



St. Mark the Evangelist with the Nile River and Alexandria, Egypt in the background.

St. Mark is holding his Gospel.

The lion which he is know for slaying is at his right foot.

The olive tree which he destroyed is at his left foot.

Lord, help me to follow in the footsteps of St. Mark and to fall in love with You completely, desiring only Your will in my life. Help me to hear your voice and to be guided by the Holy Spirit to do all that You ask of me.
Amen.

The Life Of St. Mark The Evangelist

John, known as Mark, was born in the city of Cyrene, in Pentapolis:

We recognize this area today as Libya, in Africa. John's parents, Aristobulus and Mary, were devoutly Jewish and were of the wealthy class. Aristobulus and his brother, Barnabas, were very successful farmers and had great wealth. When the area was attacked by Berbers and Ethiopians, the family lost all its wealth. Aristobulus and Barnabas moved their families to Cana, of Galilee, near Jerusalem. In Cana, Mary became a follower of Jesus as Jesus preached throughout Galilee. Her brother-in-law, Barnabas, became one of Jesus' disciples. (There is some confusion as to whether Mary was Barnabas' sister or sister-in-law.) Mary let her home become the local headquarters for Jesus and His disciples. (Acts 12:12) As John grew up in Palestine, he was called Mark. (John was his Hebrew name, Mark was his Roman name.) Mark's father's cousin was Simon Peter, Jesus' disciple. Mark spent a great deal of time with Peter, learning about Jesus and becoming familiar with His teachings. After Mark's father died, Mark spent more time with Peter. One source says Peter considered Mark his son, (I Peter 5:13) and Peter made sure Mark was educated. Mark studied the law, and the classics. He spoke Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. Mary's home is considered to be the first Christian Church. It was considered the holiest building in the Christian world.

Miracles performed by Mark:

*Mark and his father were threatened by 2 lions one day while they were walking along the River Jordan. Aristobulus tried to send Mark away, to save his life. But Mark refused to leave. He told his father that his God would save them. Mark yelled at the lions, asking the Lord to rent them asunder. The lions died instantly and Mark's father was so astounded that he and his brother began to learn about the teachings of Jesus. Mark's symbol, the winged lion, is based, in part, on this miracle.

*Another day Mark came upon a group of people who worshipped the moon and were praying to a very large olive tree. Mark told them that he would prove to them that the moon was a servant of his God, and that he, Mark, would cause the olive tree to collapse. He proceeded to pray to God to prove to the people that his God alone was the real God. At that point the sky darkened, the moon came out and spoke to the people, saying that he, the moon, was simply a servant of the real God. At that moment the tree fell over. The people were amazed, and afraid. They were also angry as their beloved tree was now dead. They grabbed Mark, beat him, and turned him over to Jews who were against Jesus. Mark was thrown in jail. During the night, in a dream, Mark saw Jesus talking to Peter about letting all those in prison go free. When he awoke, the door of his cell was open and he and all those in prison walked out. People who witnessed this believed that the deed was accomplished through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.

*Years later, when Mark was teaching the word of the Lord in Pentapolis, he healed the sick, cleansed lepers, and cast out numerous devils.

*In Alexandria, Mark healed a cobbler's hand by mixing dirt with his own spit, and spreading the mud on the injury that had been caused by an awl piercing the cobbler's hand.

Events with Mark and Jesus:

*Mark is believed to have been with Jesus in Cana when Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding celebration. It is thought that Mark was one of the men who poured the water as it turned to wine.

*Mark is believed to be the man who was carrying the jar of water that the two disciples saw when the disciples were looking for a place to prepare for the celebration of the Passover. Jesus had told the two disciples to follow the man with the jar of water, to the house he showed them, and to prepare the Passover meal, the Last Supper, there. It is believed that this was the home of Mary and Mark. (Mark 14:13-16) (Luke 22:10-13)

*It is believed that the disciples were in this home after the resurrection, when Jesus appeared in the room, having entered through locked doors.

*It is believed that Mark was among the 70 disciples who were touched by the Holy Spirit when Jesus ascended into heaven. (Acts 2:1-4)

Mark's work as a disciple of the Lord:

After Jesus ascended into heaven, Mark went with Peter, Barnabas and Paul preaching throughout the countryside and in the cities. (Acts 12:25) It is thought that Mark acted as Peter's interpreter. One night Peter had a vision where an angel of God told Peter that Alexandria, in Egypt, and the city of Rome were in terrible need of the word of God. These two cities were considered to be the most important cities in the ancient world. The two disciples went to Rome, and taught. In about 48 A.D., Peter sent Mark to Egypt to preach God's word. Mark was the first follower of Jesus to bring the word of Jesus to the cities of Egypt. He found that the inhabitants had sunken to a very low level, with their worship of various idols, and the building of many temples dedicated to their gods.

In Egypt, Mark began his teachings in the city where he was born, in Cyrene, of Pentapolis. He cured many ills, baptized many people, and taught everyone about the one true God, and his son, Jesus. After a few years, the Holy Ghost spoke to Mark and directed him to go to Alexandria to teach. Mark learned that the people of Alexandria studied the works of the great Greek philosophers but knew nothing of Jesus. As Mark taught them about God and Jesus, many in Alexandria asked to be baptized, and became followers of Jesus. Mark, as the first bishop of Alexandria, ordained his first convert, the cobbler he had healed, as the next bishop of Alexandria. He also ordained three priests and seven deacons in Alexandria.

Many non-believers in Alexandria were angry about the growth of the Christian group and began to conspire against Mark. Mark returned to Pentapolis and taught there for two years. He ordained more bishops, priests, and deacons. He longed for the group in Alexandria so he took a chance and returned to Alexandria to worship and teach. Upon his return to Alexandria, Mark was pleased to learn that the numbers of believers had grown, and a church had been built. But the non-believers were still angry about the growth of the followers of Jesus, and they searched for Mark. They found him in the new church, seized him, tied a rope around his neck and dragged him throughout town behind a horse. Mark prayed to God, thanking Him for the opportunity to suffer for God's holy name. Mark was thrown in prison for the night, where an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that his name was written in the holy book of heaven. Jesus appeared to Mark and called him the evangelist and chosen one. In the morning, Mark was again dragged through town behind a horse. He prayed to Jesus Christ saying, "I render my spirit into thy hands, O my God." With this prayer, Mark died. Mark's tormentors built a fire to burn his body but God sent a rain storm that quenched the flames. Mark's followers buried him in the church they had built. Mark was the first of the Galileans to be martyred in Jesus' name in Alexandria. Mark died on the 8th day before the kalends of May (The kalends means the first day of May.) according to the Roman calendar, or the 24th of Nisan (This is the 30 day period which begins part way through March and ends in April.) according to the calendar of the Hebrews. Mark's death occurred on April 25, 68 AD according to our calendar. The Christian church in Egypt is called Christian Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. (Copt means "Egypt".)

In 828 A.D. St. Mark's body was stolen by Italian sailors and was taken to Venice. His head was left behind and remained in the church in Alexandria. On June 24, 1968, the relics of St. Mark (his bones) were returned to Cairo, Egypt after eleven centuries in Venice, Italy. His sacred relics reside in his churches in Cairo and Alexandria.

Mark's Travels:

Mark was known to have traveled with Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. They taught about Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Seleucia, Salamis, Perga Pamphylia, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Colossae, Rome, and perhaps Venice. Mark also taught in Pentapolis and Alexandria, and other cities in Egypt.

Mark's Titles:

Over the years Mark has been known as St. Mark, The Evangelist, the Apostle, the Witness, and the Martyr.

Mark is the author of the earliest Gospel.

Mark's Gospel, thought to be the first of the Gospels, was written in Greek. Many scholars question whether it was actually written by Mark. Others believe that the Roman Christians approached Mark and asked him to write down the teachings of Peter. One source states that it was during his time teaching in Alexandria that Mark wrote the Gospel that is attributed to him. This puts the Gospel written in the middle to late 60's A.D. It is also thought that both Matthew and Luke included information from Mark's Gospel in their own Gospels. Mark's Gospel tells of the Jesus that Peter knew. One source says that Peter was pleased when he read Mark's story. Peter asked that the stories Mark had written be read at gatherings of Christians. Some scholars also believe Mark may have abridged Matthew's Gospel.

God our Father, You helped St. Mark the Evangelist with Your grace so that he could preach the Good News of Christ. Help us to know You so well that we may also preach the Good News. May you help us to know Christ well so that we may faithfully live our lives as followers of His word. Amen.



This is an example of a typical Coptic Cross.