



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

**Author:** John Mark was an African, born in Cyrene in modern Libya. He would have been a young boy at the time of Jesus' ministry. Later he travelled with Paul and Barnabas during a part of their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). As Peter's disciple, Mark travelled with him and interpreted for him. Thanks to this experience, Mark was able to write all that he heard Peter tell about Jesus' life and work. Tradition suggests that Mark was the founder of the church in Alexandria, Egypt, and that he was killed there for being a Christian. His ministry and martyrdom helped the spread of Christianity in Africa.

**Date:** The Gospel of Mark was written in Rome, probably during the years AD 55–65. Some scholars believe that this Gospel was one of the earliest New Testament documents. Others stress that it may have been written after the death of Peter between AD 65 and 70, when Mark realised that what Peter had said would be lost if Mark did not write it down.

**Overview and Story:** Mark wrote his Gospel to the Gentiles—to the Romans in particular—and not to a Jewish audience. For this reason, he made a special effort to explain Jewish customs and words. These explanations helped Gentile readers better understand Jesus' relationship to the Jews, as well as to the Gentiles. Mark also showed that all people need to know the Messiah, the Son of God, who gave his life for their salvation (Mark 10:45). Mark wrote for people who had never seen the ministry of Jesus, and so his Gospel emphasizes what it means to follow Jesus.

Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. He wrote mostly about what Jesus did, focussing on his actions rather than on what he taught. Mark is more like a book of short stories than a biography. More than 90 percent of the stories in Mark are also found in Matthew and Luke. That means that few stories are found only in Mark. He shows how Jesus served those around him and how he suffered for doing it.

The new believers to whom Mark wrote would probably be persecuted because of their faith. Persecution would put them at risk physically and could make some want to leave their faith (Mark 4:17). Mark's Gospel was meant to encourage suffering Christians who might be tempted to abandon their belief in Jesus. It showed them that Jesus also suffered, but he had the victory.

Mark also wrote his Gospel because eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry were dying. The oral record of his life and works needed to be preserved. Mark's goal was to write down the "Good News about Jesus the Messiah," the Chosen One (Mark 1:1).

### What Mark Teaches Us:

- Mark reminds Christians in Africa that Jesus really is the Son of God and the Messiah who came to save not only the Jews, but the Gentiles as well. Mark, an African himself, carried this Good News to Africa.
- Mark warns us about the dangers of not taking our faith seriously and of drifting away from it. As Christians, personal comfort and satisfaction should not be our primary goal. Rather, we are called to seek God's Kingdom and righteousness first (Matthew 6:33; Mark 10:29–30).

- We Christians are disciples. That means we live is our example. He came "not to be served but to serve, and to give a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus suffered, and we should suffer also. Our commitment to follow Jesus is not just to walk in his footsteps. That means that we could be persecuted and even killed.
- We should be sceptical of the highly appealing promises of the Christian life should be comfortable and easy. If you be my follower, you must turn from your selfishness (Mark 8:34). Suffering should be expected.

### OUTLINE AND RHYTHM

#### Jesus, the Miracle-working Messiah (1:1–8:30)

Jesus' mission and authority unveiled (1:1–3)  
Jesus' ministry begins (1:14–2:5)  
Jesus' ministry questioned (2:6–3:6)

*Response to the miracles of Jesus* (3:7–12)  
Teachings about the Kingdom (4:1–34)  
Miracles of Jesus (4:35–5:43)

*Response to the teachings* (6:1–29)  
Miracles of Jesus and responses (6:30–8:13)  
*Response to the miracles* (8:27–8:30)

#### Jesus, the Teaching Messiah (8:31–14:2)

Authority and mission endorsed (8:31–9:1)  
Prediction of death, teachings, and responses (9:30–10:54)  
Temple ministries (11:1–12:12)

*Response to the teachings* (11:27–12:12)  
End times teachings and prediction of death (13:1–14:2)  
*Response to the predictions* (14:1–2)

#### Jesus, the Suffering Messiah (14:3–16:20)

Jesus betrayed (14:3–42)  
Jesus on trial (14:43–15:20)  
Jesus crucified (15:21–47)  
Jesus resurrected (16:1–8)

*Response to the Resurrection* (16:9–20)

# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

born in Cyrene in modern Libya. He would have been a journeyman. Later he travelled with Paul and Barnabas on his missionary journey (Acts 13:13). As Peter's disciple, Mark was able to see Jesus' life and work. Tradition suggests that Mark was in Alexandria, Egypt, and that he was killed there for being a Christian. His martyrdom helped the spread of Christianity in Africa.

Mark was written in Rome, probably during the years AD 55–65. It is the earliest New Testament document. It was written after the death of Peter between AD 65 and 70, a time when his word would be lost if Mark did not write it down.

Mark wrote his Gospel to the Gentiles—to the Romans in particular. For this reason, he made a special effort to explain Jewish customs. These explanations helped Gentile readers better understand the Jews, as well as to the Gentiles. Mark also showed Jesus as the Son of God, who gave his life for people who had never seen the ministry of Jesus, so that they could follow him.

Mark wrote his Gospel mostly about what Jesus did, focussing on the things he taught. Mark is more like a book of short stories. Many of the stories in Mark are also found in Matthew and Luke, but some are found only in Mark. He shows how Jesus served people and suffered for doing it.

Mark wrote his Gospel because he was persecuted because of his faith. He was at risk physically and could make some want to leave. His Gospel was meant to encourage suffering Christians and to strengthen their belief in Jesus. It showed them that Jesus also suffered.

Mark's Gospel says that the eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry were dying. The oral tradition had to be preserved. Mark's goal was to write down the Gospel, the Good News, so that it would be preserved for the future. Mark's Gospel is the Gospel of the Chosen One (Mark 1:1).

Mark's Gospel is for Africa that Jesus really is the Son of God and the Messiah for the Jews, but the Gentiles as well. Mark, an African himself, wrote his Gospel for Africa.

Mark's Gospel is for those who are tired of not taking our faith seriously and of drifting away from God. It calls us to personal comfort and satisfaction should not be our goal. We are called to seek God's Kingdom and righteousness first (Matthew 6:33).

- We Christians are disciples. That means we live to serve Jesus and serve others. Jesus is our example. He came "not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus suffered during his ministry, and we may suffer also. Our commitment to follow Jesus is not without risk. We must be ready to walk in his footsteps. That means that we could be despised, humiliated, persecuted, and even killed.
- We should be sceptical of the highly appealing theme we often hear in Africa that the Christian life should be comfortable and easy. Jesus said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). Suffering should be expected. By suffering, we grow in holiness.

## OUTLINE AND RHYTHM

### Jesus, the Miracle-working Messiah (1:1–8:30)

Jesus' mission and authority unveiled (1:1–13)

Jesus' ministry begins (1:14–2:5)

Jesus' ministry questioned (2:6–3:6)

*Response to the miracles of Jesus (3:7–35)*

Teachings about the Kingdom (4:1–34)

Miracles of Jesus (4:35–5:43)

*Response to the teachings (6:1–29)*

Miracles of Jesus and responses (6:30–8:26)

*Response to the miracles (8:27–8:30)*

### Jesus, the Teaching Messiah (8:31–14:2)

Authority and mission endorsed (8:31–9:29)

Prediction of death, teachings, and response (9:30–10:52)

Temple ministries (11:1–26)

*Response to the teachings (11:27–12:44)*

End times teachings and prediction of destruction (13:1–37)

*Response to the predictions (14:1–2)*

### Jesus, the Suffering Messiah (14:3–16:20)

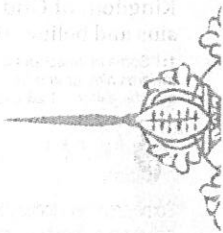
Jesus betrayed (14:3–42)

Jesus on trial (14:43–15:20)

Jesus crucified (15:21–47)

Jesus resurrected (16:1–8)

*Response to the Resurrection (16:9–20)*



4:9  
Matt 11:15  
Mark 4:23  
Rev 2:7  
4:10-12  
att 13:10-17  
uke 8:9-10

4:12  
Isa 6:9-10  
hn 12:39-40  
ts 28:26-27

4:13-20  
att 13:18-23  
uke 8:11-15

4:14  
Eph 3:8  
Jas 1:18  
Pet 1:23-25

4:15  
2 Cor 4:4  
1 Pet 5:8

4:19  
1 Tim 6:9-10, 17  
Jn 2:15-17

4:21-25  
Matt 5:15  
Luke 8:16-18

4:22  
Matt 10:26  
Luke 12:2

4:23  
Matt 11:15  
13:43

4:25  
Matt 13:12  
25:29

4:26-27  
1 Cor 3:6-7

believing God's word. <sup>18</sup>The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, <sup>19</sup>but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. <sup>20</sup>And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

### Parable of the Lamp

<sup>21</sup>Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine. <sup>22</sup>For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light. <sup>23</sup>Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

<sup>24</sup>Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given\*—and you will receive even more. <sup>25</sup>To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."

### Parable of the Growing Seed

<sup>26</sup>Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup>Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not

Or The measure you give will be the measure you get back.

### THE FARMER • Mark 4:1-20

to scatter the seed wherever we go and leave to God the work of growing the seed. Second, different portions of soil reacted differently to the seeds. In the same way, we should know that people will react differently to the gospel. We should not be discouraged or quit if we do not see the results we hoped to see. Sometimes the results may surprise us. Such was the case when freelance evangelist Mwangi-wa-Nyarari went to villages in central Kenya, preaching the gospel. Little did he know that his efforts would bring forth great East African Revival!

### D's WORD • Mark 4:1-20

pecially understand it. Hearing God's Word is not enough to withstand the troubles of life. We need to meditate on it, make it part of our beliefs, and obey it. Unless we abide in God's Word—hear it, hear it again, and live it out—we will fall away when trouble comes our way. Let us not be like the seed on a rocky place but like the seed that falls on good soil. God wants us to hear his Word, study it, and bear fruit.

partly them

understand how it happens. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. <sup>29</sup>And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

### Parable of the Mustard Seed

<sup>30</sup>Jesus said, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? <sup>31</sup>It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, <sup>32</sup>but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade."

<sup>33</sup>Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup>In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterwards, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

### Jesus Calms the Storm

<sup>35</sup>As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." <sup>36</sup>So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). <sup>37</sup>But soon a fierce storm

5:1 Other manuscripts read *Gadarenes*; still others read *Gergesenes*. See Matt 8:28; Luke 8:26. 5:2 Greek *unclean*; also in 5:8, 13.

## APPLICATION

### THE PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM • Mark 4:26-34

Jesus, the master storyteller, shaped his parables to reflect everyday life in the community where he lived. For example, it was easy for his listeners to imagine a small mustard seed growing into a big mustard tree that spread its branches so the birds could make nests in it.

How a seed germinates and grows is mysterious. These parables are about the transforming power of the gospel that no one can clearly explain. But we see with our own eyes what happens in the lives of people who receive the gospel. Before long their lives are transformed, and they begin to do good works. The multiplication effect of the mustard seed was evident in the lives of the twelve disciples. Through these

### WHO DO YOU CALL IN A CRISIS? • Mark 4:35-41

The disciples asked "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" (Mark 4:38). Many people today ask this same type of question. Is it a lack of faith that makes us fear we will be overcome, even with Christ in our lives? That is why Jesus gave such a stern rebuke to the disciples.

When we have problems, we are often confused and unsure what to do or whom to call on. We can share our problems with our family, friends, and pastor. If these are problems that require professional assistance, we may share them with a doctor, attorney, or accountant. There is nothing wrong with sharing our burdens with one another. Unfortunately, sometimes we are even tempted to go for advice to native doctors or other less-honourable characters.

4:28-29  
Matt 9:37-38  
Rev 14:15

4:30-32  
//Matt 13:31-32  
//Luke 13:18-19

4:32  
Ezek 17:23  
31:6  
Dan 4:12, 21

4:33  
Matt 13:34-35

4:34  
John 16:25

4:35-41  
//Matt 8:23-27  
//Luke 8:22-25

4:37-38  
Jon 1:4-6

4:39  
Ps 107:25-32

4:41  
Ps 33:8-9

5:1-20  
//Matt 8:28-34  
//Luke 8:26-39

came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

<sup>38</sup>Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

<sup>39</sup>When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup>Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

<sup>41</sup>The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

### Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Man

**5** So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes.\* <sup>2</sup>When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil\* spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup>This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. <sup>4</sup>Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup>Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.