

The Memoirs of Peter

An Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

“The Gospel according to Mark”

- *Gospel*
 - from the Old Anglo-Saxon word, *godspell*, which means “a good story”
 - translated from the Greek word *euangelion*.
- *Euangelion*
 - Means literally, “a good message or good news”
- Used in secular Greek of a report about an important event

Why Four Gospels?

- 1) No one account can adequately exhaust the life and character of Jesus Christ.
 - John 21:25 - there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.
- 2) Each account of the life and death of Jesus was written with a particular audience and purpose in mind.

Authorship of the 2nd Gospel

- Anonymous



External Evidence

- 1) The title “according to Mark” is found in all the earliest manuscripts.
- 2) Papias, bishop of Heirapolis in Asia Minor (c. 70-150 AD) was the 1st.
 - He wrote a work entitled *Exegesis of the Lord's Oracles*, which we no longer have.
 - But the church historian Eusebius (325 AD) in his *History of the Church*, quotes from Papias:
 - “And the elder [a reference in context to John the apostle] used to say this, ‘Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were an arrangement of the Lord’s oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave nothing out of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.’”

External Evidence

- 3) Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 AD) argued: Mark “wrote the memoirs of him [referring to Peter].”
- 4) Irenaeus (c. 140-203 AD) mentions that both Peter and Paul had preached in Rome; then he writes: “After their departure (*exodus*), Mark the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.”

External Evidence

- 5) Clement of Alexandria (c. 155-215 AD): after Peter had preached in Rome, those who heard him asked Mark to write out the messages.
- 6) Tertullian (150-222 AD): "that which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's whose interpreter Mark was."
- 7) Origen (c. 185-250 AD): "The second [gospel] is that according to Mark who composed it, under the guidance of Peter, who there, in his epistle acknowledged the evangelist as his son."
- 8) Peter himself may have given us a hint he intended to leave his own memoirs of the life of Christ.
 - Cf. 2 Pet. 1:15-16

Conclusion

- From the earliest days of the church Mark was...
 - Recognized as the author of the second gospel.
 - Known to be a close companion of Peter
 - Considered to be writing Peter's memoirs.
- There is not one dissenting voice.

Internal Evidence

- All of the early church authors make it clear that by Mark, they mean the man who is identified in the NT as "John whose surname was Mark."
- He appears often in Acts (12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37).
- And he is mentioned in four of the NT letters (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13).

Internal Evidence

- There are several pieces of evidence within the gospel that confirm the external evidence.
 - (1) There is nothing in the book inconsistent with Mark's being the author.
 - (2) The detail of the accounts points to an eyewitness; this is consistent with the external evidence that Mark wrote for Peter.
 - (3) The extremely critical way the disciples are presented points to an apostle being behind the book.
 - Hard-hearted (6:52)
 - Spiritually weak (14:32-42)
 - Dim-witted (8:14-21)

Internal Evidence

- (4) Peter is prominent in the gospel.
 - This makes sense if he is the one recalling; he would have been there.
 - There are even insights that could have only come from Peter himself.
 - E.g., 11:21 - Being reminded [or remembering], Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."
 - E.g., 14:72 - Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

Internal Evidence

- (5) The fact that this gospel emphasizes those events in Peter's life that show him in a less-desirable light, and omits the positive ones entirely.
 - This would be consistent with how Peter would have related the stories about himself.
- (6) The second gospel follows the flow of Peter's teaching about Christ.
 - Cf. Acts 10:36-41 – same flow and emphasis as book of Mark.

A Brief Biography of Mark

- Identified as John, whose surname was Mark (Acts 12:12).
 - John was a common male, Hebrew name.
 - Mark (or Marcus) was Latin.
 - Common for Greek speaking Jews to take a Latin name
- Though not an official disciple, he was still acquainted with many of the activities of the life of Christ.
 - 1) Through first hand observation.
 - He grew up in a spacious home in Jerusalem.
 - And it was apparently a place where Jesus occasionally frequented.
 - His mother, Mary, was a disciple.
 - His home was probably the site of the upper room (cf. Mark 14:14 and Acts 1:13-14).
 - Many scholars believe that the story of the young man who fled on the night of the arrest was Mark (Mk. 14:51-52).
 - 2) Through his companionship with the Apostle Paul.
 - 3) Through companionship of the Apostle Peter.

A Brief Biography of Mark

- Was possibly lead to Christ by Peter, for Peter calls him "my son" (1 Peter. 5:13).
- And Peter was apparently often a visitor in his home.
 - cf. the servant's response in Acts 12:14-16.
 - Through a closed and locked door, Rhoda was certain it was Peter by the sound of his voice alone.
- Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
- His childhood home became a center of church activity in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).

A Brief Biography of Mark

- He went with Paul and Barnabas on 1st missionary journey (Acts 13:5).
- But he soon returned home from Pamphylia in Asia Minor (Acts 13:13).
- On the second journey Barnabas was determined to take Mark again.
- That led to a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41).

A Brief Biography of Mark

- Apparently a reconciliation between Paul and Mark
 - Paul mentions him in Colossians.
 - Col. 4:10 - Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and *also* Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).
 - And he mentions him again in Philemon.
 - Philemon 1:23-24 - Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as *do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.
- Possible Mark remained in Rome after Paul left, and joined with Peter when he arrived (1 Pet. 5:13).
- Last mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:11
 - Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

Date of Writing

- Uncertain
- Likely before 70 AD (cf. 13:2).
- Most of the early church fathers have Mark writing during Peter's lifetime and under his direction.
- So likely in the mid-50's AD; or possibly 65-67 AD.

Mark's Audience

- Written from Rome, for Roman Christians.
- Some of the internal arguments:
 - 1) More Latin expressions instead of Greek ones (5:9; 6:27; 12:15, 42; 15:16, 39)
 - 2) Translates Aramaic expressions (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34)
 - 3) Omits Jewish elements and makes fewer references to the OT.
 - 4) Uses the Roman system of time (6:48; 13:35)

Internal Arguments

- 5) Identifies Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus, possibly for the benefit of the Christians in Rome (cf. Rom. 16:13)
- 6) Explains things no Jew would need explained (15:42; 13:3)
- 7) Highlights Jesus as a man of action
 - Key word is "immediately" (41x); more than the other gospels combined.
- 8) Presents the shared material more fully than either Matthew or Luke.
- 9) Presents Romans in a neutral (12:17; 15:1-2, 21-22) or favorable light (15:39).

External Argument

- E.g., Clement of Alexandria: "When Peter had preached the word publicly in Rome and announced the gospel by the Spirit, those present, of whom there were many, besought Mark, since for a long time he had followed him and remembered what had been said, to record his words. Mark did this, and communicated the gospel to those who made request of him. When Peter knew of it, he neither actively prevented nor discouraged the undertaking."

The Purpose of Mark's Gospel

- **Two primary themes:**
 - 1) Christology
 - 2) Discipleship

Christology

- 1:1 - The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - *Jesus* – the historical person with this name
 - *Christ* – Israel's Messiah
 - *Son of God*

Confession # 1: Mark

- Mark 1:1 – "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."
 - Cf. 3:11 – "Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!'"

Confession #2: Christ Himself

- Mark 2:10-11 - "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."
 - Jesus here lays claim to prerogatives that belong only to God.
 - The forgiveness of sin and a divine title
- "Son of Man" comes from Dan. 7.
 - Dan. 7:13-14 - "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.
- How do we know?
 - Cf. 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62

Confession # 3: Peter

- 8:29 - He *continued* by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."
 - Crucial theme of Mark.
 - cf. 9:41; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61-62
- Cf. 15:31-32 - "In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

Confession #3: Peter (continued)

- Where was His mission most clearly described?
 - Isaiah
 - "The Servant of YHWH"
 - And in the fourth of those songs, we learn that The Servant will lay down His life as a substitutionary sacrifice (Is. 53:4-6).
- Cf. Key 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."

Confession # 4: The Centurion

- The crescendo of Mark's gospel
- Mark 15:39 – "When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

A Summary

- So Mark presents Jesus to the Romans as Israel's divine Messiah, "the Servant of the Lord" that Isaiah had prophesied, who died as the ransom for their sins and was raised from the dead.

Discipleship

- Jesus was the Servant of YHWH.
- We are to follow Jesus.
- In fact, we may be called upon to walk the same kind of road that Jesus did.
- The way of humility, suffering, and possibly even death for Him.
- Cf. Mark 8:34-38; 10:42-45