

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 10TH–11TH, 2025 // THE GOSPEL OF MARK

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK WHO WAS MARK?

The first time we hear Mark's name in Scripture is in Acts 12:12. His mother, Mary, had a home in Jerusalem that was a meeting place for the early church.

- He is mentioned eight times in the New Testament and is often called "John Mark"—a cousin of Barnabas (one of the first missionaries and a leader in the early church).
- Barnabas (John Mark's cousin) encouraged Mark to travel with him and Paul on missionary journeys (Acts 11, 12, 13).
- For reasons we will never know, Mark called it quits and left Paul and Barnabas on the mission field in Perga (Acts 13:13).
- This led to a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, but later Mark reconciled with Paul.
- Above all, Mark is known for his relationship with Peter: Peter refers to him affectionately as his "son" (1 Peter 5:13).
- Mark most likely wrote his gospel as a memoir of Peter's spiritual remembrances of Jesus.
- In his final letter, Peter promised that even after his death, his teachings would remain accessible and remembered (2 Pet. 1:15).

## HOW AND WHEN WAS MARK WRITTEN?

The Gospel of Mark was likely one of the first books written in the NT, around AD 55–59.

- Scholars generally agree that Mark was likely written in Rome or possibly elsewhere in the Roman Empire.
- Its structure and content suggest it was written primarily for a gentile (non-Jewish) audience, possibly in response to the growing interest in Jesus among non-Jewish communities within the Roman Empire.

## THE FINGERPRINTS OF PETER ON MARK'S GOSPEL

Only Mark tells us that the Sabbath was made for man, and that Jesus declared all foods clean—a significant detail for Peter, considering the vision he received in Acts 10 to "kill and eat."

- The eyewitness details and emphasis on Jesus' emotions, crowd reactions, the time of day, and geographic locations are also Peter's fingerprints.
- Peter is mentioned 26 times in Mark, and events involving Peter are told with great detail.

## WHO WAS MARK'S AUDIENCE?

Mark's Gospel seems targeted to Roman Believers—those who had heard about Jesus and wanted to know what He did (action is recorded in Mark).

- The Gospel of Mark includes several Aramaic phrases (more than the other gospels) followed by Greek translations, explanations of Jewish practices, and the use of several Latin terms.
- There is a very gentle treatment of Roman figures.

## HISTORICAL SETTING OF MARK

When Mark's Gospel was written, Peter was probably in Rome preaching the gospel, and Paul's ministry had led to the gospel message expanding throughout the Roman Empire.

- Christianity was exploding beyond its Jewish roots. As more gentiles joined the church, there was a growing need for written accounts of Jesus' life for people who were unfamiliar with Jewish culture.
- Nero became emperor in AD 54, and Christianity was increasingly being viewed with suspicion as a subversive, anti-Roman sect that refused to honor Caesar as Lord.
- Early church tradition suggests that Mark was in Rome as he wrote this gospel—perhaps to strengthen and equip gentile Believers under growing pressure and persecution.

## WHAT IS MARK ABOUT?

- 1) Simplicity, urgency, and immediacy—the word "immediately" is used 41 times. Jesus is seen as the ultimate Servant of action and power, and the message of God's Kingdom is urgent and vital.
- 2) Jesus as the ultimate Servant of God—Jesus' service, His leadership, and His self-sacrifice.
- 3) The emotional life of Jesus—Mark uses far more adjectives than any other gospel writer to paint an emotional portrait of Jesus in fifteen powerful scenes from His life and passion.
- 4) Selective Revelation—Jesus is selective in whom He reveals Himself to until His work is complete.

## GOD'S SERVANT OF ACTION.

Mark emphasizes Jesus' actions more than His teachings, as if to show and demonstrate the identity of Jesus through what He did.

- When Jesus invades our hearts and lives, His work in us is seen—when He is just a distant idea, our faith is often empty words.
- Following Jesus is more than talk—the message of the Kingdom is one of action.

## THE SON OF GOD (MARK 1:1–8)

### "THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST..."

The good news (gospel) of how we are made right with God begins with the story of God coming to Earth in the person of Jesus, who is the Christ (anointed one/Messiah).

- "...the Son of God."—Jesus Christ was a real, historical person who walked the Earth like any other human, yet He was unique in that He is the only begotten Son of God.

The coming of the Christ was foretold by the Jewish prophets, two of whom Mark quotes in vs. 2–3 (Isaiah, Malachi).

- Only Isaiah is named, probably because Isaiah's prophecy emphasizes the servanthood and salvation of the Messiah, whereas Malachi's prophecy is more about judgment.
- In both prophecies, a messenger was sent ahead to prepare the way for the Lord's coming.

The messenger who prepared the way for the coming Messiah was John the Baptist (v. 4).

- John's ministry was like a herald who would come before a king, announcing his coming and making sure the roads were straight for the king to travel.
- John's ministry was "in the wilderness"—somewhere beside the Jordan River, in the Judean wilderness, north of the Dead Sea.

John's unusual clothing and unconventional diet (v. 6) were intended to be symbolic of his role and ministry—garments of hair were traditional dress for prophets (Zech. 13:4).

- Great crowds were not just coming to hear John preach; he was also baptizing them in the river Jordan as

they confessed their sins (v. 5).

- The only kind of baptism like this practiced by Jews was for gentiles who wished to convert.

John's baptism most likely signified a person's willingness to turn from sin and the false belief that being born a Jew automatically put them in a right relationship with God.

- As popular as John was, his message was that there was another Who was so great that he was not even worthy to perform the lowest of all tasks (removing sandals) for Him (v. 7).
- The Messiah's baptism would be even greater.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given only to prophets, priests, and kings, but the prophets pointed to a day when the Holy Spirit was to be "poured out on all flesh" (Joel 2:28).

- Now John is saying that through the Messiah, we all can have access to a baptism by the very Spirit of the living God (v. 8).
- John's baptism was external, but the Messiah's baptism would be internal and spiritual.

## BAPTISM AND THE DESERT (MARK 1:9–13)

Jesus' first appearance in Mark's Gospel is here in v. 9, as He traveled from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized by John.

- If John's water baptism was for repentance, then why would Jesus need it? He did not have any sin (Matt. 3:14)!
- The One who knew no sin would become sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He was baptized to identify with our sinful humanity and to set the example.

As Jesus came up out of the water (v. 10), the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended on Him "like a dove."

- The voice of Father God spoke from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased" (v. 11).
- We see at Jesus' baptism all three members of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bearing witness to a new work and beginning.

The same Spirit that descended on Jesus at His baptism drove Him into the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by Satan himself (vs. 12–13).

- God is not the one who tempts (James 1:13), but God sometimes allows temptations to refine us and display His faithfulness (1 Pet. 1:6–7).
- Such was the temptation of Jesus—it was a demonstration of His power and divinity even in the face of Satan himself!

The first man, Adam, met Satan and lost the battle against him, and plunged humanity into sin and death (Gen. 3).

- Israel (also called God's son, Ex. 4) was tempted and tested in the desert for 40 years after they were "baptized" in the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2).

- Israel lost the battle against temptation as well—they complained, doubted God's goodness, and failed to trust Him to provide.

But now we see the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) and the solitary Son of God warding off temptation and defeating Satan.

- Matthew and Luke make no mention of "wild animals," but Mark does. In fact, the language implies that Jesus was at peace with the wild beasts.
- After His temptation, Jesus is recognized as Lord by His creation, both angels and the wild beasts.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD (MARK 1:14–20)

We will read later, in Mark 6, what happens to John in prison, but for now, we are told that after John was arrested, Jesus came to the region of Galilee to begin His ministry (v. 14).

- Jesus' message was that "...the time [Kairos: decisive moment, and strategic opportunity] is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near."
- The Kingdom has come near because the King has come near—the time to respond is now.

## "REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS!" (V. 15B)

In our modern context, there is an idea that Jesus was simply a social activist who just performed miracles/healings and told some stories about being nice.

- Here we see that His call to action is to "repent"—make a change of mind, heart, and direction.
- He called His followers to "believe"—to trust God, take Him at His Word, and receive His Messiah.

As Jesus walks by the sea of Galilee (a freshwater lake that's 13 miles long and 7 miles wide), He sees Simon (Peter) and Andrew "casting a net" because they were fishermen (v. 16).

- The call Jesus issues to these men is at the root of what it means to respond to the good news of Jesus—"Follow Me."
- To Jews, this invitation was to a new identity grounded in a relationship with a new Leader.

The invitation was that if they followed Him, He would initiate a process of growth in their lives that would change them into something far greater ("fishers of men," KJV) than what they were.

- The phrase "fishers of men" comes from Jeremiah 16:16, where it speaks of God's judgment.
- Jesus was inviting these disciples to "catch" men and women so they'd be spared God's judgment, since Jesus would give Himself in their place.

The response of these fishermen (Simon, Andrew, James, and John) to the command of Jesus was to leave behind all they knew (vs. 18–20)

- Their belief in Jesus was shown as they left their lives to follow His lead into the unknown.
- They did not try to redesign or silence His teachings—they understood that "follow me" meant leaving everything else behind.
- What "nets" are we trying to take with us?

## REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS

- The Kingdom of God has come near because the King has come—now is the moment (Kairos) to respond.
- To truly "believe" that the Kingdom has come near is to "repent" of our own self-governance and acknowledge Jesus as King, not us.
- The good news is that God Himself has given us Jesus, His Son, to save and rescue us.

## FOLLOW ME

- Jesus' invitation to "follow" is to receive a new identity grounded in a relationship with a new Leader.
- It essentially means: "Live with Me and learn by watching Me. Own My priorities and values. Learn to care about what I care about and follow My example by doing what I have come to do."
- As we follow Jesus, He initiates a process of growth in our lives that changes us into something far greater than what we are now!