

## **Introduction to the Gospel of Mark – Mark 1:1**

### ***Introduction and Outline***

- Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 16:25-27.
- Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast [a]the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
- Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one [v]mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
- 3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have [d]for all the [e]saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in [f]heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, [g]the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as [h]in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and [i]increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and [j]understood the grace of God in truth
- It was for this He called you through our gospel, [r]that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,
- for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For,
- “All flesh is like grass,
- And all its glory like the flower of grass.
- The grass withers,
- And the flower falls off,
- 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.”
- And this is the word which was [v]preached to you.
- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed [j]from faith to faith; as it is written, “[k]But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

- 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.
- A senior pastor, reflecting upon his ministry experience of more than half a century, said: "...I have found through the half a century that what contributes the most [to growth in God's Word] is a personal preoccupation with Jesus Christ Himself. That's why I spent so many years teaching the gospels—because every verse is Christ."
- Outline:
  - Title: Introduction to the Gospel of Mark
  - 1. Background
  - 2. Mark
  - 3. Gospel

## **Background**

- Author: Mark, also called John, is the "John who was also called Mark" in Acts (Acts 12:12, 25).
- Object: The Church in Rome, most of its members are Gentile believers.
- Features: fast paced, records more of Jesus' actions than His words, often offering vivid and detailed descriptions of specific events.
- Source of eye-witness account: Peter, the apostle. The early church bore unified witness to this. "So great a light of religion shone upon the minds of the hearers of Peter that they were not satisfied with a single hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the divine proclamation, but with all kinds of entreaties urged Mark, whose gospel is extant, seeing that he was a follower of Peter to leave them in writing a record of the teaching transmitted to them orally. Nor did they cease until they had prevailed upon the man and so they became responsible humanly for the Scripture that is called The Gospel According to Mark." (Eusebius, 4th century church historian)
- On the divine level, the entire Bible is inspired by God. The Holy Spirit is the real author behind Mark, which ensures perfect accuracy.

## **Mark**

- The Bible doesn't record much about Mark, but from the fragments we can piece together a very encouraging story that testifies to God's power to transform sinners and use unworthy vessels to accomplish His glorious work.

*First Appearance—Acts 12:12*

- Background: In Jerusalem, Peter was arrested and imprisoned for preaching. The disciples gathered together to pray, and God answered their prayer and miraculously rescued Peter out of prison. He “went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.” In that scene, Mark is just a name, and the only reason it appears is to identify his mother.

*Becoming a Helper– Acts 12:25; 13:5*

- Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem by the Antioch church to bring them some financial help. On their return to Antioch, they “[took] along with them John, who was also called Mark.” But that might be just because Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10)
- In chapter 13, the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas from Antioch on their first missionary journey, "and they also had John (Mark) as their helper." Mark became the apostle's helper.

*A Serious Failure–Acts 13:13*

- While on that mission trip, "John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem", becoming a deserter who couldn't finish the task. Whatever the reason was, Mark was now too ashamed to return to his sending church in Antioch, so he had to return to his hometown in Jerusalem.
- In Jerusalem, Mark saw Peter again. Peter, who denied the Lord three times, knew what it was like for a true believer to fail miserably, and he also knew the grace and power of God to restore such a failure. The Lord had said to Peter, "when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). Undoubtedly, Mark was one of the brothers strengthened by Peter (see 1 Peter 5:13).

*Causing Division - Acts 15:36-41*

- Before Paul's second missionary trip, Mark had apparently truly repented and returned to the church in Antioch and was reconciled with Paul and Barnabas. But it's one thing to worship together, it's another to do missions work together. Paul was worried that Mark would fail again, and so he wouldn't take him. Barnabas, though, had greater faith in his cousin's usefulness now that he'd repented. Eventually, the two had to part ways.

*Used Mightily by the Lord - Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Mark*

- Finally, Mark demonstrated his growth in the Lord, proving God's work in him that he could still be useful to the Lord. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the first time, Mark was by his side (Colossians 4:10). During his second imprisonment, Paul specifically asked Timothy to "Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service" (2 Timothy 4:11).
- Mark's greatest contribution to the kingdom of God is that he wrote this Gospel, which became the eternal testimony of the Lord Jesus.

- From an ordinary brother, to the apostle’s helper, to a deserter who couldn’t finish his job, to having repented but still rejected by Paul as a coworker, to gradually proving God’s faithfulness with his own life growth, to being accepted by Paul again as a useful coworker, to finally becoming a writer of God’s Word under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. What a life! Where does such a life come from? It is the Gospel message that he himself wrote.

## Gospel

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” This is Mark's one-sentence summary of the whole book, functioning as a title. "The Gospel of Mark" is a title added later by someone else.

Question: When the original readers heard the word "gospel", what thoughts would they have? What does the "gospel" mean to Jews and Gentiles in the Church of Rome?

For the Jews, the Gospel meant the messianic hope — the coming of the Savior-King. This is the gospel preached in the Old Testament. Chapter 40 of Isaiah, the turning point of Isaiah’s prophetic message from judgment to salvation, verse 9 has "bearer of good news” twice, and the key message of that good news is "Here is your God!" In 52:7, the gospel is preached again, and the message is "Your God reigns!" So Here’s the gospel to the Jews: God has not abandoned them. He will come personally to bring them back to the Holy Land. He will be their King, and they will receive His blessings under His kingship. This is the best news they have always been waiting for. What is recorded in the Gospel of Mark is only "the beginning of the gospel", and its full fulfillment will wait until Jesus returns.

To the Gentiles, the concept of the Gospel is very similar. The Romans often used this word to announce the arrival of a new king. Archaeologists have found the following inscription: "The Providence which has ordered the whole of our lives, showing concern and zeal, has ordained it the most perfect consummation for human life by giving to it Augustus, by filling him with virtue for doing the work of a benefactor among men and by sending in him, as it were, a savior for us and those who come after us to make war to cease, to create order everywhere, the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning for the world of the Good News which have come to men through him." So, to the Romans, the gospel also implies the coming of a king, and the hope that he would bring peace and well-being to all mankind.

Obviously, the gospel of the Romans had failed. Augustus' body had long since decayed. The Romans put their gospel hope on a man, and it was bound to fail in the end. In fact, all other gospels will fail, but the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, stands forever. Is this the gospel you believe in? How much do you know about this gospel? How much faith do you have? Has your life been transformed by the gospel? Have you devoted your life to the gospel, like Mark, and become a vessel that God can use?