

## The Gospel according to Mark: An Introduction

### Introduction

1. Second Gospel: in lists of canonical books, Mark is ordinarily *second*
2. Shortest Gospel: Mark (16 chs.); Matthew (28 chs.); Luke (24 chs.); John (21 chs.)
3. Common Gospel: over 95% of stories in Mark also found in Matthew!
  - a. Blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:24)
  - b. Naked “young man” in Gethsemane (Mark 14:51)
4. Least ‘Popular’ Gospel:
  - a. Relatively neglected by ancient & medieval commentators
  - b. Contains no account of the Infancy of Jesus (cf. Matthew and Luke)
5. ‘Markan Revolution’: Markan ‘Priority’; turns from ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Gospel’ to ‘1<sup>st</sup> Gospel’!

### The Gospel of Mark in the Early Church

1. Universally attributed to John Mark
  - a. John Mark: son of Mary, resident of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12-14, 25)
  - b. Companion of Paul (Philem 23-24; 2 Tim 4:11)
  - c. Disciple of Peter (1 Pet 5:12-13)
  - d. Jewish Christian: member of “circumcision” (Col 4:10-11)
  - e. Got in an argument with Paul! (Acts 15:36-40)
2. Papias of Hierapolis: And the elder [John] used to say this: “*Mark, having become Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately everything he remembered, though not in order, of the things either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, followed Peter, who adapted his teachings as needed but had not intention of giving an ordered account of the Lord’s sayings. Consequently Mark did nothing wrong in writing down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one concern not to omit anything that he heard or make any false statement in them.*” (Papias of Hierapolis, cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.15; trans. M. W. Holmes, 2007)
2. Irenaeus of Lyons: “Mark the disciple and interpreter of Peter” (see Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.8.3)
3. Clement of Alexandria: written by Mark “Peter’s follower” during the “reign of Claudius”; was “ratified” by Peter for “study in the churches” (see Eusebius, *Church History* 2.14-15)
4. Origen of Alexandria: after Matthew, Mark was written “Secondly”; done “in accordance with Peter’s instructions”; he is mentioned by Peter in 1 Peter 5:13 (see Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.25.4-5)
5. Jerome: written by Peter’s “disciple and interpreter”; Peter both “heard it” and “approved it”; Mark “went to Egypt” and “formed a church” at Alexandria (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, 1.4)

6. Anonymous Latin Prologue: Mark was called “stumpy-fingers”; he was Peter’s “interpreter”; he wrote the Gospel after Peter’s death (trans. C. Clifton Black, *Mark*, 119)

### **The Gospel of Mark in Contemporary Scholarship**

1. Authorship of Mark’s Gospel:
  - a. Unknown: anonymous Gospel theory; ignorance of Jewish laws (Mark 7:1-4)
  - b. Peter’s Disciple: very Jewish; very Petrine; unanimous external evidence
2. Date of Mark’s Gospel:
  - a. ca./post 70 A.D.: Jesus’ prophecy of Jerusalem Temple (Mark 13:1-27)
  - b. pre- 62 A.D.: Luke-Acts dependent on Mark’s Gospel (cf. Luke 1:1-4)
  - c. External Evidence: Mark died around 62 A.D. in Alexandria (Eusebius)
3. Setting of Mark’s Gospel:
  - a. Galilee: lots of focus on Galilee
  - b. Syria: flight from Jerusalem (cf. Mark 13:14) refers to Mark’s church
  - c. Rome: use of Latin terms (Mark 15:16, 21)

### **Key Themes in the Gospel of Mark**

1. ‘Action-Packed’ Gospel: Jesus the exorcist/healer
  - a. Parables Discourse (Mark 4:1-32)
  - b. Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:1-37)
  - c. Otherwise, mostly miracles
  - d. Rapid Pace: “and immediately” (Greek *euthys*) (over 40X!) (Mark 1:10, etc.)
2. Secret of Jesus’ Messianic and Divine Identity:
  - a. “Mystery” of the Kingdom (Mark 4:1-12)
  - b. “Messianic Secret” (Mark 1:24-25, 34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26-27, 30; 9:9)
  - c. Divine “Son of God” (Mark 1:1, 11; 14:61-62)

### **The Contents of Mark: Year B**

1. The Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1) (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday)
2. Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee (Mark 2-6) (2<sup>nd</sup>—16<sup>th</sup> Sundays)
3. Feeding of the 5000 and Bread of Life Discourse (John 6) (17<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup> Sundays)
4. Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee Continued (Mark 7-9) (22<sup>nd</sup>—26<sup>th</sup> Sundays)
5. Jesus’ Ministry in Judea (Mark 10-13) (27<sup>th</sup>—33<sup>rd</sup> Sundays)
6. Christ the King (John 18) (34<sup>th</sup> Sunday)