

Mark

1. Call To Ministry

12/18/2005

My major in the fine art college in Seoul, Korea was Sculpture. When I did a sculpture, either I had to draw several sketches or take photos of front, both sides and back of the person or object. Oh yes, I could have only one shot from the front. But that would give me only two dimensional concept. By having different shots from different angles, I get to have a complete understanding of the model.

We have four Gospels of Jesus Christ in our Bible. Why not have just one Gospel? Someone might ask, "Don't they repeat the same thing pretty much?" The answers are, "Yes and no." Yes, there are a lot of repetitions, but there are so much more of different angle shots of our Savior Jesus Christ from different authors' point of views, we get to have a complete understanding of Him.

In the first chapter of this Book, we find Jesus starts His ministry and recruits His disciples – Answering to the call to ministry.

A. INTRODUCTION

As we start to embark the second Gospel of Jesus Christ according to John Mark, we are going to go over a few points of the basics of the Book.

1) Author

Majority of Bible scholars believe that it was John Mark who wrote this Book. Since Peter called Mark "my son" in 1 Peter 5:13, it is probable that it was Peter who led Mark to faith in Jesus Christ. Church tradition states that Mark was "Peter's interpreter," so that the Gospel of Mark reflects the personal experiences and witness of Simon Peter.

Paul and Barnabas set out on the first-ever missionary journey, taking John Mark as their companion. But things got tough, and something happened that Mark would live to regret. John Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem. Paul viewed Mark's premature departure as a quitter. Mark's name surfaced again later between Paul and Barnabas. But now the mood was drastically different. No longer was he viewed as a warm, loving companion. He was now seen by Paul as one shouldn't go with them on a second journey. Barnabas disagreed, which caused the end of Barnabas and Paul's travels together.

But there was a reunion coming. When we read 2 Timothy 4:9-11 and we can smile with relief on Mark's behalf. Paul was in prison at the time, very close to his own execution and lonely for companionship. Notice what he wrote:

2 Tim 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Wow! Mark had been restored to partnership with Paul in the spreading of the Gospel. He was acknowledged as a fellow worker in the kingdom of God. Forgiveness was done and Mark had reason to rejoice.

2) Composition

Action, movement, involvement and service. These are things we find in this Book. 'Euthus' is the Greek word repeated throughout the Gospel of Mark, appearing no less than 47 times. It is variously translated 'immediately,' 'at once,' 'quickly,' 'just then.' Although Mark has written the briefest of the four Gospels, he wastes no words as he paints a compelling portrait of the Savior serving others.

The tone of this Gospel is practical, written in such a way that the material would appeal to the Roman mind. As we read the Gospel of Mark, we will want to observe the Servant at work in this account of Jesus' life, paying careful attention to Jesus' words in 10:45.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Some might wonder where Mark got his information about Jesus? Many New Testament scholars believe that his information came mainly from the one who was a common fisherman and a close friend of Jesus, namely, Peter. In fact, the belief was so firmly fixed in the minds of the early church fathers, especially Justin Martyr actually gave the Gospel of Mark the subheading: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Peter."

Mark is believed to be the first of the four Gospels – the one from which the other Gospel writers received some of their information. In that sense it is a trailblazing Gospel covering virgin territory.

3) Intended Readers

Mark is a fast-paced Gospel of drama and high-energy action that emphasizes events rather than words. Mark doesn't include a lot of parables. He records far fewer actual teachings of Jesus than the other Gospel writers. His emphasis is on the miracles of Jesus. His goal is to present Jesus as the Servant who came to die. And all throughout Mark's account this suffering Servant was engaged in helping, encouraging and serving other people.

When Bible translators go to a people who have never had the Scriptures in their own language, they usually begin by translating the Gospel of Mark. Mark is the most translated book in all the world. One reason is because it is the shortest Gospel. But the other reason is because this Gospel was written for people unfamiliar with first century Judaism. Mark wrote it for the Romans.

Matthew gives us a genealogy because a king must have a genealogy. Mark does not give one because a servant doesn't need a genealogy, he needs references. A servant needs to do the job. We're going to see that in this Gospel because that is the way Jesus is presented.

B. THE IDENTITY OF GOD'S SERVANT JESUS

1) The first witness – The author himself

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark states boldly that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Even though Mark was not one of Jesus' disciples, he was an eyewitness of some of the events that he wrote about. He lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary. And their home was a meeting place for believers in the city.

2) The second witnesses – The prophet Isaiah and Malachi

Mark 1:2-3 As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.” 3 “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.’

Mark cites two quotations from the Old Testament prophets, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. The words ‘messenger’ and ‘voice’ refer to John the Baptist, the last prophet God sent to prepare the way for His Son. In ancient times, before a king visited any part of his kingdom, a messenger was sent before him to prepare the way. This included both repairing the roads and preparing the people.

By calling the nation to repentance, John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah and Malachi join voices in declaring that Jesus Christ is the Lord, Jehovah God.

3) The third witness – John the Baptist

Mark 1:4-8 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. 8 I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

I figured it out why John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey. Because he was on a low carb diet.

John the Baptist was of the order of the priests, a Levite, and was expected to minister in the temple in Jerusalem. But God had called him as a prophet, and he is out in the wilderness preaching. The “wilderness” where John ministered is the rugged wasteland along the western shore of the Dead Sea. And the people come out a long distance to hear him.

Today, we like to put a church in a location where people live or where they can congregate and come together. We feel that the church should be accessible. John didn’t work on that theory at all. He was way out in the wilderness and yet the multitudes went out to him.

Any great work of God begins with great preparation. John wonderfully fulfilled this important ministry. John was God’s bulldozer to build that highway.

The real baptism is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Ritual baptism is by water. Water baptism is very important today because it is a testimony and public declaration. In the Gospel of Matthew we learned that the reason the Lord Jesus was baptized was actually to identify Himself with mankind.

4) The Father and the Holy spirit

Mark 1:9-11 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. 11 Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Jesus didn't have to be baptized. He also didn't have to die on a cross in our place. He did both things to express His solidarity with fallen man.

Just think about Jesus as a human Himself:

- Jesus: A common name.
- From Nazareth: A despised village.
- Of Galilee: The "unspiritual" region, not the "Bible belt" of the area at that time.
- In the Jordan: A unpleasant - river. According to the Mishnah which is a collection of early oral interpretations of the scriptures, explicitly disqualifies the River Jordan for purification.

But for the baptism of Jesus, the Trinity gets involved:

- The Spirit descending: The Spirit of God was present, and in some way His presence was discernable as a bodily form of a dove.
- A voice came from heaven: It's rare in the Bible when we read that God speaks audibly from heaven, but this is one of those glorious occasions.

C. THE TEMPTATIONS THAT INITIATES THE SERVANTHOOD

Mark 1:12-13 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

From the height of the baptism where we heard the Father God's declaration and saw the Holy Spirit's manifestation to the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus was led out by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Jesus was identified with sinners in His baptism. Here, He is also identified with sinners in their temptations.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

In the Bible, number "Forty" is a number that often shows a time of testing or judgment. In Noah's flood, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Israel was in the wilderness 40 years. Moses kept sheep in the wilderness for 40 years. This is Jesus' time of testing.

D. RELOCATING TO GALILEE

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Jesus spent most of His time in the region of Galilee, usually only going up to Jerusalem for the appointed feasts. Galilee was a large, populated area north of Judea and Jerusalem, where Jews and Gentiles lived together, though usually in their own distinct cities.

Galilee was not a small, backwater region. According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, Galilee was an area of about 60 by 30 miles and had 204 villages, with none less than 15,000 people each village. This means there were more than 3 million people in the extended region during Jesus' time.

Jesus was a literally heaven-sent preacher, and He brought the message of God's rule on earth, though not in the manner that the Israel people expected or desired.

Most people wanted a political kingdom that would replace the oppressive occupation of the Romans.

Contrary to the expectations of most people in His day, Jesus brought a kingdom of love, not conquest; of grace, not law; of humility, not pride; for all men, not only for the Jews; to be received voluntarily by man, not imposed by force.

There are many people who know the Gospel, but they do not believe in it. It was an appeal not only to accept it as an intellectually accurate statement, but to trust it.

E. RECRUITING THE DISCIPLES

Mark 1:16-20 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. 20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

What kind of men Jesus was recruiting? They were common men, without theological credentials or status in the world. Jesus met them as they labored like any common man. These disciples were chosen by Jesus not for who they were, but for what Jesus could do through them.

F. CHALLENGE

What about you? Is Jesus the Lord of your life or just the Savior who paid for your eternal fire insurance? Do you know that you are called to ministry? All of us those who are born-again are called to ministries. It is a matter of responding to the 'Call to Ministry' from our God the Father in heaven. I am not saying that all of us are going to be preachers and Bible teachers, but serving God and serving others one way or another. That is the ministry at its finest.

If you are a born-again, are you going to respond to God's call? Or are you going to ignore what God is calling to do for the sake of what you want to do?