

The Gospel According to Mark

1: Intro to the Gospel According to Mark

Discover why the Gospel of Mark can be trusted and how its eyewitness roots connect us directly to the life and ministry of Jesus. Come see how Peter's memories, Mark's writing, and the earliest Christian testimony all point us to the same conclusion: *JESUS IS THE STORY.*

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* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

Most scholars believe Mark to be the first of our four Gospels written, and we need to do a little homework to determine: 1) *Who wrote it?* 2) *Who was he writing to?* 3) *How do we know?*

AUTHOR & AUDIENCE

Most people refer to this as **The Gospel According to Mark**.

The Greek word translated "**gospel**" means "**good news**"—and this Gospel tells us the GOOD NEWS of *who Jesus is* and the amazing things *He has done*.

Mark 1:1

The beginning of the **gospel** of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This particular writing is not the only Gospel. It's 1 of 4 Gospel accounts handed down to us from the earliest Christians—2 traditionally connected directly to apostles, **Matthew & John**, and 2 written by close associates of apostles, **Mark & Luke**. These aren't stories that showed up hundreds of years after Jesus. They are rooted in the eyewitness testimony of the people who knew Jesus and walked with Him.

We call this writing "**The Gospel According to MARK**". While this title was likely not part of Mark's original composition, the earliest surviving manuscripts in which the title is preserved identify it as **Kata Markon** (Greek)—"**According to Mark**."

AUTHOR: WHO is MARK & why do we believe he wrote it?

- One of our earliest pieces of evidence comes from **Papias**, a Christian leader who lived in the late 1st & early 2nd centuries - very close to the generation of the apostles.

☀ 4th-century church historian **Eusebius** preserved what **Papias** wrote about **Mark**:

*"Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ."*¹

- Peter refers to **John Mark** being with him, calling him, "Mark, my son" (1 Pet 5:13).

PETER REMEMBERS, MARK WRITES, but JESUS IS THE STORY.

- Peter has a prominent place throughout this Gospel. Yet if Mark is recording Peter's preaching, Peter certainly doesn't make himself look like the hero. Mark tells us about Peter misunderstanding Jesus, rebuking Jesus, abandoning Jesus, and even denying three times that he knew Him.

➡ Peter wasn't interested in making himself look good. **He wanted people to know the truth about JESUS.**

- Mark IS mentioned in the writing we call **ACTS of the APOSTLES** ([Acts 12:12](#); [12:25](#); [13:5](#); [13:13](#); [15:37-39](#)). The first time Mark's name appears in Acts, Peter has just escaped from prison and goes straight to the home of Mark's mother, where the Christians are gathered praying. So Mark's connection to Peter may go back very early ([Acts 12:12](#)).
- Evidently, Mark grew up around the earliest Christians → traveled with Paul and Barnabas → failed and went home (*Paul was frustrated with him*) → was restored to go on mission with Barnabas → later became closely associated with Peter.
- There's a great redemption piece outside Acts. By the end of Paul's life, the man Paul once refused to take with him is the man Paul specifically asks for:

2 Timothy 4:11

Only Luke is with me. Bring **Mark** with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry.

¹ Papias [quoted by Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.39]

AUDIENCE: WHO Mark is writing to?

There are several indications that Mark is writing primarily to a **Gentile audience** (people who were not raised Jewish).

- Mark repeatedly **stops to explain Jewish customs** that a Jewish reader would already understand. In **Mark 7:3-4**, the author pauses to explain the Jewish hand-washing traditions.
- Mark preserves several Aramaic expressions, but then immediately translates them for his readers.
"Talitha kum" — "Little girl, I say to you, get up." (Mark 5:41)
"Ephphatha" — "Be opened!" (Mark 7:34)
"Golgotha" — "Place of the Skull." (Mark 15:22)
- Mark occasionally explains things using Roman terminology. In Mark 12:42 he tells his readers that two small Jewish coins amounted to a **Roman quadrans**.
- Those details fit well with the ancient Christian tradition that Mark wrote for **Gentile believers, quite possibly in Rome**.
- Mark's Greek is simple and straightforward, but it often reflects **Hebrew and Aramaic ways of speaking**—exactly what we might expect from someone connected to Peter and the Jerusalem church.

Mark is telling the story of a Jewish Messiah to people who often need that Jewish world explained to them.

Among the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—*Mark seems to bridge the Jewish world of Matthew and the Gentile emphasis we often see in Luke*. Mark uses deeply Jewish language and ideas, yet regularly explains Aramaic words and Jewish customs so his Gentile readers can understand what they mean.

AUDIENCE: WHEN was Mark writing?

We have good reasons to believe that **ACTS** was written BEFORE the besiegement and destruction of Jerusalem - which began in April of AD 70 and was complete in August of 70 AD.

✗ Yet, there is NO MENTION of this event in ACTS!!!

❓ Why doesn't ACTS never mention the 5 month siege, the cost of over 1 million Jews (per the writings of Josephus) AND...the fact that this **fulfilled what Jesus had prophesied would occur within the lifetime of His disciples?**

✓ Likely, because the besiegement & destruction HAD NOT YET OCCURRED when ACTS was written.

DEATHS

The entire second half of Acts follows Paul - his conversion, his missionary journeys, and even the persecutions he faced. **BUT...Luke's writing of ACTS says NOTHING about Paul being beheaded** sometime between 64-67 AD. Why not?

✓ Likely, because *Paul's death HAD NOT OCCURRED when ACTS was written*.

Peter dominates the opening chapters, yet **Luke never tells us of Peter's death**, although he died around the same time as Paul.

Although **James** (the half brother of Jesus) - is leading the church in Jerusalem (see Acts 15), and is stoned to death in AD 62, Luke does not mention this either. *James the apostle's death IS mentioned in Acts* (beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I in 44 AD). Why isn't the death of James, the half-brother of Jesus, mentioned? Likely, because James' death HAD NOT OCCURRED when ACTS was written.

- **Luke writing Acts likely dates between 57-62**. In Acts, we find out that Luke was on missionary journeys WITH PAUL.
- We know that **ACTS** is the SEQUEL to the 1st writing we called **LUKE**. So, obviously, **LUKE** was written BEFORE ACTS.
- We have multiple occasions where **Paul seems to QUOTE LUKE'S Gospel**. And if that's the case, then this clearly means Luke was written BEFORE Paul quotes it. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (thought to be written in the early 50s), **Paul recounts Jesus' words at the Last Supper in language strikingly similar to Luke 22:19-20**.

MARKAN PRIORITY

LUKE was NOT the 1st Gospel written - MARK was! Nearly all of Mark's Gospel is repeated in Matthew about 90%; and **almost 50% of MARK appears in LUKE**. That's one reason many scholars believe Mark was the earliest Gospel and that Matthew and Luke used Mark as one of their sources. Mark contains around 11,000 words, while Matthew has around 18,000 and Luke about 19,000.

According to early Christian testimony, Mark's account was strongly shaped by Peter's eyewitness testimony; a fast-moving, vivid account of what Peter had seen Jesus do and heard Him say...ALL likely written before 50 AD - less than 20 years from when the events took place.

🕒 *The story of Jesus wasn't invented generations later. The words and deeds of Jesus were being remembered, preached, transmitted, and written down while the eyewitness generation was still alive.*

PETER REMEMBERS.

MARK WRITES.

JESUS IS THE STORY.

Join us next week as we explore this powerful gospel that begins with these powerful words,

Mark 1:1

The beginning of the **gospel** of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

✓ *It's all about Jesus! HE is worthy of our lives!*

❓ Do you KNOW HIM? Are you GROWING in him?

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Chris & Caitlin Day** (850-673-7920), **Glen & Margie Peacock** (850-464-1484).

Discussion questions

These questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your family, friends, or small group.

1. What stood out to you most about the background of John Mark and his connection to Peter? Why?
2. Why does it matter that Mark's Gospel is closely connected to eyewitness testimony about Jesus? How does that affect the way you read it?
3. Peter's failures are not hidden in Mark's Gospel. What does that tell you about the honesty of the Gospel accounts—and about the grace of Jesus toward imperfect people?
4. John Mark experienced failure, conflict, and later restoration. Where do you see God's grace in Mark's story, and how does that encourage you regarding your own failures or someone else's?
5. Mark often explains Jewish customs and Aramaic expressions for Gentile readers. What does that tell us about the importance of helping people understand the message of Jesus in language they can grasp?
6. We summarized the early Christian tradition this way: **"PETER REMEMBERS. MARK WRITES. JESUS IS THE STORY."** What would it look like for **Jesus to truly be the story of your life** rather than simply one part of it?
7. Mark begins with: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What do the titles "Christ" and "Son of God" tell us about who Mark wants us to understand Jesus to be?
8. The message emphasized that the story of Jesus was **remembered, preached, transmitted, and written down while the eyewitness generation was still alive**. How does that strengthen your confidence in sharing the Gospel with someone who questions whether the Bible can be trusted?
9. Do you KNOW Jesus, or do you mainly know things ABOUT Jesus? What is the difference?
10. Where do you most need to GROW in your relationship with Jesus as we begin this journey through Mark?