

New Testament Survey:
The Gospel of Mark

Source: Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997.

Major themes of the Gospel

1. Mark is an “action” Gospel. Mark uses lots of action verbs. Also, Mark uses the word “immediately” (Greek “euthys”) 42 times.
2. Mark strikes a balance between Jesus’ divinity and His humanity. Mark uses the title “Christ” to refer to Jesus, but the title does not appear again until Peter’s confession in 8:29. Mark records the title “Son of God” in his first verse and in the centurion’s confession in 15:39. In between, Mark records Jesus as God’s “Son” at His baptism (1:11) and His transfiguration (9:7). Demons also call Jesus the “Son of God” (3:11, 5:7). Jesus calls Himself the “Son of Man” 13 times in this Gospel.
3. The Messianic Secret. It seems Jesus is constantly telling people not to tell anyone about Him. Jesus tells Peter and the disciples to tell no one He is the “Christ.” Interpretations of parables are for the disciples only (4:10-12). Miracles are to be kept between Jesus and the recipient (1:44, 5:18-19).
4. Disciples and Discipleship. The disciples do not fare well in Mark’s writing; they rarely understand the parables, they have little faith, and they fail to exorcise demons. Peter is recorded as denying Jesus, Judas as betraying Him, and, depending on the ending, even the women who steadfastly stand with Him in His darkest hour are too terrified to tell anyone of the resurrection.
5. Imminent Eschatology. Although Mark records few of Jesus’ sayings, he includes the eschatological discourse in chapter 13.
6. Message of Jesus as Good News. Mark introduces the term *euangelion*, Greek for “good news” and the term from which our word “gospel” derives.

Circumstances

Mark’s Gospel includes several clues as to its intended audience. Most of the Church Fathers believed the Gospel was written in Rome and records that he wrote the Gospel using Peter’s recollections. Mark uses Latin words (12:42), explains Jewish customs (handwashing, *Corban*), and includes several Aramaic transliterations.

If we believe Mark was the earliest Gospel, it must have been written before A.D. 62. We do not know where Peter was during the 40’s or 50’s. However, if both Peter and Paul were present in A.D. 60, then Luke may well have been there also and would have had access to Mark’s writings.

All the Church Fathers agree that the Gospel was written by John Mark, who is first mentioned (unfavorably) in Acts 13 and 15). Paul later reconciled with Mark and Barnabas (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark is mentioned in Church history as serving as Peter’s secretary. According to Church history, this fact came from John the Apostle.

The Ending?

There is manuscript evidence that Mark 16:9-20 may have been added after the book was first written. Most scholars believe these verses are not part of the original text. However, an examination of Scripture from numerous traditions shows the universal inclusion of these verses, and opinion is not unanimous in their exclusion. It is best to believe they are part of Holy Scripture; however, it is also advisable not to base key doctrines on their content unless the doctrines can be verified with other texts from elsewhere in Holy Scripture.

Outline

- I. Introduction: The Beginning of the Gospel (1:1-13)
 - A. John the Baptist's preparation of the way (1:1-8)
 - B. Jesus' Baptism (1:9-11): the Spirit descends and the Father speaks from heaven
 - C. Jesus' Temptation (1:12-13)
- II. The Ministry of Christ (1:14-8:30)
 - A. The Authority of Jesus and the Blindness of the Pharisees (1:14-3:6)
 - a. Introduction (1:14-20): Jesus calls the first disciples
 - b. Healing Miracles (1:21-45)
 - 1. Jesus casts out an unclean spirit (1:21-28)
 - 2. Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law (1:29-34)
 - 3. Jesus preaches in Galilee (1:35-39)
 - 4. Jesus heals a leper (1:40-45). This is the first time Jesus tells someone not to tell anyone about the miracle. The leper disobeys.
 - c. Controversy Stories (2:1-3:6)
 - 1. Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins and heals him (2:1-12)
 - 2. Jesus calls Levi (Matthew) and eats with him and his friends (2:13-17)
 - 3. The Pharisees question Jesus about fasting (2:18-22)
 - 4. The Pharisees question Jesus about picking grain on the Sabbath (2:23-28): Jesus pronounces He is Lord of the Sabbath
 - 5. Jesus heals a man with a withered hand in a synagogue on the Sabbath (3:1-6): the Pharisees begin to plot against Him
 - B. The Parables and Signs of Jesus and the Blindness of the World (3:7-6:6a)
 - a. Discipleship and Opposition (3:7-35)
 - 1. Jesus calls the 12 Apostles (3:13-19)
 - 2. Jesus' family tries to take Him home, fearing for His sanity (3:20-21)
 - 3. Jesus accused of consorting with Satan and speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (3:22-30)
 - 4. Jesus redefines His family (3:31-35)
 - b. Parables (4:1-34)
 - 1. Parable of the Sower (4:1-20)
 - 2. Parable of the Lamp under the Basket (4:21-25)
 - 3. Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26-29)
 - 4. Parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30-34)
 - c. More Dramatic Miracles (4:35-6:6a)
 - 1. Jesus calms the sea on the storm (4:35-41). See note below.
 - 2. Jesus heals the demon-possessed Gerasene (5:1-20)
 - 3. Jesus heals a woman of a blood discharge and raises Jairus' daughter from the dead (5:21-43). Jesus tells Jairus not to tell anyone, but everyone notices a dead girl walking around.
 - 4. Jesus faces hometown opposition (6:1-6)
 - C. Jesus' Ministry to Gentiles and the Blindness of the Disciples (6:6b-8:30)
 - a. More Mission, Opposition, and Miracles (6:6b-56)
 - 1. Jesus sends out the Apostles (6:7-13). The Apostles meet with great success on their first mission trip.

2. John the Baptist is killed by Herod at Salome's (really Herodias') request (6:14-29)
3. Jesus withdraws from Herod's territory, teaches the disciples, and feeds 5,000 men (plus women and children) with 5 loaves and 2 fish (6:30-44)
4. Jesus walks on the water (6:45-52). See note again.
5. Jesus heals in Gennesaret (6:53-56)
- b. Clean and Unclean: Withdrawal from Israel (7:1-8:21)
 1. The Pharisees challenge Jesus about ritual hand-washing before meals (7:12-23). Jesus responds by challenging the teachings on Corban and stating that what truly defiles a person comes from within.
 2. Jesus heals the Syrophenician woman's daughter (7:24-30).
 3. Jesus heals a deaf man (7:31-37)
 4. Jesus feeds the 4,000 men (plus women and children) with 7 loaves (8:1-10)
 5. The Pharisees demand a sign (8:11-13)
 6. The disciples misunderstand Jesus' teaching about the leaven of Pharisees and Herod (8:14-21)
- c. Physical and Spiritual Eyesight (8:22-30)
 1. Jesus heals the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26) and commands him to remain silent. People notice a blind man now sees.
 2. Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ (8:27-30). Jesus commands the disciples to tell no one of the confession.

III. The Passion of Christ (8:31-16:8)

A. Predictions of Death and the Meaning of Discipleship (8:31-10:52)

- a. Cross and Resurrection Foreshadowed (8:31-9:29)
 1. Jesus foretells His death and resurrection for the first time (8:31-9:2)
 2. The Transfiguration (9:2-13): Jesus, Elijah, and Moses.
 3. Jesus heals a boy of an unclean spirit (9:14-29)
- b. On True Servanthood (9:30-50)
 1. Jesus foretells His death and resurrection for the second time (9:30-32)
 2. Disciples argue over who is the greatest (9:33-37)
 3. John wants to destroy someone casting out demons (9:38-41)
 4. Overcoming temptation (9:42-50)
- c. Ministry in Judea in Light of the Cross (10:1-52)
 1. Jesus teaches about divorce (10:1-12)
 2. Jesus rebukes the disciples for preventing the children from coming to Him (10:13-16)
 3. The rich young man chooses riches over Jesus (10:17-31)
 4. Jesus foretells His death and resurrection for the third time (10:32-34)
 5. James and John's request to sit by Jesus in the kingdom (10:35-45)
 6. Jesus heals Bartimaeus (10:46-52)

B. Jesus and the Temple (11:1-13:37)

- a. Entry and Judgment (11:1-26)
 1. Jesus enters Jerusalem (11:1-11)
 2. Jesus curses the fig tree (11:12-14, 20-25)
 3. Jesus cleanses the Temple (11:15-19)
- b. Teaching and Debate (11:27-12:44)

1. The priests, scribes, and elder challenge Jesus' authority (11:27-33)
 2. Parable of the wicked tenants (12:1-12)
 3. Paying taxes to Caesar (12:13-17)
 4. Teachings of the resurrection: "whose wife is she?" (12:18-27)
 5. The Greatest Commandments (12:28-35)
 6. "Beware the scribes" (12:36-40)
 7. The widow's offering (12:41-44)
- c. Prediction of Destruction and Christ's Return (13:1-37)
- C. The Climax of Jesus' Life (14:1-16:8)
- a. Preparation for Suffering (14:1-72)
 1. Jesus' anointing at Bethany (14:1-9)
 2. Judas set to betray Jesus (14:10-11)
 3. The Last Passover of Jesus (14:12-21)
 4. Institution of Holy Communion (14:22-25)
 5. Jesus foretells Peter's denial (14:26-31)
 6. Jesus prays in Gethsemane (14:32-42)
 7. Jesus is betrayed and arrested (14:43-50)
 8. A young man's anecdote (14:51-52)
 9. Jesus before the Council of the priests (14:53-65)
 10. Peter denies Jesus (14:66-72)
 - b. Crucifixion (15:1-47)
 1. Jesus delivered to Pilate (15:1-5)
 2. Pilate delivers Jesus to crucifixion (15:6-15)
 3. Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers (15:16-20)
 4. Jesus is crucified (15:21-32)
 5. Jesus' death (15:33-40). The centurion confesses Jesus is the Son of God.
 - c. Resurrection (16:1-8)
- IV. Ending (16:9-20)

Note on Sea of Galilee: This body of water — in reality a large lake — is about 13 miles long from north to south and about 13 miles wide at the widest point. The most interesting point about the geography of the Sea of Galilee is the heights involved: The lake lies roughly 600 feet below sea level, and the Golan Heights tower nearly 2,700 feet above the water. In the spring, strong winds suddenly swoop down from the mountains and churn the lake into a raging cauldron, causing huge waves.