

## Mark

Sermon preached at DCC on 2020-05-03

### Why four Gospels?

We come to the second Gospel today, the Gospel of Mark. And you might wonder why God gave us four Gospels. Don't they mostly cover the same material? After all, 91% of Mark is already contained in Matthew, so why do we need Mark. And 53% of Mark is contained in Luke. Why do we need those duplications? But we will see that each Gospel beautifully portrays Jesus in a new light to give us a more comprehensive picture. And each Gospel was addressed to a unique audience, and therefore has a different impact. And each Gospel has a different purpose for its writing. We need all four Gospels.

Matthew was written to a Jewish audience and it is saturated with Jewish customs, language, quotes, idioms, and Old Testament prophecies. Because lineage was critical for a Jewish king, Matthew has genealogies, where Mark does not. The genealogies are not important to Mark's purpose. Though Matthew shows other aspects of Christ's person and work, its emphasis is to show that Jesus was the King of Israel. He is trying to get Jews to embrace Jesus.

Mark is not written to Jews. It was written to Gentiles - which makes sense since Mark was very involved with Barnabas and Paul in their first missionary trip to the Gentiles. Though he wasn't able to make it all the way through that entire trip (he went back to Jerusalem part way through), Barnabas invited Mark on another trip - something Paul refused to hear of. Valuable as Mark was (and I believe there is evidence that Paul recognized that Mark was a powerful instrument of God), Paul didn't want to be weighed down by a person who couldn't handle the rigors and dangers of his calling. It was *his* calling after all. So *Barnabas* worked with Mark on his own missions trips to the Gentiles (Acts 15:36-51). And we will be seeing hints later that Mark had already been working with the Gentiles in Rome long before he went on his trip with Barnabas. Though Mark was a Jew, he had already been honing his skills to be an effective minister to the Gentiles. I believe he was one of the original seventy prophets that were sent out. We might get to that later. And later I'll get into the rift between Paul and Barnabas (not between Paul and Mark, but between Paul and Barnabas) and how it relates to the dating of this book.

But my point here is that this Gospel was perfectly designed to reach Romans. It uses Roman time (6:48; 13:35), translates words that Romans won't understand (3:17; 5:41; 7:11,34; 15:22), explains Jewish cultural issues that Romans would otherwise have a hard time understanding (7:2-4; 15:42), and has a special emphasis upon persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13) - which I believe was preparing the Roman church for its own persecution and martyrdom. Though the Old Testament is quoted as an authoritative Scripture, Mark does not spend the time that Matthew does in painstakingly showing how Jesus fulfilled all the expectations that the Jews had. So there is only one time when Mark says, "So the Scripture was fulfilled which says..." Otherwise he just quotes the Scripture.

But because of Mark's emphasis, he devotes an unusual amount of time to Christ's ministry to non-Jews and then devotes three chapters to describe his ministry among the Gentiles in Tyre, Sidon, and the whole region of Phoenicia (7:24-30), and then through the Decapolis (7:31-8:10), and then to Caesarea Philippi (8:11-9:32). Proportionally, three chapters out of 16 is pretty significant. It is Mark (the Gospel to the Romans) that particularly shows Christ's love to Romans.

In addition, Achtemeier, Smith, Decker, and others have pointed out that Mark went to pains in communicating well with his Roman audience because he used Latinisms that are unique to the Greek dialect used in the city of Rome and Italy (at least in Mark's time). These include not only Latin words,<sup>1</sup> but also Latin syntax and idioms.<sup>2</sup> Mark wrote this Gospel as a means of reaching Romans to Christ and ministering to Roman Christians. And this teaches us that it is very biblical to adjust our language to communicate more effectively when we are talking with an unbelieving audience - or, when we are talking to Christians in a different nation. I have had to use totally different illustrations and idioms when I have taught in Asian countries or in India. Mark (by inspiration) did a masterful job of communicating across cultural barriers - so much so that some liberals wonder if Mark really did write this book. But it is the unanimous testimony of the early church that he did so.

And Roman citizens would have connected with this Gospel far more easily than with the Gospel of Matthew. This book portrays Jesus as a man of action. It skips his birth and earlier years and instantly plunges Jesus into an incredibly busy public ministry. One of the distinctive words used in Mark is the word "immediately." In the Majority Text, the Greek word εὐθέως occurs 40 times. That's half of the 81 times the Greek word for "immediately" occurs in the whole New Testament. And it is one of many ways in which Mark makes this book a fast paced story.

So where Matthew portrays Jesus as King, Mark presents Him as Servant, Luke presents Him as Man (or the Second Adam), and John portrays Him as God. We will be seeing that all the Gospels portray Him as God as well, but there is a special emphasis in each Gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Latin words in Mark are census (κῆνσος, "poll tax," 12:14), centurio (κεντυρίων, "centurion," 15:39, 44, 45), denarius (δηνάριον, a Roman coin, 12:15), legio (λεγιών, "legion," 5:9, 15), modius (μόδιος, "peck measure," 4:21), praetorium (πραιτώριον, "governor's official residence," 15:16), quadrans (κοδράντης, a Roman coin, 12:42), sextarius (ξέστης, quart measure, "pitcher," 7:4), speculator (σπεκουλάτωρ, "executioner," 6:27), and flagellum (φραγελλώω, "to flog," 15:15)." <http://ntresources.com/blog/?p=1205>

<sup>2</sup> "Smith, 58, gives a summary list of such Latinisms: iter facere (ὁδὸν ποιεῖν, "to make one's way," 2:23); consilium dederunt (συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν, "to give counsel," 3:6); hoc est (ὅ ἐστιν, "that is," 3:17; 7:11, 34; 12:42; 15:16, 42); satis facere (ἱκανὸν ποιῆσαι, "to satisfy," 15:15); genua ponentes (15:19, τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα, "bending the knees"). Except for ὅ ἐστιν, these occur only in Mark and not elsewhere in the NT or LXX." <http://ntresources.com/blog/?p=1205>

## **What is unique about the Gospel of Mark?**

And my second point fills out this picture of what is unique to the Gospel of Mark.

### **It is the shortest Gospel, yet it has the most miracles and the least teaching**

First of all, it is by far the shortest Gospel. For Roman men of action, this was a plus. You can read the entire book out loud in one and a half hours. And yet, despite being short, this is a book that is loaded with action - especially with miracles - far more miracles proportionally than in any other Gospel. Just as an example of the ratio of miracles to teaching, there are 24 miracles in Mark and only 5 parables. And again, it shows the emphasis of Mark is to show that Jesus is a servant who is very active in being about His Father's business and of serving the world.

Of course, those miracles served other purposes as well. They also demonstrated Christ's sovereign power over things that even Caesar had no power over - power over disease, disability, demons, and nature itself. His power also demonstrated to this Roman audience that His kingdom had come.

### **It is fast-paced, vivid, and action packed.**

Second, as I have already mentioned, the book of Mark is fast-paced, extremely vivid, and action packed. Commentators point out how the vivid descriptions in the book would capture a Roman's interest. Even the way he describes how the people were sitting on the ground is much more vivid. They were tell-it-like-it-is people who didn't hide much. So Mark too speaks with candor of the amazement of the disciples, their total lack of understanding, and Christ's emotions and compassion. It portrays real men with all their failings. Of course, all the Gospels portray real men, but this one does so in particularly vivid ways.

### **Six of the sixteen chapters are dedicated to the final eight days of Christ's life.**

Another unique feature is the percentage of the book that is devoted to the Passion Week. In Mark 8:31 Jesus started telling people that he was about to be crucified, buried, and raised. And the movement in the book from that verse on was to head very deliberately to the cross. For soldiers, Jesus would have been a man of heroism who did His servant duty even unto death. And 36% of Mark's narrative is devoted to the passion week. That's chapter 11:1-16:20.

### **It is the most chronological of the Gospels**

Another feature is that of all of the Gospels, this one is the most strictly chronological. Obviously it doesn't include his early years, but it is a chronological account of the three and a half years of His ministry - the part of His life that Romans would most connect with.

## It portrays Jesus not only as the Son of God, but as the Servant of the Lord Prophesied in Isaiah 40-53.

And let's spend a bit of time on the central theme of this book - that Jesus is the Servant of the Lord that is prophesied to come in Isaiah 40-53. It's not enough to say that Mark portrays him as a servant. He portrays Jesus as the famous Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40-53 - a servant who was very unusual.

Obviously the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40-53 was both man and God, and to avoid any confusion with the Roman audience, Mark makes it clear eight times that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. He does not want his readers to miss that point. Let's look at each of those, because this Servant of the Lord was different than any other Servant.

### Unlike Caesar, this "Son of God" was truly divine

The very first verse of the book says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." And then he gives a quote from both Isaiah and Malachi to prove that He was divine. Caesar claimed to be the Son of God, but He was a pretender. The only Son of God who had the right to be the ruler of the universe was Jesus. And this Gospel will make clear that this God-man was not a pretender; He really was divine, and He really did have power over nature and over men.

Look at verse 11. God the Father Himself identifies Jesus as being His Son. Immediately after His Baptism, which inaugurated Him into His ministry, it says, "Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Commentators point out that this is parallel to the words the Father speaks to the Son in Isaiah 42:2, where Sonship and Servanthood are linked together tightly. This is a Servant-Son. Somehow this divine being has a very humble Servant attitude. He's not like some spoiled sons of Caesars. There were miraculous legends of some of the Caesars that supposedly proved them to be God, but there were no credible witnesses, and compared to the rending of the heavens here, and the power over demons, and His power over nature, the Caesars looked like pathetic fakes.

Look at chapter 3:11 for the next mention of the fact that this Servant of the Lord was the Son of God, which Romans would instantly interpret as God-incarnate. They wouldn't have a very good picture of what that meant, but this book would fill in the details. Chapter 3:11.

And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God."

Notice the "whenever." This happened frequently. Demons recognized who he was and acknowledged Him to be the Son of God. Did demons make *humans* do that to Caesar? Yes, but here the demons themselves are forced to bow before Jesus. They know the difference.

Look at 5:7. This describes the time that Jesus ministered to a Gentile who was possessed by a legion of demons. Starting to read at verse 6:

Mark 5:6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. 7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

Not only did Jesus have power over demons, the demon was frightened by Him, and declared that He was God - the Son of the Most High God. None of these declarations are a contradiction to Jesus being the Servant of the Lord, since Isaiah described this Servant as both God and man.

In chapter 9:7 God Himself descended upon Jesus in a cloud, transforming Christ's clothing and figure so that it shone brightly like the sun, and said, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" Once again the Father is affirming Jesus to be the Son of God.

In chapter 13:31 Jesus told His disciples that His words would never pass away, and in the next verse he told them why - He is the Son of the Father.

In 14:36 He called God His Father.

One of the most powerful declarations that He was divine was given in chapter 14:61-62, when He was being tried by the Sanhedrin. When the high priest asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus answered, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." They immediately accused Jesus of blasphemy because Jesus was claiming to be the divine Son of Man in the clouds that is mentioned in Daniel 7, which the Jews understood was Yehowah God Himself. So Jesus is both Son of Man and Son of God - both man and God.

But while the Jews rejected Him as the the God-Man, the Roman soldier at the cross, after seeing all the supernatural darkness, supernatural earthquake, and other events was totally convinced, and said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God" (Mark. 15:39). Mark uniquely reports that so as to have a Roman himself being convinced.

I give all of those references not to say that Mark's central message is that Jesus is the Son of God, but to show that when Jesus is portrayed as Servant in this book, it is specifically the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah - a Servant who was also divine.

### **Unlike Caesar, this "Son of God" did not need man to affirm Him**

But this brings us to the next point. Unlike Caesar, this "Son of God" did not need man to affirm Him. Unlike Caesar, this Son of God was so unbelievably humble that He embraced His call as Servant of the Lord fully doing (and only doing) the will of the Father. Scattered through all the passages we read earlier is another theme that contrasts Caesar (the fake) and Jesus the real Son of God. It is what some people call the secrecy motif of Mark. His humility shows through in that He doesn't need acclaim. Let's look at some examples:

In chapter 1:24 a man with an unclean spirit identifies Jesus as the Holy One of God. Jesus rebukes the spirit and commands him to be quiet. The demons knew who He was, and they feared Him. But Jesus didn't need or want their testimony. He didn't need their help. Mark 1:34 says, "He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him."

We read in chapter 3:11-12 that this occurred *every single time* that He cast out a demon - they fell down before Jesus and cried out, "You are the Son of God." Since He cast out a lot of demons, that was a lot of testimonies that He was the Son of God. But what was Christ's constant reaction? Verse 12 says, "But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known." Romans would have wondered why Jesus would insist on this secrecy. This is such a contrast with Caesar's prideful power religion. Caesar wanted to be acknowledged as the Son of God and he erected temples to His image everywhere and welcomed such. Jesus didn't need that fake acclaim. His kingdom was an upside down kingdom that exhibited God's power through loving service. And Jesus of course was the exemplar of this service.

And the secrecy Jesus commanded of demons, he also commanded of humans that He healed. In Mark 1:40-45 Jesus healed a leper. Verses 43-45 say,

43 And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely...

Liberals have come up with all kinds of strange theories on this secrecy motif that make no sense. But when you realize that Jesus not only opposed the political Messiah of the Jews but also the Messianic State of the Romans, it makes great sense. Indeed, the Servant of the Lord songs in Isaiah 40-53 (that form the background to so much of Mark) were an absolutely necessary corrective to Roman Christians as well as to Roman seekers. This Son of God was establishing a kingdom that was totally different than the lousy kingdoms of the world. And we need to ask ourselves by way of application, "Which kingdom do we reflect? The self-centered kingdom of man or the God-centered kingdom of Jesus?"

This Son of God was not insecure like Caesar was and He did not need acclaim like Caesar did. He was content for His Father to get the glory. This King came in weakness but demonstrated an inner power that no one could conquer. Every detail of the Gospel of Mark is designed to tear down pagan thinking that exalts itself against the true knowledge and the true nature of Christ's kingdom.

I won't go through every passage that emphasizes this secrecy motif, but let me list a few. In Mark 7:31-37 Jesus heals a deaf man and charges him to speak to no one - a charge he blatantly disregards.

He does the same to a blind man in Mark 8:22-26, telling him to go back to his house, and saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town." Secrecy.

Then He asks His disciples who *they* thought He was. In verse 29 Peter rightly says, "You are the Christ." That is obviously one of the messages of this book - that Jesus is the true Messiah, not Caesar. So why does verse 30 say, "Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him"? Here they know that Jesus is the Messianic God-Man, but Jesus won't let them tell others. Why? A number of reasons have been suggested, but I believe a central one is that His kingdom would not come as a result of human support, political support, religious support, financial support, or any other kind of support from below. His kingdom comes from heaven and grows by supernatural power. When you have

grown up in a statist empire like Rome, you need the Gospel of Mark to undo faulty thinking about what God's true kingdom is. And Mark systematically destroys all humanistic ideas about kingdom life.

Just one more example. Look at chapter 9:1-10. This is Mark's version of Jesus being transfigured and shown to be a heavenly being. The disciples' reaction is a typical reaction of humans. They want to build three tabernacles - one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. That's kind of weird - putting Jesus on the same plane as those two. But by wanting to build three tabernacles they were elevating, worshiping and wanting to honor the wrong things. This would have been a powerful story for Romans, who were especially prone to this error. Let's read the account, and I think you can see for yourselves why Jesus commanded them to keep this secret. Though Jesus would use His disciples as tools and ambassadors in the last verses of Mark, He had to first of all make it clear that His kingdom was not dependent upon them. Not at all. Verse 1:

Mark 9:1 And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

This would not be the kind of power that Romans took pride in - political power. This would be a heavenly power that transforms everything on earth and even has the power to transform bodies and souls. Verse 2:

2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" — 6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

But notice that God is not impressed with man's help or man's voice. Listen to the rebuke in verse 7:

7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" 8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. 9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

Once the resurrection had happened and His followers had been winnowed down to a few, the kingdom would grow from a mustard seed into a huge plant - indeed, into a world-wide kingdom that embraces everything lost by Adam. Christ's kingdom would eventually rival the Pax Romana or Roman peace that Rome claimed to have brought. His kingdom would be of greater extent than the Roman empire at its height. His kingdom would not only embrace the universe, but would claim every thought, motive, and goal that we have internally. Only a supernatural power of heaven could achieve this.

## Unlike Caesar, this “Son of God” came not to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many

But what is the most remarkable thing about Mark is that this divine being who is King over a universal kingdom has a humility to self-consciously embrace servanthood. This whole book is such a rebuke to pride, stinginess, self-seeking, hoarding, laziness, materialism, and all the other things that men tend to find meaning in. This too is the opposite of Caesar. Caesar made the whole world serve His selfish interests, but Jesus showed no selfishness. The theme verse of the whole book is Mark 10:45. After rebuking His disciples who wanted to sit at His right hand and wanted to be the greatest, Jesus contrasts His kingdom with the kingdoms of the Gentiles. Let's read verses 42-45 so that you can see the context of verse 45. Mark 10, beginning at verse 42.

Mark 10:42 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Underline that verse. It is at the core and heart of this whole book. This is clearly an upside down kingdom and a King who is different from any other king, and followers who are different than any other kingdom's followers.

### All the upside down aspects of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40-53 are true of Jesus in Mark

As the next point states, “All the upside down aspects of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40-53 are true of Jesus in Mark.” It is remarkable how saturated Mark is with this section of Isaiah. You could say that Isaiah structures Mark. We won't have time to trace all of the evidence of this through the book of Mark, but let's look at a few:

The servant songs of Isaiah start in chapter 40 with a voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God” etc. In other words, it starts where the Gospel of Mark starts, with John the Baptist preaching the kingdom and calling people to repent of all the man-made ways of thinking about the kingdom, just as Isaiah did. There are remarkable parallels between those first two chapters of the songs of the Servant and the beginning of Mark.

Then Isaiah goes on to describe the baptism of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus. This is chapter 42. I'll read the first four verses from Isaiah 42.

Isaiah 42 > 1 “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, > My Elect One in whom My soul delights! > I have put My Spirit upon Him; > He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. > 2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, > Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. > 3 A bruised reed He will not break, > And smoking flax He will not quench; > He will bring forth justice for truth. > 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, > Till He has established justice in the earth; > And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”



Wow! That's the same upside down kingdom that Mark speaks about. It doesn't use Roman power or any other human power to accomplish its will. Instead of crushing, it lifts up and heals. Instead of overwhelming power forcing conformity, it wins people to the *truth* and never will be discouraged or give up until justice happens by *grace* rather than by brute force. You can see how in-your-face the contrast is between Christ's kingdom and the Roman concept of kingdom.

So as you go through the Servant of the Lord passages in Isaiah you see Mark written all over them. Let me outline the book of Mark based on its emphasis of different aspects of the Servant of the Lord Songs in Isaiah. And you will see these five parts of Mark in the middle of the second page of your outline.

In Mark 1:1-2:12 we have the *presentation* of the Servant of the Lord. He's presented to us by Mark in verse 1, by the Old Testament prophets in verses 2-3, then by John the Baptist, and by God the Father at His Baptism, by His triumphant power over Satan and demons and disease and disability. He is clearly presented as being who Mark says He is.

In Mark 2:13-8:26 we have the *opposition* to the Servant of the Lord. That was not unanticipated. Isaiah had predicted such opposition. And Mark is trying to convince His readers not to be surprised by the opposition they will face. Jesus faced it and you will face it. And this opposition is a testing of the authenticity of the kingdom life that we have inside of us. If you are a fake Christian, you won't be able to stand up to that kind of opposition. And it encourages us to realize that nothing can successfully resist the power of the Servant of the Lord. Even death cannot stop His purposes. We face death convinced that even our death will advance His kingdom. Now, I guess Roman soldiers could connect with that. They were used to dealing with opposition.

In Mark 8:27-10:52 we have the *instructions* that the Servant of Lord gives concerning the upside down nature of this kingdom. It is a kingdom that starts small and grows. It is a kingdom of service not lording it over others. It is a kingdom in which infants and children play a part. It is a kingdom where riches do not buy influence and generosity is more important than hoarding. In short, it is a kingdom that is the diametric opposite of the Roman empire.

In Mark 11:1-15:47 we have the *rejection* of the Servant of the Lord - also anticipated in Isaiah's servant songs. After all, it presents Him as the Suffering Servant. There should be no surprise when the world rejects Christ's kingdom. That's the *only* thing the world can do until it is conquered with the Gospel. And Romans understood that. Nobody wants to be conquered. But the strange thing about Christ's kingdom is that when heaven conquers an individual, that individual loves Christ and is willing to lay down his life for Christ. And the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. But the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah are fulfilled to a T in Jesus. They are such astounding prophecies of every detail of Christ's suffering and crucifixion that Jewish rabbis try to avoid this passage nowadays. It's a dangerous passage to them - especially Isaiah 53. But it is also a dangerous passage to Romans and all power religionists. It is the cross that conquers hearts, not the sword.

In Mark 16:1-20 you have the *victory* of the Servant of the Lord through resurrection and through the Great Commission.

And all of the specifics of those prophecies were lived out in Jesus. Isaiah said that the servant of the Lord would have no deceit in His mouth (Is. 53:9), but that He would tell it like it is. And you see Jesus refusing to play politics. He spoke truth.

Isaiah 48 portrays the Messiah as being fully Yehowah. In fact, let me give you my favorite verse on the Trinity in the Old Testament. It's Isaiah 48:16. I love this verse. This verse shows the doctrine of the Trinity as well as any New Testament verse. It is a prophecy of Jesus, who has just been described as the First and the Last (which the New Testament also does, by the way), and this First and Last says this:

“Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me.”

When the Hebrew words Adonai and Yehowah appear together, the NKJV translates it as “Lord GOD” with the GOD being capitalized. So literally, Yehowah says, “Adonai Yehowah and His Spirit have sent Me.” What could be a better description of the Trinity? Yehowah and His Spirit send the First and the Last to minister as the Servant of the Lord, and He Himself is Yehowah. Three Persons, one name. Three Persons, one God. Not all commentators accept this. Some would disagree with the New King James capitalizing the Me. Some say that Cyrus is saying this, but that would be blasphemy. I follow Gill in saying that the preincarnate Christ is talking.<sup>3</sup> We see the same thing in Mark. The Spirit comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven says, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” All three members of the Trinity in unison, and Father and Spirit commissioning Jesus to be the Ultimate Servant of the Lord in this book.

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<sup>3</sup> Gill says, “Ver. 16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this, &c.] An address to the Jews, to attend the ministry of Christ, and hear the doctrine he had delivered to them: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the beginning of his ministry; which he exercised not in private houses, but in the synagogues of the Jews, and in the temple, whither a large concourse of people resorted, John 18:20: from the time that it was, there am I; from the time that his ministry began there, he was in the same places, in Judea and Galilee, always publicly preaching the Gospel, and doing good: or rather, before the time that it was, there was I; Christ existed before his incarnation, before he appeared as the great Prophet in Israel; he existed as the Word and Son of God from all eternity, and was with God his Father from everlasting; he was by him, and brought up with him, and lay in his bosom so early: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me; in the fulness of time, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to preach the Gospel, fulfil the law, and to redeem and save the Lord's people. Here is a glorious testimony of a trinity of Persons in the Godhead; Christ the Son of God is sent in human nature, and as Mediator; Jehovah the Father and the Spirit are the senders of him; and so is a proof of the mission, commission, and authority of Christ, who came not of himself, but was sent of God, John 8:42 it may be rendered, and now the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit: both were sent of God, and in this order; first, Christ, to be the Redeemer and Saviour; and then the Spirit, to be the Convincer and Comforter; see John 14:26 and 15:26 and 16:7, 8.” John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, vol. 5, *The Baptist Commentary Series* (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 281.

Yet this same divine being is said to be in the womb of a woman in Isaiah 49:1 and called by Yehowah in the womb, and to be fully human, and to represent Israel as His body.

Isaiah 53 and other passages show the Servant of the Lord to be the sinless yet suffering substitute who bears the sins of His people. It declares Him to be tortured and killed as a Suffering Servant, yet totally victorious. So the whole way of salvation that was promised in Isaiah is clearly laid out as being fulfilled in Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. That is good news indeed.

## **To demonstrate how the Christians of Rome could live, suffer, and die in such a way as to glorify God.**

And the next subpoint indicates that He is portrayed in this way so that Christians will imitate Jesus by having a loyal servant heart, and by facing suffering victoriously just as Jesus did. The bold and confident way that Jesus faced death would be an inspiring example for the Christians of Rome on how they too could face death with faith.

## **The author, date, and place of writing for this book**

I probably should have started with the next point - the author, date, and place of writing for this book. From the earliest times there has been no doubt whatsoever about the author of this book. The unanimous testimony of the church has been that it was John Mark.

Mark is mentioned ten times by name in the New Testament. John was his Jewish name and Mark was his Roman name. The evidence seems to suggest that he was from a very wealthy family. God is not against wealth. Wealth can be used to advance His kingdom, and Mark did indeed do that. Even His mother's house must have been a huge house to have been able to house the church in Acts 12. Though we cannot know for sure, most biographers infer that Christ's last supper was held in that same home, and that his father was alive in Mark 14 but had died by Acts 12 since the house is now said to be his mother's house. Most biographers say that Mark (a young man in Mark 14:51) followed Jesus out of that house where the last supper occurred and accompanied the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. Most assume that Mark 14 describes *him* when it says,

Mark 14:51 Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, 52 and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

Enough about Mark. Let me deal with dating a bit. When I was preaching on Matthew I mentioned that the order we have of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is the order in which those books were written. If you have done much reading of modern commentaries, you will notice that a majority of modern scholars disagree with this ancient consensus. Modern scholars claim that Mark was written first and that Matthew and Luke borrowed material from Mark. Liberals go further. Since they don't like the idea of predictive prophecy, they say that all of the Gospels were written long after Jerusalem was destroyed, with Mark being first, and the others following.

What are we to think of this? Just from the statements of the Bible alone, we can ditch the liberal ideas of a late date. My book on the Canon<sup>4</sup> demonstrates from internal evidences that a late date is absolutely impossible, and why every book of the New Testament was finished by AD 66.

But which came first? The church used to say that it was Matthew. In the last four decades a lot of evangelicals have followed the liberals on dating Mark first. And you might think, "What's the big deal? Who cares which one came first? It's Scripture, right? We'll just enjoy it as Scripture." Well, it is a big deal. A lot of people don't realize that you must embrace several liberal presuppositions before Markan priority can even make sense. Back in the 1980s most evangelicals would have agreed with me on this. I will just give one story as an example. Back in the 1980s, Robert Gundry was one of the first evangelicals to adopt Markan priority. The Evangelical Theological Society was much more conservative back then, and they actually censured him for his commentary on Matthew and forced him to resign from the organization. That's how important they considered this issue to be. They did not think you could be an evangelical and hold to Markan priority. Markan priority is too wrapped up in other critical presuppositions.

So if you see organizations like the Bible Project, commentaries, and even sermons that claim Mark was written first, you need to realize that it is a herd mentality following after liberal establishment scholarship. And believe me, it is not an inconsequential issue - at least if you are consistent with your presuppositions. Praise God that most of these evangelicals are not consistent. David Laird Dungan, Gary Derickson, Eta Linnemann, Robert Thomas, and many others have shown how destructive the presuppositions that undergird Markan priority are to Christianity - even when they are adopted by evangelicals and by evangelical study bibles. I won't get into the very complex reasons why, but I did at least want you to be aware of this issue. Gary W. Derickson says,

The anti-supernatural foundation and non-evangelical assumptions that form the basis of the denial of Matthew's priority and authorship must be recognized and avoided by evangelicals if they are to remain true to Scripture's inspiration and authority. To permit this theological drift within evangelical churches, colleges, and seminaries poses a threat to the vitality and future of evangelicalism as witnessed in the decline of mainline denominations.

Eta Linnemann is correct in her warnings that evangelical adoption of critical methods, such as Redaction Criticism, ultimately leads to the same liberal conclusions, since those methods were designed to prove the evolutionary theory of religious development and deny divine inspiration. The danger arises from accepting the presuppositions of modern scholars and their theories...<sup>5</sup>

Again, I won't get into all of the evidence this morning, but I believe Matthew was written in AD 40 or earlier. Mark was written in AD 45 or earlier (one church father said five years earlier). Luke was written in AD 57. And the Gospel of John was written in AD 65.

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<sup>4</sup> Phillip G. Kayser, *The Canon of Scripture: A Presuppositional Study* (Omaha, NE: Biblical Blueprints, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj14e.pdf>

By the way, even liberals are being forced to admit that every book of the New Testament was written before AD 70. John A.T. Robinson is an example. He is a liberal who was forced to this conclusion from the internal evidence and wrote a very compelling book called *Redating the New Testament*. I obviously don't agree with everything that he says. I just mention it to show that the evidence is so overwhelming that even liberals are conceding the point.

But I do want to point to the top two pictures in your outline to clue you into another embarrassment to liberals. The top picture represents a stunning archaeological find. It is a papyrus fragment found at a Qumran cave that is a perfect match for Mark 6:52-53. (And by the way, they have found other New Testament fragments since then in that cave. I won't get into that.) The top two pictures in your outline represent that fragment. I've read articles for and against this identification, but when you overlay the words on this fragment over the actual text of Mark (as the second picture does), they fit. And they don't fit any other known document. Since the Qumran community was expelled from the area in AD 68, this would mean that the document that was left in the cave had to have been written prior to AD 68. How much earlier?

Well, before the writing was even identified, both conservative and liberal scholars unanimously dated the fragment to somewhere between 50 BC and AD 50 based on the style of the script. They believed that it could not have been written later than AD 50. OK - no controversy so far. But later, when Jose O'Callaghan and even later Carsten Thiel identified it as part of the Gospel of Mark, a firestorm erupted with many liberal scholars who were not familiar with papyrology claiming that this was impossible since Mark wasn't written till much later (OK? It contradicted their presuppositions, so it can't be). But as even Wikipedia now states, "The results of the 1991 symposium demonstrated that most papyrologists agreed with them based on Papyrologist Hebert Hungers 22 point analysis and President of Papyrological Association Orsolina Montevicchi statement that there can be no doubt that 7Q5 is a copy of Mark's Gospel."<sup>6</sup> More and more experts from Jewish, atheist, agnostic, Roman Catholic, and Protestant persuasions have shown that the evidence is overwhelming that this is a fragment from the Gospel of Mark.<sup>7</sup>

If this is true, it would mean that the parchment dates to AD 50 *at the very latest*. All by itself this is a huge embarrassment to previous liberal claims. Since copies are always younger than what was copied (unless this is the original, which is impossible on other grounds), this would mean that the Gospel of Mark had to have been written before AD 50. That would line up with the conservative view that it was written by AD 45 at the latest.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7Q5> as it is found on 5-6-2020.

<sup>7</sup> Several books have been written on this, but an interesting summary of the debates can be read here: <https://www.uccronline.it/eng/2018/04/13/early-date-of-marks-gospel-what-dead-sea-scrolls-say/>

Why is this significant? Well, it is an embarrassment to liberalism. I always enjoy embarrassments to liberal unbelief.

But beyond that, it means that Mark wrote his gospel one year (or possibly more) before Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey with Mark in Acts 12:25. Mark was already a prophet who had written Scripture prior to the debate and had been powerfully used by God prior to the debate. It also means that Mark had experience in missions and in work with the Gentiles prior to Acts 13. No wonder he was invited along for Paul's first missionary journey. There is no evidence that Mark backslid (as some have guessed) or that Mark was fearful (as others have guessed) or that Mark was unfaithful (as others have guessed). If we stick with the text, we simply know that Mark left. It is an equally valid guess to say that his constitution (his body) was not able to keep up with Paul's aggressive missionary trips. And one very early church tradition says that Mark had some physical disabilities. So that could very well be the case. In any case, very few men could keep up with the astounding schedule that Paul kept.

Barnabas valued both men and knew that neither one was a slouch. In his debate with Paul, I assume that both sides (Barnabas and Paul) had legitimate points. Paul realized that Mark couldn't keep up with him on the kinds of journeys he was engaged in he didn't want to be slowed down. Barnabas realized that Mark had already proven himself to be an indispensable tool that God had raised up for missions. Their parting could very well have been a godly solution, and not necessarily a sinful alienation. Barnabas and Paul both held their ground on valid points, and the Bible doesn't seem to censure either one. As a result of that providential split (and possibly even a godly split), the work actually multiplied rather than diminishing. I think too many commentators read that disagreement through the eyes of modern mushy Christianity that doesn't tolerate strong heated disagreements. In any case, Mark became indispensable to Paul long before Paul's last epistle praises him. Mark was working closely with Paul in Philemon 24 - that is AD 58. He is still working with Paul seven years later in AD 65 (that is 2 Timothy 4:11). And after Paul died, he worked with Peter in 1 Peter 5:13. I think John Mark has not been given a fair hearing in some circles.

And since Mark was an associate of Jesus and an eyewitness of many of the events in the Gospel, and may even have been one of the seventy prophets that were sent out by Jesus in Luke 10, there is no need to try to guess which Gospel copied from the other Gospels. All of them had access to the facts and all of them were moved by the Holy Spirit to write an inspired account that was inerrant and that perfectly dovetails with the other accounts. There is no need to guess who copied who. And there is plenty of evidence to suggest that nobody copied the other ones, but were directly moved by the Holy Spirit to write. Not that it would be wrong for them to quote each other, but that is not a necessary conclusion.

## **Why the last verses of Mark do indeed belong**

Before I end this message, I want to explain why I believe the last verses of Mark do indeed belong in the Bible. I do admit that this is an issue that divides very good people. Even some Reconstructionist friends of mine (like Joe Morecraft and Greg Bahnsen) are convinced that

these verses are spurious. But these last twelve verses are part of the Majority Text, and I want to give you some very quick reasons why you should not doubt them at all.

In my book on Textual Criticism,<sup>8</sup> I demonstrate that the Bible gives us eleven infallible presuppositions by which we can evaluate the text that God has preserved. Modern textual criticism fails to examine what the Bible says about the subject. And here is the thing: it is impossible to follow those eleven biblical presuppositions without also accepting the last twelve verses of Mark. Impossible. Those who reject these last verses have unwittingly accepted the secular presuppositions of textual critics. They are good honest men, but they probably have not studied this subject presuppositionally. For me, the Biblical presuppositions easily settle the question. But let me give you some other reasons since this is such a hotly contested issue in evangelicalism.

My second reason is that everyone admits that *if* the last twelve verses of Mark are spurious, then the Gospel ends with a whimper that seems utterly inconsistent with the rest of the book. It ends with verse 8, which says,

So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The end. They disobeyed the angels because they were afraid. Even those who believe the last twelve verses are spurious have to admit that either the true ending is lost (contrary to Christ's repeated promises that none of His Words would be lost), or it ends abruptly and leaves one hanging. There is no smooth landing at the end.

Third, out of 1700 Greek manuscripts that are complete copies of Mark, only three known manuscripts leave these verses out. One is Vaticanus, another is Sinaiticus, and the third is a twelfth century manuscript labeled 304. In addition to those 1700 Greek manuscripts, the last twelve verses are contained in all surviving 2000 or so Greek church lectionaries. Lectionaries were portions of Scripture divided up into readings for each day to be used in the church. So that means that there are 3700 Greek manuscripts in favor, and only three against! That's not a very good basis on which to leave out the last twelve verses. Of course, these evangelicals have many other arguments from the fathers and the translations, but the manuscripts of the Bible itself is conclusive.

Fourth, the evidence shows that the ancient Greek church all the way up through to the modern Greek church certainly considered the last twelve verses to be authentic. But so did virtually the rest of the church, with only a handful of exceptions. John W. Burgon's masterful book, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to Mark* demonstrate this very well. The ancient translations into Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Gothic all have these verses. This is massive testimony. There are about 1000 manuscripts of the ancient Syriac Bible, 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin translation. This means that statistical probability that these last twelve verses are spurious is almost nil - that is, if you allow the Bible's presuppositions to interpret the evidence. Are there other fathers and other translations

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<sup>8</sup> Phillip Kayser, *Has God Indeed Said? The Preservation of the Text of the New Testament* (Omaha, NE: Biblical Blueprints, 2019)

that leave it out? Yes. But God didn't promise to preserve the writings of the fathers or the translations. He promised to preserve the words that were written by the prophets - in this case in Greek.

Fifth, an examination of the only three Greek manuscripts to leave it out shows that there is something strange going on. Vaticanus has an unusual gap between Mark and Luke - a gap large enough to put the last twelve verses of Mark into that space. You don't find any other similar gaps in the New Testament in that document. The reason there were no gaps is that Vellum was expensive. Scribes used every space. So why is the gap there? And take a look at the second picture from the bottom. It almost looks like something was erased from Vaticanus. James Snapp, Jr. has done a reconstruction on the bottom picture<sup>9</sup> of what might have originally been there by using the scribe's own handwriting, using a clever cut-and-paste technique. He uses the scribe's own compacted lettering that is used in the first six columns of Luke and shows that it is a perfect fit. This shows that even Vaticanus is not an unambiguous testimony against the longer reading.

The second manuscript, Sinaiticus, has the last lines written in a completely different handwriting, showing that it wasn't even written by the original scribe, and it too has a gap. And you can see a picture of that in your outlines. So if the scribe didn't even finish writing the book of Mark (as everyone agrees), the fact that the last verses are missing does not testify to what the first scribe had before him. And notice that there is a gap in Sinaiticus as well.

Besides those two weird gaps, there are other odd things that make Vaticanus and Sinaiticus false witnesses. Everyone admits that those two manuscripts disagree with each other over 3000 times in the Gospels alone! That does not make them the best manuscripts. According to Biblical justice it makes them false witnesses on a grand scale. So why would those two manuscripts be given such a strong voice in determining that these verses are fake? And, by the way, many other readings followed in the NIV, ESV, and NASB are based upon only one or two of these two manuscripts. In any case, this means that the evidence shows 3700 Greek manuscripts against three. And those 3700 Greek manuscripts represent every geographic region of the church. I feel like I have to give you these evidences so that you are confident that you do have every word of Mark.

Wilbur Pickering summarizes the massive amount of other evidence saying this:

As stated at the outset, with united voice, down through the centuries, in all parts of the world (including Egypt), the Church universal has affirmed and insisted that Mark's Gospel goes from 1:1 to 16:20.<sup>10</sup>

My last reason is that if God has preserved His text (which he promised to do - and which every Reformed confession says that He did do)), you would expect it to exist in *actual*

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.thetextofthegospels.com/2016/04/codex-vaticanus-and-ending-of-mark.html>

<sup>10</sup> Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text, IV* (Pickering pdf, 2014), p. 313.



manuscripts and not only in a theoretical reconstructed text. The USB and the Nestle Aland Greek texts that the ESV, NIV, NASB are based on are purely theoretical texts where experts picked and chose which Greek words should belong. By theoretical texts I mean that there is not a single Greek manuscript in existence that is word-for-word the same as the USB and Nestle Aland in any book of the New Testament. There is no manuscript in existence that is word-for-word that same as what you will find in the ESV, NIV, NASB, etc. The same is not true for the Majority Text that we follow. The Majority Text for Mark is word for word identical with numerous manuscripts. I can give you the exact manuscripts that you can compare. God has indeed preserved His Word - every word. And to criticize these last verses through other means (such as being unbiblical, and weird, and doctrinally unsound), is to criticize God Himself. It may be an unwitting criticism, but it a scary criticism nonetheless.

Does Acts record each of these predictions in the last twelve verses as happening? Yes. And if yes, they should not be criticized. Now, Paul didn't *deliberately* pick up a venomous serpent. That would be to tempt God. But he did *accidentally* pick up a serpent in Acts 28, got bitten, and had no harm come to him - as prophesied by these verses. He did speak in tongues. He did cast out demons. He did lay hands on the sick so that they recovered. These were all evidences that the kingdom of God had come and that what Christ had *begun* to do in the Gospels He *continued* to do through His church in the book of Acts.

From the first verse to the last verse, Mark is a unified book that would have turned a Roman citizen's life upside down. And it continues to turn our lives upside down when we submit to it and internalize it. May our appreciation for Mark continue to grow. Amen.