



Bible Readers Club

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Week

22

Mark 1-16

Dear Friends,

Mark has been called “The Essential Gospel,” and for good reason.

It came first. Scholars now almost all agree that Mark was the first of the God-inspired accounts of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection to be written. Matthew and Luke (the other two “Synoptic Gospels” – which means “with the same eye” and refers to their striking similarities) probably had access to copies of Mark’s account when they composed their own.

It emphasizes action. While the other Gospel writers take time and organize their writing to bring out various meanings of Jesus life—His Jewish context, His universal relevance, His cosmic significance, etc.—Mark tends simply to point to Jesus’ words and actions and let them speak for themselves. So, Mark’s Gospel is shorter in length than the others. Almost all of his sentences begin with “and,” and one of his favorite words is “immediately.” Thus, he keeps things moving from action to action at the urgent pace of a 1st-century chase scene... “*And immediately*” (41 times). Little details along the way also give readers a sense of the eyewitness accounts about Jesus shared in an oral culture that eventually became the Gospel of Mark.

The writer of this Gospel is unknown, but early in church history Mark was attributed to John Mark who was a companion of Paul (Colossians 4:10) and Peter (1 Peter 13). Many believe that it is the Apostle Peter whose authority and witness stand behind this account written just after

Peter's death especially for the Church in Rome suffering persecution under Emperor Nero. It reminded Christians, whose faith was a serious risk, that the Jesus who calls believers to follow Him is not only the Kingly Messiah but also the Suffering Servant.

One intriguing aspect of Mark is that Jesus is found frequently telling people to keep quiet about his identity as Israel's Messiah. This odd reality is called "The Messianic Secret," and it makes sense when we consider that though Jesus knew Himself to be the "Anointed One" of God who had come to save His people He also knew how people misunderstood that title. They thought Messiah would be a military leader whose unrivalled divine force would mow down Israel's pagan opponents. Jesus was the Messiah, but not like that. So he told people not to broadcast His true identity too loudly or widely.

There are various ways to understand the structure of the Gospel of Mark. One is to follow Jesus' geographical movement as He announces the coming of God's Kingdom, reveals the surprising nature of God's Kingdom, demonstrates the supernatural power of God's Kingdom and does the work of God's Kingdom.

1. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (1:1-13)
2. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (1:14-6:29)
3. Jesus' Withdrawal from Galilee (6:30-9:32)
4. Jesus' Final Ministry in Galilee (9:33-50)
5. Jesus' Ministry in Judea and Perea (10)
6. Jesus' Suffering and Death in Jerusalem (11-15)
7. Jesus' Resurrection (16)

May God bless you as you richly as you read the oldest, essential, action-oriented account of the life of Jesus—Israel's Messiah, God's Son, and our Lord and Savior.

- Pastor Jay