

The Gospel of Mark

Author

The letter itself like the other gospel composers doesn't identify its writer. However there is external evidence that names John Mark of the New Testament as its author. This is the same Mark that accompanied and then abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (12:12, 25; 13:5, 13). Paul reaffirmed his value some twenty years later (2 Tim. 4:11). Peter identifies Mark as his companion in his First Epistle (1 Peter 5:13).

In Ecclesiastical History 3.39.15 Eusebius quotes an earlier writer's work (which is not extant) identifying Mark as a Gospel writer. "Mark, who had indeed been Peter's interpreter, accurately wrote as much as he remembered, yet not in order, about that which was either said or did by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but later, as I said, Peter, who would make the teachings anecdotally but not exactly an arrangement of the Lord's reports, so that Mark did not fail by writing certain things as he recalled. For he had one purpose, not to omit what he heard or falsify them.

The Anti-Marcionite prologue of Mark makes the following statements concerning the author. *"Mark made his assertion, who was also named stubby-fingers, on account that he had in comparison to the length of the rest of his body shorter fingers. He was a disciple and interpreter of Peter, whom he followed just as he heard him report."*

Recipients

Internal evidence suggests a gentile audience and that as possibly Rome. The author works to explain Jewish customs (7:2,4; 15:42). The author translates Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41). He also uses Latin words such as "executioner," (6:27) suggesting a Roman audience. Mark also wrote with a special interest in commitment through suffering (8:34-38; 13:9-13). Mark's interest in perseverance becomes important when one considers that during the 60's Christians in Rome experienced persecution.

Concerning external evidence, the Anti-Marcionite Prologue of Mark suggests a Italian audience... *"When he was requested at Rome by the brethren, he briefly wrote this gospel in parts of Italy."*

Place and Date

While not exclusively held, Mark has been dated to the 60's. Several reasons are given for this dating. First, Mark emphasis on persecution fits well with the citizens of Rome during the 60's. Second, early writers¹ indicate that Mark wrote after the death of Peter

¹ External evidence varies. While some of the writers indicate that Mark wrote after the death of Peter (Anti-Marcionite Prologue and Irenaeus) others indicate that Mark wrote his gospel while Peter was still alive (Clement

(64-67AD). Third, his reference to Jerusalem without mentioned its fall in 70AD indicates a date prior to 70 AD. All this information lends to a mid 60's dating of Mark's Gospel.

1 Peter 5:13 mentions Mark as a resident of Rome. Given that 1 Peter was written in the 60's and for that matter also Mark, it is easy to conclude that Mark wrote from Rome. As mentioned above, The Anti-Marcionite Prologue indicates that the letter was written from the "*parts of Italy.*"

Purpose

Mark did not write with the same purpose as Luke. Whereas Luke wrote with one identified purpose to set in order the historical accounting of Jesus, Mark did not write with chronological order in mind. Eusebius, as noted above, quoted Papias when he wrote "*Mark, who had indeed been Peter's interpreter, accurately wrote as much as he remembered, yet not in order, about that which was either said or did by the Lord.*" From the internal evidence of Mark it can be gleaned that he wrote a more pastoral letter. He wrote to encourage the believers in Rome to maintain faith in the Savior during difficult times. His call to true discipleship that expects persecution provided a necessary encouragement for the Roman Christians in the 60's AD. Mark also stressed the servant attitude of Jesus, constantly showing him moving quickly from one scene to another healing and ministering all the way. His main statement in Mark 10:45 provides an excellent summary of Mark's teaching. "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*"

Message

God's Servant bore our sufferings on the cross providing Himself as a ransom for many.

Theme

God's Suffering Servant

of Alexandria and Origen). Taking both of these statements into account, Mark could have starting writing his Gospel during the Peter's lifetime and then finished after his death. With this in mind many hold to a mid 60's dating of Mark.

Theological Outline of Mark

- I. Introduction of God's Servant 1:1-13**
- II. Early Galilean Ministry 1:14-28**
 - A. Christ's Authority to Heal 1:29-2:12
 - B. Christ's Teaching of True Religion 2:13-3:6
- III. Later Galilean Ministry 3:6-35**
 - A. Transitional Statement 3:7-12
 - B. Humanity's Relationship to the God's Message 4:1-34
 - C. Christ's Authority over the Supernatural 4:35-5:43
- IV. Christ's Teaching Concerning Discipleship 6:1-8:26**
 - A. The Cost of Discipleship 6:1-32
 - B. Christ's Care for His Followers 6:33-56
 - C. Christ's Teaching concerning Defilement 7:1-23
 - D. Man's Need for Persistent Faith 7:24-8:26
 - E. Man's Proper Confession of Christ 8:27-9:13
 - F. Christ's Strategy for Securing Spiritual Power 9:14-32
 - G. Christ's Strategy for Faithful Service 9:33-50
 - H. Christ's Value of the Marriage 10:1-12
 - I. Man's Need for Humble Faith 10:13-31
 - J. Christ's Model of Selfless Service 10:32-52
- V. Christ's Ministry in Jerusalem 11:1-13:37**
 - A. Christ's Rightful Place to Receive Worship 11:1-12:44
 - B. Christ's Warnings of His Return 13:1-37
- VI. Christ's Passion Week 14:1-16:20**
 - A. Christ's Unique Place in Worship 14:1-9
 - B. Christ's Faithful Love for His Followers 14:10-42
 - C. Irrational Rejections of God 14:43-15:21
 - D. Christ's Sacrifice for Sin 15:22-47
 - E. Christ's Victory over Sin 16:1-13
 - F. Christ's Commission for Service 16:14-20