

## THE BIG READ (2)

### Mark

#### A. Introduction

1. The New Testament begins with four books which tell the story of Jesus' earthly life and together paint a beautiful portrait of who Jesus is.

After Matthew comes the Gospel of Mark.

Although Matthew's Gospel comes first in the New Testament, Mark's Gospel was most likely the first of the four Gospels to be written.

2. Mark was not one of the men called by Jesus to be one of His 12 disciples.

But he was a co-worker of both Paul (Colossians 4:10) and Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

While Mark was with Peter in Rome, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write his Gospel based on Peter's eyewitness testimony around AD60.

The early Christian leader Papais wrote that: *"Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately all that he remembered."*

It is interesting to note that the structure of Mark's Gospel follows the preaching of Peter.

Acts 10	Mark
"good news" (v36)	"the beginning of the gospel" (1:1)
"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit" (v38)	the coming of the Spirit on Jesus (1:10)
"beginning in Galilee" (v37)	the Galilean ministry (1:16-8:26)
"He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil." (v38)	Jesus' ministry focuses on healings and exorcisms
"We are witnesses of everything he did... in Jerusalem" (v39)	the ministry in Jerusalem (11-14)
"They killed him by hanging him on a tree" (v39)	focus on the death of Christ (15)
"God raised him from the dead on the third day" (v40)	"He has risen! He is not here" (16:6)

3. Mark presents the story of Jesus' life in two main sections.

Chapters 1-8: The Identity of the Christ.

Mark's account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, where the focus is on what Jesus did rather than what He said, answers the question 'Who is Jesus?' It aims to show that Jesus is the Christ (or Messiah) and the Son of God.

This section ends with Jesus asking His disciples who they think He is.

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." (Mark 8:29)

Chapters 9-16: The Mission of the Christ.

Mark's explanation of why Jesus came or what it means for Jesus to be the Christ and the Son of God comes in two acts.

The first act from Mark 8:27-10:52 takes place on the way to Jerusalem and includes three conversations with the disciples where Jesus explains clearly what is going to happen to Him and why. He came to suffer and die for the sins of many.

"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31)

"He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." (Mark 9:31)

"Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (Mark 10:32-34)

"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 10:45)

The second act from Mark 11-16 takes place in Jerusalem where Jesus does what He came to do as He suffers and dies on the cross, and then after three days, rises from the dead.

## **B. Things to look for**

### 1. The way Jesus is introduced.

Jesus is introduced as a new Adam who will rule over a new creation.

There are numerous allusions to Genesis 1-3.

Son of God (cf. Genesis 1:26-27).

"The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1)

Appears as a full grown man (cf. Genesis 2:7).

"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee..." (Mark 1:9)

Receives God's Spirit (cf. Genesis 2:7)

"As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove." (Mark 1:10)

Tempted by the devil (cf. Genesis 3:1-5)

"At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert for forty days, being tempted by Satan." (Mark 1:12-13)

Rules over the animals (cf. Genesis 2:19-20)

"He was with the wild animals." (Mark 1:13)

Identified as King (cf. Genesis 1:26)

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

He is fruitful and multiplies as new people are brought into His kingdom (cf. Genesis 1:28).

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him." (Mark 1:17-18)

He heals old Adam and Eve.

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek." (Mark 1:25-26)

"Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them." (Mark 1:30-31)

The beginning of a new day brings a new creation to the world as the sick are healed, demons exorcised, lepers made clean and able to enter God's presence, lame leap for joy, and sinners are forgiven.

"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons." (Mark 1:32-34)

"Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured." (Mark 1:41-42)

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all." (Mark 2:10-12)

Mark wants His readers to believe that Jesus is the Christ who has come to restore both humans and the rest of creation.

## 2. The warning Jesus gives 'not to tell anyone about him.'

"...but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was." (Mark 1:34)

"Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: "See that you don't tell this to anyone." (Mark 1:43-44)

"Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was." (Mark 3:11-12)

"He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this." (Mark 5:43)

"Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it." (Mark 7:36)

"Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village." (Mark 8:26)

"Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him." (Mark 8:30)

Like Jesus, Mark wants to make sure that those reading his Gospel understand what it means for Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. After 8 chapters there is a danger that people might get the wrong impression (which in fact is what happens).

## 3. The blindness of the disciples and the way this blindness is overcome.

The disciples struggled to understand who the man they were following was.

"Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (Mark 1:36-38)

"They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:41)

Even when they recognised that He was the Christ, they didn't understand what this meant.

"He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him." (Mark 8:32)

The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida sums them up brilliantly.

"He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly." (Mark 8:23-25)

How is this blindness overcome?

"Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mark 9:9)

"And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)

Mark wants his readers to understand that we won't truly see who Jesus is without understanding His death on the cross.

#### 4. The surprising ending.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." (Mark 16:6-8)

Mark ends his gospel in this abrupt way intentionally. He is pushing his readers for a response.

Will you run away from the truth of the eyewitness testimony about Jesus or will you believe that Jesus who died and rose again is the Christ, the Son of God?

Will you stay silent about who Jesus is and why He came or will you put aside your fears and go and tell people the good news?

### **C. Who is Jesus?**

#### 1. He is the Christ who saves.

"While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:15-17)

Jesus came to save sinners – that's what the Christ does.

#### 2. He is the Christ who suffers.

"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 10:45)

Jesus suffers and dies to save sinners – that's how the Christ does His saving work (see Isaiah 53).

### **D. How then shall we live?**

#### 1. We are to repent and believe the good news.

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

#### 2. We are to follow Him even if this brings suffering.

"Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)