



Overview of Mark

Author:

John Mark was an apostle who worked with both Paul and Peter to build the church in the first century. Many scholars say that Mark gives us Peter's perspective on Jesus' life and ministry.

Date:

The exact date of the writing of the Gospel of Mark is a matter of scholarly debate. Most scholars believe that Mark was written sometime around 65 AD.

Audience:

Mark was written for a Gentile audience in Rome. Old Testament scriptures aren't quoted much, and Mark assumes his audience knew the meaning of Roman terms. He explains some Jewish matters and customs.

Central Message:

The Kingdom of God is at Hand!

"Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).

Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of the Lord.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Unique Characteristics of Mark

Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels.

Mark's story is the most narrative.

Mark's Gospel is more focused on Jesus' actions than His teachings.

CHAPTER 1

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

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" (Mark 1:1-3)

Who was John the Baptist?

- John the Baptist is the predicted one who prepares the way of the Lord (see Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1).
- He is Jesus' cousin, son of Elizabeth and Zechariah

Why did Jesus get Baptized?

Jesus was baptized in keeping with His entire mission on earth: to do the will of the Father and to identify with sinful man.

The Enactment of the Kingdom of God is Immediately Followed by Opposition.

Opposition by Demons

The Demons know who Jesus is and are scared of him.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." (Mark 1:24)

And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. (Mark 1:34)

And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." (Mark 3:11)

What Does Jesus Do in the Face of this Opposition?

"And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. (Mark 1:35-39)

CHAPTER 2

Opposition by Scribes, Pharisees

Healing of the Paralytic (v 1-12)

*And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, **questioning in their hearts**, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:5-7*

The Call of Levi & An Invitation to Dinner (v 13-17)

And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"(Mark 2:16)

Tax Collectors & Sinners

Why were the tax collectors lumped in with sinners?

They collaborated with the Romans

They collected taxes on behalf of the Roman Empire

They were notorious for their corruption and extortion.

They were considered ritually impure because of their association with Gentiles

Who Were These Scribes & Pharisees who Opposed Jesus?

Scribes: They studied and copied the law, often interpreting it when judging matters pertaining to the law.

Pharisees: They held no official office within Judaism. They were primarily concerned with the Law. They were a renewal movement within Judaism that sought to draw Israel into alignment with the Law and with ancestral traditions as part of preparing for the Messiah.

Their theology was closest to Jesus 'which is why there were so many recorded interactions between them – they both believed in the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Historical Context: The Jewish Diaspora led to the establishment of synagogues in local communities. Syncretism (combining worship of God with other pagan practices/worship of other gods) began to creep into the synagogues. The Pharisees overreacted to the syncretism they saw all around them, adding more and more rules to God's law to try to keep the people pure and righteous. This is part of the reason the Pharisees became so legalistic in their obedience to the law.

Why did the Pharisees get so upset when Jesus ate with the sinners and tax collectors?

Historical Context - They lived in an honor/shame based culture. They weren't supposed to associate with anyone whose honor status was lower than theirs. But Jesus ate with everyone, Pharisees and sinners. In everything He did, Jesus's emphasis on humility was completely counter-cultural.

Lord of the Sabbath

When the disciples began to pluck the heads of grain on the Sabbath, in the eyes of the religious leaders they were guilty of four violations of the Sabbath. They violated traditions against reaping, threshing, winnowing, and preparing food.

Jesus showed an important principle — **human need is more important than religious ritual.** The Sabbath was meant to serve man.

CHAPTER 3

More Opposition by Pharisees, Herodians, Jesus' Own Family

Jesus Heals a Man with a Shriveled Hand on the Sabbath (v 1-6)

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Who were the Herodians?

The Herodians were likely a political faction or group of supporters known for their royalty to the ruling dynasty of Herod Antipas. They came together in their opposition to Jesus, likely due to their concern over his growing popularity and the threat he posed to their respective positions of power and influence.

Jesus and Beelzebub - More Opposition from Jesus' Family & Pharisees (v 23-30)

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." 22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." 23 So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. 28 Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin." For they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

Regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8), and that He will testify of Me (John 15:26). Therefore, when we persistently reject the work the Holy Spirit to bring us to Jesus, then we blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

THEMES EMERGING IN CHAPTERS 1-3:
SECRECY, OPPOSITION, JESUS' AUTHORITY, THE KINGDOM

THEME #1 – Secrecy

The demons knew exactly who he was, but the people didn't. He often told people to keep His identity a secret or not to tell people about the miracles He was doing, which scholars call “the Messianic Secret.”

The Inner Secret behind the Outer Story:

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9-11)

Mark uses an “apocalyptic” style – he unveils another reality - showing his readers the heavenly reality in the midst of the earthly.

THEME #2 – Opposition

Jesus meets major opposition from demons, scribes and Pharisees and even his own family.

Theme #3: Jesus 'Authority

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. (Mark 1:22)

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” (Mark 1:27)

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” – he said to the paralytic – “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” (Mark 2:10-11)

Theme #4: The Kingdom

The kingdom of God is the reign of God. Mark's message is clear - the time of God's rule (the kingdom of God) has come with Jesus. Jesus is the one promised in the scriptures. Mark shows Him as more of the suffering servant of Isaiah than a conquering hero.

“Mark is a mosaic picturing the ministry of Jesus as a relentless progression of events destined to reach their climax in the Cross of Christ.” Eugene Carpenter (Asbury Bible Commentary). The cross is Christ's mission and calling, and the whole book of Mark is intentionally crafted to lead to it.

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS OF JESUS' TIME

PHARISEES SADDUCEES ESSENES ZEALOTS

	PHARISEES	SADDUCEES	ESSENES	ZEALOTS
<i>Origins</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descended from Hasidim freedom fighters of the Maccabee era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descended from Solomon's high priest, Zadok • Became a faction in approximately 200 B.C. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resisted the Maccabees' claim to the high priesthood in approximately A.D. 170. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A movement formed against a Roman census in A.D. 6 and led by Judas the Galilean
<i>Membership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were middle-class merchants numbering about 6,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were priests who were wealthy, aristocratic, and often Hellenistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were possibly dissident Sadducees or Pharisees who preferred isolation in the wilderness to participation in Temple services led by corrupt priests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were extreme Pharisees and religious Jews living primarily in Galilee
<i>Beliefs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believed in the entire Old Testament as law • Accepted the oral interpretations of the Old Testament as binding • Believed the study of the Torah (law) was the highest act of worship • Believed that keeping the law was God's desire • Believed in bodily resurrection and life after death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believed in only the Torah as God's law • Rejected oral traditions • Believed the Temple was the only path to God • Did not believe in bodily resurrection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believed in withdrawal from corruption • Believed true priests were descended only from Zadok • Believed in rigid adherence to the Torah • Believed they had been chosen to prepare for the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theology resembled that of the Pharisees—however, only God could rule • Slavery was the worst evil • Taxes were due only to God
<i>Practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the synagogue for the study, interpretation, and teaching of the Torah • Believed in strict, detailed obedience to the oral and written law • Accepted Rome as a necessary evil so long as they could practice obedience to their beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ran the Temple and all the ceremonies • Dominated the Sanhedrin, the religious ruling council • Lived a Hellenistic lifestyle • Received Roman support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked at copying and studying the Torah • Lived in isolated communities • Shared property and communal meals • Practiced ritual cleansing • Rejected Hellenism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practiced terrorism against the hated Romans • Refused to pay taxes • Adhered carefully to the Torah and oral interpretations