

**NAME**

The name "Mark" means "a large hammer" or "polite."

**AUTHOR**

**Authorship:**

1. External Evidence

The Gospel does not refer to its author. Yet the authorship of Mark has never been seriously questioned. Although not an apostle, Mark, the companion of two leading apostles, has been recognized by early church tradition as the author of the second Gospel (Eusebius quoting Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (about A.D. 140) who in turn was quoting the "elder" (probably John). Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180) commenting in agreement with an Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark (A.D. 160-80) which mentions Mark as a Gospel writer connected with Peter. The Muratorian Canon (c. A.D. 200) refers to Mark writing down the preaching of Peter.

Expositor's Bible Commentary (page 606):

At least three different church centers are represented: Hierapolis (Papias), Rome (Anti-Marcionite Prologue and the Muratorian Fragment), and Lyons (Irenaeus). The tradition is repeated later by Tertullian of North Africa and Clement of Alexandria.

The above indicates a wide spread (ecclesiastical and geographic) acceptance of the Markan authorship of the Gospel.

2. Internal Evidence

Mitchell:

Mark was a Palestinian Jew and the individual who authored this gospel gives evidence of being precisely such a person. He makes geographical references which are correct in fine detail (Mark 11:1); he knows Aramaic because he uses Aramaic words (Mark 5:41; 7:37) as well as showing evidences of Aramaic influences on his Greek; he was conversant with Jewish institutions and customs (Mark 1:21-2:14,16; 7:2-4). A comparison of the description of the "guest room" in Mark 14:12-16 with that of Matthew 26:17-19 and John 13:1-12 will reveal a more detailed description in Mark's account, which would be natural if it were in Mark's mother's home as many suppose. The contention of Papias that Mark was "the interpreter of Peter" (above) is strikingly substantiated by a comparison of Peter's sermon in Acts 10:36-43 with Mark's Gospel. It shows the former to be an outline of the life of Jesus which Mark has given in much greater detail.

**Biography of Mark:**

Of the New Testament authors Mark was probably the youngest at the time he wrote his Gospel. His given name was John ("Jehovah has been gracious") and his Latin surname was Mark, with the latter name being more prominent in Scripture. Nothing is known about his father, but his mother was Mary, a leading Christian and resident of Jerusalem and a sister to Barnabas (Acts 12:12; Colossians 4:10). His family must have had some wealth, for Mary owned a house large enough to accommodate many Christians gather together for prayer (Acts 12:12), and Barnabas, a Levite of Cyprus, owned sizable acreage (Acts 4:37).

He is first mentioned in the Bible at the time of James' martyrdom and Peter's imprisonment (Acts 12:12-17). Some have suggested that it was his house that had the upper room where Jesus met with His disciples the night before His crucifixion (14:12-16) and where the disciples waited for the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:12-2:2). Because only Mark's Gospel contains the account of a young man who followed Jesus after His arrest in Gethsemane and who later fled naked when apprehended by the arresting crowd (14:51,52), many identify that young man as an anonymous reference to Mark himself.

His active ministry began when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch and later from Antioch to Cyprus during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:3-13). However, when the team moved into Pamphylia (central Turkey), he left and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Several reasons have been given for Mark's defection. When Paul and Barnabas planned their second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41), Barnabas wanted to take Mark again, but Paul disagreed. Luke records that the contention was so sharp between them that Barnabas separated from Paul and he (Barnabas) took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.

For the next ten years the Bible is silent on the activities of Mark. Mark is then associated with Paul during the latter's first Roman imprisonment (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). In fact, Paul identified him as a fellow-laborer. Either before or shortly after this experience in Rome with Paul, Mark was working with Peter in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). Tradition states that Mark went to Egypt and established the churches in Alexandria. It sets his death as a Christian martyr during the reign of Nero.

### Mark and Peter:

It is not known when Mark became a disciple. It is probable that the Apostle Peter stayed at Mary's house (Mark's mother) and so a tradition has arisen that Mark was a convert or Peter's. Mark was probably with Peter in Rome when Peter wrote his first epistle in which Peter refers to Mark as his "son" (1 Peter 5:13). It is believed that Mark's Gospel contains essential elements of Peter's telling of Jesus' ministry.

### Mitchell:

It is generally believed that Peter was not a good Greek or Latin scholar, and that preaching in his native Aramaic, the vernacular or speech-language of the Palestinian Jews, he required the services of an interpreter to translate his sermons, sentence by sentence, into the language of his Greek-speaking and Latin-speaking audiences. Mark is supposed to have performed this service. There are at least five stated reasons for accepting this tradition.

2. Mark's Gospel begins at the point when Peter attached himself to the Lord
3. Mark's Gospel concentrates on Galilee (1:14-9:50) and particularly the neighborhood of Capernaum, which was Peter's home.
4. Mark's Gospel tells of Peter's home and his mother-in-law
5. Peter is continually emphasized in the Gospel: The disciples are described as "Simon, and they that were with him" (1:36). For other instances, see 11:21; 13:3; 16:17.
6. Yet significant details favorable to Peter are omitted, thus indicting that while it was Mark's hand doing the writing, it was Peter's account of the gospel: Compare Mark 8:27-33 with Matthew 16:13-23. No mention of Peter walking on water. No mention of Peter catching a fish with a coin in its mouth. No mention of Peter's mission to prepare for the Passover. Nor the fact that he visited the sepulcher

### DATE

There is much disagreement among scholars over the date of Mark's writing. Since the date of

composition is involved in the synoptic problem, those who argue for Markan priority would date it as early as 45 A.D. Others, who see Matthew as the first Gospel, would date it near the martyrdom of Peter and before the destruction of Jerusalem, approximately 67-68 A.D.

William Graham Scroggie (1877-1958) - English pastor, writer: holds to Markan priority - around 50 A.D.. Archibald Thomas Robertson (1863-1934) - Bible scholar: between 46 and 56 A.D., Henry Clarence Thiessen (1883-1947): inclined to date it later, larger on the strength of Irenaeus who said that Mark wrote down what Peter had preached after the departure of Peter from Rome. Taking "departure" to mean death (c.f. Luke 9:51) and yet feeling it must have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, he dates the book about 67 or 68 A.D. In view of the fact that Peter himself uses the word departure while alluding to his own death (2 Peter 1:15) there may be some value to this theory.

There is a hint within the book suggesting a composition date in the middle third of the first century. On the way to Golgotha, the soldiers compelled Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country of the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear the cross (Acts 15:21). If this is the same Rufus as the one saluted by Paul during his third journey (Romans 16:13), then the intended readers of Mark's Gospel must have known the two sons of Simon. Otherwise, why would Mark have included the mention of the two sons when they have not historical significance to the life of Christ?

This verse also argues for a Roman destination or origin. Either Mark was writing to believers in Rome where Rufus lived or else he was writing from Rome to readers who knew the family of Alexander and Rufus. With the exception of Chrysostom, who places the origin of the Gospel in Egypt, tradition clearly indicates that Mark's Gospel originated in Rome.

### **THEME**

Halley (page 44): "*Jesus the Wonderful*"

Mitchell: "*Jesus Christ, the Servant of God, Who provided redemption for mankind.*"

The opening verse presents the first obvious purpose: "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*" (1:1)

Key Word (Nelson's): Jesus the Servant - Mark's theme is captured well in 10:45 because Jesus is portrayed in this book as a Servant and as the Redeemer of men (cf. Philippians 2:5-11). Mark shows his Gentile readers how the Son of God—rejected by His own people—achieved ultimate victory through apparent defeat.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"And calling the crowd to Him with His disciples, He said to them, 'If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?'"* (Mark 8:34-37)

*"But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 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 10:43-45).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 8 - Mark 8 is a pivotal chapter showing the change of emphasis in Jesus' ministry after Peter's confession, "*You are the Christ.*" After this point Jesus begins to fortify His men for His forthcoming suffering and death.

The Gospel of Mark is a succinct, unadorned yet vivid account of the ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Mark presents the narrative in an appealing way, for he tells the Good News about Jesus Christ so simply that a child can understand it. The Gospel is brief and full of activity and movement. “euthus” (English: “straightway, immediately, forthwith, or anon”) occurs 42 times in the Gospel. Frequently the imperfect tense is used. The progression of movement is shown as a series of snapshots. There are 151 uses of the historic present and of the imperfect tense which portray action as in process rather than simply as an event. All of which is a good lesson to be learned in how we present the gospel (dead history or life in Christ).

Nevertheless his Gospel, as Peter said of Paul’s letters, also contains “*some things that are hard to understand*” (2 Peter 3:16). Like a pool of pure water, it is far deeper than it looks. Therefore one ought to approach the study of this book humbly and with due recognition of the need for wisdom from the almighty God and enlightenment from the Holy Spirit.

Mark is the original seeker sensitive gospel tract (see below: Recipient: Dr. Gibert Bilezikian). Three-eighths of the book is occupied with the account of the Passion week.

Mark intended to convince the Roman mind and reader of the deity and mission of Jesus Christ.

Mark’s purposes were both evangelism and edification. The book was designed to convince the new readers of Christ’s deity and sacrificial death and to educate the converts about the significance of Christ’s personal ministry.

### Outline:

- I. Introduction To Ministry - Presentation 1:1-13  
By the forerunner, by baptism, by temptation
- II. Ministry In Galilee - Demonstration 1:14-6:13  
Commencement of ministry, climax of ministry
- III. Ministry Beyond Galilee 6:14-8:26  
Interlude regarding Herod and John, feeding 5,000 and its sequel, feeding 4,000 and its sequel
- IV. Ministry Toward Jerusalem - Revelation 8:27-10:52  
(Concerns His death), ministry near Caesarea Philippi, ministry through Galilee, ministry through Perea, Judea, ministry near Jerusalem
- V. Ministry in Jerusalem - Repudiation 11:1-15:47  
Preparatory events, prophetic discourse on Olivet, Passion narrative
- VI. Ministry In Authentication 16:1-8  
Visit of women to the tombs, words of angels to the women, flight of women from the tomb
- VII. Ministry In The World - Evangelization 16:9-20  
(Inspiration doubted), appearance of the Lord, ascension of the Lord, proclamation of the word to the world

### Ending:

Mitchell:

The chief problem in any serious consideration of Mark’s Gospel is the place and manner of its ending. What about the last 12 verses? Are they genuine or spurious? There are two views

commonly held:

1. The long ending, which includes 16:9-21 as it basically appears in the Authorized Version. While these verses are not found in the two most ancient manuscripts (Sinaitic and Vatican - 4th century) other MSS contain them with various omissions and variations. Also, these verses are quoted by Irenaeus and Hippolytus in the second and third centuries. Also, the Vatican MSS does contain a space after verse eight - which could possibly indicated a known absence. *"The overwhelming mass of MSS, versions and Fathers are in favor of the verses"* (Angus Bible Handbook). It is argued that to omit these verses breaks off the narrative with a strange anti-climax.
2. The short ending, which stops with the little conjunction "for" (γάρ) at the end of 16:8. This is often called the "abrupt ending." Although the greater number of MSS contain 16:9-21, many of them are of a late dated and an inferior quality. By the recognized standards of textual evaluation, verses 9-21 must be rejected (This is the judgment of almost all textual scholars). In addition, the examination of verse 9-20 cannot fail to impress the student (particularly in the original language) with the fact that these verse differ markedly in style from the rest of the Gospel.

The generally accepted view is either that the Gospel was very early mutilated at the last page, or that Mark was unable to finish, perhaps owing to the rising tide of persecution. However, a few argue that Mark intended to end abruptly at verse eight (R.H. Lightfoot, "The Gospel Message of St. Mark", 1950).

There does not appear to be a solution in sight. Most would admit that if the long ending is genuine, it is more like an epilogue than a conclusion to a continuing narrative. Since the science of textual criticism favors the abrupt ending, it would seem best not to base doctrine or practice upon these verses. The passage may be genuine, but until it can be conclusively proven, doctrinal support should be found elsewhere.

### **RECIPIENT**

Gentiles in Rome.

See above under DATE: Roman destination or origin.

Mitchell:

The Gospel was probably written for Gentile readers in general, but Romans in particular. Old Testament quotations and allusions are relatively few; Aramaic expressions are interpreted (e.g. 5:41); Jewish customs are explained (e.g. 7:3,11); and the presence of Latin words relates to a Latin audience. The general tone, depicting the Lord's ceaseless activity and His power over demons and disease would all appeal to Roman readers, whose interest were in deed rather than words.

Mark occasionally used a Latin term to explain a Greek word (12:42; 15:16).

Note also regarding format: Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian (The Liberated Gospel) argues that Mark followed the form of Greek tragedy which would have been familiar to his secular (Roman) audience.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

Halley (page 565):

The special emphasis of Mark is the superhuman power of Jesus, demonstrating His deity by His

miracles. Mark narrates the things Jesus did rather than the things Jesus said. That is why he omits most of Jesus' discourses. It appears that Mark wrote his Gospel for non-Jews.

## **RESOURCES**

Bilezikian, Gilbert G., Ph.D., *The Liberated Gospel: A Comparison of the Gospel of Mark and Greek Tragedy*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Robert H. Gundry, Ph.D., *A Survey Of The New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1970

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, General Editor, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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