



## 5a. Mark and the Apostolic Proclamation of Christ

“Few any longer doubt the pivotal place of the Gospel of Mark not only in the coming forth of the other records of Jesus’ ministry but also in the transmitting of the essential message of Jesus’ messiahship . . . It is the record closest to the ministry, both in time and in tone.” (S. Kent Brown, *The Gospels* [SS5], 61)

## Mark’s Gospel

- **“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . .” (Mark 1:1)**
- Is this first a title? Mark’s theme? A later scribe’s explanation?
- What was “gospel” to Mark?
  - Literary treatments of Jesus and his mission were not yet called “gospels”
  - Mark has more references to Jesus himself preaching **“the gospel”** than the other evangelists
    - These usually refer to the coming kingdom
  - But Mark’s use of “gospel” elsewhere seems **similar to Paul’s apostolic proclamation or testimony of Jesus and what he did**
    - In other words, **christology**—the person and work of Jesus

## Authorship

### Historical Questions

- The Gospel According to Mark
  - As with all the gospels, **the superscription is late** (not original to the earliest texts)
    - Despite our footnotes, **mss. show that the JST only call Matthew and John “The Testimony of . . .”** This supports the suggestion those two were eyewitnesses
- Nevertheless, **early Christian sources are unanimous that “Mark” was the evangelist**
  - Papias (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century): “Mark, indeed **having been the interpreter of Peter**, wrote **accurately, although not in order**, all the he recalled of what was either said or done by the Lord . . . **He followed Peter, who used to adapt his instructions to the needs** [of the moment or audience]” (Euseb. *EH* 3.39.15-16)
    - **Kerygma**, or apostolic preaching, as source; Peter as authority
    - Mark’s structure follows Peter’s speeches in Acts: **baptism, ministry, focus on Passion and resurrection**
  - References in other post-biblical Christian sources (“patristic” sources) all agree an author named Mark

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## John Mark

- Mark the evangelist is usually associated with the New Testament Mark
- **John Mark** of Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37-39
  - **Yohanan, Jewish name**
    - Daughter of the Mary who owned a house and garden in Jerusalem
    - May have known of Jesus in the Jerusalem phase of his ministry, no evidence that he was in Galilee
      - Traditionally associated with the young man who flees from Gethsemane in Mark 14:50–51, but this is a tendentious identification
  - **Marcus, Roman name?**
    - If he had citizenship, would he have known some Latin?
- Sometime companion of Paul (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24)
- Peter’s companion in Rome (1 Pet. 5:13)
  - Mark’s Greek and perhaps Latin would have enabled him to serve as a translator

*Fra Angelico, “Peter Preaching with Mark”*



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## Audience and Date

### Historical Questions

- Patristic evidence
  - Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1): **in Rome after Peter's death c. A.D. 64**
  - Clement of Alexandria (Euseb. *EH* 6.14.6-7): **in Rome before the execution of Peter**, who read and reviewed it
- Internal evidence: **western Gentile audience**
  - Unfamiliar with Jewish customs, Aramaic terms, and Palestinian geography
    - The author himself is confused about Galilean geography, but not Judean
  - Pervasiveness of Latin terms and Roman customs
  - Concerned with opposition, civil upheaval, and the possibility of failure in the face of persecution
- Suggested audience: **Rome or Italy in the late 60's**
  - Christians had suffered persecution in the capital after the A.D. 64 fire
    - These would not have been specifically "Romans" but people of all classes from all over the empire who lived in the city, for most of whom Greek would be their primary language
  - K. Brown suggests Rome between the overthrow of Nero and the fall of Jerusalem, i.e., A.D. 69
    - Mark 13 does not betray knowledge about the details of the Jerusalem siege
  - **Earliest written of the gospels**, although authorities from Irenaeus to Augustine thought that Matthew had come first
    - Modern studies suggests that Mark was a source for Matthew and Luke

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## Features of Marcan Style

### Literary Questions

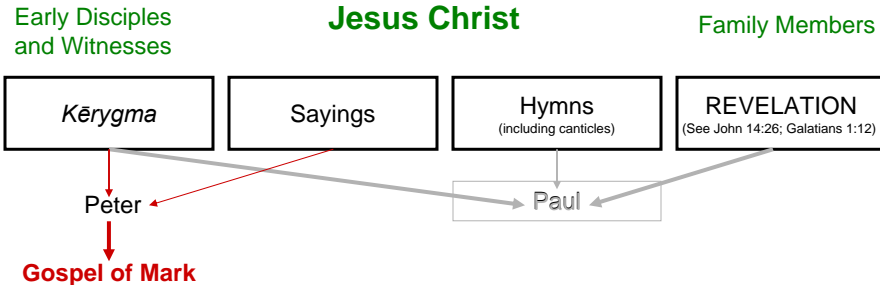
- **Grammar sometimes faulty**
  - Example of Mark 16:6, "Behold (second singular although audience plural) the place (nominative case although direct obj) where they laid him)
  - Matthew and Luke correct such mistakes, which supports the idea that they were written after Mark
- Example of oral literature **meant to be heard** (probably read aloud in congregations)
  - **Quick-moving narrative pace**: frequent use of "immediately" (*euthys*) and "again" (*palin*)
  - Paratactic (little subordination, one sentence after another)
  - Frequent use of the historical present
- **Descriptive style**
  - **Miracle stories** sometimes twice as long as the same events as recorded in Matthew
  - Focuses on **the deeds and suffering of Christ**
- **Interlocking narrative structure**
  - Episodes often interwoven in "**Marcan sandwiches**" (intercalations)
- **Omniscient narrator who knows the feelings and thoughts of major players**
  - May have its roots in Peter's first-hand knowledge of characters and events

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## Gospel Sources: Mark



- The Gospel of Mark, perhaps following the preaching of Peter, is structured according to the apostolic proclamation of the *kerygma*
  - The deeds but especially the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus
- Teachings and other words of Jesus are simple, usually consisting of short parables and brief, pithy sayings (known as *chreiai*)

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## Speeches of Peter

- **Basic elements of the apostolic *kerygma***
  - Jesus was the Son of God
  - He “went about doing good” (see Acts 10:38)
  - Suffered and died to save mankind
  - Rose again from the dead
  - Ascended to heaven where he sits at the right hand of God in glory
- Examples from speeches of Peter as portrayed by Luke in Acts
  - “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain . . . This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (2:22–23, 32–33, 36)

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## Peter's Speech to Cornelius: A Model for Mark?

- “That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, **after the baptism which John preached**; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for god was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; **whom they slew and hanged on a tree**; **Him God raised up on the third** day, and shewed him openly . . . and he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that **it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead.**” (Acts 10:37–42)

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## Structure: “A Drama in Three Acts”

### Literary Questions

- **Heading** (1:1, introduction): “The **beginning** of the **gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**”
  - **Reminiscent of the beginning line of Genesis**; parallel to the beginning of John
  - **Gospel**: the good news of Jesus? Mark’s account about Jesus?
  - “**of Jesus Christ . . .**” Jesus’ good news (subjective), the good news about Jesus (objective), or both?
- **Prologue** (1:2–13)
- **Act I: Authoritative Mission in Galilee** (1:14–8:30)
  - Starts with the *baptism* that preceded the opening of the formal ministry
- **Act II: On the Road to Jerusalem** (8:31–10:52)
  - *The passion predictions begin: “the shadow of the cross falls across the narrative”*
- **Act III: Climax in Jerusalem** (11:1–16:8)
- **Note the geographic and thematic, not chronological, progression**

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## Marcan Christology

### Theological Questions

- **The Person of Jesus**
  - Jesus is **pronounced the Son of God at his baptism**: “. . . Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mark 1:11)
  - Mark notably lacks an infancy narrative
    - Some scholars suggest that this is indicative of a “low Christology,” meaning that God “adopted” Jesus at this point
    - Instead, **Mark is emphasizing that Jesus’ sonship is best evidenced by his Father’s approval and by the authoritative mission that follows**
- **The Work of Jesus**
  - Emphasis in the ministry is on deeds—in particular miracles and signs—that demonstrate that he is **the Son of God** come to **usher in the kingdom**
    - **healings are closely associated with forgiveness of sins**, making them types of greater, spiritual healing
    - **Casting out demons is portrayed as overthrowing the kingdom of Satan**
    - Even though the glorious, final coming of the Lord remains in the future, hints are given in strong eschatological language, images of rent heavens (e.g. at baptism and Transfiguration), and Jesus’ final prophecies regarding Jerusalem (the “Little Apocalypse” of Mark 13)
  - Overall **the focus is on the suffering and death of Jesus which brought salvation**
    - Even the resurrection receives less attention in Mark than in the other gospels
      - Some manuscripts, in fact, break off after Mark 16:8 (the “short ending of Mark”)

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## Other Themes

- **Authentic discipleship**
  - Self-sacrifice for the gospel
  - Examples of followers **who failed but were redeemed comforting to early victims of persecution**
- **Kingdom of God**
  - Overthrowing the kingdom of Satan (reflected in exorcisms, healings, etc.)
  - Promise of a future kingdom
- **“Messianic Secret”**
  - Rather than “unknown,” the Greek for “mystery” (*mystērion*) meant that which was known only to the initiated or authorized
  - **Modification**: Christ was not keeping his identity secret: **he did not want mislead those who had the wrong conception of what the Messiah would be**, and he kept teaching his disciples (the initiated) more about his mission
- **Geographic Progression to Jerusalem and Jesus’ Death there**
- **Eschatology**
  - study of the end times, fulfillment of prophecy and God’s promises, here in the person of Jesus

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