

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK: AUTHOR, DATE, AND TEXT

25. What is Holy Scripture?

Holy Scripture is “God’s Word written” (Articles of Religion, 20), given by the Holy Spirit through prophets and apostles as the revelation of God and his acts in human history, and is therefore the Church’s final authority in all matters of faith and practice. (*Psalm 19:7–11; Jeremiah 36:1–8; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; Revelation 1:1–11*)

I. The Scriptures are Inspired by the Holy Spirit through the human author.

1 Cor 14:37; Eph 3:5; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21

And Jesus answering began to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT THINE ENEMIES BENEATH THY FEET.”’”

Mark 12:35-36

¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:19-21

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

A. The human author is not erased.

David writes like David, Mark like Mark, etc.

1. Mark vs other Gospels
2. Who wrote Mark & When

Author - John Mark mentioned in Acts 12, 15. Papias, the bishop of Hieropolis, wrote in *Interpretation of the Lord’s Sayings*, AD 120/30, cited by Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.39.15):

And this is what the Elder said, “Mark, who became Peter’s interpreter, accurately wrote, though not in order, as many of the things said and done by the Lord as he had noted. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterwards, as I said, he followed Peter who composed his teachings in anecdotes and not as a complete work of the Lord’s sayings. So Mark made no mistake in writing some things just as he had noted them. For he was careful of this one thing, to leave nothing he had heard out and to say nothing falsely.

Mark Study Kick-Off

This information is echoed in other early Christian writings, including Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1), and Clement of Alexandria attributes the writing to Mark in Rome during Peter's lifetime (Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.14; cf. 2:15).¹

Date - The Gospel of Mark is spread throughout the empire before the end of the first century. The earliest traditions date Mark either immediately after Peter's death in Rome around 64/65 AD or during Peter's time in Rome. The earliest traditional date for Peter to be in Rome is during the reign of Claudius who reigned from 41-54 AD.

Modern questions of dating have focused on the fixed date of the fall of the Temple in 70AD. It would seem that if Mark were written after that cataclysmic event, it would have left a more significant impact on his Gospel.

B. Nevertheless, it is not only the human authors creativity or ideas.

- 1. The human authors are given spiritual insight beyond creativity and recollection.*
- 2. The human authors speak better than they know.*

II. The Scriptures are the "God's Word written."

Psalms 33:4–9; Jeremiah 1:9; Ezekiel 2:1–3:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:15–16; Hebrews 1:1–2

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'THEREFORE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER AND HOLD FAST TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Matthew 19:3-6

¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

1 Thess 2:13

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Hebrews 1:1-2

A. God himself speaks in the Scriptures.

Expect that God is going to speak to you through reading Mark.

¹ Robert A. Guelich, [Mark 1-8:26](#), vol. 34A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), xxvi.

Mark Study Kick-Off

B. The Scriptures contain the power of God.

Expect that God is going to change you through reading Mark.

III. The Scriptures alone reveal what is necessary to know God and the Gospel.

Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 33:1–12; Lk. 16:29–31; Gal. 1:8, 9; Col 1:15–19; 2 Tim. 3:15

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. ⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

John 5:39 –47

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:13-17

A. Nature teaches us that God exists (Rom 1), his majesty (Ps 19), and his care for humanity (Ps 8), but we need Scripture to know him personally and please him.

B. All Scripture testifies to Jesus Christ.

C. Scripture contains "all things necessary for salvation."

IV. The Scriptures are True in what they teach and promise.

Num. 23:19; 2 Sam. 7:28; Prov. 30:5; Ps. 119:96, 160; Matt. 5:18; Jn. 10:35; 17:17; Tit. 1:1, 2

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

Matthew 5:17-18

*The words of the Lord are pure words,
like silver refined in a furnace on the ground,
purified seven times.*

Psalms 12:6

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⁷ “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

Revelation 3:7, 14

A. God is trustworthy, therefore his Word is too.

B. This doesn’t mean our interpretations are always right!

For I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it.

St. Augustine, Letter 82, 3 (to Jerome)

Kevin Vanhoozer:

I propose the following definition: to say that Scripture is inerrant is to confess faith that the authors speak the truth in all things they affirm (when they make affirmations), and will eventually be seen to have spoken truly (when right readers read rightly).²

C. God Preserved the Words of Scripture

The text of the Bible has remained consistent since earliest days, though there are a few disputed passages (John 8, Mark’s longer Ending). The copying of one manuscript to another is not like the telephone game:

1. Recent Research shows that “the Autographs” (ie. the *original* Gospel of Mark) were still in use into the 2nd or 3rd century, meaning copies could be compared to the original.

Craig Evans in 2015 article entitled “How Long Were Late Antique Books in Use?” in BBR:

Autographs and first copies may well have remained in circulation until the end of the second century, even the beginning of the third century...The longevity of these manuscripts in effect forms a bridge linking the first-century autographs and first copies to the great codices, via the early papyrus copies we possess.

² Vanhoozer in *Five Views*, Kindle loc. 3566.

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2. The Church professionalized the transmission of the NT documents.
Loveday Alexander sums up:

It is clear that we are dealing with a group [early Christians] that used books intensively and professionally from very early on in its existence. The evidence of the papyri from the second century onwards suggests . . . the early development of a technically sophisticated and distinctive book technology ("Ancient Book Production and the Circulation of the Gospels," 85)

3. Number of Manuscripts

Today we have existing manuscripts, many fragmentary in nature in the ballpark of 24000 (and constantly growing). Estimates of the accuracy of the transcription (copying) are 98-99.5 percent. Both the number and accuracy of the NT manuscripts far exceed other ancient writings, including important works such as those of Homer or Plato. We have a copy of the entire bible from 325, a nearly complete copy of the NT from 250. We have complete manuscripts of individual books from about 200, and the complete list of the NT books from about 170. The oldest undisputed fragment is from the Gospel of John (John 18) dated to roughly 120's.

When we work back to the original text, we are working from a surplus of material. In other words, we haven't lost anything, the text has grown slightly over time (Mark 16:9ff, John 8, etc.).

4. The sheer number of NT manuscripts shows us how important these documents were to the earliest Christians. There are not this many copies of Christian Apocryphal books. For instance from the second and third century we have 60 NT manuscripts, while we have 17 of the Christian Apocrypha.³

V. Scripture is our Authority

Neh 8:1–8; Ps 94:8–15; Mt 22:29, 28:20; Acts 8:26–35; 18:24–28; Rom 1:2, 4:21, 2 Thes 3:14; Heb 10:23

25 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:25-27

³⁶ Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

1 Corinthians 14:36-38

³ Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 21-22.

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²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:23

A. Believed in all it teaches.

As we read Mark together, we are going to let Scripture challenge our assumptions and misconceptions about Jesus, and conform our belief to Scripture.

B. Obeyed in all that it requires.

As we read Mark, and hear Jesus commanding his disciples to pursue self-denial, servanthood, love, and mission, with God's help we will follow Jesus obediently.

C. Trusted in all that it promises.

As we read Jesus's words and of his mighty deeds, we will hold fast to the forgiveness, spiritual power, and future hope which he promises.

34. How does the Holy Spirit use Holy Scripture in your life?

Through Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit will teach, rebuke, correct, and train me in the righteousness that God desires. The prayerful study of Scripture forms me for life in Christ and the service of God and my neighbor. (*Psalm 119:105; John 14:26; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 4:12–13; see questions 27–32*)

OVERVIEW & KEY THEMES

Opening Prayer:

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

(Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent, BCP p. 598)

Question #230 from the Catechism:

How should you “mark” passages of Scripture?

I should study the Bible attentively, noting key verses and themes, as well as connections between passages in the Old and New Testaments. I should study on my own and with other Christians using trustworthy commentaries and other resources to grasp the full meaning of God’s Word.

(To Be a Christian, An Anglican Catechism, p. 82)

THE BIG IDEA

If there is only one thing you take away tonight regarding Mark’s Gospel, let it be this:

Mark is issuing a call to discipleship.

Who is this man?

What shall we do with him?

GROUPS OF LOST PEOPLE

The Crowds,
the Disciples
the Religious leaders.

A Roman Centurion: “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

As we study the Gospel of Mark these next 10 weeks, consider what it means for you personally to yoke yourself to him as your teacher and Lord. For after all, he is alive and so is his Word!

WHAT IS A GOSPEL (as a genre)?

A highly crafted account of the public ministry and especially the Passion of Jesus.

“Passion narratives with lengthy prologues.”

It is not a biography.

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BASIC OUTLINE & MOVEMENT

Three parts after the prologue (1:1-13)

- I.) 1:14 – 8:21. Ministry in Galilee
- II.) 8:22 – 10:52. On the way to Jerusalem
- III.) 11:1 – 16:8. Ministry in Jerusalem

IMMEDIATELY

Mark builds urgency with the word “immediately.”

It occurs 7x in the first chapter alone and 35x overall.

Hinge of Mark: Peter’s confession at 8:29 “You are the Christ...”

KEY TITLES

Son of Man – simply means that he was born of a human mother.

Son of God – he was conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Christ – the Greek rendering of Hebrew “Messiah,” anointed one.

Jesus is fully man and fully God.

DANIEL AND ISAIAH

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

(Daniel 7:13–14 ESV)

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:4–6 ESV)

Nobody expected these two Old Testament figures to be one and the same person!

MESSIANIC SECRET

Mark 4:11 “To you has been given the **secret** of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables...”

This was a temporary restriction, only until the Resurrection occurred.

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Therefore, together we proclaim the MYSTERY of faith:
Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

INCLUSIOS

Mark inserts one story inside another.

When you come across these, note the whole context of both stories and ask, “how do the stories add meaning to each other?”

FINAL THOUGHTS

The major theme of Mark is to “present and defend Jesus’ universal call to discipleship” (ESV Study Bible).

Mark’s Gospel is not just the story of Jesus, but of Jesus and his disciples.
The Twelve are always there as a silent presence, watching. And, so are you the reader!

Mark is issuing a call to discipleship.