



GOSPEL OF MARK 101

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As with the other three gospels, people often assume the Gospel of Mark was named for the author. In this case, tradition says the author was Mark the Evangelist, a companion of Peter and founder of the Church of Alexandria. But scholars dispute this claim of authorship and consider the writer to be unknown or anonymous. Even without an author's name, we have other important details about the context for the Gospel of Mark. Scholars believe it was the first of the gospels to be written, somewhere just after 70 CE. Written in Greek for a gentile audience, Mark is written in the style of an ancient biography, in this case, a collection of stories meant to detail the historic acts of the life of Jesus as well as the values of his preaching and teaching. Scholars believe that the authors of both Matthew and Luke used Mark as a foundational text.

ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF MARK

If you like the sparse literary style of Earnest Hemingway, you'll love the Gospel of Mark. The shortest of the four gospels, Mark is a just-the-facts approach to telling the stories of Jesus as miracle-worker and Messiah. Mark doesn't begin with an account of Jesus' divine birth but instead dives right in with the start of Jesus' public ministry, his baptism by John the Baptist. In the first chapter alone, we read of his baptism, temptation in the desert, selection of his disciples, and several healing stories. Mark doesn't add much context or reflection on the actions (or even very many adjectives): the gospel reads like a slide show presentation. Jesus heals many at Simon's House. *Next slide.* Jesus preaches in Galilee. *Next slide.* Jesus cleanses a leper. *Next.*

Coupled with this succinct writing style is a clear message: Jesus is the Messiah. Viewing Mark as a three-act play, the first chapters reveal the miracles and preaching of Jesus to the crowds, then his transfiguration and teaching among his disciples, and finally the crucifixion, the ultimate expression of the suffering servant. Interestingly, early versions of the Gospel of Mark end with the women fleeing the empty tomb. But a longer ending, likely added sometime in the second century, includes the resurrection, commissioning of the disciples, and Jesus' ascension. This could well be the first instance of the ultimate Director's Cut.



MARK SOUNDBITES

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." –Mark 1:2-3

As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. –Mark 2:14

He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."
–Mark 3:30-32

Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house." –Mark 6:4

She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." –Mark 6:24

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" –Mark 9:4-7

Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. –Mark 10:9

"Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
–Mark 12:28b-31

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" –Mark 15:34

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. –Mark 16:1

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." –Mark 16:15

