

Walking Through the Word

Jesus, Paul and the Church (Week 19)

Story: **Tell Me the Stories of Jesus** (E: The Story of the Sower, Stories About the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus Calms the Storm, Jesus Heals a Wild Man, Jesus Answers Calls of Help, A Boy's Lunch Basket, Jesus Walks on the Water, A Gentile Mother Comes to Jesus, Jesus Heals and Feeds the Crowd, and The Blind Man of Bethsaida, p 405-421)

Location: **Mark 1:1-16:20**

Bios & definitions

gospel: a word from the Greek *euangelion* meaning "good news," and used in the NT to describe the "good news" of salvation offered by God through the death and resurrection of Christ, His Son, to those believing in Him; reference to this word appears once in Mark, Matthew, 1 Peter and Revelation, twice in Acts, and often in the letters of Paul; eventually used to describe a history of Jesus life (e.g. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

synoptic: a word meaning "seeing together," from *syn* meaning "alongside, together with" and *optic* meaning "to see"; used to describe the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke because of their similarities in material, language and ordering of events in the life of Christ; while these three Gospels are not identical, the following statistics help explain the commonly held scholarly opinion regarding the *Source* of the writings:

The Gospel of Mark – 661 verses; The Gospel of Matthew – 1,068 verses; The Gospel of Luke – 1,149 verses

Between 80 to 90 percent of Mark's verses are found in Matthew

Between 53 to 65 percent of Mark's verses are found in Luke

This sharing of common material is known as "The Triple Tradition"

Approximately 220-235 verses are shared between Matthew and Luke

This sharing of common material is known as "The Double Tradition"

"The most common view currently is that the Gospel of Mark and a hypothetical document, called *Quelle* (German for "source") or *Q*, were used by Matt and Luke as sources for most of the materials included in their Gospels."¹

Author: most agree that John Mark, first mentioned in Acts 12, was the author of this Gospel, having collected stories and information about the life of Christ from Peter, whose preaching and stories Mark arranged and preserved, for he was a close follower of Peter so that he was referred to as a "son" (1 Pet 5:13); John Mark was an associate of Paul and Barnabas and traveled with them (Acts 12:25; 13:5); he seems to have lost Paul's confidence during a desertion (Acts 13:13), but kept Barnabas' faith and traveled with him (see Acts 15:36ff); Paul eventually reconciles and speaks well of John Mark (Col 4:10, 2 Tim 4:11, Philemon 24); there is no internal evidence within the Gospel (statement of authorship) to attest this work to Mark, though Papias, a bishop of Heirapolis and early leader in the Christian Church, said that:

"Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings [*logia*]. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements."²

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Audience: it is assumed that this Gospel was written somewhere in Italy, most likely in Rome; as history points to the likelihood that Peter spent his last days in Rome and evidence that Mark was with him, the author would have compiled his work in this place; additional evidence within the text points to a potential Roman audience, most specifically: 1) explanation of Jewish customs, 2) translation of Aramaic words, and 3) an emphasis on persecution and martyrdom; as Roman believers often endured persecution for their faith (e.g. fire of 64 AD, where Nero burned the city of Rome to eliminate the Christian faith), and would have had no knowledge of Jewish customs or language; two possible dates exist for when readers would have received the Gospel, either the early 60s, or close to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, between 68 and 73 AD

Points to Remember: Mark is a summary-style Gospel, much less “comprehensive” than the others, but succinct in highlighting the keys of Jesus’ ministry; he focuses on Jesus Christ as a “teacher” (some 37 references in the gospel) and “Son of God”; he emphasizes discipleship and the cross, pointing to the suffering believers may endure by following Christ; within Mark’s Gospel there are only three stories which are not attested (written) elsewhere: the *growing seed* (4:26-29), healing a mute/deaf man (7:31-37), blind man from Bethsaida (8:22-26)

- 1) The “Growing Seed” – Mark records this story just after “The Parable of the Sower”; while the first illustration focuses on the quality of the soil upon which the seed falls, Mark alone includes this story which highlights the mystery of the seed’s power; the *seed* is the Gospel, the good news *sown* in the heart of those who may believe
- 2) Healing of the deaf-mute – Following an encounter in a Gentile city with a Syrophonecian woman (non-Israelite) seeking healing for her daughter, Jesus returns to the area of the Sea of Galilee and a man with two infirmities is brought to Him for healing; Mark here explains the word *Ephphatha* spoken over the man in conjunction with his healing, as it is in Aramaic
- 3) Blind man – this story, also unique to Mark, is equally unique to Jesus’ ministry, as the Messiah lays hands on the man not once, but twice
- 4) Mark 8:27 marks a significant transition in the Gospel; the first half of Mark’s writing is focused on Jesus’ ministry of healing and preaching, where the second half clearly focuses on Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection
- 5) Interesting sequence of 3s in the Marcan material: three seed parables (chpt 4), three passion predictions (8:27-9:1, 9:30-32, 10:32-34), three disciples going to the transfiguration (9:2-13), three movements of isolation during the time in Gethsemane and the three failures of the disciples to stay awake (14:26-52), three time periods noted during the crucifixion (3rd, 6th, 9th hours) as well as three mocking groups highlighted at the cross (passersby, chief priests and criminals)

¹ Source: Zondervan NASB Study Bible (p 1361).

² Source: Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* (3.39.15-16) – *this is the earliest surviving history of the early church.*