

An Overview of the Gospel of Mark

Author

John Mark (Mark = Roman name, John = Jewish name)

John Mark was a close companion of Peter (Acts 12:12; 1 Pet 5:13) and the son of a wealthy family in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12-14).

Mark served as Peter's interpreter and used Peter as his primary source of information in writing.

Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica (History of the Church)*, written in 325:

And the presbyter [likely the apostle John] used to say this, "Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.

Date and Time of Writing

Most likely between A.D. 50 and A.D. 60. It is very likely that Mark is the earliest Gospel.

Probably written in Rome (1 Pet 5:13). Rome is symbolically called "Babylon".

Audience

Mark's audience was most likely comprised of Gentile Christians most likely situated in Rome.

- Explanation of Jewish customs (7:3-5; 14:12; 15:42)
- Translation of Aramaic expressions (3:17, 5:41, 7:34, 14:36, 15:22, 34)
- Use of Latin terms and measurements (5:9, 6:27,48, 12:15,42, 13:35, 15:16,39)
- The reference to Rufus (15:21; cf. Rom 16:13)
- The fact that Mark was probably in Rome with Peter (1 Pet 5:13)
- Few Old Testament references (63, compared with 128 in Matthew and 90-100 in Luke)

Purposes for Writing

1. To demonstrate to non-Christians that Jesus is the Son of God because of his authority over nature, demons, death, and sickness.
2. To provide an apologetic that in spite of his crucifixion, which was a death reserved for criminals and slaves, that Romans should follow Jesus even though many Jews had rejected him.
3. To show that Jesus, not Caesar, is the true Son of God, Savior, and Lord.
4. To teach Christians about the nature of discipleship.

Structure

1:1-13	Jesus in the wilderness
1:14-9:50	Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee
10:1-52	Jesus' journey to Jerusalem through Judea
11:1-16:8	Jesus' final week and passion (6 of 16 chapters)
1:1-8:26	Jesus the Son of God is the powerful Messiah (who Jesus is)
8:27-16:8	Jesus the Son of God is the suffering Servant (why Jesus came)