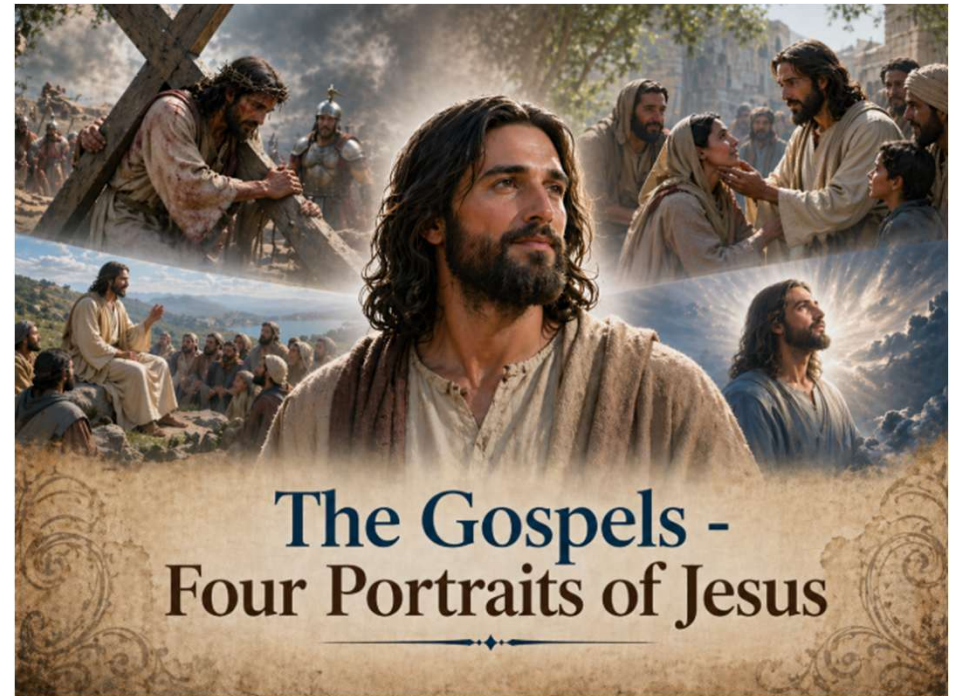


Week 2: The Gospel of Mark

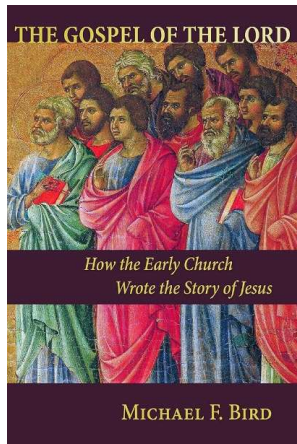
Phillip Cornwell

Eastside Church of Christ

When you think of the Gospel of Mark, what comes to mind first and why?



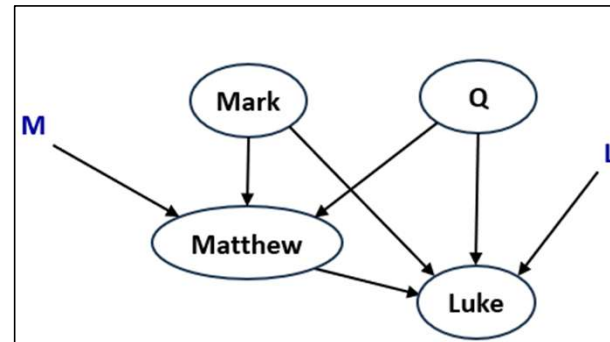
Last week we started this series on the Gospels



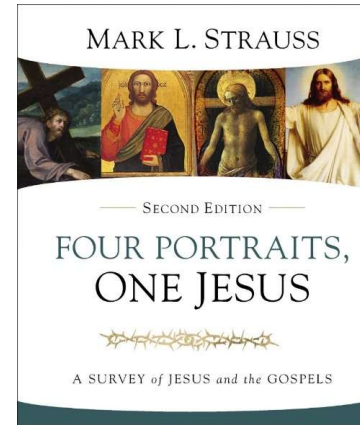
Genre and history



The "other" Gospels

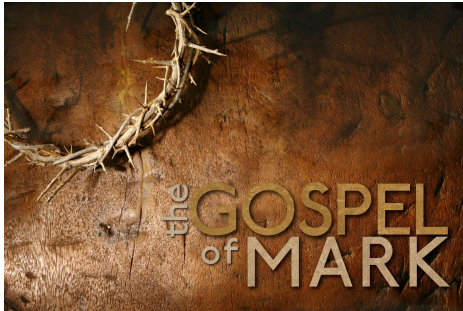


Synoptic problem



High level comparison

This evening, I will present an overview of the book of Mark



Background




Literary characteristics




Overview and application

When reading a book of the Bible, you should always ask the following four questions

Who is the author? (most likely)  **John Mark**

When was it written? (most likely)  **AD 60-70**

Who was it written to?  **Gentile Christians in Rome**

What is the book's main purpose? 

- To present Jesus as the Son of God (1:1) and the suffering servant (10:45)
- To emphasize discipleship through suffering

Let's start by discussing the author – John Mark

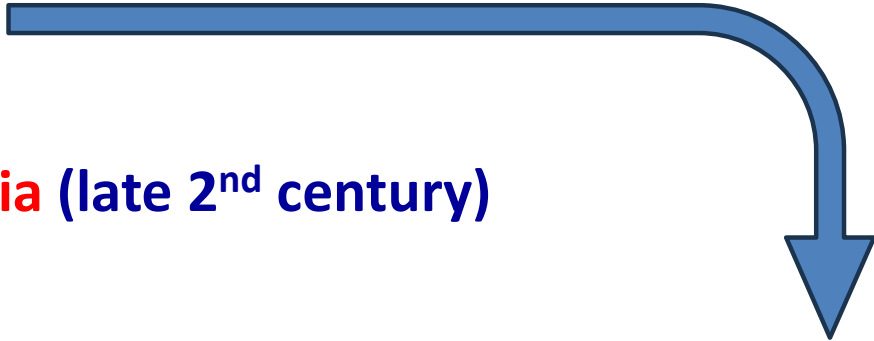
Affirmed by early church fathers:

Papias (120-130 AD)

Irenaeus (180 AD)

Clement of Alexandria (late 2nd century)

Tertullian (200 AD)



“Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord, though not in order.”

There is also some internal evidence for this Gospel reflecting Peter's eyewitness perspective

Contains vivid details that suggest eyewitness reminiscence, such as:

- Specific times of day (e.g., Mark 1:35, 4:35)
- Concrete details not found in other Gospels (e.g., “green grass” in Mark 6:39)

It sometimes casts Peter in a harsh light (e.g., Mark 8:33 – “Get behind me, Satan” and 14:66-72 - “I don’t know this man”), which makes sense if it reflects Peter’s honest testimony rather than later attempts to idealize Peter.

John Mark is associated with Peter – in 1 Pet 5:13 he refers to “Mark, my son.”

What do we know about John Mark?

Likely the son of a wealthy woman

Acts 12:12 “When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.”

Cousin of Barnabas

Col 4:10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)

What do we know about John Mark

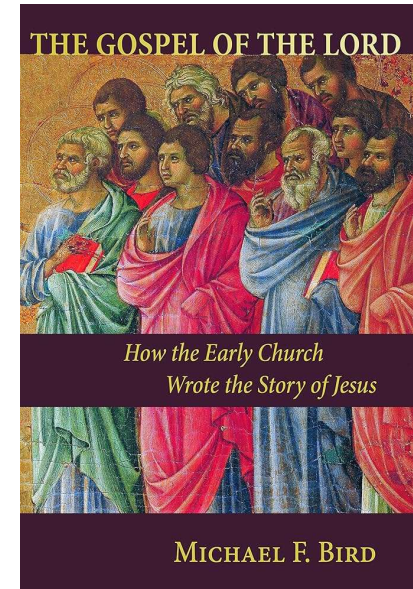
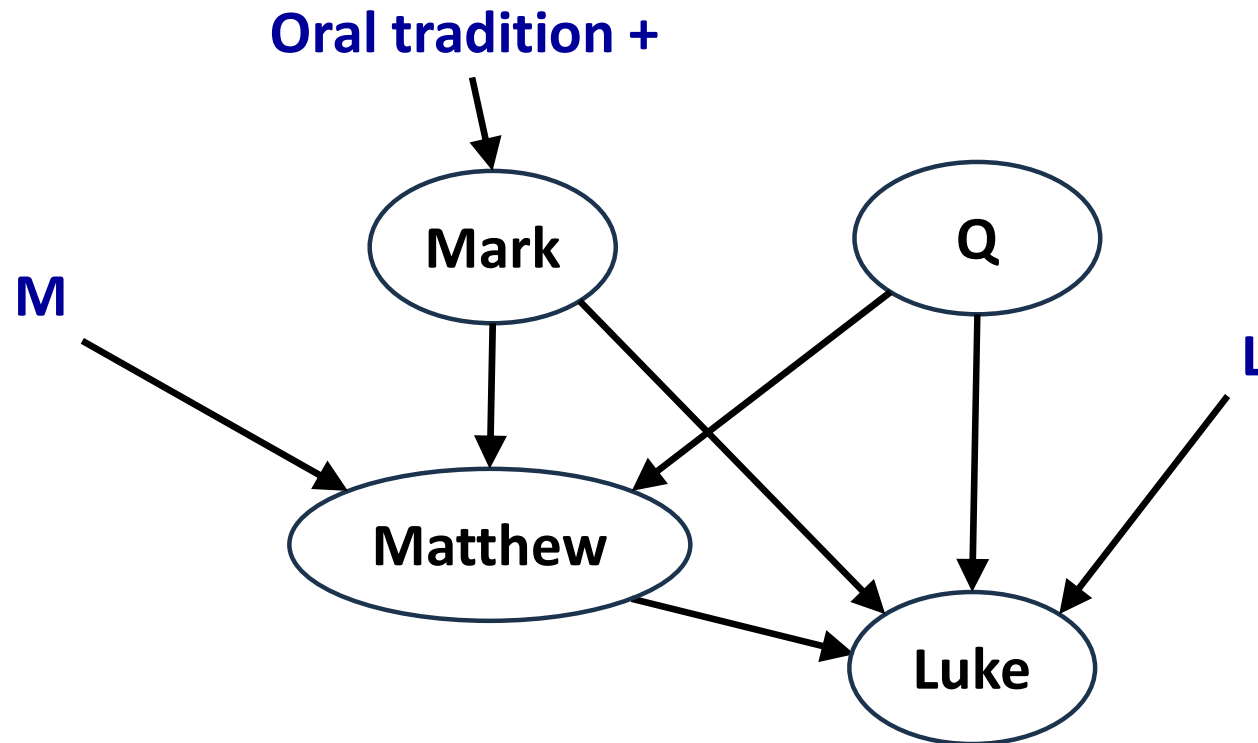
Ministry with Paul and Barnabas

- Went on 1st missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 12:25), but left (Acts 13:13)
 - **Acts 12:25** ²⁵ When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.
 - **Acts 13:13** ¹³ From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.
- Caused a rift between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:37-39): Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus; Paul took Silas elsewhere.

Later reconciled with Paul (**Col 4:10 (previous slide), 2 Tim 4:11**)

- 2 Tim 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

Last week I discussed the literary dependence of the synoptic Gospels, so today I'll discuss why I think Mark was written first



Based on your reading of the Synoptic Gospels, what are some reasons you think Mark might have been written first?

Let's look at some evidence for Markan priority

Category	Evidence	Why It Supports Markan Priority
Length	Mark is the shortest Gospel (16 chapters). Almost all of Mark is in Matthew and/or Luke.	Easier to explain Matthew & Luke adding to Mark than Mark cutting large sections (e.g., Sermon on the Mount, birth narratives).
Content Order	Mark provides the basic sequence of events. When Matthew and Luke differ, Mark usually matches one of them.	Suggests Mark was the structural source both used.
Style & Grammar	Mark's Greek is rougher, more colloquial, with redundancies and awkward wording.	Matthew and Luke often smooth out Mark's language; unlikely Mark would "roughen" their polished Greek.

Evidence for Markan priority (cont.)

Category	Evidence	Why It Supports Markan Priority
Vivid Details	Mark includes eyewitness-like touches: green grass (6:39), Jesus' emotions (3:5), Aramaic words (Talitha koum, Ephphatha, Abba).	Later writers tend to shorten or omit such details, not invent them.
Harder Readings	Mark records more difficult/embarrassing details: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus' family thinks he's "out of his mind" (3:21).• Peter rebuked as "Satan" (8:33).• Naked young man flees (14:51-52).	Scribes and later evangelists would be more likely to omit or soften these than create them.
Christology	Mark lacks birth narratives and post-resurrection appearances (ending at 16:8 in the earliest manuscripts).	Fits an earlier stage of Gospel writing, before later expansions in Matthew, Luke, and John.

There is something called the “messianic secret” in Mark

The “messianic secret” refers to Jesus’ repeated commands in Mark for people/demons not to reveal His identity as the Messiah or Son of God until the right time.

Let's look at some examples

1. Commands to demons

- **Mark 1:34** – “He would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.”
- **Mark 3:11-12** – Unclean spirits cry out, “You are the Son of God,” but He orders them not to make Him known.

2. Commands to those he heals

- **Mark 1:43-44** – To the cleansed leper: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone.”
- **Mark 5:43** – To Jairus’s household after raising his daughter: “He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this.”
- **Mark 7:36** – To those who witnessed the healing of the deaf man: “Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone.”

Why do you think Jesus would tell people/demons not to spread the news?

Let's look at some examples

3. Commands to the disciples

- **Mark 8:29-30 – After Peter confesses Him as the Christ, “Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.”**
- **Mark 9:9 – After the Transfiguration, “Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”**

Climax of the Secret

- **Mark 15:39 – At the crucifixion, the Roman centurion said: “Surely this man was the Son of God!”**
- **This is the first explicit human confession of Jesus as God's Son in Mark.**
- **The irony: the “secret” is revealed not in glory, but in apparent defeat.**

Why the messianic secret in Mark? Here are some theories.

1. Avoiding misunderstanding

- Many Jews expected a political/military Messiah to overthrow Rome.
- Jesus' true mission was to suffer and die (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).
- Revealing Himself too soon could fuel wrong expectations.

2. Timing of revelation

- “Messiah” can only be understood in light of the cross and the resurrection.
- Until then, public declarations would be premature.
- This is why at the cross (15:39), the secret is finally “out.”

3. Mark's literary strategy

- Creates irony: readers know Jesus is the Son of God, but contemporaries don't.
- Builds tension leading to the climactic confession by the centurion.

4. Historical/practical reason

- Publicity could provoke early confrontation with authorities.

Let's look at some literary features of the book of Mark

Immediately (εὐθύς)

“Three”

Present-tense verbs

Intercalation

Irony

εὐθύς (euthys) – Immediately, at once, straightaway (over 40 times in Mark)

Mark 11

- 11:2 – “Just as you enter **(Immediately)** upon entering)... you will find...”
- 11:3 – “will send it back shortly **(Immediately)** he will send it back...”

Mark 14

- 14:43 – “Just as **(Immediately)**, while he was still speaking, Judas came...”
- 14:45 – “Going at once **(Immediately)** Judas went up to Jesus...”
- 14:72 – “And **immediately** the rooster crowed a second time.”

Mark 15

- 15:1 – “**Immediately**, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation...”

- 10:52 – “**Immediately** he received his sight...”

- 6:54 – “As soon as **(Immediately)** the people recognized him.”

- 4:29 – “When the grain is ripe, **(immediately)** he puts in the sickle.”

The narrator uses present-tense verbs to describe past actions – a Greek idiom known as the *historical present* (151 times in Mark)

It is characteristic of a less polished narrative Greek (the author probably spoke Greek as a 2nd language)

It gives the narrative a vivid and realistic feel, like a newscaster giving an on-the-spot report

The account of Jesus calming the sea if translated literally:

“Leaving the crowd, they are taking him along with them in the boat ... There is arising a fierce gale of wind ...and they are waking him and saying to him ...” Mark 4:36-38

Mark likes sets of three



Jesus predicts his death 3 times (and follow-up)



3 events with just Peter, James, and John



3 boat scenes illustrating the disciples' lack of faith



Jesus' 3 prayers at Gethsemane and disciples sleeping



Pilate's 3 questions



Peter's 3 denials



3 groups (passersby, leaders, criminals) mocking Jesus

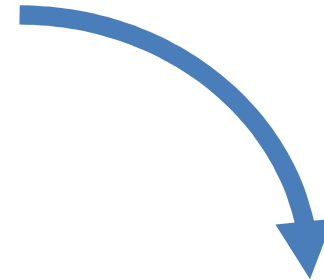
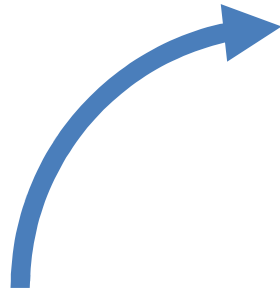


"After 3 days" resurrection

Three cycles of events in Mark (from Mark Strauss' book)

Jesus predicts his death

1. 8:31-32
2. 9:31-32
3. 10:32-34



Jesus follows with teaching about servanthood and cross-bearing discipleship

1. Take up your cross: 8:34-38
2. The first shall be last: 9:35-37
3. Servant leadership: 10:42-45



Climax

“For even the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”
(Mark 10:45)



Each time the disciples misunderstand or respond with pride/selfishness

1. Peter rebukes Jesus: 8:32-33
2. Debate over who is the greatest: 9:33-34
3. Chief seats in the kingdom: 10:35-41

Mark likes to use a literary device called an “intercalation” (often nicknamed a “Markan Sandwich”)

Definition:

Intercalation is a story-within-a-story structure in which Mark begins one narrative, interrupts it with another, and then returns to finish the first.

Purpose:

The middle story often interprets or sheds light on the outer story.

The two narratives are meant to be read together, creating theological emphasis and irony.

Let's look at some examples of intercalation in Mark

The Beelzebul controversy: Jesus rejected by his "own" (3:20-35)

Jesus' family
tries to seize
Him, thinking
He is "out of
His mind."
(3:20-21)

The scribes
accuse Him of
being
possessed by
Beelzebul.
(3:22-30)

His family
arrives; Jesus
redefines
family as
those who do
God's will.
(3:31-35)

→ **Meaning: Both Jesus' family and the scribes misunderstand who He is. True family is defined by doing God's will.**

Let's look at some examples of intercalation in Mark

Jairus's Daughter and the Bleeding Woman (Mark 5:21-43)

Jairus begs
Jesus to heal
his dying
daughter.
(5:21-24)

A woman with
a flow of
blood touches
Jesus and is
healed.
(5:25-34)

News arrives
the girl has
died; Jesus
raises her.
(5:35-43)

- **Meaning:** The woman's healing highlights faith and prepares for the raising of Jairus's daughter. Faith trusts Jesus even when hope seems gone.

Let's look at some examples of intercalation in Mark

Mission of the Twelve & Herod's Banquet (Mark 6:7-30)

Jesus sends
the Twelve
out to preach
and heal
(6:7-13)


Herod kills
John the
Baptist
(6:14-29)

The apostles
return and
report to
Jesus
(6:30)

- **Meaning:** The mission of the Twelve is interrupted by John's death, showing that proclaiming the kingdom involves both mission and suffering.

Let's look at some examples of intercalation in Mark

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree & Cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:12-21)



Jesus curses a barren fig tree (11:12-14)

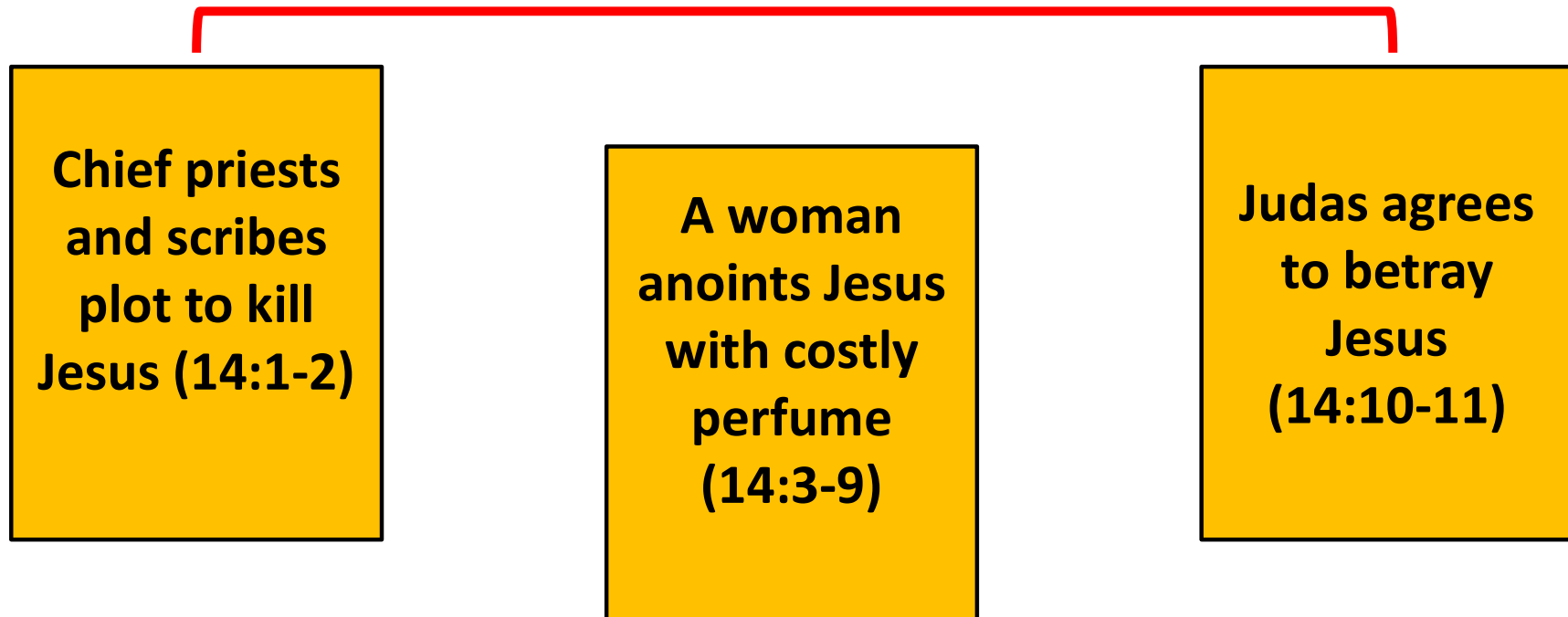
Jesus cleanses the temple, driving out buyers and sellers (11:15-19)

The fig tree is withered from the roots (11:20-21)

→ The fig tree symbolizes the temple's fruitlessness. The cleansing shows God's judgment on empty worship.

Let's look at some examples of intercalation in Mark

Plot Against Jesus, Anointing, Judas' Betrayal (Mark 14:1-11)



- The woman's devotion is framed by plots of betrayal, highlighting the contrast between true love for Jesus and rejection of Him.

Let's look at some examples of intercalation in Mark

Peter's Denial Contrasted with Jesus' Trial (Mark 14:53-72)

Jesus taken to
the high
priest; Peter
follows
(14:53-54)

Jesus is
interrogated,
condemned,
beaten
(14:55-65)

Peter denies
Jesus three
times
(14:66-72)

→ **Meaning: Mark contrasts Jesus' faithful witness with Peter's denial.**

The whole book can be seen as one large intercalation

Jesus revealed as the Son of God

**The beginning of
the good news
about Jesus the
Messiah, the Son of
God. (1:1)**

**The rest of the
book shows
this through
His words and
actions.**

**And when the
centurion, who stood
there in front of Jesus,
saw how he died, he
said, "Surely this man
was the Son of God!"
(15:39)**

Note: Jesus' identity is most fully understood at the cross.

Irony is a striking feature of the Gospel of Mark. Here is an example.

The demons recognize Jesus, but the disciples don't

- **Mark 1:24 – A demon cried out: “I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”**
- **Mark 3:11 – “Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God.’”**
- **Meanwhile, the disciples repeatedly fail to understand who Jesus is (e.g., Mark 4:41; 6:52).**

→ Irony: Those who oppose Jesus (demons) acknowledge Him correctly, while His closest followers remain clueless.


Here is a summary of some irony in Mark

Theme	Example	Irony
Outsiders “get it”	Demons, Centurion	Insiders fail to understand, enemies confess truth
Misunderstanding Jesus	Family thinks He’s crazy; Disciples seek greatness	Messiah is misunderstood by His own
Mockery speaks truth	“King of the Jews” at crucifixion	True kingship revealed in humiliation
Apparent defeat = victory	Cross (15:39)	Death reveals Jesus as Son of God
Mission failure → God’s success	Women silent at the tomb	The Gospel still spreads

Mark has a relatively simple structure


- I. Prologue (1:1-13)**
- II. Ministry in Galilee (1:14-8:26)**
- III. Turning Point – Peter’s confession and the way to the cross (8:27-10:52)**
- IV. Passion week in Jerusalem (11:1-15:47)**
- V. Resurrection (16:1-8 or 16:1-20)**

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- John the Baptist, Jesus’ baptism, temptation.
- Immediate identification of Jesus as Son of God.

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- V. Resurrection (16:1-8 or 16:1-20)

- Teaching, healings, exorcisms.
- Growing popularity and opposition.
- Key stories: healing of the paralytic, calming the storm, feeding the 5,000.

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V. Resurrection (16:1-8 or 16:1-20)

- Peter declares Jesus as Messiah.
- Jesus teaches about suffering and discipleship.
- Transfiguration and the road to Jerusalem.


Mark has a relatively simple structure

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- V. Resurrection (16:1-8 or 16:1-20)



- **Triumphal entry.**
- **Conflict with Jewish leaders.**
- **Last Supper, Gethsemane, betrayal, trial, crucifixion.**

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- V. Resurrection (16:1-8 or 16:1-20) 

- Women at the tomb.
- Earliest manuscripts end at 16:8—abrupt, perhaps intentional to provoke response.
- Later addition includes appearances and Great Commission.

There are good reasons to doubt that Mark 16:9–20 was part of the original ending of Mark

Evidence Type	Issues with 16:9-20
Manuscripts	Not present in oldest, best copies
Church Fathers	Eusebius & Jerome note that it's missing in most copies
Style & Vocabulary	Different from the rest of Mark
Multiple Endings	Several endings exist, showing uncertainty
Literary Flow	Awkward transition; Mary Magdalene reintroduced
Theological Fit	Ending at 16:8 matches Mark's themes of mystery and awe. The reader must decide how to respond to this proclamation.

- **Most scholars agree 16:9-20 was not part of Mark's original Gospel, but was added early (2nd century) to provide resurrection appearances.**
- **The longer ending is still valuable as early Christian testimony, but it likely doesn't come from Mark himself.**

Mark often highlights Jesus' and others' emotions in especially vivid ways

Anger/indignation



Mark 3:5 — ⁵ He looked around at them in **anger** and, **deeply distressed** at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.”

Mark 10:14 — ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was **indignant**. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, ...

Mark 11:15–17 — Jesus cleanses the temple; **anger** is strongly implied

Compassion



Mark 1:41 — ⁴¹ Jesus was **indignant** [many manuscripts have **compassion**]. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”

Mark 6:34 — ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had **compassion** on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Mark 8:2 — ² “I have **compassion** for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat.

Mark often highlights Jesus' and others' emotions in especially vivid ways

Love

Mark 10:21 — ²¹ Jesus looked at him and **loved** him (the rich young ruler).

Amazement

Mark 6:6 — ⁶ He was **amazed** at their (the people of Nazareth) lack of faith.

For other people being amazed see 1:22, 1:27, 2:12, 5:20, 5:42, 7:37, 10:24, 10:26, 11:18, 12:17, 15:5, 15:44.

Distress/sorrow



Mark 3:5 — ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, **deeply distressed** at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.”

Mark 14:33-34 — ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be **deeply distressed** and **troubled**. ³⁴ “My soul is **overwhelmed with sorrow** to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

Mark often highlights Jesus' and others' emotions in especially vivid ways

Exasperation, deep emotional burden, or weary frustration

Mark 4:40 — ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? **Do you still have no faith?**”

Mark 7:34 — ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a **deep sigh** said to him, “*Ephphathas!*” (which means “Be opened!”).

Mark 8:12 — ¹² He **sighed deeply** and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.”

Mark 9:19 — ¹⁹ “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? **How long shall I put up with you?**”

Mark 8:17-21 — “Do you not yet perceive or understand?... Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?... **Do you not yet understand?**”

Mark emphasizes emotions for a variety of reasons

Why do you think Mark so vividly portrays Jesus' emotions?

Humanity of Jesus: He isn't detached — He feels deeply.

Authenticity: Vivid emotions fit with Mark's 'eyewitness detail' style.

Theological Point: The Son of God truly enters human experience, sharing our sorrows and passions (cf. Isa. 53:3).

Discipleship lesson: Following Jesus involves emotional investment, not detached religion.

One of Mark's main portraits of Jesus is as the son of God

Mark 1:1 — “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, **the Son of God.**”

This is Mark's opening thesis statement.

Mark 1:11 — At Jesus' baptism: “You are my **beloved Son**; with you I am well pleased.”

Mark 3:11 — Unclean spirits fall down before him and say, “You are the **Son of God.**”

Mark 5:7 — The Gerasene demoniac cries out, “Jesus, **Son of the Most High God...**”

Mark 9:7 — At the transfiguration: “This is my **beloved Son**; listen to him.”

Mark 14:61–62 — Before the high priest, Jesus is asked if he is the Christ, the **Son of the Blessed One**, and Jesus answers, “**I am.**”

This is one of the climactic revelations.

Mark 15:39 — The centurion at the cross says, “Truly this man was **the Son of God.**”

This is hugely important because the confession comes **at the cross.**

Mark also shows the reader who Jesus is through what Jesus does (healings, exorcisms, authority over nature, authority to forgive sins, authority over death, authority in teaching)

Mark also presents Jesus as a suffering servant

Mark 8:31 — Jesus begins to teach that the Son of Man **must suffer many things**, be rejected, killed, and rise again.

Mark 9:31 — “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him...”

Mark 10:33–34 — Jesus predicts in detail his suffering, condemnation, mockery, flogging, death, and resurrection.

Mark 10:45 — “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but **to serve**, and to **give his life as a ransom for many.**”

Mark 14–15 — the whole Passion narrative. Jesus is betrayed, abandoned, mocked, beaten, condemned, and crucified. The narrative itself powerfully presents him as the one who suffers obediently.

Mark devotes the largest percentage of his Gospel to the arrest, trial, and crucifixion (10.5%) vs 7.9% (Matthew), 6.4% (Luke), 8.8% (John)

Discussion

What is one thing that you have learned in this class or one thing that stood out to you about Mark's portrait of Jesus?

How does Mark's portrait of Jesus call us to live?

There are several key takeaways from the book of Mark

Who is Jesus?

- The Son of God
 - The suffering servant
- } **The powerful Son of God is revealed most fully in the path of suffering and service**

What does it mean to follow Him?

- Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow Him.
- Mark's Jesus calls not just for belief but for radical discipleship.

Are we willing to follow a crucified Messiah?

- Especially relevant for persecuted or suffering believers.

Not a Gospel of comfort but of challenge and hope.

I'd like to close with one of my favorite stories in Mark 1:40-45

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand, **touched him**, and said, ‘I am willing; be clean.’ ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.

In Mark, Jesus’ compassion is personal, not abstract. He touches, takes people aside, speaks tenderly, and restores dignity. He heals not only physically, but emotionally and socially.

Homework

Read or listen to Matthew this week (~2-2.5 hours or 25-30 minutes per day for 5 days)

- Look for times Matthew says “This was to fulfill ...”
- Look for Jesus as the New Moses
- Look for discussions on the Kingdom of Heaven. What is it like? How do people respond to it?

Questions?