

40. Jesus in Mark

June 8, 2017

All the palaces around the world are beautifully built and well maintained. You and I both know that the kings, queens, and presidents of the kingdoms and nations don't clean them. Either employees or servants do. Those leaders are masters of all, servants of none. But our Lord Jesus was and is the Master of all AND Servant of all. Even though He always has been the sovereign Ruler of the entire creation, in His highest act of humility, He laid aside His royal robes, tied a servant's towel around His waist and served the needs of humankind. Do you know any gods, kings, or presidents like that? None.

Whether it was the time when He walked on earth or it is today, when people get to hear His Word, they are encouraged in the midst of despair and hopelessness; when they were under the bondage of satanic control, they were freed. Jesus came to serve humanity and made the greatest sacrifice a servant could make – giving His own life for those He served.

The Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus, the Servant King in a non-stop action. It is the shortest Gospel of the four. In this Book, you would find Mark's favorite word – "immediately." It repeats 10 times in chapter one alone. In the entire Book, there are 36 appearances.

In his commentary, "Talk Thru the Bible", Bruce Wilkinson mentioned something I've never known before:

"This may be why Mark omitted a number of items that would not have been meaningful to the Gentiles, such as the genealogy of Christ, fulfilled prophecy, references to the Law, and certain Jewish customs that are found in the other Gospels. Mark interpreted Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 15:22) and used a number of Latin terms in place of their Greek equivalents (4:21; 6:77; 12:14, 42; 15:15-16, 39)."

Interestingly, the author Mark only listed 18 out of the 70 parables of Christ in his Book. But he listed over half of Jesus' 35 miracles – a higher percentage than the other 3 Gospels. Action packed!

A. THE SOURCE OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Have you ever wondered where Mark got the information to write this Gospel? According to the NIV Study Bible, 91% of Mark's Gospel is contained in Matthew and 53 % of Mark is found in Luke in a word-for-word comparison. In other words, the Apostle Matthew and Dr. Luke used the Book of Mark as their main source. But it still doesn't answer the question in our heart. Where did Mark get his info? None other than the apostle Peter.

We know this from the writings of the early church fathers. Papias (A.D. 60-130) stated that Mark wrote his account of Jesus' life based on Peter's sermons to the Christian community. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) even referred to Mark's Gospel as the "Memoirs of Peter."

B. THE UNIQUENESS OF MARK'S GOSPEL

According to William Barkley, a 20th century British theologian, "No one tells us so much about the emotions of Jesus as Mark does. Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit (7:34; 8:12). He was moved with compassion (6:34). He marveled at their unbelief

(6:6). He was moved with righteous anger (3:5; 8:33; 10:14). Only Mark tells us that when Jesus looked at the rich young ruler, He loved him (10:21). Jesus could feel the pangs of hunger (11:12). He could be tired and want to rest (6:31).

If it weren't for Mark's Gospel, we would know very little about the emotional stages of our Lord Jesus. Even the meticulous writer, Dr. Luke didn't cover them as much as Mark did, because he learned all that inside information from the apostle Peter.

C. THE BACKGROUND OF MARK

What do we know about this author? He was also known as "John Mark." He was not one of Jesus' chosen disciples, but he hung around with them often. Including the fateful night at the Garden of Gethsemane:

Mark 14:51-52 Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, 52 and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

Now, that is an honest account of himself. If it was you and me, we probably would not include it in the Book.

His mama, another believer herself, opened her home to be used as a meeting place for the early church according to Acts 12. One of Mark's cousins was Barnabas, Paul's sidekick. This young man accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but times got tough, he just quit and went back home. Later, when Barnabas wanted to give him another chance with their second missionary journey, Paul adamantly refused to let him go with them. These two godly men's disagreement was so sharp that they parted ways: Paul took Silas one direction, while Barnabas and Mark went another. The Bible is so honest that it records all the flaws of our great men and women of God. Aren't you glad that the Bible is not still recording and not recording about you?

Acts 15:3-41 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." 37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

We don't know anything more about Mark for a long time, but somehow he popped up again in Rome, the ground zero of Christian persecution, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Paul, who was in prison. This aging apostle Paul mentioned Mark's name lovingly in Colossians 4:10-11 and Philemon 24.

In his last epistle, 2 Timothy, Paul named Mark as one of his few faithful encouragers and fellow workers – from deserter to fellow worker in Christ.

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

What would have made this young man turn from a spiritual washout to a faithful servant? I wouldn't doubt for one moment that it was the forgiving hands of our merciful God who forgave an apostle who once denied Him three times. I also would not

guess how many times the apostle Peter reminded this young man of God's everlasting compassion.

The Christians in Rome were facing the massive persecution from the Roman crazy emperor Nero and their faith was like a little candle in the path of a destructive hurricane. They needed to see something or to talk to someone with skin. How wonderful for these persecuted believers of Rome could hear Mark's Gospel of Jesus Christ who died for them and rose again and whose love was worth dying for!

D. THREE MAJOR THEMES IN THIS BOOK

We can find three major themes in this Book:

1) Discipleship

Jesus recruited His disciples – Peter, Andrew, John and James, Matthew and others. They responded to Him by leaving everything behind. That is what Jesus was asking for: All-consuming purpose to do the will of God. Setting aside their own self-interests and willing to lose their lives for His sake.

Although we are called to give up everything for the sake of our Lord, the rich rewards our Lord stores for us far outshine and out value anything the world can offer.

2) The Contrast between Belief and Unbelief

The Jewish religious rulers could not make anything out of Jesus. While they hated Him, the common people clamored for Him. The Lord did not demand fasting from His disciples; He often broke their Sabbath customs and discarded their favorite traditions, such as washing of their hands according to their traditional ways; unmasked their hypocrisy; disrupted their moneymaking schemes in the temple; whenever they tried to trap Him, they were the ones who got trapped in the Word of God. Instead of repenting, they decided that they were going to kill Jesus once and for all and remove Him from anyone's memory.

Right smack dab in the middle of this Book, the author Mark placed the question by Jesus that should be asked to every human for their eternal destiny:

Mark 8:27 "Who do men say that I am?"

This is the unavoidable dividing line that everyone comes across. Depending on our answers, our eternal destiny will be decided permanently.

3) The Crucifixion and Resurrection

For 10 chapters, Mark steadily built the tension between Jesus and the Jewish religious rulers. The inevitable clash took place in chapters 11 through 16, during the Passover week. Here Mark slowed down the pace, because this is the focal point of his Gospel, the culmination of Jesus' mission – the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

By the way, almost 40 percent of this Gospel is devoted to a detailed account of the last eight days of Jesus' life.

E. OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The outline of Mark's Gospel is best summarized in the following verse:

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.

This Book can be divided into 4 sections:

1) The Servant Introduced and Prepared – 1:1-13

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark established Jesus' identity from his first sentence, confirming it with the Father's words at Jesus' baptism in v11:

"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2) The Servant at Work – 1:14-8:30

In the chapters that follow, Jesus' acts of service revealed Him as the source of divine power and love. After calling His disciples, He proved His divine authority by driving out demons and freeing the satanically oppressed, healing lepers and the crippled and the paralyzed, and confounding the Jewish religious rulers with His wisdom. He calmed a storm and stirred one up with His penetrating parables. He raised a girl from the dead and revived the hope of a desperate woman. He revealed God's power by walking on water, and He held fast to God's truth by standing against the Pharisees.

3) The Servant Resisted and Rejected – 8:31-15:47

As soon as Peter voiced his confession, Jesus unveiled the true nature of His Messianic mission – to suffer, be rejected, die, and rise again on the third day. From this point forward, the shadow of the Cross loomed large over Christ's life.

He taught His disciples unforgettable lessons about faith. At His Transfiguration, He gave Peter, James, and John a vision of His true glory. When His disciples could not cast out a certain demon, He taught them about the importance of believing God to do the impossible. He instructed them that greatness is not about being first. His teachings continued until the Servant-King presented Himself to His people when He entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey.

During the final week, the chief priests joined their rivals, the Pharisees, to get rid of the "troublemaker." With the help of Judas, the betrayer, they finally captured the Lamb of God on the night of the Passover without any resistance from Jesus. This is the reason He has come, to offer His life as the ultimate Servant for the sins of humankind.

4) The Servant Triumphant and Exalted – 16:1-20

Then, in the quiet of early morning three days later, His tomb was found empty. He had risen from the dead, triumphing over hypocrisy, injustice, murder – all sin – and death itself! The grace of God has conquered, securing the forgiveness of sins and new life for anyone who believes.

Mark's brief account of the Resurrection comes to an abrupt end at verse 8. Many scholars think verses 9-20 were added to Mark's original work because they don't appear in early manuscripts, and the style of writing differs from the rest of the Gospel.

However, Mark's theme of belief versus unbelief is once again presented. Despite the women's report that Jesus was alive, the disciples struggled to believe it was true. Not until Jesus appeared in person did they believe.

Mark's message, then, is clear. Jesus is worthy of our faith. We can lean on Him when the stresses of the world bear down on us and we feel like caving in. He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.