

Lesson 28

MARK

THE MAN

The author of Mark's Gospel, like the authors of the other three Gospels, does not name himself. However, the universal testimony of the early church confirms that Mark is its author.

Mark appears several times in the book of _____ [a], where his name is given as "_____ [b] who is also called Mark" (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37). Sometimes he's only called "John" (Acts 13:5, 13) and sometimes he's simply called "Mark" (Acts 15:39). The name "John" reflects his Jewish background, and "Mark" comes from the Latin name "Marcus," telling us that although he was Jewish, he did have official Roman connections in some way.

Acts 12:12 also says that his mom's name was _____ [c] and she lived in _____ [d]. It also suggests that their house in Jerusalem served as a gathering place for the early church. The fact that their home had a gate, a maid, and was large enough for a sizable group to gather indicates that they were a family of financial means.

As a presumably young man, Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their _____ [e] missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5). But he deserted them when they reached the coast of Asia Minor (at Perga in Pamphylia) (Acts 13:13). Luke doesn't record for us why he left. Maybe he was homesick. Maybe he was afraid of the unknown dangers of travel. Maybe he had gotten sick. We do know, however, that Paul refused to take him on a subsequent trip (Acts 15:37-38), which strongly suggests that Paul wasn't very sympathetic with Mark's decision to desert the mission team on their first trip. Paul's refusal to take Mark on the _____ [f] missionary journey sparked a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, and they decided to part ways. Consequently, Paul took _____ [g] and journeyed toward Syria while Barnabas took _____ [h] and sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:37-41).

Though Paul felt Mark had betrayed them on the first missionary journey, Mark later became a valued member of _____ [i] ministry team. In Colossians 4:10-11, Paul instructed his readers to welcome Mark as one of his "fellow workers in the kingdom" who had proven "to be an encouragement" to him during his first Roman imprisonment. From that text we also learn that Mark was Barnabas' cousin. Some

years later, near the end of his life, Paul asked Timothy to “pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service” (2 Tim 4:11). It's likely that John Mark was restored to ministry usefulness, at least in part, through the mentorship of Peter. As a leader in the Jerusalem church, Peter was very familiar with the house of Mark's mom (Acts 12:12), and he may have met Mark through her. The friendship between Peter and Mark was such that Peter became a _____[j] father figure to Mark. This spiritual father/son relationship between the two is suggested in Peter's first epistle: “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark” (1 Pet 5:13). The phrase “my son, Mark” likely conveys that Peter had been responsible for Mark's conversion and was continuing to be a spiritual mentor to him. Mark being with Peter at that time indicates that, toward the end of Peter's life, Mark traveled with him on numerous occasions.

THE AUDIENCE

We can't say with certainty where Mark was when he wrote his Gospel, nor can we say with certainty to whom he originally wrote. Many believe he was in Rome and was writing for Roman Christians. Wherever he was and to whomever he wrote, what we can say with confidence is that his original audience was mostly _____[k] (while Matthew's audience was mostly Jewish). This is made clear in places like Mark 7:3-4 when he explains ritual cleanliness customs which he says are the practice of “all the Jews.” Mark must have been speaking to non-Jews who would not have been familiar with these practices.

THE CONTENT

Mark aims to produce a fast-moving, action-packed account of Jesus' life. He moves quickly through much of Christ's ministry, using the word “_____ [l]” more than the three other Gospel writers combined. While Matthew related Jesus' discourses, Mark recorded Jesus' _____[m]. While Mark certainly pictures Jesus' teaching, he doesn't record much of the content of His teaching. Mark stresses Jesus' activities instead. He skips the genealogies and birth of Jesus and focuses on Jesus' _____[n].

Many scholars agree that two themes stand out in Mark's Gospel. First, he portrays Jesus as the _____[o] Son of God who is the ultimate model of _____[p] service to God and humanity. Second, he emphasizes the demands of _____[q]; disciples are to be like their master.

Portrait of Jesus

The first half of Mark's Gospel leads to Peter's _____[r] of Mark 8:29: "You are the Christ." So, the first eight chapters are permeated with the miracles and stories of Jesus which demonstrate His _____[s]. When Jesus teaches, the people "were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority" (Mark 1:22). When He casts out demons, they declare "He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him" (Mark 1:27). The question underlying most of these stories pops up in Mark 4:41: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" The answer, of course, is finally clear to the disciples in Mark 8:29 when Peter makes his confession.

At this point a new facet of Jesus' portrait is painted—the suffering servant. After Peter's confession, Jesus "began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things . . ." (Mark 8:31). The fact that this authoritative figure who commanded nature, disease, demons, and death would submit to death in suffering _____[t] is a key theme that permeates everything after Mark 8:31. Even though the second half of the book continues to emphasize Jesus' authority, the focus turns more and more toward the cross. This focus is explicit in Jesus' own statements about His coming _____[u] (Mark 8:31; 9:12; 10:32-34, 45; 14:18-21, 24-25, 27, 41). The shadow of His _____[v] lies over the second half of the book as well. For example, the fate of the son in the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:6-8), the anointing at Jesus at Bethany (Mark 14:1-9), and all the events from the Lord's Supper point to the crucifixion (Mark 14:12-15:47). In the second half of the book, Mark underscores the fact that the powerful, authoritative Son of God willingly submitted Himself to the most shameful and inhumane death because He had the heart of a _____[w].

Portrait of Discipleship

In presenting Jesus as the model of service, Mark emphasizes that Jesus' _____[x] are to be like their master. They are to follow in His footsteps in suffering _____[y]. This point is first emphasized when Peter "rebukes" Jesus for what He said would happen to Him. Jesus then rebukes Peter and calls all the people together with His disciples and explains that what He plans to do has implications for His followers: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

Similarly, the disciples again don't understand Jesus' prediction concerning Himself (Mark 9:32), nor do they grasp its implications for themselves. Instead, all they seem to care about is establishing which of them in the _____[z] (Mark 9:33-34). Jesus responds by telling them that His followers must be _____[aa] like Him (Mark 9:35).

Then, once again, immediately following a prediction concerning Jesus' death, James and John seek the chief places in the coming kingdom (Mark 10:35-37). Jesus' reply is: "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45). This emphasis—Jesus came to _____[bb]; therefore His disciples must _____[cc]—permeates the second half of Mark.

THE ENDING OF MARK

Mark 16:9-20 is one of the major textual problems in the New Testament. Almost every English translation of the New Testament indicates in some way that there is a question about the _____[dd] of these verses. That is, there is a question about whether or not this passage—Mark 16:9-20—was a part of the _____[ee] book of Mark.

Why are these verses questioned? The main reason is because the two oldest Greek _____[ff] in existence (Codex Vaticanus, c. AD 325 and Codex Sinaiticus, c. AD 350) do not contain these verses. For many people, that's enough to close the case and declare, "Mark didn't write these verses." But it's not that simple. The evidence is strong that Mark did write those verses. Here are just a few pieces of that evidence:

- Every other Greek manuscript of Mark—more than 1,600 manuscripts—contain these verses. In other words, over _____[gg]% of surviving Greek manuscripts of Mark's Gospel contain Mark 16:9-20.
- Codex Vaticanus—the oldest surviving Greek manuscript of Mark and one of the two that doesn't contain those verses—leaves a blank page at the end of Mark. That suggests the copyists were aware that there was an ending to Mark's Gospel that they didn't possess at the moment.
- A very prominent second century Christian writer by the name of Irenaeus (c. AD 180) quoted Mark 16:19 and said it was at the end of the Gospel of Mark. This was almost _____[hh] years before Codex Vaticanus was produced.
- Several other early Christian writers in the _____[ii] and _____[jj] centuries either quote from Mark 16:9-20 or they use phrasing from it.

Personally, I believe that Mark 16:9-20 is original to Mark's Gospel. But even if it isn't, it's important to acknowledge that there is nothing in that passage that isn't taught in other passages in the New Testament. In other words, no _____[kk] of Scripture is solely dependent on the authenticity of this passage.

LESSONS FROM MARK

- Jesus came to _____[ll] humanity.
- Jesus' disciples must follow Him in the path of _____[mm].
- Real _____[nn] is shown by _____[oo].
- _____[pp] and _____[qq] should not be our _____[rr].
- Self-_____ [ss] isn't wrong; _____[tt] is.
- _____[uu] is our greatest problem and _____[vv] is the only solution.

KEY PASSAGES FROM MARK

- Mark 3:31-35
- Mark 5:18-19
- Mark 8:34-38
- Mark 9:35
- Mark 10:6-9
- Mark 12:28-31
- Mark 16:15-16

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] Acts
[b] John
[c] Mary
[d] Jerusalem
[e] first
[f] second
[g] Silas
[h] Mark
[i] Paul's
[j] spiritual
[k] Gentiles
[l] immediately
[m] deeds
[n] ministry
[o] authoritative
[p] sacrificial
[q] discipleship
[r] confession
[s] authority
[t] service
[u] suffering
[v] death
[w] servant
[x] disciples
[y] service
[z] greatest
[aa] servants
[bb] serve
[cc] serve
[dd] authenticity
[ee] original
[ff] manuscripts
[gg] 99
[hh] 150
[ii] second
[jj] third
[kk] doctrine
[ll] serve
[mm] service
[nn] greatness
[oo] service
[pp] Ambition
[qq] power
[rr] desire
[ss] interest
[tt] selfishness
[uu] sin
[vv] Jesus