

*All Nations Biblical Study Center*  
*The Life of Jesus: The Synoptic Gospels I*  
*SPRING 2010*  
*Class 4*

***An Introduction to The Gospel of Mark***

**I. Authorship**

Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome attest that John Mark was the author of this Gospel. John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) and son of a woman named Mary who lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). He assisted Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but abandoned the mission in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13). When Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again on a missionary journey, the disagreement between him and Paul was so sharp that they parted company (Acts 15:36-41). John Mark had a close connection to Peter and was with him in Rome when I Peter was penned (I Peter 5:13). In Paul's later ministry John Mark would once more assist him and be useful to him (Col. 4:10-11, 2 Tim. 4:11, Philemon 24). He was with Paul during his first imprisonment. During Paul's second imprisonment, Paul requested that Timothy bring John Mark to him in Rome.

**II. Purpose**

The first line of a book in antiquity was called an *incipit* and it functioned as the *title*.

The Roman Emperor was called "the Son of God."

Jesus is called the Son of God by Himself, unclean spirits, Peter and the Roman Centurion.

The Son of Man is also important terminology in Mark. There are two images of the "Son of Man": one of Isaiah's *Suffering Servant* and another from the book of *Daniel*.

It is interesting to compare the theme of Mark with Isaiah 52:7-10, "<sup>7</sup> *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces*

*peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." <sup>8</sup> Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."* Immediately after these verses, in 52:13-53:12, is the Fourth Servant Song, with the theme of the Suffering Servant.

### **III. Audience**

The Gospel of Mark was written to a *suffering/persecuted* church.

Mark's distinction of the *Syro-Phoenician woman* would be understood by *the Romans*.

Mark mentions *Simon of Cyrene*, who was the father of *Alexander* and *Rufus*. He was most likely a member of the *Roman* church (see Romans 16:13).

### **IV. Date**

### **V. Unique Features**

- A. The Present Tense (The Historical Present) is used *151 times* and magnifies intensity.
- B. The Greek word *εὐθὺς* (*immediately*) is used *47 times* and is dramatic.
- C. Aramaic and Translations.
- D. Latinisms.
- E. Explanation of Jewish customs.

## **F. Structure and Literary Patterns**

- a. Mark contains *661 verses*.
- b. There are only *2 unique pericopes* in Mark.
- c. When Mark shows variation from Matthew and Luke, he gives greater detail.

## **G. Outlining the Gospel of Mark**

A Simple Outline of Mark's Gospel, according to Neal Flanagan, is as follows:

Part One: Mark 1:1-8:29. The central question in this part of Mark is "Who then is this . . . ?" with reference to Jesus' identity. In 8:29, Peter answers this question with, "You are *the Christ*." This is a turning point in Mark.

Part Two: Mark 8:30-16:20. The central question in this second part of Mark is "What kind of Messiah?" We see from this point on that Jesus is the Suffering Servant. All of this leads to the Roman Centurion's declaration, "Truly this man was the *Son of God*." The Son of Man imagery takes on new meaning with the resurrection of Jesus.