

- **\*READ Mark 8:27-30\*** There are a number of monumental moments throughout the different narratives of Scripture, but perhaps there is none more instrumental to the story than that of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This is especially true when we consider Mark's Gospel account because though it is considered a synoptic Gospel account along with Matthew and Luke...we might actually say that it shares a number of similarities to John's Gospel. I say this based upon the fact that Mark's Gospel is much shorter than Matthew and Luke's Gospel, and it does not share the same comprehensive and chronological approach that is seen in the tax collector and physician's account of Jesus's life.
- Mark really hits the ground running in his Gospel and spares no time giving details about the birth of Jesus or John, and he certainly doesn't have any time for genealogies. No, Mark has a simple goal with his message and that is to tell the gospel/good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Again, Mark isn't concerned with every detail and he also doesn't seem to be all that concerned with chronology. No, Mark is only concerned with developing a beautiful narrative that will surely lead the open and honest heart to the understanding of The Incredible Jesus being the Son of God.
- Over the course of this year, I would like to balance out our studies through the Prophets with a consideration of Mark's Gospel account. We will work our way through this Gospel to see and be reminded of the incredible nature of our Lord and Savior, and to be further impressed with His Messiahship, how it is proven to be so, and what it means through the pen strokes of John Mark. I want to begin our study with some introductory information that will help us in our considerations over the next few months, and then we will consider the opening words that tell of the ministry of John the Baptist, the Messianic Messenger.

## **I. Introductory Information For Mark**

### **A. Though not specifically stated, Mark's authorship is attested by the early second century by Papias and further endorsed by the early church.**

1. Whereas many of the New Testament Letters state specifically who the authors are, this simply isn't the case with the Gospel accounts. There are no statements in any of the four Gospel accounts we have in our Bibles that makes claims towards authorship. This seems to be the case because these accounts weren't being written to be compiled into a book of books like we currently hold. They were simply accounts of Jesus's life that were to be used to help instill faith in those who read them.
2. Therefore, it came down to these four Gospel accounts gaining their titles through early church identification. Disciples very early on were making claims for certain ones of these Gospel accounts based upon their Apostolic influence. Those accounts that were known to be in close association with Apostles were supported and promoted when other accounts such as the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, or the Nazoreans were not promoted. (DeSilva, Intro To NT, 194) These distinctions were made based upon what the earliest Disciples believed were truly Apostle influenced or an accurate reflection of what was true concerning Jesus's life. A number of early church writers vouch for Mark as the author of this Gospel including Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.
3. The earliest Disciple who vouched for Mark's authorship was Papias and Eusebius says this about him in his work *History of the Church*. *"The elder also used to say: Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of his followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter's. Peter used to adapt his teaching to the occasion, without make a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things*

*just as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only—to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it.” (History of the Church 3.39.15)*

**B. Though not an eyewitness to Jesus, Mark is most likely able to record this Gospel account through the help of the eyewitness testimony of Peter.**

1. For a non-witness to author a Gospel account isn't anything out of the ordinary considering Luke plainly states this to be the case in the opening words of his Gospel account. **(Luke 1:1-4)** Luke states that a number of original eye-witnesses had compiled narratives concerning the life of Jesus, but Luke had to do some investigation in order to write a Gospel account in orderly sequence, which again is a big difference between Luke's Gospel and Mark's Gospel account. But remember the Papias quote...*“Peter used to adapt his teaching to the occasion, without make a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things just as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only—to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it.”* Mark was concerned only with clarity and accuracy, and not so much concerned with chronology.
2. But this still gets us back to the original claim that this Gospel has strong Petrine influence. How can we have an idea this is the case? Consider these pieces of evidence.
  - a) At the very least we know that Mark and Peter were extremely close per **1 Peter 5:13**. Think along the lines of Paul and Timothy's relationship. Very possible this relationship started in **Acts 12:12** when Peter is rescued from prison and ends up at the home of John Mark's mother, Mary.
  - b) Nearly the entire Gospel account is bookended by Peter, and this is known as the Petrine Inclusio. He is the first Apostle we are introduced to in **1:16** and he is the last Apostle mentioned in the shorter ending of **16:7**.
  - c) Peter is mentioned far more times in Mark's Gospel account than any of the other Apostles. While Peter is a key figure in the ministry of Jesus, it would make sense that he would mention himself the most since he was sharing his perspective of Jesus's ministry.

**C. Tradition and internal evidence points to this Gospel being focused on Christians in Rome before 70AD.**

1. One such traditional evidence would be what we have already suggested in that Peter was a great source for what was written. If Peter's influence is true and if Peter did die in the mid to late 60s, then it would stand to reason that this letter would have been written before Peter's death at the very latest 68AD or so. The other three Gospel accounts are believed to have been written post-70AD thus making Mark the earliest preserved Gospel account.
2. As far as it being addressed to Roman Christians and other citizens, consider the historical realities of Christians under the rule of Nero. Those Disciples were had a hard life under this emperor, and therefore the teachings on the cost of discipleship, the relationship of believers to society, and the true meaning of confessing Christ would have been extremely pertinent to them as they were trying to live as Christians in the Roman society.
3. Further, the brisk nature of the Gospel account would have very much fit the culture of the Romans and those Jewish Christians that lived among them. They were all about getting things done, so a shorter Gospel account (7,000 less words than Matthew & 8,000 less words than Luke) would be more appealing and could be read comfortably in a single setting. Additionally, Jesus is portrayed in this Gospel as always seemingly being on the go. The word “immediately” is found 37x as showing Jesus as quickly moving about and getting things done. This, again, would have appealed to the Roman culture at the time.
4. Finally, there are instances when Greek terms are explained by Latin terms that would have been more easily understood by a Roman audience. Roman currency in **12:42** and Roman administrative terms in **15:16**. (DeSilva, Intro To NT, 196)

D. The Gospel account is most easily seen in three parts.

### Outline Of Mark's Gospel

<b>1:1 – 8:21</b> <b>Ministry In Galilee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John the Baptist Introduced (1:1-8)</li><li>• A New King Arrives (1:9-3:6)</li><li>• A New Kingdom Is Near (3:7-6:6)</li><li>• A New Order Is Coming (6:7-8:21)</li></ul>	<b>8:22 – 10:52</b> <b>Road To Jerusalem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blind Man Healed (8:22-26)</li><li>• Peter's Confession &amp; 1st Prediction of Death (8:27-9:29)</li><li>• 2nd Prediction of Death (9:30-10:31)</li><li>• 3rd Prediction of Death (10:32-10:45)</li><li>• Blind Man Healed (10:46-52)</li></ul>	<b>11:1 – 16:8</b> <b>Jerusalem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suffering Servant Explained (11-15)</li><li>• The Garden, Betrayal, &amp; Crucifixion (14:27-15:47)</li><li>• Resurrection &amp; Shorter Ending (16:1-8)</li></ul>	<b>16:9-16:20</b> <b>Disputed Longer Ending Of Mark's Gospel</b>
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## II. The Messianic Messenger Mark 1:1-11

A. Mark's only personal statement is made to describe what can be found within this account. (1)

1. Again, let's recognize that there is no birth story and there are no genealogies within this account. There are no attempts to go back and tie in Jesus as the proposed descendant or David or establish His miraculous birth story. Therefore, I believed we can conclude that Mark simply wants to get down to business concerning who Jesus was based upon what He did and how people responded to Him.
2. Additionally, this statement is a confession of Mark concerning who he believed Jesus to be, and his focus was on giving evidence for why other people ought to believe the same thing. The front half of the Gospel account is very heavy on miraculous deeds (about 22) which would serve as further evidences for Jesus's deity. But before we get to any of the miracles, Mark wants to introduce us to the before prophesied forerunner of Jesus.

B. The Old Testament foretold of this special messenger that would precede the Messiah. (2,3)

1. The quotation of Mark in **1:2,3** is a combination **Malachi 3:1** & **Isaiah 40:3**.
  - a) *"See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming," says the Lord of Armies.*" (**Malachi 3:1**)
  - b) *"A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert."* (**Isaiah 40:3**)
2. Both of these texts from the writings of the prophets are focused on preparing the people for the coming Messiah and what is known as a theophany. A theophany is an instance when men find themselves in the presence of God, and they are able to tangibly observe this with their human senses. We know that is exactly what was taking place within the Gospel accounts which is why we see John preaching the message that he does.

C. John is identified as this messenger, his teachings are explained, and his impact is seen. (4-6)

1. John's ministry is focused very specifically on preparing the people for the arrival of their God among them which meant that the people needed to cleanse themselves of their sins, and therefore we find John preaching a message of repentance and forgiveness of sins through baptism.
2. The people of Judea were willing to hear and obey the teachings of John for the text tells us, *"The whole Judean countryside and all of the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."* When we read of that kind of success, we might be tempted to think that John was some sort of amazing and impressive speaker, but Mark tells us he was a simple man going the way of the prophets like Elijah.

- D. John's recognizes and accepts his place compared to the one for whom he was preparing the way. (7,8)
1. Though he was gaining great notoriety, John was very quick to make sure that people were not think that he himself was the Messiah. Mark records him as saying, *"One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of His sandals."* John's humble appearance matched his humble attitude, and he wanted for the people to recognize that he truly was only the forerunner of the true One to come.
  2. This is also seen in the way that he describes the work he was doing with the work the One coming after him would do. Yes, he was doing the Lord's work in preparing the people through repentance and baptism, but the One coming after Him would introduce even greater transformation through the giving of the Holy Spirit. *"I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."* John's work was truly important, but he recognized his place and only desired to serve the truth One to come. Let's close by thinking upon some application questions that we get from the example of John.

### III. Application Questions:

#### A. Am I willing and prepared to speak as the voice crying out in the wilderness?

1. John's example is so powerful because he was willing to stand alone while still confidently speaking with conviction concerning the message he was presenting. This is additionally impressive considering his message was demanding for people to make a change in their lives through repentance, and he wasn't willing to budge from this stance and message no matter who came out to meet him as can be seen in the other Gospel accounts. **(Matthew 3:7-10)**
2. Are we willing to follow in the footsteps of John by being willing to speak the truths of God's Word with conviction? We might not see ourselves as being in a desert per say, but we are in a world where we are constantly surrounded by non-religious people who very much doubt the necessity of the truths we hold to. They very much doubt the need to reform their lives through obedience to the Gospel. As a result, they will speak poorly of us, they will demean us, and they may even threaten harm against us, so what will we do in those moments? Will we continue to speak confidently with a strong voice or will we quiet down in fear of those who stand opposed to us? If we want to follow the example of John then we must be willing to stand up with strong conviction no matter what might be said.

#### B. Am I willing to speak with the heart of a servant?

1. Building off of this point about being voices in the wilderness, if we want to follow in the footsteps of John, then we must be willing to remain, as John did, in our places as servants of the most high King. This might be easy for someone of little notoriety, but that certainly was not John! Who knows how many hundreds or thousands of people John baptized, but he continued to remain humble all the way through the process. He was humble even when Jesus Himself referred to John in high regard as the new "Elijah." **(Matthew 11:13,14)** His statement of not even being worthy to untie Jesus's sandal straps is perfectly indicative of his humble mindset.
2. Do we have that same type of mindset as John in reference to our humility before God? We must remember the honor and privilege that we have in being able to live as saved individuals, and we must not allow for our status as the people of God to allow pride to build up. We are all servants who ought to humbly serve before our Master and King. May we always remember our helplessness and unworthiness, and that it is only through the loving mercy of our heavenly Father and Jesus that we can be saved and live lives for Him.

This beginning section of Mark's Gospel prepares us to remember our humble place before the Messiah who is preparing to show up on the scene to get busy with His ministry. As we study through this Gospel account over the coming months, I hope it will help us to be even more impressed with the incredible nature of Jesus as the Messiah and become even more convinced of His worthiness for us to serve Him.