

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK

## Isogagical Introduction

### I. Authorship.

#### A. By whom the book was written.

##### 1. Tradition: extra-Biblical sources.

###### a. Excerpt from *Eusebius: Church History*, Book 2.15&16 (translation by Paul Maier):

- Peter's hearers, not satisfied with a single hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the divine message, pleaded with Mark, whose Gospel we have, to leave them a written summary of the teaching given them verbally, since he was a follower of Peter. Nor did they cease until they persuaded him and so caused the writing of what is called the Gospel according to Mark. It is said that the apostle was delighted at their enthusiasm and approved the reading of the book in the churches. Clement quotes the story in *Outlines*, Book 6, and Bishop Papias of Hierapolis confirms it. He also points out that Peter mentions Mark in his first epistle and that he composed this in Rome, which they say he himself indicates when referring to the city figuratively as Babylon in the words, "Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark" [1 Peter 5:13].
- Mark is said to have been the first sent to Egypt to preach the Gospel that he had also written down and the first to found churches in Alexandria itself. So great was the number of converts, both men and women, and so extraordinary their asceticism that Philo thought it appropriate to describe their conduct, gatherings, meals, and way of life.

###### b. Statement by Papias of Hierapolis (early 2nd Century) quoted in *Eusebius: Church History*, Book 3.39 (translation by Paul Maier):

- The Presbyter used to say this also: "Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote down accurately, but not in order, all that he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of his followers, but later, as I said, a follower of Peter. Peter used to teach as the occasion demanded, without giving systematic arrangement to the Lord's sayings, so that Mark did not err in writing down some things just as he recalled them. For he had one overriding purpose: to omit nothing that he had heard and to make no false statements in his account."

###### c. Testimony of early church fathers.

- Anti-Marconite Prologue: Mark wrote a record of Peter's preaching "in the regions of Italy".
- Clement of Alexandria: Eusebius cites an early tradition attributed to Clement that Mark wrote the gospel in Rome at the request of those who had heard Peter preach there. An excerpt from *Eusebius: Church History*, Book 6.14 (translation by Paul Maier):
  - Clement has included a tradition of the earliest elders regarding the order of the Gospels, namely, that those with the genealogies were written first and that Mark originated as follows. When, by the Spirit, Peter had publicly proclaimed the Gospel in Rome, his many hearers urged Mark, as one who had followed him for years and remembered what was said, to put it all in writing. This he did and gave copies to all who asked. When Peter learned of it, he neither objected nor promoted it. Last of all, John, aware that the external details had been recorded in the Gospels, was urged by his disciples and divinely moved by the Spirit to compose a spiritual Gospel.
- Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen report similarly.

##### 2. Biblical evidence.

###### a. References to one named Mark:

- Acts 12:12 = John Mark, son of Mary
- Acts 12:25 = companion of Barnabas and Saul (46 A.D.)
- Acts 13:5 = with Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus
- Acts 13:13 = leaves them at Pamphylia
- Acts 15:37~39 = dispute about taking Mark along again
- Colossians 4:10 = cousin of Barnabas
- II Tim. 4:11 = Paul's request for Mark
- Philemon 24 = in Rome with Paul, who was under arrest
- I Peter 5:13 = "my son Mark"
- Mark 14:51,52 = anonymous man may refer to author

###### b. Predominance of Peter in the gospel:

- Mark 1:16 = begins with call of Peter
- Mark 8:29 = at critical point, Peter's confession
- Mark 16:7 = Jesus' appearance to "disciples and Peter"
- Mark 1:29 = Peter's home in Capernaum is central
- Mark 1:36 = followers called "Simon and those with Him"
- Acts 10:34~43 = Peter's sermon capsules Mark's Gospel

B. To whom the book was written.

1. Addressed to non-Palestinian Christians of pagan origin.

- a. No attempt to relate to O.T.:
  - Only one explicit quote (1:2~3).
- b. Explanation of Jewish customs:
  - Rules of purification (7:3~4).
  - Passover (14:12).
  - Day of Preparation (15:42).
- c. Details about life in Palestine:
  - Geography (1:5,9; 11:1).
  - Season for figs (11:13).
  - Coin value (12:42).
- d. Translation of Aramaic words:
  - "Boanerges" (3:17).
  - "Talitha cumi" (5:41).
  - "Corban" (7:11).
  - "Ephphatha" (7:34).
  - "Bartimaeus" (10:46).
  - "Abba" (14:36).
  - "Golgatha" (15:22).
  - "Elol, eloi, lama sabachthani?" (15:34).
- e. Use of words related to Latin:
  - "Bushel" = modius (4:21).
  - "Legion" (5:9).
  - "Denarius" (6:37, 12:15, 14:5).
  - "Census" (12:14).
  - "Penny" = quadrans (12:42).
  - "Praetorium" (15:16).
  - "Centurion" (15:39).
- f. Applications for pagans/Gentiles:
  - Gospel to Jews first, then Gentiles (7:27).
  - Feeding of Gentiles (8:1~9)[Jews (6:34~44)].
  - Teaching on divorce (10:12).
  - Temple for all nations (11:17).
  - Taxes to Caesar (12:17).
  - Gospel preached to all nations (13:10).
  - Commission to evangelize worldwide (16:15).
- g. References to persecution:
  - Cost of discipleship (8:34~38).
  - Warning of rejection (10:38~39).
  - Warning of future troubles (13:9~13).

C. Generally accepted conclusions.

1. The earliest Gospel (64~70 A.D.).
  - Jerusalem not yet destroyed (cf. 13:1~2, 14ff.).
2. Written by John Mark.

3. Gospel of Peter via Mark.
4. Tied to church in Rome and/or Italy (non-Palestinian).
  - Churches in Rome mentioned in Romans 16.

## II. Literary Structure.

### A. Characteristics and style.

1. Resembles an eye witness account.
  - a. Historical present used 151 times.
  - b. Use of words which create a sense of urgency:
    - “Immediately” used 41 times (10 times in chapter 1).
    - Fond of “and” (29 of 35 verses in chapter 3 begin thus).
  - c. Expressions, gestures, feelings of Jesus and effect of His words and deeds on disciples and people are noted.
  - d. Often retains original Aramaic and Hebrew expressions.
2. Focus more on deeds than words of Jesus (action-oriented).
  - a. Basically a teaching book about person of Jesus.
  - b. Jesus’ whole life portrayed as a sermon.
    - Only a few messages recorded, primarily two discourses (4: 1~34; 13:1~37).

### B. Geographical setting.

1. Galilee.
  - a. Place of Jesus’ residence from after birth (1:9).
    - Goes to Judea only for Baptism.
  - b. Jesus’ arena for ministry (1:14~6:13).
2. Regions beyond Galilee (6:14~8:30).
  - Three journeys by Jesus to surrounding regions (7:24~30; 7:31; 8:27~30).
3. From Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem (10:1~10:52).
  - Jesus travels via Transjordan.
4. Jerusalem (11:1~16:8)
  - Jesus spent less than a week there.

### C. Suggested structure as reflected in content.

1. Linear progression: based on pattern of Jesus’ ministry.
  - a. Preparation.
  - b. Messianic activity.
  - c. Confusion.
  - d. Conflict.
  - e. Tragedy.
  - f. Triumph.
2. Circular outline: based on theological themes.
  - a. Prologue (1:1~14).
  - b. Mystery of the Messiah (1:14~8:30).
  - c. Transition/pivot/hinge (8:27~30).
  - d. Mystery of the Son of Man (8:27~16:8).

### D. Relationship to Matthew and Luke

1. The oldest of the three synoptic gospels.
2. The basis for both.
  - a. Mark has 661 verses.
    - 606 of these in Matthew.
    - 320 in Luke.
    - Only 31 appear in neither.
  - b. Both follow Mark’s order of events.
    - Either varies order at times, but never both in the same way.
    - One always agrees with Mark; most often both do.