



Notes for session 1

Wednesday 6th October 2021

8pm until somewhere between 9pm and 9.15pm
depending on how much we chat

Zoom link should have been sent by e-mail



Some points for reading before the session (if you wish) – just to get us in the mindset of knowing who Mark was writing to and therefore some of the decisions he’s taken in writing his account.

Mark’s explanations of Jewish customs and his translations of Aramaic expressions suggest that he was writing for Gentile (non-Jewish) converts, probably especially for those converts living in Rome.

- Jewish customs are explained in: 7:3-4, 14:12, 15:42
- Mark assumes that the early audiences recognise the names of Alexander and Rufus as the sons of Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus’ cross (15:21), Rufus is also mentioned as a church leader in Rome by Paul (Rom 16:13). This means that the gospel was written relatively early.
- Mark does not include a genealogy – something which would have been important for Jewish readers.
- Mark interprets Aramaic words and expressions: e.g. 3:17, 5:41, 7:11 & 34, 9:43, 10:46, 14:36, 15:22 & 39.
- Latin terms are used rather than their Greek equivalents: e.g. 5:9, 6:27, 12:15 & 42 15:16 & 39.
- Mark explains Palestinian locations and places.

After an introduction (1:1–13), the Gospel describes Jesus’ ministry in and around Galilee (1:14–8:26), his journey to Jerusalem (chs 11–13), the Passion (chs 14–15), and the resurrection (ch 16).

The final passage in Mark (16:9–20) is omitted in some manuscripts, including the two oldest, and a shorter passage is substituted in others. Many scholars believe that these last verses, in the versions we have, were not written by Mark, or at least not at the same time as the majority of the Gospel, but were added later. There are several theories about why that could be, but the simplest is that the original ending was just lost and someone else (maybe Mark, maybe another) who had read it did their best to recreate what it said. We’ll never know for sure.

Mark’s Gospel stresses the deeds, strength, and determination of Jesus in overcoming evil forces and defying the power of imperial Rome. Mark also emphasizes the Passion, predicting it as early as chapter 8 and devoting the final third of his Gospel (11–16) to the last week of Jesus’ life.



Who was Mark?

John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark, also served as a companion to the Apostle Paul in his missionary work and later assisted the Apostle Peter in Rome. Three names appear in the New Testament for this early Christian: John Mark, his Jewish and Roman names; Mark; and John. The King James Bible calls him Marcus.

Tradition holds that Mark was present when Jesus was arrested on the Mount of Olives. In his Gospel, Mark says:

"A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind." (Mark 14:51-52, NIV)

Because that incident is not mentioned in the three other Gospels, scholars believe Mark was referring to himself.

John Mark was not one of the 12 apostles. He is first mentioned by name in the book of Acts (written by Luke) in connection with his mother. Peter had been thrown in prison by Herod Antipas, who was persecuting the early church. In answer to the church's prayers, an angel came to Peter and helped him escape. Peter hurried to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where she was holding a prayer gathering of many of the church members (Acts 12:12).

Both the home and household of John Mark's mother Mary were important in the early Christian community of Jerusalem. Peter seemed to know that fellow believers would be gathered there for prayer. The family was presumably wealthy enough to have a maidservant (Rhoda) and host large worship meetings.

Paul made his first missionary journey to Cyprus, accompanied by Barnabas and John Mark. When they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. No explanation is given for his departure, and Bible scholars have been speculating ever since.

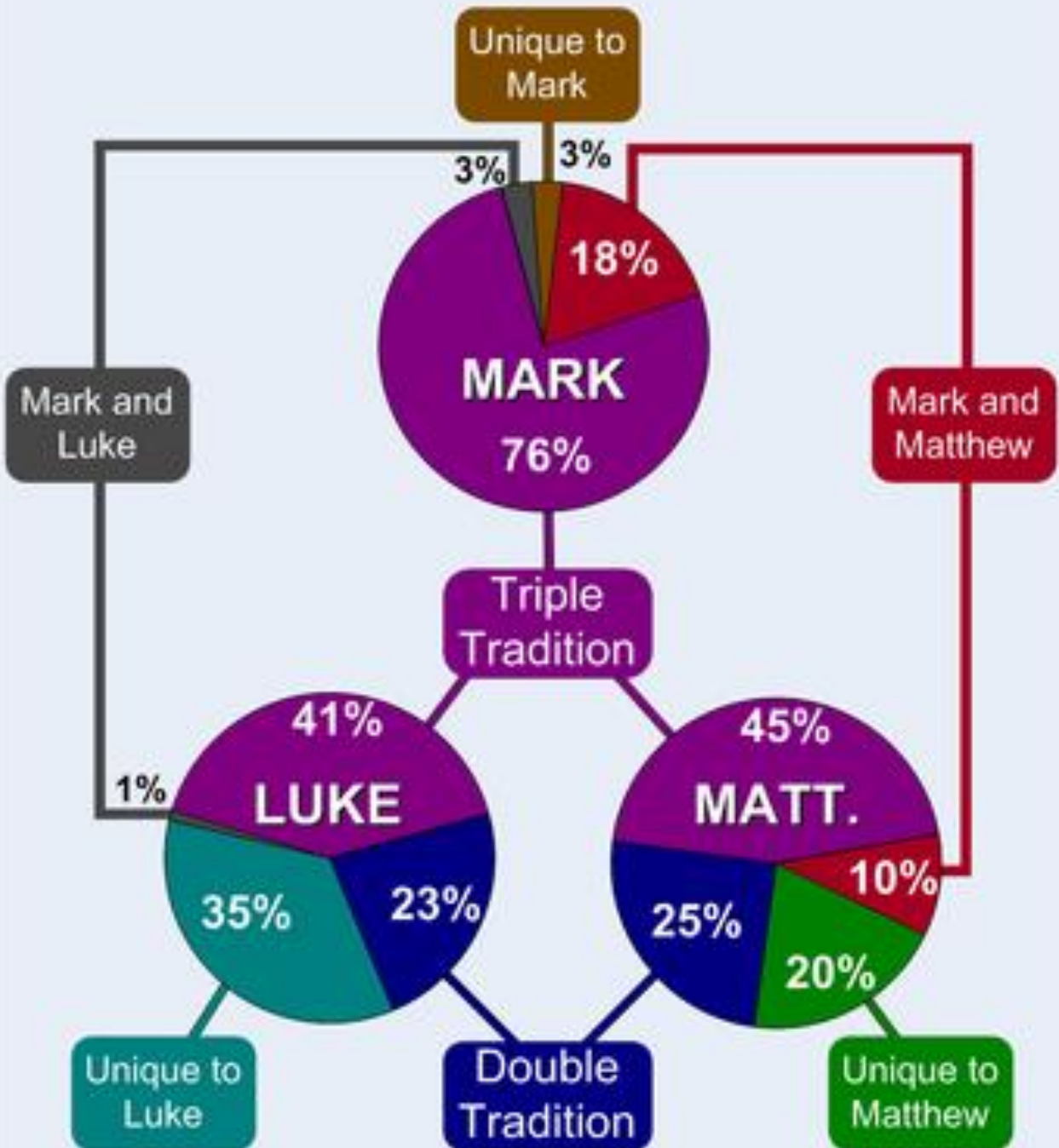
Some think Mark may have become homesick. Others say he might have been ill from malaria or some other disease. A popular theory is that Mark was simply afraid of all the hardships that lay ahead. Regardless of the reason, Mark's behaviour soured his relationship with Paul and caused a debate between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:39). Paul refused to take John Mark on his second missionary journey, but Barnabas, who had recommended his young cousin in the first place, still had faith in him. Barnabas took John Mark back to Cyprus, while Paul travelled with Silas instead. Over time, Paul changed his mind and forgave Mark. In 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul says, *"Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry."* (NIV) The last mention of Mark occurs in 1 Peter 5:13, where Peter calls Mark his "son", no doubt a sentimental reference because Mark had been so helpful to him.

According to Coptic tradition, John Mark is the founder of the Coptic church in Egypt. Copts believe Mark was tied to a horse and dragged to his death by a mob of pagans on Easter, 68 A.D., in Alexandria. Copts count him as the first of their chain of 118 patriarchs (popes). Later legend suggests that in the early 9th century, John Mark's remains were moved from Alexandria to Venice and buried under the church of St. Mark.

MYSTERIES OF
MARK

Diagram 1

Relationships between the Synoptic Gospels



MYSTERIES OF

MARK

Diagram 2

What is a "gospel"?

- "Good news"
- Story of Jesus
- Theology, not journalism

What is "THE gospel"?



MATTHEW
 • Tax collector
 • Apostle

Matthew's gospel

- Jesus = King of Jews
- Emphasis on the teachings of Jesus
- Jesus fulfills the words of the Law + Prophets (basis of Jewish faith)

MARK
 • Aided PETER
 • Missionary
 • Probably first

Mark's gospel

- Jesus = Suffering Servant
- Shows Jesus' authority
- The whole book is a declaration of Jesus' work
- Probably a source for Matthew + Luke

LUKE
 • Physician
 • Aided Paul
 • Interviewed him

Luke's gospel

- Jesus = Savior for all
- Educational: seeks to arrange details of Jesus' life + ministry in order
- Written by a non-Jewish person for another non-Jew

Pt 2: ACTS

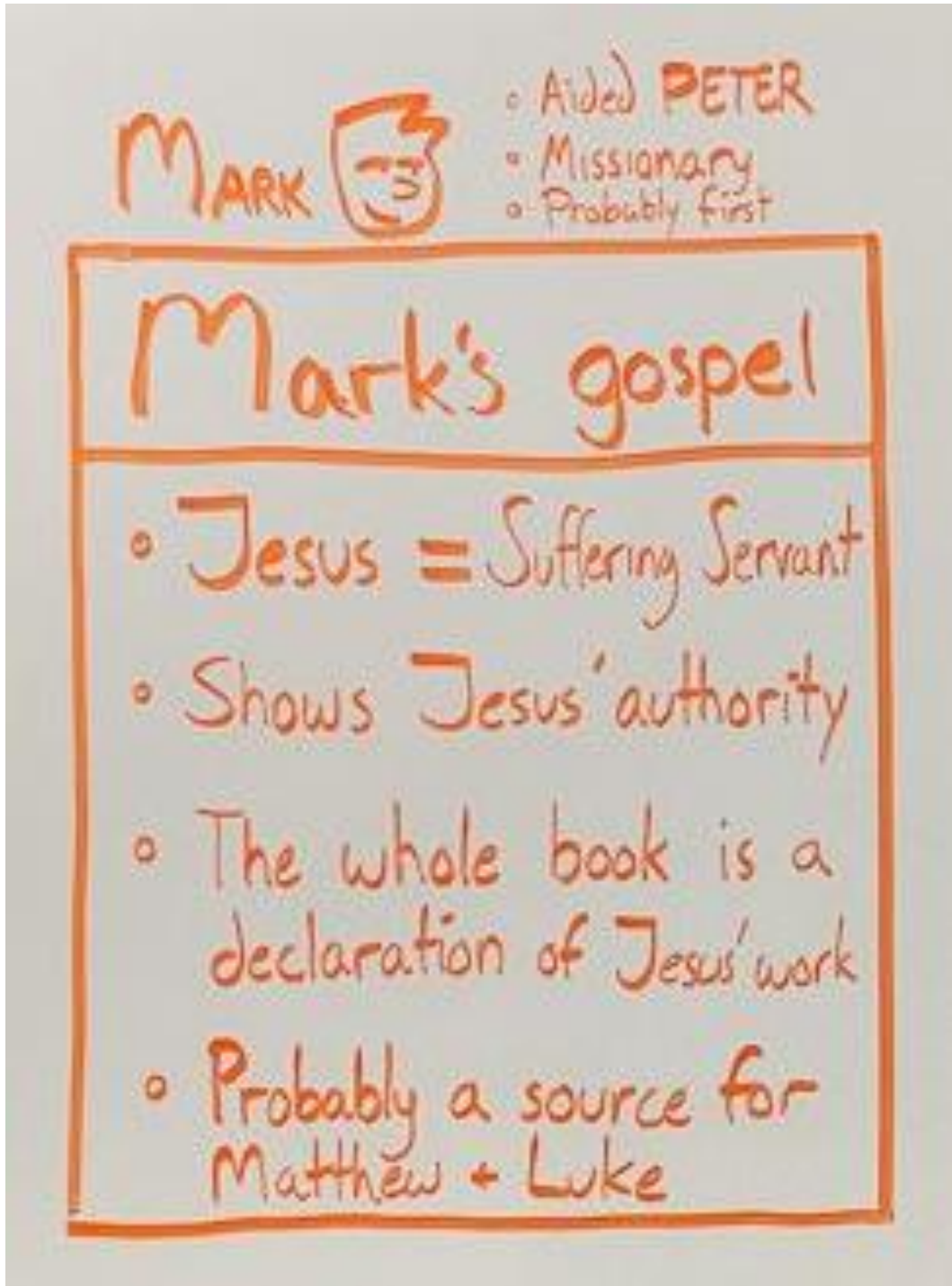
JOHN
 • Apostle

John's gospel

- Jesus = God
- Written to inspire belief
- Written long after the other gospels
- Mostly unique content
- Focus on signs/statements

"SYNOPTIC GOSPELS"
 (They cover the same material)

Diagram 2
(Mark only)



These summaries are from 'Bible Overview' a 10 minute YouTube clip of these can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaucATa9ufQ>



Mark chapter 1

¹ The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,

² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way” (quoting Malachi 3:1)

³ “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’” (quoting Isaiah 40:3)

Malachi 3.1 (literal translation rather than ‘good’ English!)

“Behold! I send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me. And shall suddenly come into his temple the Lord whom you seek; and the messenger of the covenant which you delight: behold, he shall come’, says YHVH of hosts*.”

Malachi 3:1

הַנְּבִי שֶׁלַח מִלֵּאכִי וּפְנֵה־דֶרֶךְ לִפְנֵי וּפְתָאֵם יָבֹא אֶל־הֵיכְלוֹ הָאֲדוֹן |
אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מִבְּקָשִׁים וּמִלֶּאךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֹפְצִים הִנֵּה־בָא אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

* **Lord of hosts** – a title describing God used 261 times in the Old Testament, ‘YHVH saboath’. The NIV usually translates this as ‘Lord Almighty’; it’s more literal meaning would be ‘God and commander of the armies of heaven’.



Mark reference

OT quoted

Notes

Mark 1:2

Malachi 3:1

Malachi 2:17 (immediately before 3:1) gives context – we are in times of wickedness when even the religious authorities say the people who do evil are doing good.

The part AFTER the words quoted are even more important than the words actually quoted*.

- God will send a messenger.
- God himself will come.
- God will come to His temple.
- The messenger of the covenant (saviour / redeemer / messiah) will come to rescue the world from evil.

Mark 1:3

Isaiah 40:3

FROM ISAIAH 40 (which Mark is pointing us to) ...
What is Jesus ministry?

Should we stop reading at Isaiah 40 v5 or keep going (from the context of this quote in Mark ch1)?

So, if we are to be 'Jesus in the world', what is our ministry?

Mark 4.11

Isaiah 6:9-10

Mark quotes the beginning and the end of this Isaiah passage, omitting a middle section. My opinion is that Mark is pointing us to the pieces he quotes and the bit of Isaiah in between – not the parts before or after the quote – but feel free to disagree with me!

* It's very interesting that Mark uses this Rabbinical technique (quoting the words but using them to point us to the words before or after) because it was thought that this was primarily a Jewish technique, PLUS it requires a knowledge of the Old Testament to be able to continue the quote – which the Gentiles would not have. It's clearly deliberate and people have various theories about why he did it....but the truth is.... we don't really know.

MYSTERIES OF
MARK

Mark reference

OT quoted

Notes

Mark 7:6-7

Isaiah 29:13

Don't equate this 'darkness' with the darkness at the crucifixion – that's different (and we may deal with that in a later session). In Isaiah here, 'darkness' is about hidden / secret.

Mark 7:10

Exodus 20:12

Deuteronomy 5:16

Exodus 21:17

Leviticus 20:9

My opinion is that these are examples of where he is just quoting the verse – there is no expectation that the reader will continue by looking before or after the quoted verse – but feel free to disagree with me (and argue the case)!

Mark 9.48

Isaiah 66:24

The last verse of Isaiah – so Mark is certainly not pointing us forward! Is he pointing us back, looking at v 22-24?

Mark 10:6

Genesis 1:27

Mark 10:8

Genesis 2:24

Mark 10:19

Deuteronomy 5:16-20

I would suggest that when Mark quotes the books of the Law, he's usually just quoting the verses and not pointing further as he does frequently when quoting the Psalms and prophets – but feel free to disagree with me!

Mark 11:9

Psalms 118:26

Ps 118 V27 = the palm branches; v28 = another statement of the Divinity of Jesus

MYSTERIES OF
MARK

Mark reference	OT quoted	Notes
Mark 11:17	Isaiah 56:7	Look at verse 8 !!!! What does this tell us about Jesus' mission?
	Jeremiah 7:11	Do we need to look at all of Jer ch7 or just part of it? Should we go back to parts of Jer ch6? There may even be value in extending into ch 8.
Mark 12:11	Psalms 118:22-3	Our 2 nd journey to Psalm 118 in Mark ! Does this context in Mark add anything new?
Mark 12:26	Exodus 3:6	At first I thought – just this verse, then, looking at the wider story in Exodus 3 – that is a critical 'shekhinah' – a physical settling of the presence of God – so maybe there's a subtle 'do you know who I am?' moment?
Mark 12:29-31	Deuteronomy 6:4 Leviticus 19:18	I would again suggest that when Mark quotes the books of the Law, he's usually just quoting the verses and not pointing further (the one above may well be an exception).
Mark 12:36	Psalms 110:1	Which book(s) of the Bible does this Psalm remind you of (style and content)? Why have I asked that question?
Mark 13:14	Daniel 9:27, 11:31 12:11	Ooooh – he's citing a whole wide section of Daniel Why? What's Marks (and Jesus') message?



Mark reference

OT quoted

Notes

Mark 13:24-5

Isaiah 13:10
& 34:4

If you attended the Revelation sessions in November 2020 Is Jesus pointing us to passages which show that his coming is a fundamental pivotal time in human history? Is he pointing to passages that show his arrival is 'the beginning of the end'?

Mark 14:27

Zechariah 13:7

More apocalyptic visions

Mark 15:34

Psalms 22:1

Don't go here yet We'll continue with this in the November session – probably the megastar quote of this style of 'don't just look at the verse quoted, but look further' So hold onto your seats for a month this one will blow your mind.

A little mystery We are not sure whether Luke, the writer of the next gospel was a Gentile (non-Jewish) Christian or a Hellenic (Greek) Jew. Here's an example of Luke applying the same technique – or at very least recording Jesus using the technique. The mystery is about why Luke would use this technique if he was a Gentile or was he just quoting Jesus not realising what was happening, or was he actually Jewish? In Mark the mystery is why Mark uses this technique for a non-Jewish audience, in Luke it is why does he use it at all Maybe one day we'll get to ask him

Luke 23:46

Psalms 31:5

So, from our learning today, can we confidently conclude that Jesus was quoting v5 But fully expecting people to press onwards in Psalm 31 ... at least verses 6,7&8 but how far do you think Jesus was pointing us to? The whole Psalm or just a part of it?

Bible pub quiz ... bonus question I'll bring a prize to church one Sunday for whoever gets the answer first If we make an assumption that Luke was a Hellenic Jew then who is the only Gentile to have authored a part of the Bible?