

MARK - INTRODUCTION

(Jerry Fite)

I. THE AUTHOR

A. Is not specified - the book does not mention him by name.

B. *External evidence:*

1. The book is ascribed to Mark by early writers - "Interpreter of Peter":
 - a) The words of Papias (A.D. 125) as quoted by Eusebius (A.D. 375): " This also the elder (John) said: Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, wrote down exactly whatever things he remembered, but yet not in order in which Christ either spoke or did them; for he was neither a hearer or a follower of the Lord's but was afterward, as I [Papias] said, a follower of (he attached himself to) Peter."
 - b) The words of Irenaeus (A.D. 175): " ...Mark, the disciple and interpreter (hermeneutes) of Peter, even he has delivered to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter"
 - c) The words of Tertullian (A.D. 207) In speaking of the authority of the four Gospels - "not excluding that which was published by Mark, for it may be ascribed to Peter, whose interpreter Mark was."

C. *Internal evidence:*

1. As to Mark's association with Peter, some have seen Mark's Gospel as an expansion of the brief statement made by Peter in his preaching to Cornelius (Acts 10:36-42). It also follows closely the points of apostolic testimony which Peter marked out immediately after Christ's ascension (Acts 1:22).

D. Facts about Mark:

1. He is mentioned by name ten times in the New Testament (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col. 4:10, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philm. 24; I Pet. 5:13).
 - a) Twice he is identified as "John whose surname is Mark" (Acts 12:12, 25).
 - b) Once he is identified as "John... who was called Mark" (Acts 15:37).
 - c) Twice he is identified as "John" (Acts 13:5, 13).
 - d) Five times he is identified as "Mark" (Acts 15:39; Col. 4:10; Philm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; I Pet. 5:13).
2. Mark was not an apostle but was the son of a woman in Jerusalem whose name was Mary (Acts 12:12).
 - a) A relative or cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
3. He returned with Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 12:25).
4. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas as an attendant on their first preaching tour - left for Jerusalem from Perga (Acts 13:13).
 - a) Due to Mark's abrupt leaving on the first preaching tour, Paul did not want to take him on the second journey (Acts 15:38).
 - b) A sharp contention about the matter arose between Paul and Barnabas.
 - c) Paul and Barnabas separated and Paul took Silas with him and Barnabas took Mark with him, and they sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:39-41).

5. Scripture mentions nothing about Mark for the next ten years.

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6. We next read of him sending greetings to Colosse (Col. 4:10, Philm. 24). Apparently Paul's problem with Mark has been resolved. At the end of Paul's life he says Mark is "useful" to him (2 Tim. 4:11).
7. Mark's connection with Peter:
 - a) It appears that Mark was converted by Peter (I Pet. 5:13).
 - b) Peter was well acquainted with Mark's mother, and went to her home when he was miraculously released from prison (Acts 12:12).

II. DATE OF BOOK:

- A. Date uncertain. It is believed to have been written at an early date, before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) - A.D. 67-68.
 1. Some scholars say that A.D. 50 is a probable date, and therefore could be the first of the four gospels written.

III. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK:

- A. The opening verse sets the stage for the book: "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*"
 1. It does not discuss the parentage, birth, or early development of Jesus.
 2. It gives a series of episodes in Christ's career with some detail concerning the last week of Jesus's life on earth.
- B. Is characterized as "*the Gospel of the Son of God*" for it emphasizes his Deity through his miracles.
 1. Mark gives more space to the miracles of Jesus than does any other Gospel narrative. It records eighteen of them.
- C. Is characterized as "*the Gospel to the Romans*".
 1. The author's Roman name "Marcus" seems to have superseded the Hebrew name of "John".
 2. The Gospel contains little emphasis on Jewish law and customs. When they do appear, they are explained more fully than in the other synoptists. (Mk. 14:12, cf. Matt. 26:17; Mk. 15:42, cf. Matt. 27:57).

IV. SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE BOOK:

- A. Mark is a "*Gospel of action*".
 1. The Greek word EUTHUS or EUTHEOS, translated "*straightway*", "*immediately*", "*forthwith*", "*anon*", is used forty-two times - more than all the rest of the New Testament.
 - a) Fourteen of these are in reference to the activity of Jesus; thus the Lord is pictured as a strenuous worker, hurrying from one task to another.
 - b) Of the seventy parables or parabolic utterances in the Gospels, Mark only gives eighteen of these.

- c) The emphasis is upon the deeds of Christ (including the miracles), not so much his teaching.
- d) Twice the book represents the Lord and his disciples as being so involved in their work that "they could not so much as eat bread" (3:20; 6:31).

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B. Mark is a "*Gospel of vividness*"

1. Unique references to Jesus' personal actions and gestures are given:
 - a) Looked upon them with "anger" (3:5).
 - b) took man aside and "put his fingers in his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened" (7:33-34).
 - c) "And he took hold of the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village ;and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, seest thou aught? " (8:23).
 - d) "...But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he arose" (9:27).
 - e) "And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them" (10:16).
2. Vivid phrases occur frequently:
 - a) "The Spirit *driveth* him forth into the wilderness" (1:12).
 - b) "when they had *broken it up* [the roof]" (2:4).
 - c) "the unclean spirits...*fell down* before him" (3:11).
 - d) "the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat *was now filling*" (4:37).
 - e) "he commanded them that all should sit down by companies *upon the green grass*" (6:39).

C. Passages peculiar to Mark's Gospel:

1. The alarm of Jesus' family (3:21)
2. The seed growing secretly (4:26-29)
3. The healing of one deaf and dumb (7:32-37)
4. the gradual healing of the blind man (8:22-26)
5. The exhortation to watch (13:33-37)
6. The flight of the young man (14:51-52)
7. Certain details about the Lord's resurrection (16:6-11).

D. Summation of Book: "Altogether, it is a simple, direct, forcible narrative, and gives the general outline of our Lord's ministry in a clearer form than either the gospel of Matthew or Luke. It sets Him before us as He worked and taught in the *living present*, making no mention of the law, and scarcely ever quoting prophecy, but aiming simply to depict Him in that aspect of energetic and victorious strength which was fitted to impress the Roman mind, and which is foreshadowed by the opening words, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus

Christ the Son of God.' " (J. A. M'Clymont, The New Testament and Its Writers, p. 25).

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V. CONTENTS OF THE BOOK:

- A. INTRODUCTION (1:1-13)
 - 1. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (v.1).
 - 2. John the Baptist (v. 2-8)
 - 3. The baptism and temptation of Jesus (v. 9-12).
- B. The ministry of Jesus in Galilee (1:14-9:50).
- C. The ministry of Jesus beyond Jordan and His trip to Jerusalem (10:1-52).
- D. The final days in Jerusalem (11:1-13:37).
- E. Events Surrounding Jesus's death in Jerusalem (14:1-15:47).
- F. Jesus' resurrection and commission to Apostles (16:1-20).

NOTE:

Some critics have questioned the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20 because the passage is not found in two of the oldest manuscripts, the Vaticanus and Sinaitic.

- 1. Yet, the evidence is overwhelming that Mark 16:9-20 should be retained as a part of the sacred text.
 - a. Is found in nearly all the other ancient manuscripts - including the Alexandrian (5th. century).
 - b. Cited by Irenaeus and Tatian of the second century; Hyppolytus and Dyonisius of Alexandria of the third century - all lived before the earliest existing manuscript was written.
 - (1) Irenaeus: "But Mark in the end of his gospel, says: 'And the Lord Jesus, after that he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.' "
 - c. In the Ancient versions (Peshito, Syriac, the Old Italic, The Sahidic, and the Coptic - all earlier than the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts.
 - d. There is *incompleteness* if Mark's Gospel ends at verse 8.
 - e. All of the historical statements in these twelve verses are contained in other undisputed Scripture:
 - (1) Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9-11 - John 20:1-18, Luke 8:2).

- (2) Appearance of Jesus to two disciples as they went into the country (Mk. 16:12-13 - Lk. 24:13-35).
- (3) Appearance of Jesus to the eleven (Mk. 16:14 - Lk. 24:36-43, Jn. 20:19-23).
- (4) Commission and the Ascension (Mk. 16:15, 16, 19, 20 - Lk. 24:36-51; Matt. 28:19,20, Jn. 14:12).

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- f. J.W. McGarvey sums up the matter: "Our final conclusion is, that the passage in question is authentic in all its details, and that there is no reason to doubt that it was written by the same hand which indited the preceding parts of this narrative. The objectors which have been raised against it are better calculated to shake our confidence in Biblical Criticism than in the genuineness of this inestimable portion of the word of God" (McGarvey, The New Testament Commentary Matthew Mark, p. 382).