



Lecture #6 Part 1

# INTRODUCTION TO MARK

## I. OPENING STATEMENT

- A. The ancient church usually bypassed copying, studying, and teaching Mark in preference to Matthew and Luke because they saw Mark as a “reader’s digest” version (i.e. abridged gospel), a view which is specifically stated later by Augustine.
- B. Mark is not often quoted by the Greek church fathers or the second century apologists (defenders of the faith).
- C. Since the rise of the modern historical-grammatical approach to biblical interpretation the Gospel of Mark has taken on new significance when it is viewed as the first written Gospel. Both Matthew and Luke use it in their presentations of Jesus’ life and significance. **Thereby Mark becomes the foundational document of the church, the first official account of Jesus’ life.**

## II. GENRE

- A. The Gospels are not modern biographies or histories. They are selective theological writings used to introduce Jesus to different audiences and bring them to faith in Him. They are “good news” accounts of Jesus’ life for the purpose of evangelism (cf. [John 20:20–31](#)).
- B. Mark is made up of four distinct historical settings or theological purposes.
  - 1. the life and teachings of Jesus
  - 2. the life and ministry of Peter
  - 3. the needs of the early church
  - 4. the evangelistic purpose of John Mark
- C. The Gospels are unique in near eastern and Greco-Roman literature. The inspired authors had the Spirit-led task of selecting from Jesus’ teachings and actions those that clearly revealed His character or purpose.

They arranged these words and actions of Jesus in different ways. One example would be in comparing Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5–7](#)) with Luke’s Sermon on the Plain. It becomes obvious that Matthew tended to collect all of Jesus’ teachings into one long sermon, while Luke spreads these same teachings throughout his Gospel.



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This implies the Gospel writers' ability not only to select and arrange Jesus' teachings, but also to adapt them to their own theological purposes (see Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 113–134). When reading the Gospel one must continue to ask what theological point these writers are trying to make. Why include this particular event, miracle, lesson here?

- D. Mark's Gospel** is a good example of Koine Greek as a second language of the people of the Mediterranean world. Mark's mother tongue was Aramaic (as was Jesus' and all Jews in first century Palestine). This Semitic flavor is characteristic of Mark's Gospel.

### III. AUTHORSHIP

- A.** John Mark has traditionally been identified with the Apostle Peter in writing this Gospel. The work itself (like all the Gospels) is anonymous.
- B.** Another evidence of Peter's eyewitness account is the fact that Mark does not record three special events in which Peter was personally involved.
1. his walking on water (cf. [Matthew 14:28–33](#))
  2. his being the spokesperson at Caesarea Philippi for the faith of the Twelve (cf. [Matthew 16:13–20](#)). In Mark only [Mark 8:27–30](#) and the "on this rock" and "keys of the kingdom" passages are omitted)
  3. his procurement of the temple tax for himself and Jesus (cf. [Matthew 17:24–27](#)).

Perhaps Peter's modesty motivated him not to emphasize these events in his sermons

- C.** Early church tradition
1. **Papias the bishop of Hierapolis**, about (A.D. 130) wrote *Interpretation of the Lord's Sayings*, which is quoted by **Eusebius** (A.D. 275–339) in his *Ecclesiastical History* 3:39:15. He asserts that Mark was Peter's interpreter who recorded accurately, but not chronologically, Peter's memories of Jesus. Apparently **Mark** took and adapted Peter's sermons and organized them into a Gospel presentation. **Papias** claims to have received this information from "the elder," which could refer to the Apostle John.
  2. The Anti-Marcionite Prologue to **Mark**, written about A.D. 180, identifies Peter as the eyewitness of Mark's Gospel. It also states that Mark wrote the Gospel from Italy after Peter's death (i.e. **traditionally in Rome around A.D. 65**).



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3. **Irenaeus**, writing about A.D. 180, mentions John Mark as Peter's interpreter and compiler of his memories after his death (cf. *Contra Haereses* 3:1:2).
  4. **The Muratorian Fragment** (i.e. canon), written about A.D. 200 from Rome, although the text is incomplete, seems to affirm John Mark's recording Peter's sermons.
  5. **Walter Wessel** in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Vol. 8, p. 606, makes the interesting comment that the above early church traditions are from geographically diverse church centers.
    - a. **Papias from Asia Minor**
    - b. **Anti-Marcion Prologue** and the **Muratorian Fragment** both from Rome
    - c. **Irenaeus** (cf. *Adv. Haer.* 3:1:1) from Lyons in France. Irenaeus' tradition is also found in **Tertullian** (cf. *Adv. Marc.* 4:5) from north Africa and **Clement of Alexandria, Egypt** (cf. *Hypotyposesis* 6 quoted by **Eusebius**, *Eccl. His.* 2:15:1-2; 3:24:5-8; 6:14:6-7). This geographical diversity gives credence to its trustworthiness because of the tradition's wide acceptance in early Christianity.
- D. What do we know about John Mark
1. His mother was a well-known believer in Jerusalem in whose house the church met (possibly the night of the Lord's Supper, cf. [Mark 14:14-15](#); [Acts 1:13-14](#); [Acts 12:12](#)). He was possibly the unnamed man who fled from Gethsemane ([Mark 14:51-52](#)).
  2. He accompanied his uncle Barnabas (cf. [Colossians 4:10](#)) and Paul back to Antioch from Jerusalem ([Acts 12:25](#)).