

The Gospel According to Mark

The Beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ

Mark 1:1-8

Sunday, January 12, 2020

Introduction

While the four Gospels of the New Testament are at times referred to as biographies or historical narratives, the truth is that they are both less and more than either of these. They are less in that they don't provide all of the details that would generally be included in a life story; there are lots of things we aren't told. But the Gospels are more, in that they accomplish a greater purpose: they help us to see who Jesus really is, why He came to live among us, and what He accomplished to make our salvation possible.

As we begin a study of the Gospel of Mark it will help to understand his primary aim or purpose: *Mark's purpose, simply stated, is for his readers to see Jesus as the Son of God and to submit to Him as His disciples.*

A Brief Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

- **The writer** – Mark, also known as John Mark (Acts 12:12), was a leader in the early church. He was a cousin of Barnabas, a co-laborer with Paul and a son in the faith to the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). It is commonly believed that Mark's Gospel is Peter's witness of Jesus, recorded by Mark.
- **The earliest gospel** – Written in the late 50's or early 60's A.D. in Rome, Mark was the first Gospel account to be written.
- **The shortest gospel** – Moving quickly from event to event, Mark doesn't include as many details as the other Gospels. But he includes all that is needed to fulfill his purpose, to show Jesus as the Son of God.

Mark's Introduction and Purpose Statement (1:1)

- Some have suggested that vs. 1 may have originally served as the title of the Gospel. At the very least it serves as Mark's introduction and lays out his reason for writing – to show Jesus as the Son of God.
- **The Gospel** – Good news or joyful tidings. Mark is writing to convey the good news of the person and work of Jesus.
- **Jesus, the Christ** – While *Christ* has come to be used as a name for Jesus, it is actually a title. It is the Greek word for Messiah – the anointed and promised one of Israel (Mark 8:29).
- **Jesus, the Son of God** – For the original audience this is a bold claim. This title communicates that Jesus is divine – He is God in flesh.

The Forerunner of Jesus – John the Baptist (1:2-8)

Each of the Gospels, with their different aims, begins in a different place. Mark begins his gospel with the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist.

- **An Expected Witness - The foretelling of John the Baptist (1:2-3)** – The prophets who foretold the coming of Christ also foretold one who would go before Him, preparing His way (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3-5).
 - **A messenger for God Himself** – The contexts of Malachi and Isaiah reveal a messenger that is announcing the coming, not only of a man, but of God Himself.
- **An Unusual Witness - The ministry of John the Baptist (1:4-6)**
 - **An unusual location** – While we may expect an announcement of God's coming to be made in a city or religious center, John fulfills prophecy by preaching in the wilderness. This is also symbolic. In the OT the wilderness is a place of preparation and repentance and a place from which God called His people into His grace.
 - **An unusual appearance** – John's unusual appearance is significant because it aligns him with the great (and awaited) prophet Elijah. The OT saints expected Elijah to appear before the coming of the Lord, and John the Baptist fulfills that prophecy (2 Kings 1:8; Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:9-15; 17:10-13).
 - **An unusual impact** – John's ministry had an immediate and massive impact; people came from all over to see him, hear his message and to be baptized by him.
- **A Faithful Witness – John's Twofold Message (1:4, 7-8)**
 - **A message of repentance** – While much of John's audience was made up of the religious community (Jews) John's message was firm and clear – he was calling them to repent. To turn from sin and to turn to God for forgiveness (Luke 3:7-9).
 - **The baptism of John** – Before John, baptism was not a common practice, but he introduced it as symbol and sign of repentance and forgiveness.
 - **A message of Jesus** – Although John grew in influence and fame he never wavered in his mission. He did not proclaim himself, but Jesus, the One who was greater and who would bring a greater baptism – the baptism of the Holy Spirit – which can truly change hearts and grant forgiveness (John 3:28-30; John 1:29-31; Ezekiel 36:25-28).