

# Mark - Introduction & Background

## Authorship

*External* evidence favors Mark as the book's writer. External evidence favoring Marcan authorship comes from Irenaeus, Papias, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome. Since Mark was not an apostle, it is unlikely that such a powerful tradition of Marcan authorship would have arisen in the early church had he not been the book's author. Also, the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark dating back to 125 AD contain the heading "according to Mark." Other sources of information evidencing Marcan authorship include the Muratorian Canon and the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark.

Although the book is anonymous, *internal* evidence also argues for Marcan authorship. Mark's connection to Peter is well established (1 Peter 5:13) and Mark's Gospel reveals Peter's influence behind it. Peter is mentioned 23x in the book. The closest rivals are James and John, who are only mentioned a total of 9x. Mark routinely refers to Peter's words and deeds (8:29,32-33; 9:5-6; 10:28-30; 14:29-31,66-72). Mark 16:7 even seems to single out Peter for special attention. Some have also seen an interrelationship between the outline of Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34-43 and the structure of Mark's Gospel.

Other internal evidence includes Mark's more detailed description of the Upper Room (14:12-16) in comparison to that offered by the other Gospel writers (Matt 26:17-19; John 13:1-12). If it is granted that the upper room is the same room that Mark's mother owned and that the early church met in (Acts 12:12-17), then the more detailed description found in this Gospel argues for Marcan authorship. Some believe that because the story of the young man fleeing naked is only recorded in Mark's Gospel (14:41-42), it represents an autobiographical reference by Mark to himself. Mark also qualifies as a candidate for the book's author since as a resident of Jerusalem he was well acquainted with Israel's geography (5:1; 6:53; 8:10; 11:1; 13:3), language (5:41; 7:11,34; 14:36), and customs and institutions (1:21; 2:14,16,18; 7:2-4) that are spoken of so frequently throughout the book.

As far as Mark's *biography* is concerned, he was possibly the youngest NT author. His Jewish name was John and his Roman or Latin name was Mark. This latter name is the one more frequently referred to in Scripture. Throughout the Bible, he is called Mark, Marcus, John Mark, or John who is called Mark. Although nothing is known of his father, his mother was Mary (Acts 12:12). She was resident of Jerusalem, the sister of Barnabas (Col 4:10), and owner of a large house (Acts 12:12). Interestingly, Barnabas also owned a tract of land (Acts 4:36-37). Because both Barnabas and Mary both owned property, Mark evidently came from a wealthy family background. This wealthy background might also be evidenced

by his two names. His latter name may indicate some sort of commercial relationship with the Roman Empire.

Mark is first clearly mentioned in Scripture in Acts 12:12 in connection with the meeting place of the early church. Because Peter went to Mary's house immediately after his release from prison (Acts 12:12-17), this house was likely a popular meeting place for the early church. Peter probably converted Mark since Peter later referred to him as his "son" (1 Peter 5:13). Paul also referred to Timothy as his son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2). Thus, Peter seems to have looked at Mark as his spiritual son.

Mark's initial ministry experience consisted of accompanying Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25) and from Antioch to Cyprus (Acts 13:1-3,5). However, when this missionary team reached Pamphylia, Mark departed and returned home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). The reason for Mark's departure is unstated. Theories abound concerning the reason for Mark's departure. They include Mark's lack of a direct calling when juxtaposed against the direct calling that Paul and Barnabas received, Mark's lack of personal conviction, Mark's dislike of Paul's subjugation of his uncle Barnabas, and the Gentile focus of Paul's ministry may have violated Mark's Jewish convictions. At any rate, Mark's desertion resulted in a split between Paul and Barnabas over whether Mark should accompany the missionary team on the second missionary journey. This split resulted in Barnabas and Mark traveling to Cyprus and Paul and Silas traveling to Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:36-41).

Mark's name then disappears from the Scriptural record in the following ten years.

However, Mark apparently matured since Paul had no problem of enjoying Mark's company in the midst of his first Roman imprisonment (Philemon 24; Col 4:10). Mark also ministered with Peter during the latter's ministry to the Jews in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). Paul even desired for Mark to come and be with him during his second imprisonment (2 Tim 4:11). According to tradition, Mark planted churches in Alexandria, Egypt and was martyred during the Neronian persecution.

### **Date**

It is unlikely that Mark was written after 70 AD since Mark's Gospel contains Christ's prediction of this event (13:2) without offering any comment as to its fulfillment. How one dates the book depends largely upon his view of Marcan or Matthean priority. Adherents of Marcan priority could date the book as early as 45 AD while adherents of Matthean priority could date it even later than Peter's martyrdom in 68 AD. Because of the supremacy of the arguments favoring Matthean priority over those favoring Marcan priority,<sup>4</sup> the later range of dates is preferable.

Because Clement of Alexandria (150–215 AD) indicated that the book was written from Rome to the Christians at Rome, there were only two potential times when Mark was in Rome to write the book. The first time was during Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Col

4:10) in 61 AD. The second time was during Paul's second Roman imprisonment (2 Tim 4:11) in 67 AD. The second date is preferable since tradition places Peter in Rome around this time and most agree that Mark depended upon Peter in order to produce his book (1 Pet 5:13). Eusebius cites Clement of Alexandria and Origen as indicating that Mark was written during Peter's life. However, another stream of tradition found not only in the writings of Irenaeus but also in the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark indicates that Mark wrote after the death of Peter and Paul. All things considered a date of 67–69 AD for the writing of Mark would not be far from wrong. Thus, Mark wrote toward the end of the Neronian persecution.

### **Audience**

Mark wrote to a believing, Roman audience. The conclusion that Mark wrote to Romans is apparent from several factors. First, Mark indicates that Rufus was one of the two sons of Simon of Cyrene (15:21). It would seem odd for Mark to insert this information if Rufus was not already well known to Mark's audience. Evidently, he was the same Rufus that Paul mentions elsewhere as a member of the church at Rome (Rom 16:13). Second, Mark's readers obviously were not Jews since they demonstrated a lack of familiarity with the land and customs of the land of Israel. Thus, it was necessary for Mark to explain to them that the Jordan was a river (1:5), that the Pharisees fasted (2:18), that the Mount of Olives stood opposite the temple (13:3), and that Bethphage and Bethany were near the Mount of Olives (11:1). He also had to explain to them the significance of several Jewish customs (7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42).

Third, the Gentile nature of Mark's audience is also evidenced by the way that he had to translate numerous Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11,34; 9:43; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22,34).

Fourth, the Roman nature of his audience is also seen in the way Mark often used Latin words when Greek equivalents were available. Examples include *modius* for "bushel" (4:21), *census* for "tribute" (12:14-15), *centurio* for "centurion" (15:39,44-45), *praetorium* (15:16), *legion* (5:9), *speikoulatara* for "guardsman" (6:27), and the use of Latin terms to explain the meaning of Greek words (12:42; 15:16). Fifth, Mark also expressed time in a Roman way (6:48; 13:35).

Sixth, Mark also appealed to the Roman mind by creating a work built around action. The emphasis reveals a Roman audience since the Romans were interested in action and power. Seventh, Mark's book contains minimal allusions to the OT. In fact, outside of recording Christ's direct references to the OT, Mark only cites the OT 1x (1:2-3). Eighth, Mark omits other items that would have been of interest to a Jew but little interest to a Roman, such as references to the Law or Christ's genealogy.

Ninth, Mark's recording of Christ's universal statements would be appealing to a Gentile mind. For example, Mark recorded Christ's concern for all nations (5:18-20; 7:24—8:10; 11:17; 13:19; 14:10) as well as His conviction that the temple was a place of prayer for all

nations (11:17). Tenth, Mark also appealed to a Roman audience by recording that a Roman Gentile centurion proclaimed Christ's deity (15:39) while wayward Israel did not. Eleventh, much of Mark's content would be appropriate for a Roman Christian audience in the midst of the Neronian persecution (9:49; 13:9-13).

Twelfth, except for Chrysostom who believed that Mark wrote his Gospel from Egypt, the unanimous opinion of the church fathers is that Mark was written to Roman Gentile believers. If the presupposition that Mark wrote to the church at Rome is correct, then the believing nature of Mark's audience is not only apparent from the testimony of the church fathers but it is also apparent from Rom 1:8. This verse indicates that the church had already believed and that their faith was being reported throughout the world. In sum, when all things are considered, it seems safe to conclude that Mark addressed a believing Roman audience.

### **Place of Writing**

As previously mentioned the unanimous opinion of the church fathers is that Mark's Gospel was written from Rome for the benefit of the Christians in Rome. Clement of Alexandria's (150–215 AD) opinion is typical when he indicates that the Gospel was written from Rome to the Christians at Rome. The only real deviation from this uniform testimony is Chrysostom who indicated that Mark wrote his gospel from Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it seems safe to conclude that Mark wrote his Gospel from Rome.

### **Sources**

Because Mark was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Christ or an apostle, his primary source of information was Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Not only was Mark with Peter during the latter's ministry to the Jews in Babylon, but as a Jerusalem resident he no doubt heard Peter preach often in the early days of the Jerusalem church (33–47 AD). Mark also received information from his contacts with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5-12; 15:39; Col 4:10-11) as well as Luke (Philemon 24). If it can be established that Mark was the young man mentioned in 14:51-53, then some of his information could have come from personal memory.

### **Purpose and Message**

Many see that the dominant *purpose* of Mark's Gospel is to present Christ as the servant. Three reasons make this too narrow a purpose for the book. First, Mark fails to cite Isaiah's servant passage (Is 42:1-4) in 3:1-12 despite the fact that Matthew quotes this passage in the same context (Matt 12:10-21). Second, the titles that Mark uses for Christ emphasize human and divine relationships rather than Christ's role as a servant. Third, the verse that is typically used to support the servant theme (10:45) appears at the end of the discipleship section (8:34–10:52). Thus, this verse may only govern that section rather than the entire book.

It seems better to argue that the purpose of the Gospel pertains to leading the believing reader into the full sight of discipleship. This purpose is derived from the fact that Mark's Gospel features two miracles involving the restoration of sight (8:22-26; 10:46-52). In the Bible, sight is often used as a metaphor for understanding. Both miracles relate to the subject of discipleship.

Several reasons make the first miracle (8:22-26) significant. First, it is unique to Mark's Gospel. This fact alone should cause the reader to carefully ponder its significance for understanding the book since Mark's Gospel contains little unique material. Second, it occurs immediately before Peter's confession (8:27-30) thus foreshadowing this confession. Third, the blind man's sight was not fully regained until a two-stage process transpired. Peter similarly was in need of a two-step process in order for his spiritual sight to be completely restored. Peter had a correct understanding of who the messiah was and an incorrect understanding of his calling as a disciple (8:31-33). In other words, Peter had experienced the first stage of gaining spiritual insight but not the second. He was still blind because he did not yet understand that the cross had to precede the crown for both Christ and himself.

Several reasons make the second miracle (10:46-52) significant. First, it ends the unit on discipleship (8:34—10:52). Second, blind Bartimaeus not only had correct insight into the identity of Christ ("Son of David") but he also had a correct view of discipleship since he persevered in his petition when others were seeking to deter him. In other words, Bartimaeus had gained understanding into both areas. He understood not only who Christ was but also his calling as a disciple. Thus, the purpose of Mark's Gospel is to lead his Christian readers into the second stage of insight where they will not only understand who Christ is but also their calling as His disciples. In this respect, Mark wants his readers to follow in the pattern of Bartimaeus rather than Peter.

Mark seeks to accomplish this goal by bringing his readers' attention to the true identity of Christ. Throughout His Gospel, Mark identifies Christ as the Son of God. Mark (1:1), the Father (1:11; 9:7), demons (3:11; 5:7), Peter (8:27-30), Christ (13:32), and the Roman centurion (15:39) make this identification. Thus, Mark uses the revelation of who Christ is as a model for the discipleship of his readers. Mark holds up Christ as the supreme example of service and sacrifice in order to induce his Christian readers into gaining a full understanding of their calling as disciples. They would need such an understanding since they were in the midst of the Neronian persecution. Some of them would even be called to pick up their cross and follow Christ's example by submitting to a martyr's death. Thus, the *message* of Mark is that Christ is the ultimate model of sacrifice and service who enables Christians to gain full understanding of their calling as disciples.

### **Unique Characteristics**

Mark's gospel boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, it is a book of action. For example, it skips material involving Christ's early life and instead moves quickly into Christ's miraculous ministry. Second, the word for "immediately" (*euthys*) is used 42x, which is more than all the rest of the NT combined. By contrast, this same word is only used 7x in Matthew, 3x in John, and 1x in Luke. Third, in order to portray action in progress, Mark uses the historic present 151x. Fourth, Mark used a variety of forceful words, such as "impelled" (1:12).

Fifth, Mark contains 18 of Christ's 35 miracles. Because Mark contains over half of Christ's miracles, he focuses more on the subject of Christ's miracles than any other Gospel writer. Sixth, Mark's Gospel contains only two of Christ's extended discourses (4:1-34; 13:1-37). Seventh, Mark only employs a small number of Christ's parables. Some of these parables are covered in a single sentence. Ninth, Mark is the shortest and simplest Gospel. Tenth, Mark's Gospel contains few explanatory comments. Eleventh, Mark's Gospel is known for its very simple sentences. Often these sentences are linked with the conjunction "and." Twelfth, Mark's chapters frequently begin with the word "and" (9-13). Thirteenth, Mark used ordinary, simple Greek. Fourteenth, Mark often noted what Christ taught without recording the actual words of His teaching (1:21,39; 2:2,13; 6:2,6,34; 10:1; 12:35).

Fifteenth, Mark notes the crowds that typically surrounded Christ. Sixteenth, Mark places a special emphasis upon Christ's emotions. Examples include Christ's compassion (6:34; 8:2; 10:16), anger or displeasure (1:43; 3:5; 8:33; 10:14), and distress or sorrow (7:3; 8:12; 14:33-34). Seventeenth, Mark observes the reactions of individuals and crowds when they experienced the ministry of Christ. Such reactions include concern (3:21, 31-35), amazement (1:22; 2:12; 5:20; 9:15), fear (4:41), scorn (6:3), and offense (7:37).

Eighteenth, 40% of the book is devoted to discussing the ultimate sacrifice of Christ that He would offer in the final week of His life. Nineteenth, Mark's Gospel places a special emphasis upon repeatedly noting that Christ is the Son of God (1:1,11; 9:7; 3:11; 5:7; 8:27-30; 13:32,61-62; 15:39). Twentieth, because over 90% of Mark is found in the other synoptics, Mark contains very little unique material. The parable of the seed growing secretly (4:26-29), the two-stage healing of the blind man (8:22-26), and the flight of the young, naked man (14:43-52) are among Mark's unique material. Twenty-first, in comparison to the other synoptics, Mark's Gospel contains significant omissions.

Significant omissions from Christ's life and ministry include:

1. No genealogy
2. No virgin birth
3. No Bethlehem shepherds
4. No visit of the wise men
5. No childhood at Nazareth
6. No submission to parents

7. No childhood growth
8. No reference to preexistence
9. No sermon on the mount
10. No lengthy discourses or messages
11. No major discourse against the Pharisees
12. No reference to the foolish virgins

Twenty-second, Mark uses minimal OT citations. Twenty-third, Mark's Gospel contains its own unique discipleship section (8:34–10:52). Twenty-fourth, Mark consistently draws attention to the disciples' lack of spiritual understanding (4:13,40; 6:52; 7:17-19; 8:17,21; 9:10,32; 10:26; 16:10-14). Twenty-fifth, Mark emphasizes the messianic secret. This secret is invoked after miracles (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), exorcisms (1:25,34; 3:12), confessions (8:30), and the transfiguration (9:9). This messianic secret was necessary in Christ's ministry to prevent Him from being seen only as a superficial miracle worker (John 6:15,26), in order to avoid detracting Him from His ministry to the disciples, in order to avoid detracting from the suffering aspects of His ministry, in order to safeguard Him from premature death, and in order to prevent Him from revealing Himself to the nation before the elapsing of the divinely ordained timeline (Dan 9:24-27).

### **Structure**

Mark seems to follow a six-fold structure. First, he introduces Christ (1:1-20). Second, he focuses on Christ's ministry of service (1:21–3:19). Third, he focuses on the opposition and rejection experienced by Christ. This section emphasizes both the individual and national rejection of Christ (3:20–6:29). Fourth, regarding the new spiritual truths that Christ sought to reveal to the disciples in light of the nation's rejection of Him, Mark notes the disciples' failure to grasp these truths (6:30–8:33). Fifth, Mark records the discipleship section (8:34–10:52). This section is designed to help the disciples grasp the truths of discipleship that seemed to have eluded them in the previous section. Just as Matt 12:24 represents a turning point away from Christ's public ministry and toward Christ's private ministry in Matthew's Gospel, Peter's confession (8:27-33) represents a similar turning point. It transitions the reader away from the disciples' obtuseness and toward the Lord's teaching on discipleship. These discipleship truths are delivered on the way (9:33; 10:32) to Jerusalem. Sixth, the final section records Christ's ultimate sacrifice (11–16). A geographical structure of Mark would encompass the Galilean ministry (1:14–8:30), Christ's journey through Judea (8:31–10:54), and His ultimate sacrifice in Jerusalem (11:1–16:20).

### **Outline**

- I. Introduction to the servant (Mark 1:1-20)
  - (1) Identity of the servant (1:1)
  - (2) Announcements regarding the servant's advent (1:2-11)

- (A) By Isaiah (1:2-3)
  - (B) By John (1:4-8)
  - (C) By the Father (1:9-11)
- (3) Preparation of the servant (1:12-20)
  - (A) Christ's temptation (1:12-13)
  - (B) Christ's proclamation of the kingdom (1:14-15)
  - (C) Christ calls the first disciples (1:16-20)
- II. Ministry of the servant (Mark 1:21—3:19)
  - (1) Casting out the demon (1:21-28)
  - (2) Healing of the fever (1:29-31)
  - (3) Healing of the masses (1:32-34)
  - (4) Preaching (1:35-39)
  - (5) Healing of the leper (1:40-45)
  - (6) Healing of the paralytic (2:1-12)
  - (7) Calling of Levi (2:13-17)
  - (8) Christ's service is beyond the pharisaical system (2:18-22)
  - (9) Christ defends the disciples (2:23-28)
  - (10) Healing of the withered hand (3:1-6)
  - (11) Healing of the masses (3:7-12)
  - (12) Appointing the disciples (3:13-19)
- III. Opposition to the servant (Mark 3:20—8:33)
  - (1) Rejection in his hometown (3:20-21)
  - (2) Rejection by the Pharisees (3:22-30)
  - (3) Rejection by Christ's own family (3:31-35)
  - (4) Opposition causes Christ to change the direction of his ministry (Mark 4:1—5:43)
    - (A) Revelation of the mystery age (4:1-34)
      - (a) Sower (4:1-20)
      - (b) Lamp (4:21-25)
      - (c) Growing seed (4:26-29)
      - (d) Mustard seed (4:30-34)
    - (B) Revelation to his disciples (Mark 4:35—5:43)
      - (a) Power over nature (4:35-41)
      - (b) Power over demons (5:1-20)
      - (c) Power over disease and death (5:21-43)
  - (5) Christ again rejected in His hometown (6:1-6)
  - (6) Christ commissions his disciples by warning them of opposition (6:7-13)
  - (7) Herod beheads John (6:14-29)
  - (8) More revelation to his disciples (Mark 6:30—8:33)



- (A) Feeding of the 5000 (6:30-44)
- (B) Walking on water (6:45-52)
- (C) Healings at Gennesaret (6:53-56)
- (D) Traditions of the Pharisees (7:1-23)
- (E) Healing of the Syro-Phoenician girl (7:24-30)
- (F) Healing of the deaf and dumb man (7:31-37)
- (G) Feeding of the 4000 (8:1-10)
- (H) Leaven of the Pharisees (8:11-21)
- (I) Healing of the blind man (8:22-26)
- (J) Peter's confession (8:27-33)

#### IV. Discipleship teachings of the servant (Mark 8:34—10:52)

- (1) Cost of discipleship (8:34-38)
- (2) Christ's Transfiguration (9:1-13)
- (3) Importance of faith (9:14-29)
- (4) Christ's second prediction of His death (9:30-32)
- (5) Necessity of humility (9:33-37)
- (6) Necessity of not stumbling a disciple (9:38-50)
- (7) Necessity of faithfulness in marriage (10:1-12)
- (8) Importance of a childlike faith (10:13-16)
- (9) Having a proper perspective toward worldly wealth (10:17-31)
- (10) Christ's third prediction of His death (10:32-34)
- (11) Importance of following Christ's example of humility (10:35-45)
- (12) Healing the blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52)

#### V. Ultimate sacrifice of the servant (Mark 11:1—16:20)

- (1) Presentation and rejection of the servant (Mark 11:1—12:44)
  - (A) Triumphal entry (11:1-11)
  - (B) Cursing the fig tree (11:12-14)
  - (C) Cleansing of the Temple (11:15-19)
  - (D) Instructions on faith (11:20-26)
  - (E) Questioning of Christ's authority (11:27-33)
  - (F) Parable of the tenants (12:1-12)
  - (G) Reciprocal questions (12:13-37)
    - (a) Three hostile questions from the Jewish leaders (12:13-34)
      - (i) Taxes (12:13-17)
      - (ii) Resurrection (12:18-27)
      - (iii) Law (12:28-34)
    - (b) Christ's defense of his deity (12:35-37)
  - (H) Christ rejects the Pharisees (12:38-40)

- (I) Widow's mite (12:41-44)
- (2) Olivet discourse (13:1-37)
  - (A) Prediction of the Temple's destruction (13:1-2)
  - (B) Disciples' questions (13:3-4)
  - (C) Events of tribulation (13:5-27)
    - (a) First half (13:5-13)
    - (b) Middle (13:14-18)
    - (c) Second half (13:19-20)
    - (d) Second advent (13:21-27)
  - (D) Applications (13:28-37)
    - (a) Illustration of the fig tree exhorting watchfulness (13:28-32)
    - (b) Illustration of the slave exhorting faithfulness (13:33-37)
- (3) Passion narrative (Mark 14:1—15:47)
  - (A) Plot to kill Christ (14:1-2)
  - (B) Christ anointed by Mary (14:3-9)
  - (C) Judas' betrayal (14:10-11)
  - (D) Celebration of the Passover (14:12-25)
    - (a) Securing the upper room (14:12-16)
    - (b) Prediction of Judas' betrayal (14:17-21)
    - (c) Celebration of the Passover (14:22-25)
  - (E) Christ predicts Peter's three-fold denial (14:26-31)
  - (F) Christ in Gethsemane (14:32-42)
  - (G) Christ's arrest (14:43-49)
  - (H) Disciples flee (14:50-52)
  - (I) Christ's trial before Caiaphas (14:53-65)
  - (J) Peter's threefold denial (14:66-72)
  - (K) Christ's trial before Pilate (15:1-15)
  - (L) Christ's mistreatment by the soldiers (15:16-20)
  - (M) Christ's crucifixion (15:21-41)
  - (N) Christ's burial (15:42-47)
- (4) Christ's Resurrection (16:1-20)
  - (A) Announcement (16:1-8)
  - (B) Appearances (16:9-14)
  - (C) Great commission (16:15-20)

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## Why Four Gospels?

This is not incidental: The Holy Spirit determined before the foundation of the world that there would be these four portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ. He took these four men and prepared each of them to tell the story of Jesus' life, each in his own way.

### **In Retrospect**

- Matthew—The Promised One is here; see His Credentials
- Mark—This is how He worked; see His Power
- Luke—This what He was like; see His Nature
- John—This is who He really was; see His Godship

### **Levitical Offerings: Lev 1-7**

- Matthew: whose theme is the government of God, identifies the work of the Cross with the trespass offering, where the Lord could say, as in Ps 69, "Then I restored that which I took not away"
  - Mark: the sin offering is before us, Christ dying not only for trespasses committed, but because we are sinners by nature, which our practice makes evident.
  - Luke: as the peace offering, that man may have fellowship with the Father
  - John: the death of our Lord as the burnt offering, glorifying the Father in the scene where He had been so dishonored by sin
- [Source: Ironside, Mark, p.10-11.]

### **Mark's Uniqueness**

Acts 12:25: And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 13:5: ...and they had also John [with them] **to minister**.

- "...to minister" -

— *aggelos*, a messenger, envoy; angel; ministering spirit

— *apostolos*, one sent forth; a delegate; apostle

— *diakonos*, one who executes the commands of another; one who serves; deacon

— *leitourgos*, a public minister, a servant of the state, or of the temple (from which we get the term, liturgy)

— *huperetes*, under-rower; the lowest of all ranks

— The lowest rank of the slave positioned in the most difficult spot with the most unwieldy oar; the common workhand; the subordinate; the menial laborer...this is the term used to refer to Mark.

### **Mark's Background**

John Mark was the son of a wealthy woman named Mary, probably a widow, whose home was large enough to serve as a meeting place for many of the early disciples after the Pentecostal outpouring (Acts 12:1-19).

When the rich young ruler questioning Christ about what he needed to do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17-22), Mark includes a detail that Matthew and Luke failed to mention: "And Jesus looking upon him loved him..." (Mark 10:21). This hints at the possibility that young John Mark himself may have been that rich young man.

An early church tradition suggests that it was Mark who was the certain "young man" who followed Christ right up to His entry into the house of the high priest and then, when the guards tried to lay hold of him, left the linen cloth that he was clothed with in their hands and fled naked (Mark 14:51-52). Mark was the only one who included this incident.

Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus, but later returned to Jerusalem, which deeply disappointed Paul (Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:37-39). Having felt abandoned, Paul refused to take him on the second journey, and thus began a bitter quarrel between Paul and Barnabas, to whom Mark was related: probably a cousin—not "nephew" (KJV); the word *anepsios* (Col 4:10) being used in Num 36:11, for "father's brothers' sons." Enter Silas and exit Barnabas and Mark.

Paul and Mark later reconciled when Paul was in prison in Rome. Mark served as his aide and then as a delegate on an important mission to Asia Minor (Cf. Philemon 24 and Col 4:10). Later Paul would ask Timothy to bring Mark back with him to Rome because he was useful in service (2 Tim 4:11).

When Peter was writing 1st Peter, he affectionately called Mark "his son" (1 Peter 5:13). It may have been Peter that originally led him to Christ. It was Mark's intimacy with Peter that resulted in this intimate portrait of Christ.

### **A Gospel of Action**

Mark's gospel is that of a shooting script, as for a movie or a teleplay. It moves rapidly through a series of visual images, emphasizing action. Mark continually uses a word *eutheos*, which is translated "immediately," "straightway," "forthwith," "anon," etc. (it appears over 40x—about equal to the rest of the NT; only 7x in Matthew, 1x in Luke). Mark uses the "historical present tense" 150x: Jesus comes, Jesus says, Jesus heals—all in the present tense.

There are more miracles recorded in Mark than in the other Gospels, despite it being shorter. [Matthew's gospel seems longer because he includes the discourses—probably verbatim, having the skill to take them down in shorthand (as a customs official). Removing the discourses, it is shorter than Mark's.]

It takes only 20 short verses in Mark 1 to describe the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism, His temptation in the wilderness, and the call of the disciples.

## **The Gospel for Romans**

Mark's purpose was to write down the Gospel as Peter had presented it to Romans (so say the Fathers, at least, and internal evidence supports them). That the Gospel was for Gentiles can be seen:

- (1) From the translation of the Aramaic expressions
  - Boanerges (Mark 3:17)
  - Talitha cumi (Mark 5:41)
  - Corban (Mark 7:11)
  - Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46)
  - Abba (Mark 14:36)
  - Golgotha (Mark 15:22)
- (2) In the explanation of Jewish customs (Mark 14:12; 15:42)
- (3) From the fact that the Law is not mentioned and the OT is only quoted once in Mark's own narrative
- (4) The Gentile sections, especially in Mark 6-8

That it was for Romans is seen in:

- (1) The explanation of a Greek term by a Latin (Mark 12:42)
- (2) The preponderance of works of power, the emphasis on authority (Mark 2:10), patience and heroic endurance (Mark 10:17ff).
- (3) Forbids a practice that was not Jewish but Roman (Mark 10:12)

Those who believe it was written at Rome find further hints in the mention of Rufus (Mark 15:21; Cf. Rom 16:13 ) and the resemblance between Mark 7:1-23 and Rom 14.

The Roman centurion's remark (Mark 15:39) is the style of the author, and bears the same relation to Mark's purpose as to John's (John 20:31).