The lack of scholarly consensus in reconstructing the evangelists' community throws doubt on the method for searching for those communities' identities.
3. Interpreting certain features of the Gospels as applying to a specific situation is misleading because those features can apply to a large number of Christian communities.
4. Scholars who think that the Gospels address specific communities mistake the texts' genre—Gospels are not epistles and should not be read as allegories of early Christian communities. The Gospels most closely resemble biographies, meaning they address any competent reader.
5. Early Christian communities were not isolated entities; rather, early Christians had considerable social networks, and members of the Christian movement regularly traveled to different churches. The evangelists were part of this mobile group of leaders that did not focus their attention on the local needs and problems of a single community when composing a Gospel (Bauckham, "For Whom," 9–48).

Bauckham's arguments have been influential but have not been adopted by the majority; many scholars have critiqued Bauckham's conclusions (see Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 17–22). Those critiques include the following:

1. The circular nature of the Gospels does not necessarily presuppose an unspecific situation.
2. Scholars' failure to produce a consensus does not mean that "community" theories are useless.

3. The possible application of certain features in the Gospels as applying to general audiences does not prove anything about the evangelists' intentions.
4. The genre of biography may presuppose broad readership but not an indefinite one.
5. The evangelists could have used the literary genre of a biography with a specific readership in mind.
6. The mobile nature of early Christians as proof for general readership is circumstantial and only proves that some traveled widely.
7. The differences between the Gospels would imply a more limited readership of each Gospel (see Sim, "The Gospels for All Christians," 3–27; Esler, "Community and Gospel," 235–48). For example, why would Matthew and Luke omit the mention of Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21), if they were writing for a general audience? Mark's mention of Simon of Cyrene can easily be explained as the result of the readers' familiarity with the father of Alexander and Rufus (Rom 16:13).

In his commentary on Mark, Witherington offers a mediating position: The evangelists had some specific issues and people in mind when they wrote, but the Gospels are not allegories of those communities. Instead, the Gospels are written *to* them. Thus, Mark may remember the text's wider audience while intending it for the Christians with him—persuading, encouraging, and exhorting this latter group during a difficult time of suffering and persecution (Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 29–30).

Most scholars believe that Mark's audience was composed mostly of Gentiles (Carson, Moo, and Morris, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 99). However, some studies (e.g., Watts)—which focus on the Gospel's allusions and references to the thought and context of Jewish scriptures—conclude that the Jewish (or at least god-fearers') element was not absent (Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 379–81).

Location

For those who see Mark addressing a specific audience, numerous places have been proposed for the group's location. The early church identified the Gospel's origin and destination as Rome (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.1.2.; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.6–7). The presence of a large number of Latinisms (e.g., Mark 7:26; 12:42; 15:16) supports this view (see Guelich, *Mark*, xxx-xxxi). However, these Latinisms seem to be mainly military, administrative, and commercial terms, and Latin was widely spoken in other parts of the Graeco-Roman world. Other locations frequently associated with Mark's destination include Galilee, the Decapolis, Syria, a Gentile Christian community in the East, and Egypt (see Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 94–114). John Chrysostom suggested that Mark wrote his Gospel in Egypt, though this suggestion may have resulted from a misreading of Eusebius (Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 1.3).

Genre

Determining the genre of a text is helpful in establishing interpretive parameters in terms of accuracy and faithfulness to authorial intent. Redactional studies of the Gospels have led to vigorous debate regarding the Gospels' genre. Many scholars have attempted to categorize the Gospel of Mark within a certain ancient literary genre (Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel*, 11–14). Mark's Gospel has been compared to Greek tragedy, tragic-comedy, historiography, apocalypse, aretalogy, Hellenistic biography, Socratic dialogue, and romance. Also, the genre of Old Testament stories about Elijah and Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings and Moses in Exodus and Deuteronomy have served as points of comparison.

Current research into Mark's genre seems to focus on whether Mark belongs to Graeco-Roman biography (see Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 1–9). Ancient biographies center on a particular person and seek to present an adequate and accurate characterization of that person. Mark focuses on the person and the ministry of Jesus, but the information about Jesus' life before His ministry is mostly omitted. However, this phenomenon is not uncharacteristic of ancient biography, which did not prioritize chronological order. Burridge also notes that the ancient biography was flexible, "having strong relationship with history, encomium and rhetoric, moral philosophy and the concern for character" (Burridge, *What Are the Gospels*, 69). The purpose of ancient biography is multifaceted; while some scholars have argued that ancient biographies have a strong moral orientation, others view the Gospels as biographies with a strong apologetic and polemic purpose (see Aune, *Literary Environment*). Perhaps the genre of the Gospels is best characterized as "a sub-type of Greco-Roman biography" (Aune, *Literary Environment*, 46).

However, the biographical shape of the Gospel is secondary to its overall purpose—be it Christological, apologetic, or polemical (see Guelich, *Mark*, xxi); Mark's use of the term "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον, *euangelion*) in Mark 1:1 is a literary designation that pertains more to the content than the genre. The content seemingly influenced the form, rather than the form the content, with the Gospel's genre mainly serving as a vehicle to convey its message.

Sources

Much of the early modern study of Mark attempted to determine the sources behind the canonical Gospels (Kummel, *Geschichte der Erforschung*, 88–143). However, determining the sources behind Mark's Gospel depends on answering the Synoptic Problem. If Mark was the first Gospel written—as is held by majority opinion—and a four-source hypothesis is maintained, then the sources of Mark's Gospel must be reconstructed from the Gospel themselves. Scholars of Mark have proposed a number of sources, including:

- a pre-Markan passion narrative (Mark 14–16);
- a parable source (Mark 4:1–34);
- a miracle source (Mark 4:35–6:44; 6:45–8:26);
- an apocalypse source (Mark 13); and
- a controversy source (Mark 2:1–3:6).

However, such hypotheses remain inconclusive; any written sources used by Mark in compiling his Gospel are no longer extant. If Papias' statement is true, then Peter himself may be the source of Mark's material (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.15).

Since 1995, further questions regarding Mark's sources include the following:

- Maurice Casey argued that Mark's Gospel is based on one or more Aramaic sources—not merely for the *logia* (sayings) of Jesus, but for whole narrative portions of the text. Casey sees translation signs throughout the Gospel (see Casey, *Aramaic Sources*).
- John Dominic Crossan argued that several noncanonical documents (e.g., Papyrus Egerton 2, the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*) are older than the New Testament Gospels and therefore could be sources for the canonical Gospels. For example, Crossan argues for the influence of the *Gospel of Peter* on the Markan Passion Narrative (Crossan, *Cross that Spoke*). Most scholars, however, do not agree with Crossan (for a critique, see Evans, *Mark*, xxxii—xliii).

Text

Mark's ending (Mark 16:9–20) presents one of the best-known textual issues in the New Testament. Most scholars concur that the original text of Mark did not contain Mark 16:9–20 and either that (1) Mark intended to end the Gospel at Mark 16:8, or (2) his original ending was lost (see Mark, Gospel of). For further discussion, see this article: Mark, Gospel of.

Another significant text-critical issue is whether the title "son of God" in Mark 1:1 is a later addition. Some early manuscripts and church fathers' writings attest to the shorter reading without the title. However, Wasserman argues that the title "son of God" was omitted due to a copying oversight involving the abbreviation of sacred names (*nomina sacra*; for a defense of a longer reading, see Wasserman, "Beginning," 20–50). Others insist that the scribal tendency to expand theological titles (with "the son of God" references as strategic in Mark 9:7 and 15:39) suggest that the title was added later (for a defense of a shorter reading, see Head, "Text-Critical Study," 621–29).

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VIKTOR ROUDKOVSKI[13]

Mark

Mark's Gospel offers the briefest treatment of the Pharisees, and the available information predominately consists of a quick series of questions early in his account:

- Mark 2:16—Some of the scribes of the Pharisees ask the disciples why Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners, insinuating that Pharisees would not do so.
- Mark 2:18—People come to Jesus and ask Him why the disciples of John the Baptizer and those of the Pharisees fast, while His disciples do not.
- Mark 2:23–24—The Pharisees ask Jesus why His disciples break the Pharisaic rules of Sabbath-keeping by plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath.

Mark later provides a more extended treatment of the Pharisees and their practices. The Pharisees and their scribes approach Jesus and ask Him why the disciples eat bread without first washing their hands (Mark 7:5). In framing the episode, Mark notes that "all the Jews," not just the Pharisees, practice ritual hand-washing (Mark 7:3). He explains that the Pharisees observe a great many "traditions of the elders" (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, *tēn paradosin tōn presbyterōn*), including ritual purification between visiting the marketplace and eating, and washing cups, pots, and other eating instruments (Mark 7:4). In response (Mark 7:6–13), Jesus chastises the Pharisees by distinguishing their observance of the "traditions of men" (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, *tēn paradosin tōn anthrōpōn*) from the "commandment of God" (τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, *tēn entolēn tou theou*; Mark 7:8). He frames His condemnation in a contrast between internal and external piety.

The Pharisees then pose a set of challenges to Jesus, hoping to entrap Him in His speech. These challenges come at the midpoint of Mark's Gospel, just as Jesus begins to anticipate His passion.

- They demand a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11).

[13] Roudkovski, V. (2016). Mark, Gospel of, Critical Issues. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- They question the lawfulness of divorce (Mark 10:2).
- They (accompanied by Herodians) ask Jesus whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13–14).

It is unusual that Mark records the Pharisees interacting with the Herodians (Mark 3:6; 8:15; 12:13) because the Pharisees were generally completely opposed to the accommodating nature of the Herodian court. This element of Mark's account may suggest that the Pharisees were not a unified body, but were comprised of diverse elements—some of whom actually cooperated with the Herodians.[14]

JOHN MARK

Scripture references: Acts 12:12, 25; 15:39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13

Date:About A.D. 45

Name:Mark [MAHRK; "large hammer"]

Greatest Accomplishment:Mark became Peter's companion and wrote the Gospel of Mark.

MARK'S LIFE AND TIMES

As a teen, Mark may have witnessed the capture of Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14:51–52). After the resurrection, Mark participated in prayer meetings of the young church held in his mother Mary's home (Acts 12:12). He had another important Christian connection; his cousin Barnabas was one of the young church's most notable leaders (Col. 4:10). It was not surprising that Mark should accompany Paul and Barnabas as a member of their team on their first missionary journey. However, for some reason, young Mark abandoned them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 15:38). Later, when Barnabas wanted to take Mark on another missionary journey, Paul refused. Paul and Barnabas separated, and each led a separate missionary team. John Mark went with Barnabas.

Under Barnabas's gentle tutelage Mark matured as a Christian. Years later, Paul asked Timothy to send Mark to him because "he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1). Tradition tells us that Mark became the companion of Peter, who described him as "my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). The same tradition states that Mark related in his Gospel the stories he heard from Peter.

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MARK'S GOSPEL

Mark's Gospel reflects the stories told by Peter in his ministry to the Jewish Diaspora (the Jews living outside the Holy Land). Yet Mark's Gospel had a special appeal to the Roman mind.

The Romans who built and maintained an empire that surrounded the Mediterranean Sea—incorporating Europe and England, Egypt, and Asia Minor—were an eminently practical people. The Romans were people of action who appreciated decisiveness and strength of character. Mark's portrait of Jesus, which tells His story briefly but with vivid

[14] Johnson, B. T. (2016). Pharisees. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

scenes frequently linked by "then immediately," appealed to the Roman mind. This Jesus was a Man of strength and honor, a Man of action, a Man with power and authority.

While Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four accounts of Jesus' life and closely parallels Matthew's Gospel in structure, it has a very different tone. Matthew presents Jesus the Messiah. Mark presents Jesus, the Man of action and authority, stripped of those details that were necessary to answer questions Jewish readers might ask. The Jesus of Mark's Gospel was an attractive figure to the first-century Roman, a Man to whom one might confidently pledge allegiance and become His client, confident that Jesus would be able to protect and care for His own.

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MARK: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

Mark at best is a peripheral character as far as the Gospels and Acts are concerned. Yet, he seems representative of many young people who come to faith early but grow into commitment only after a number of false starts or failures. From Mark we learn several important lessons about nurturing faith in young people.

- Mark had many family and other links to Christian faith. Through them he was exposed to the gospel early in life. Mature believers need to help young people establish relationships with as many committed believers as possible.
- Mark, in Barnabas, had a Christian friend who would not give up on him. Young people may fall short of our and their own expectations. We need not only to support them but also to give them additional opportunities to succeed.
- Mark had a more significant role in God's plan than anyone might have expected. When we invest in a young person, we never know how significant that investment might become![15]

Source Criticism. The attempt to explain the extensive duplications and disagreements among the Gospels through an examination of their literary histories and sources.

Problem. The puzzle that is especially acute for Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are termed "synoptic" (Gk. *syn-optikos*, "viewed together") Gospels because they have so much in common. For example, 93 percent of Mark is found paralleled in Matthew and Luke; on the other hand, merely 8 percent or 9 percent of John is found in the other three Gospels. Therefore, the problem rests with the Synoptics and its study is often termed the synoptic problem. Its chief task is unraveling the mystery of why the synoptic Gospels have so much overlapping material. Were they each dependent on the same source or were they interdependent? Are they independent of each other or was there borrowing? A close look at any synopsis (an arrangement of the Gospels showing parallel accounts) illustrates the problem well.

The early church was not unaware of the problem. Gospel harmonies such as Tatian's *Diatessaron* (AD 170) provided syntheses. The popular view defended by Augustine, however, was that the NT sequence reflected a literary history: Matthew was the earliest Gospel, Mark was his abbreviator, and Luke was dependent on both. This might be illustrated thus:

[15] Richards, L. (1999). *Every man in the Bible* (pp. 210–211). Nashville: T. Nelson.

It was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that critical scholarship challenged this solution. It was generally agreed that all three Synoptics were mutually dependent on something earlier. Hence:

For some (e.g., Herder, Westcott) an oral Gospel was being tapped. Others thought of written tracts or fragments. Still others such as Lessing suggested an old Aramaic Gospel ("The Gospel of the Nazarenes")—a short "pregospel" (or *Urevangelium*). This shows that a documentary solution involving literary borrowing was forming and would soon find a consensus. Unfortunately all evidence for these pre-Gospel sources has been lost.

Methods of Interpretation. The numerous synoptic coincidences—seen especially in the Greek text—soon compelled scholars to look within the Gospels themselves for a solution. Perhaps the Synoptics were not independent witnesses to something original, but dependent on one another.

The Priority of Matthew. The first scholar to attempt this solution was J.J. Griesbach (1745–1812). Rather than harmonize the Gospels, Griesbach printed the Gospels in parallel columns in order to make scientific comparisons possible. For him the antiquity of Matthew could be defended, but Mark had to be seen as the abbreviator of both Matthew and Luke. Hence:

Today this is a minority viewpoint but it still has its passionate defenders (e.g., W.R. Farmer).

The Priority of Mark. Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) not only edited the first critical edition of the Greek NT in 1831, but four years later made a breakthrough in the synoptic problem by analyzing the *order of events* in each Gospel. Lachmann found the following: when Matthew and Luke use Mark, the sequence of these events in their Gospels is the same. When they interrupt Mark's outline with new materials, their method of arrangement completely diverges. This suggested that Matthew and Luke were indeed using Mark (or an early form of Mark) and other sources, but not each other.

This new emphasis on Mark was developed by many (H. Weisse, 1801–66; H. Holtzmann, 1832–1910; B. Weiss, 1827–1918) and given its classic form by B.H. Streeter (1874–1937) in his book, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (1924). The arguments for Mark's priority are numerous: (1) *Subject matter.* Much of Mark is found in Matthew and Luke. Of Mark's 661 verses, 601 are found in the other two Synoptics (or, of Mark's 11,078 words, Matthew has 8555 of them and Luke has 6737). Good explanations are available showing why Matthew and Luke omitted these few Markan units (see Kümmel, 1975, 56f). (2) *Sequence.* Lachmann observes that there is no case in which Matthew and Luke fully agree in the way in which they diverge from Mark (see Kümmel's tables, 58f). (3) *Literary characteristics.* There are elements of Mark's style which suggest that Mark is the more primitive account. First, Mark's narratives are abbreviated in Matthew and Luke to make the pericope more concise (see Mk 1:32/Mt 8:16; Mk 6:39/Mt 14:19); for example, Matthew 9:2 ("Jesus saw their faith") makes little sense unless we read Mark 2:4 which Matthew omitted. Second, Mark's rugged style is modified and/or improved by Matthew and Luke. Thus the correct title for Herod is given in Matthew 14:1 (cf. Mk 6:14) and the improper Greek term for pallet used by Mark (*krabbaton*, 2:4) is changed by both Matthew and Luke. Further, historic presents in Mark (151) are reduced to 21 in Matthew and one in Luke, and many of Mark's redundant negatives and awkward constructions are removed. Of Mark's eight Aramaic words, Matthew contains only one and Luke none. Third, substantive changes improve the content of Mark. Embarrassing statements (Mk 6:5) and even the failure of the disciples (Mk 4:13; cf. Mt 13:18; Lk 8:11; also Mk 4:40/Mt 8:26/Lk 8:25) are modified. The confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi ("You are the Christ," Mk 8:29) is expanded in Matthew 16:16 and Luke 9:20. Together these data have a cumulative force and have led most scholars to accept the antiquity of Mark.

The Case for Q. What do we make of the material common to Matthew and Luke which is not found in Mark? Griesbach could explain this by Matthew and Luke's use of each other. Now it is argued that another written source was used by Matthew and Luke alongside of Mark. This source is called "Q" from the German word *Quelle* (source). The following categories suggest Q's existence: (1) *Agreements.* Numerous corresponding verses (about 250) show such precise parallels (see Mt 3:7–10/Lk 3:7–9; Mt 7:7–11/Lk 11:9–13) and close similarities (Mt 10:26–33/Lk 12:2–9) as to urge a common document. (2) *Sequence.* If the sequence of Q sayings in Matthew and Luke are compared, the order in which they are used has a surprising number of parallels (although there are variations). This does not refer to the point where each has interrupted Mark's outline (cf. Lachmann), but instead to the mere sequence of Q sayings. (3) *Doublets.* This is decisive for many. A doublet is when a saying of Jesus occurs twice in Matthew or Luke—one source being clearly from Mark while the other is not. These include narratives (the sending of the disciples, Lk 9:1–6; 10:1, 2 with Mk 6:7–13/Mt 9:35–37) and sayings (Mt 13:12/Mk 4:25/Lk 8:18 with Mt 25:29/Lk 19:26). Q is thus a written source consisting chiefly of sayings with little narrative. (On the other hand, if Luke knew Matthew as A.M. Farrer has argued, then the hypothetical source "Q" disappears.)

The Four-Source Hypothesis. The sources of the Synoptics are now postulated with some certainty. Matthew and Luke were dependent on Mark and Q. But B.H. Streeter also points to the independent materials contained in Matthew and Luke which might represent other primitive sources. This might be illustrated thus:

Thus Matthew employed Mark, Q, and his own sources (M= about 300 verses or 42% of Mt), and Luke used Mark, Q, and his own sources (L= about 520 verses or 59% of Lk). The size of "L" has led some to argue for yet another homogenous source for Luke, namely proto-Luke, which might be another ancient text (see Martin, 1975, 1:151–156).

Assessment. While there seems to be a general consensus in favor of the four- (or two-) source hypothesis, extensive debate surrounds its particulars. Many even challenge its basic assumptions. For instance, why does Luke omit Mark 6:45–8:26 (Luke's so-called "great omission")? Streeter explained that Luke possessed a damaged copy of Mark. Others have said that Luke used an early, shorter form of Mark (*Urmarkus*) and that a later editorial hand added the debated section to the Second Gospel. But there is no evidence whatsoever for this. Moreover, it runs the danger of adapting the data to the theory rather than the other way around.

While the conclusion of Markan priority seems assured, the continued disagreement over details may indicate that source criticism has reached its limitations. The literary history of the Synoptics may have been extremely complex. Each Gospel may have gone through numerous recensions at its earliest stage. If this is so then only the broadest outline of literary dependence is obtainable.

The conclusions of source criticism have become basic to any critical study of the Gospels today. Its use, however, must be seen in a much larger theological context. Scholars are endeavoring to get behind the Gospel tradition *as a feature of the quest for the Jesus of history*. Ancient traditions are deemed more reliable: hence sources such as Mark, Q—even proto-Luke—are valued due to their antiquity. Thus the conclusions of source criticism are presupposed in redaction criticism (the study of how the evangelists themselves shaped these ancient traditions as editors) and form criticism (the history of the tradition prior to its written stage).

Fundamental to Christian faith is some certainty concerning the historical traditions within the Gospels. Source criticism helpfully shows how the evangelists used primitive sources in their work (see Lk

1:1–4). However it would be misguided to disparage a portion of the Gospel *when no source can be determined* (Wenham, 1977, 145f). Source criticism effectively illustrates literary dependence, but has severe limitations when used to affirm historical certainty. A completely independent pericope, for instance, in Matthew might theoretically bear a greater antiquity than Mark or Q. At least in this example the source critic is incapable of making an objective historical judgment on it.

See FORM CRITICISM; MARKAN HYPOTHESIS; DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS; REDACTION CRITICISM; TRADITION CRITICISM; SYNOPTIC GOSPELS; MATTHEW, GOSPEL OF; MARK, GOSPEL OF; LUKE, GOSPEL OF; BIBLICAL CRITICISM; NEW TESTAMENT; DEMYTHOLOGIZATION.

Bibliography. W.R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis*; D. Guthrie, *NT Introduction*; W.G. Kümmel, *NT Introduction*; R.P. Martin, *NT Foundations*, 2 vols; S. Neill, *The Interpretation of the NT 1861–1961*; B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins*; D. Wenham, "Source Criticism," in I.H. Marshall, ed., *NT Interpretation*.[16]

JOHN MARK Son of Mary (Acts 12:12), cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10), and missionary companion of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5). According to church tradition, John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark.

In first-century Palestine, it was common for a man to have two names: a Hebrew name (e.g., "John"), by which he was known to friends and relatives, and a Greek or Roman (Roman Christian) name (e.g., "Mark"), by which he was known in the business world (Barclay, *Introduction*, 151; Acts 12:12, 25). "Mark" appears to have been a common name in the first century. Consequently, it is difficult to know whether the person mentioned in Acts and Colossians is the "Mark" named elsewhere in the New Testament (2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24; 1 Pet 5:13; compare with John Mark in Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col 4:10).

John Mark in Acts and Colossians

John Mark is first mentioned in connection with his mother, who hosts a gathering of believers at her home (Acts 12:12). Because John Mark's father is not mentioned, he might have been dead when Acts was written. John Mark accompanies Paul and Barnabas when they return from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25). He then serves as their "helper" during their missionary journey to Cyprus (Acts 13:5 NIV).

After the missionaries sail from Cyprus to Perga, John Mark returns to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Several theories have been proposed to account for John Mark's departure, which the text does not explain (see Stott, *The Message*, 220). This event might be Paul's reason for opposing John Mark's participation in the subsequent journey (Acts 15:36–41). Because of the disagreement over John Mark, Paul chooses Silas and travels through Syria and Cilicia, while Barnabas and John Mark sail to Cyprus.

Whatever rift might have existed between Paul and John Mark seems to have been reconciled by the writing of Colossians, which identifies "Mark, the cousin of Barnabas," among Paul's "fellow workers" who had provided him comfort (Col 4:10–11).

Other References to "Mark"

Three New Testament letters mention a person named "Mark" who may or may not be the John Mark of Acts and Colossians. In 2 Timothy, Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark to Paul, because Mark was "useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim 4:11). A "fellow worker" named Mark is mentioned in the closing of Paul's letter

[16] Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Source Criticism. In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 1988–1990). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

to Philemon (Phlm 24). These references are most likely to John Mark, based on their similarity to Col 4:10 (note especially the corresponding names in Phlm 23–24 and Col 4:10–13).

The conclusion of 1 Peter refers to "my son Mark" (1 Pet 5:13). In line with rabbinic tradition, this may simply imply that Mark was Peter's disciple, not his actual son (*b. Sanhedrin* 19b; see also Clement, *Stromata* 1.12–13). Although there is no clear evidence of a link, it at least seems likely that the John Mark of Acts was acquainted with Peter (Acts 12:12–17).

John Mark as the Author of Mark's Gospel

Church tradition identifies John Mark as the author of the second Gospel. The text of this Gospel does not state the name of its author; the attribution to Mark likely was added in the late first or early second century, when it became necessary to distinguish between the various accounts about Jesus. The earliest assertion of Mark's authorship comes from Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, at the start of the second century (ca. AD 110–150). Although Papias' five-volume *Interpretation of the Lord's Sayings* is lost, a description of its content is preserved by Eusebius, the fourth-century historian and bishop of Caesarea (ca. AD 260–340). According to Eusebius, Papias identified Mark as the author of a body of literature containing the words and deeds of Jesus (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.15). In addition, Papias reported that Mark received his information from Peter's teaching—a detail that makes John Mark's authorship plausible, in light of Acts 12:12–17.

Selected Resources for Further Study

Barclay, William. *Introduction to the First Three Gospels*. Rev. ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975.

Schoedel, William R. *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias, vol. 5 of The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*. Edited by Robert M. Grant. Translated by William R. Schoedel. Camden: Thomas Nelson, 1967.

Stott, John R. W. *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World*. The Bible Speaks Today. Edited by John R. W. Stott. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990.

DAVID SEAL[17]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishing_net

Fishing nets have been used widely in the past, including by stone age societies. The oldest known fishing net is the net of Antrea, found with other fishing equipment in the Karelian town of Antrea, Finland, in 1913. The net was made from willow, and dates back to 8300 BC.[1] Recently, fishing net sinkers from 27,000 BC were discovered in Korea, making them the oldest fishing implements discovered, to date, in the world.[2] The remnants of another fishing net dates back to the late Mesolithic, and were found together with sinkers at the bottom of a former sea.[3][4] Some of the oldest rock carvings at Alta (4200–500 BC) have mysterious images, including intricate patterns of horizontal and vertical lines sometimes explained as fishing nets. American Native Indians on the Columbia River wove seine nets from spruce root fibers or wild grass, again using stones as weights. For floats they used sticks made of cedar which moved in a way which frightened the fish and helped keep them together.[5] With the help of large canoes, pre-European Maori deployed seine nets which could be over one thousand metres long. The nets were woven from green flax, with stone weights and light wood or gourd floats, and could require hundreds of men to haul.[6]

Fishing nets are well documented in antiquity. They appear in Egyptian tomb paintings from 3000 BC. In ancient Greek literature, Ovid makes many references to fishing nets, including the use of cork floats and lead weights.[7][8][9] Pictorial evidence of Roman fishing comes from mosaics which show nets.[10] In a parody of fishing, a type of gladiator called retiarius was armed with a trident and a cast net. He would fight against a secutor or the murmillo, who carried a short sword and a helmet

[17] Seal, D. (2016). John Mark. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

with the image of a fish on the front.[11]Between 177 and 180 the Greek author Oppian wrote the *Halieutica*, a didactic poem about fishing. He described various means of fishing including the use of nets cast from boats, scoop nets held open by a hoop, and various traps "which work while their masters sleep". Here is Oppian's description of fishing with a "motionless" net:

The fishers set up very light nets of buoyant flax and wheel in a circle round about while they violently strike the surface of the sea with their oars and make a din with sweeping blow of poles. At the flashing of the swift oars and the noise the fish bound in terror and rush into the bosom of the net which stands at rest, thinking it to be a shelter: foolish fishes which, frightened by a noise, enter the gates of doom. Then the fishers on either side hasten with the ropes to draw the net ashore.

In Norse mythology the sea giantess Rán uses a fishing net to trap lost sailors. References to fishing nets can also be found in the New Testament.[12] Jesus Christ was reputedly a master in the use of fishing nets. The tough, fibrous inner bark of the pawpaw was used by Native Americans and settlers in the Midwest for making ropes and fishing nets.[13][14] The archaeological site at León Viejo (1524–1610) has fishing net artifacts including fragments of pottery used as weights for fishing nets.[*citation needed*]

Fishing nets have not evolved greatly, and many contemporary fishing nets would be recognized for what they are in Neolithic times. However, the fishing lines from which the nets are constructed have hugely evolved. Fossilised fragments of "probably two-ply laid rope of about 7 mm diameter" have been found in one of the caves at Lascaux, dated about 15,000 BC.[15] Egyptian rope dates back to 4000 to 3500 BC and was generally made of water reed fibers. Other rope in antiquity was made from the fibers of date palms, flax, grass, papyrus, leather, or animal hair. Rope made of hemp fibres was in use in China from about 2800 BC.[*citation needed*]