

Introduction to Mark

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It's good to be with you again, for this session on the introduction of the Gospel according to Mark. Just a few comments that kind of build up from Matthew. The 1700 years AD, virtually everybody thought that all of the gospels were written independently of one another, and that Matthew was written first. In 1786, a German theologian by the name of Gottlieb Christian Storr, first proposed that Mark may have been written prior to any of the Gospels, and that Matthew, and to a large extent, Luke, used Mark as a source for their works. It took about 100 years for that idea to kind of catch hold, but now just, it's generally accepted, certainly not every scholar holds it, but it's generally accepted that Mark was written prior to Matthew and Luke, and that they used Mark as their source.

Now, I'm not going to get into much of the whys people believe that Mark was written first. But one thing I think that is important, and just about everyone agrees, that if you when you read Mark's account, he has a lot of the same stories, the same events, the same miracles, the same parables that Matthew and Luke have, but they're short. And it's generally a custom, if you're going to use some source, then you especially if it's by inspiration, you would expand that, that source that you're using, rather than cut it down and make it shorter and make it briefer. And so that is a primary reason why that many believe that Mark was written first.

As we begin remember, remember, I said last time in the introduction of Matthew, that it's always important to read a book through several times. If you're not studied a book, and you're not really familiar with the book at all, it's important to read that book through several times. If you're more familiar with a book, maybe you've studied it several times before, but you still need to read it through to familiarize yourself with the way begins, where he ends and what fills in the gap between. And I think that's very important to do. But then after you read the book, and after you kind of acclimate yourself to the setting, then it's time to start doing the work of the introduction.

For example, who is the author? And so we ask, who is the author of the Gospel according to Mark? Well, while the text itself, just like Matthew, Luke, does not identify the actual author of the book. The earliest tradition holds that Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, which we might know as John, who is also called Mark. Now, John would have been the the Jewish name, and Mark would have been the Roman name. And this was the same person that Paul and Barnabas took with them on their first missionary journey that turned back and went back to Antioch rather than completing the first missionary journey, which caused a lot of conflict between Paul and Barnabas and caused Barnabas to take John Mark with him on his trip, when Paul chose Silas to go with him.

So all indications are that Mark was a Jew, living in Antioch, at the time when he left with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Even though one would think that an apostle would be the one who would write an account of the life of Jesus, Mark is not an apostle. However, just about everyone believes that he got his information from an apostle, that he got his information from Peter, and Peter would have been an eyewitness to the accounts of Jesus. Furthermore, Peter would have been in a situation that he would have been very familiar, very close to, Mark. As a matter of fact, if you read in Acts chapter 12, when Peter was in prison in Antioch, and the angel came and loosened

the bars and loosen the chains, and Peter was released, he went first to Mark's mother's house. He went to Mary's house. And the implication is that he knocks on the door and, and a servant girl came to the door, and asked, "Who's there?" And Peter said, "It's me." And the text says that she recognized his voice. Now, if she, the servant girl, was familiar enough with Peter to recognize his voice on the other side of that door, then surely Peter was very familiar with Mark and his mother, Mary.

As a matter of fact, and 1 Peter chapter five and verse 13, Peter calls Mark, "My son." Now, you can take that in a couple of different ways. One, you can take it as like a father-son relationship. Or you can take it maybe like Paul intended his relationship with Timothy, that he was the one, that Peter was the one, that had taught Mark and baptized him into Christ, whatever. Either way you take it, there is a very close relationship between Peter and Mark. It stands to reason that Peter could have informed Mark about all of the things that were going on. And so Mark wrote down what Peter preached. And we'll talk more about that, in a moment.

Let's think about the place and the date for Mark's gospel. First of all, the earliest tradition is almost unanimous that Mark wrote his gospel account from Rome. And this is still generally agreed upon by scholars, even today, that Mark wrote his account from Rome. However, the dating of Mark is not nearly as unanimous. As a matter of fact, the date of Mark has been from 45 to 90. And nobody really knows. And we'll talk a little bit about, and I'll give you some of my conclusions for the dating of Mark.

We know, if Mark was written from Rome, we know that Mark was in Rome on at least two different occasions, and most likely three. But we know that Mark was with Paul, in Rome, when Paul wrote Colossians and Philemon because Paul tells us that Mark was with him, when he wrote those two letters. And we generally date those two letters in 60 to 61, somewhere in there. We also know, secondly, that Mark was with Peter in Rome, even though 1 Peter five and verse 13, doesn't say Rome, it uses the term Babylon. But Papias says that Babylon is a euphemism for Rome, indicating that Peter was in Rome and Mark was with him in Rome, when he wrote the first epistle of Peter. The dating for that is generally dated around 65. So we have Mark in Rome on those two occasions: 60 to 61, 65.

And then we also have another reference, at the end of Paul's life. When Paul writes his second epistle to Timothy. He tells Timothy, to "stop by and pick up Mark and bring him with you." Paul is in Rome, in his second incarceration, just prior to his death. And it is generally believed that Paul died in 67-68, second, epistle Timothy's written in 66-67, there just prior to the end of Paul's life. Therefore, those three occasions certainly put Mark in Rome. If Mark was written from Rome, and if these are the only times that we have that Mark was in Rome, it is possible that Mark was in Rome, with Peter and Paul, in the early stage, and maybe even in 60, 61, 62, or even in 65, with Peter. Very possible.

But there's another glitch that we have. And that is, in after reading Irenaeus' remark in the work, "Against Heresies," he said, "After the departure of Peter, Paul and Paul, Mark, even he, delivered to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter." Now, some scholars have determined that the word "departed" there, is actually a reference to the death of Peter and Paul. However, if their death is scheduled in 67, 68. The death of Paul is another issue. Some date Paul's death in 64. Some date 68, 67. Some date Peter's death in 65. Some date it in 67, 68. We're assuming that with everything that we have, we're looking at a later time. And Paul and Peter died near the end of Nero's reign, somewhere around 67, 68. On the other hand, you have Clement of Alexander's writing, that states after Peter's preaching, Paul and Peter left, indicating that it was not after the death of Paul and Peter,

but after, simply after they left Rome, then Mark wrote his work, which could have very easily been possibly in the mid 60s.

Another point to make. If Luke's account is written, and, you know, just prior to the death of Paul, which if it is giving a defense before Theophilus (we'll talk about this more when we get to Luke and Acts). But if it was written then, just before the death of Paul, and so, and Mark was written first, then Mark had to be written prior to the death of Paul. If we hold to that case. Therefore, in my opinion, when we look at the dating of the Gospel According to Mark, the date has to be somewhere in the 60s. It may be in the late 60s or the mid 60s. This is probably more where I would put it. But it has to be in the 60s.

Then we look at the audience. Who is the audience that Mark writes to? Well, the earliest records indicate that Mark wrote his account of the gospel of Christ to a predominantly Roman audience. And it's still pretty much agreed upon today that his audience was predominantly Roman. The internal evidence seems to suggest, there is a lot of Aramaic phrases throughout the letter that are explained, that are translated, that are interpreted into the Greek language, which would indicate that maybe this was written for a Roman audience. Because why would a Jew need so many Aramaic phrases interpreted for them? That's not as set in stone, because when you look at the crucifixion of Jesus, one of the statements, one of the very famous and popular statements that Jesus made upon the cross is, is interpreted both in Matthew's account and in Mark's account. And He says in Matthew, He says, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" And then He said, "Which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" In Mark's account, He says, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?," which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" So in both cases, he interprets that Aramaic phrase. And we know without question that the predominant audience for Matthew was Jew. And so it doesn't do any damage for us to understand that he is writing, Mark is writing to a predominantly Roman audience.

Another thing is that Mark gives, explains Roman customs. For example, in Mark chapter 7, he talks about and explains that Jews have a custom, of washing their hands and washing their cups and washing the pitchers and washing their pans before eating. And he explains that, which would indicate that this was written to a predominantly Roman audience. However, there is no doubt that Mark wrote his gospel from a Jewish perspective. A couple of reasons for that. Number one, Jesus was Jewish. He's telling, and it started, the gospel began, among the Jews. So it's pretty obvious that he would be writing from a Jewish perspective. That would indicate the reason why he might do some Aramaic phrases in there. It also may indicate why he feels so comfortable, Jesus, quoting Jesus as calling the Gentiles dogs in chapter seven. And so we believe, then it's written to a Roman audience, from a Jewish perspective. After all, Mark is a Jew by birth. And it's just like, you know, we have Saul, who became Paul, because of going to a different audience. Same thing is true with Mark. And so John was his Jewish name, and Mark was his Roman name.

Look at the purpose of Mark. And if, if so many things I've said, "if, if, if," about the dating of Mark. But when you come to the purpose of Mark, here's where it really gets interesting. And here's where it really gets solid. The purpose of Mark's gospel is stated in verse one of chapter one, when he says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What this gospel is about, it's about proving to a Roman audience, probably Roman converts, who may be having some questions. If we're correct on the dating of Mark, that it is in the mid 60s, and it's and written to the converts of Rome, then they're going through some pretty significant persecution. And Mark writes to them, to prove

that Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God. And this becomes obviously clear when you read through the book. You look right at the very beginning. And when Jesus comes to John to be baptized by him, he comes up out of the water, and what's the first thing? The heavens opened up and a voice booms out, "You are my beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." So here's the voice from God declaring that this is "My Son." John, in 1 John, chapter 1, says that he was told that the one that the Spirit descends upon like a dove, he is the Son of God. And John says, "This is him." So he is proving to John at this moment, at least, that Jesus is the Son of God. There's the first one.

Then you move on into, and we have this Galilean ministry going on, and near the end of the Galilean ministry, you have in chapter 8, when Peter, when Jesus asked Peter, who do men say that I am? And he said, "Some say, John the baptist, some say Elijah." And Jesus then says, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter says, "You are the Christ." There's another acknowledgment of what this epistle is all about, or what this this gospel is all about. It's about proving that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. But I'm not sure the apostles really, at this point, really get it. I'm not sure that they really get that, that he is the Son of God. In chapter nine, Jesus takes them up on the mountain, and He is transfigured before them. And he, this voice came blurring, out of the clouds, and it's almost, it's almost like this, God is rebuking Peter for saying, "Let's build three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for you." And this booming voice came out of heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son. You listen to Him." And it's like they're saying, "Not Moses, not Elijah. But you listen to Him now. This is my Son." So, another confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God.

And then you move on, you go on through all the way into the crucifixion of Jesus. And at the very end, when the curtain is torn from top to bottom, the Roman soldier standing at the foot of the cross, says, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Clearly, it begins like this, it has this kind of indication in the body of the work, and then at the conclusion of the work, "Surely, this Man was the Son of God." And so the whole purpose of the Gospel of Mark is to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

What's the literary structure? How is this book divided? Well, I've divided this book into five parts. First of all, is the preparation. You can go from chapter 1 through verse 13 of chapter 1. It's just simply talking about who John is, and John's preaching, and then the baptism of Jesus in the preparation for Jesus' ministry. And the second part goes from verse 14 of chapter 1, all the way through chapter 9, which is simply the Galilean ministry of Jesus. And this is a good division. Understand that Mark is not written in any kind of chronological order, and we don't need to think about it in chronological order. But he lumps all of the Galilean ministry together in from chapter 1, verse 14, all the way through chapter 9. And then chapter 10, in my opinion stands kind of alone. It is the Judean ministry where Jesus, where Mark explains what Jesus did, throughout Judea, in His ministry throughout Judea. And then beginning in chapter 11, and going through chapter 13, you have the Jerusalem ministry that, building up to the last day of the life of Jesus.

And then in chapter 14, you have the arrest, where it begins with the arrest, the trials, the illegal trials of Jesus. Then you have the crucifixion. You have the burial and the resurrection. And then you have the ascension.

There's one point that I think I would be remiss if I did not mention, and that is the short ending compared to the long ending on Mark. There are some people that do not believe that verses nine through the end of the chapter of chapter 16 belongs to the autograph, and that it would be added as a copy. Now, let me say this about that. If that is true, and I'm not saying it is, or it isn't, but I'm saying if that is true, there is nothing in this long ending of Mark that contradicts anything else that said in

the gospels, or anywhere else in Scripture. It really sums it up and builds it up and talks about the ascension of Jesus and the Great Commission, that would be given just as the other Gospel accounts do. And so, from that perspective, I think it's very important that we understand and we read the long ending of Mark and get what we can do and harmonize that with the other gospels.

I'm not going to take the time to do a detailed outline of the Gospel according to Mark because it's, there's so many short paragraphs, that my detailed outline is two pages long. And I'm not going to take the time to do that. But I encourage you to do that before you really dig in to start studying the book. Take your time, go through it and do a detailed outline. Thank you, and be waiting for next time when we look at the introduction of the Gospel According to Luke.