

## 41 – Mark: The Action-Packed Good News of the Servant

- Mark is the **shortest of the four Gospels**. Originally this Gospel did not contain the name of the author, which was added later to the title. There is ample information, however, to indicate that “John Mark” (a Jewish Christian with both a Jewish and Greek name) wrote this version of the “good news” about Jesus. Many think he wrote under Peter’s direction. His is a Gospel of action, very much like Peter was a man of action. Mark was not one of the early disciples of Jesus.
- We can read about John/Mark in **Acts and in the letters of Paul**. He was Barnabas’ nephew and lived with his mother, and their home was an early meeting place for Christians. John Mark was a rich young man, and some people even think he could have been the “rich young ruler” of chapter 10. Peter called him “my son” (1 Peter 5:13), which might indicate that Mark became a Christian through Peter. Mark went to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, but returned home for an unknown reason. Paul was upset by this apparent “desertion” and wouldn’t allow him to go with him on another journey (Acts 15). Instead, Mark worked with Barnabas on Cyprus. He went to Rome later and worked with Paul (*they worked out their differences, a good model for us!*), even after Paul was imprisoned.
- Some scholars think **Mark was the first Gospel written and that Matthew and Luke used it as a primary source for their Gospels**. There is some evidence for this. Matthew uses about 90% of Mark’s account, and Luke over 40%. Over 600 of Mark’s 661 verses are found in Matthew and Luke combined. We don’t know exactly when Mark was written, but best dates are probably around 50-64 AD, before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- The early church fathers believed Mark’s Gospel was written in Rome **primarily for Gentile Roman Christians**. It does not make the extensive use of Old Testament references like Matthew, and takes time to explain some very Jewish words and customs. The Gentiles would need this to understand certain parts of the Gospel. His objective is to show Jesus as the Suffering Servant of all. This is the “Guide to Jesus for Gentiles.”
- Mark’s Gospel is somewhat different than the others, in that **he emphasizes the actions of Jesus rather than His teaching**. He recorded 18 of Jesus’ miracles but only four of His parables. Mark’s style is strong, descriptive and action-packed rather than reflective. He uses eyewitness accounts, and everyday Greek language (not the literary styles). He shows the people in his account as real, with real problems and real emotions. His Gospel gets right to the point and doesn’t waste any words. In keeping with this, John Mark uses the “historical present tense” 150 times! Jesus comes, Jesus does, Jesus heals, Jesus goes – all of it in the present tense.
- Even though this Gospel is much shorter than the others, Mark still **presents more miracles** of Jesus than any of the others.
- The main focus of Mark’s Gospel is **Jesus’ constant movement toward the Cross and His Resurrection**. He and His disciples are always moving in this direction to the big climax of the book, and the main point. Jesus died and rose again for the sins of all. Mark identifies Jesus as the “Son of God” but paints Him as a very real human, the servant of all. Jesus is shown as authoritative, but also as serving. Mark shows that the disciples followed Jesus in amazement, even in misunderstanding of His ultimate mission, and also fear. This Gospel writer emphasized the empty tomb and the risen Messiah. The primary purpose of Mark’s Gospel was to present a portrait of Jesus the Messiah as the Servant of the Lord for all people (not just Jews) and to give instructions for new Christians, new disciples of Jesus. Mark is not as concerned with the intricate details of Jesus’ teachings and parables as he is in telling the action-packed story of His life, death and resurrection, and what it means to the whole world.



### Suffering Servant and Sacrifice

*The ox was the beast of burden, the servant of man and is likened to Jesus. Each of the four Gospels is portrayed as having a likeness of its theme. For Matthew it is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Jewish Messiah. For Mark it is the beast of burden, the ox, which is also a sacrifice. For Luke it is a man, as Luke concentrated on the humanity of Jesus. For John it is an eagle, as eagles were symbolic of divinity and John’s purpose was to show Jesus as God Himself.*

# Highlights

<b>Ministry Starts</b> (1:1-13)	The forerunner, John the Baptist: Jesus' baptism, His temptation
<b>Ministry in Galilee</b> (1:14-6:6a)	<b>Early Galilean ministry</b> , message, call to 4 fishermen, authority over demons and disease, exorcism, heals Peter's mother-in-Law, prayer time, leper cleansed, confronts religious leaders (about healing and forgiving a paralyzed man, calling a tax collector, fasting, and authority over the Sabbath; rejected by Pharisees)
	<b>Later Galilean ministry</b> , 12 disciples appointed, about Beelzebub, invitation to join Jesus' family, to enter the Kingdom, responsibility of hearers, parable of sower (and explained), purpose of parables, parable of the lamp, parable of the growing seed, parable of the mustard seed, demonstrates His authority, calms a storm, heals a demoniac, raises Jairus' daughter, heals a hemorrhaging woman, rejected at home
<b>Withdraws from Galilee</b> (6:6b-8:38)	News spreads about Jesus, gets to Herod, report of Herod, John beheaded, goes to a deserted place, performs miracles, feeds 5,000, walks on water, confronts Pharisees about clean vs unclean, declarations to the crowds, teaching disciples, heals Syrophenician woman's daughter near Tyre, heals a deaf mute in Decapolis, feeds 4,000 at Sea of Galilee, Pharisees demand a sign, warning against Pharisee's teaching, 1 <sup>st</sup> mention of His coming suffering (at Caesarea Philippi), heals blind man at Bethsaida, Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, talk about His death and resurrection, resistance from disciples, suffering before glory
<b>On the Way to Jerusalem</b> (9:1-10:52)	The Transfiguration, heals a demon-possessed boy, 2 <sup>nd</sup> prediction of his death and resurrection, "greatest" disciple, doing good in Jesus' Name, stumbling blocks, worthless salt, about divorce, being like a child, about riches, 3 <sup>rd</sup> prediction of death and resurrection, true leadership, John's and James' interesting request and Jesus' response, heals blind Bartimaeus
<b>Ministry in Jerusalem</b> (11:1-13:37)	The Suffering Servant is presented: entry into Jerusalem; preparation (colt), people hail Jesus as Messiah and King, comes to the Temple, enters, curses the fig tree (a rejection of Israel), cleanses Temple, Messiah rejected, plots to kill Him, withered fig tree, confrontations with religious leaders, Jesus' authority questioned, parable of wicked tenants, paying taxes to Caesar, marriage at the resurrection, greatest commandment, whose Son is the Messiah?, hypocrisy of leaders, condemnation of hypocrisy, widow's sincerity, judgment of Israel through prophecy, discourse on Mount of Olives, signs of the end of the age
<b>Suffering, Death and Resurrection</b> (14:1-16:8*)	Preparation for death, anointed at Bethany (woman to be memorialized), Judas agrees to betray Jesus, last Passover, prediction of Peter's denials, time in Gethsemane, Jesus arrested, illegal trials, Peter denies three times, crucifixion, soldiers mock Him, His death, His burial, His resurrection, the empty tomb, angelic announcement, fearful disciples.
<b>"Postscript"</b> (16:9-20)	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, she tells disciples, they don't believe her, Jesus appears to 2 others "in the country" who also told others, but again they didn't believe them, Jesus appears to all 11, rebukes them for unbelief, gives the great commission (like Matthew) but adds info about speaking in new tongues, taking up serpents and living. Jesus ascends to heaven, sits down at right hand of God. Disciples go out preaching the good news, God confirms with signs.

- The **details of Jesus' birth are not found in this Gospel**. It opens with the announcement of the "beginning" of the Gospel, the good news of the promised Messiah. Mark opens with John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. This Gospel covers a period of only 7 years.
- Matthew provided a genealogy for Jesus because the King must have the proper credentials. Mark's portrayal of Jesus as servant does not require such a pedigree except that he is the "Son of God."
- **Paul echoes Mark's purpose** in His Gospel account: "*... Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*" (Philippians 2:5b-7)
- **\*There is great dispute about the last verses of this Gospel**. Some believe (*we won't get into the reasons here*) that Mark ended his account at verse 8, but that would have left everyone afraid and no sign of the resurrection, other than the angel's announcement. A close examination of the text itself reveals some very remarkable signs that verses 9-20 were indeed intended to be there. We recommend you read a commentary by Chuck Missler about these verses, which reveals the remarkable construction and inspiration of ALL of God's Word. You can find the complete commentary at Missler's website (<http://www.khouse.org/articles/2000/201/>). You will be amazed!