

Note

Mark – Part 1 of 1

Summary

Mark - Part 1 of 12

The book of Mark is the shortest and faster paced book of the Gospel. The frequent use of words such as ‘immediately’ and ‘soon’ sets a sense of urgency to the tone of the book. The narrative of the book can be divided into 2 distinct sections; Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and the rest shows the events of His journey toward Jerusalem and The Cross. At the mid part of the book we see Peter identifying Jesus as the Messiah. This can be taken as the fundamental theme of this book. In both the sections, Mark places great emphasis on the power of God manifesting through Christ’s presence and ministry. The disciples also had a hard time breaking away from the Jewish idea of the anticipated Kingly presence of The Messiah to accepting the Messiah who was serving as a an humble servant to the point of dying for our sins.

This book is a useful tool when we want to bring the Good News to a new or an unbeliever as the book focuses on the revelation of Christ as the ‘Beloved Son of God’ and ‘The Servant King’ in a clear, precise and absolute manner. The demonstration of power through Jesus’ miracles, the transfiguration and resurrection proves that Jesus is The Messiah and He has conquered death and will return to reign.

Transcript

Mark – Part 1 of 1

Today, we come to the book of Mark. Matthew showed Jesus as King. Mark showed Jesus as a servant. Matthew was written particularly for new believers, and especially Jewish new believers, because at that time when Matthew wrote it, the vast majority of the new believers were Jews. And later on as more Gentiles came in, there was kind of a division. So Matthew wrote it for the new believers - those who were Jews to understand, and for those who were Gentiles to understand their Jewish roots.

Now, after a believer read through Matthew, and learnt a lot of things, then the beautiful book of Mark is placed next, because Mark is for unbelievers. So now the new believers having been taught in Matthew, goes on their mission to make disciples, but how do you make disciples? You need materials. Nowadays, we use books, or tracts. But in those days, the best material to use was Mark. Mark was like the tract that we produce nowadays. A typical tract is not very long, and it grabs your attention. It's exactly what the book of Mark is. Short gospel, and it's written in such a way that there is action all along. It tells us in Mark what Jesus did-the miracles. Same number of miracles as in Matthew, about 18 of them.

But Matthew has 18 miracles, and 18 long lectures, lessons for new believers. Mark has 18 miracles and only 4 lessons or discourses. So basically, Mark is not so much telling what Jesus taught but who Jesus is. And you know who he is by what he does. The many miracles he did obviously tell us that he was not just a servant. He's not just Son of man, he's not a carpenter's son. He is much more than that. So, in the book of Mark, the goal is for an unbeliever to read and say, Who is this Jesus? He looks like a man, he served people, but He is God. Nobody else can do this. So, I hope you see the reason why Mark is placed after Matthew. So many people read Matthew and then they say, why do I read Mark? It's almost the same thing. Actually, largely I think Matthew's gospel was built on the framework of Mark because Mark was the first gospel that was written. And many believers have no idea why Mark is placed next and seems to have less to say than Matthew. Mark is for unbelievers, use this book for unbelievers.

Many Christians today will use Matthew as a book for unbelievers. Or commonly, they use John. Those are the two books you would not want to use for unbelievers. Later we will see about John. Matthew is for new believers - be missional, go make disciples. Then Mark tells you how to make disciples. So I hope this helps us to see this beautiful book, not a redundant book.

Now, you'll notice Matthew begins with the birth of Jesus. First is the genealogy-son of who, son of who.....when an unbeliever reads that, he will surrender, but when you're a believer, you hang in there. Mark doesn't begin with the genealogy and the birth as in Matthew, but he begins with the baptism.

Baptism is the time you inaugurate someone to start serving. Today, baptism doesn't inaugurate anything; you inaugurate someone to become a spectator in your church. And maybe 10 years later, he is ready to serve as a cell group leader.

Who is Mark? Mark is sometimes called in the Bible, John Mark. You will find that in the book of Acts, John Mark was the assistant to Paul and Barnabas when they went on their first missionary trip. In those days, travel was a huge hassle, and it was dangerous. For a missionary trip, Paul and Barnabas needed a younger man, and Mark, was the man they brought along (Acts 12:25). So John Mark actually knew Paul and Barnabas personally. Later, he left Paul and Barnabas, and Paul never wanted to use him again.

Later, John Mark became the assistant of Peter. In 1 Peter 5:13 Peter called him my son, Mark. So why is his name John Mark? Sometimes, John, sometimes Mark. John obviously is a Hebrew name, very common. Mark is not a Hebrew name, Mark is Marcus, a very Roman name. So he obviously was a Hebrew with Roman influence. And obviously he was able to speak the Roman language and that's why probably Peter used him. Peter was the country boy from Galileo, who probably didn't know Roman, he probably spoke Hebrew, or Koine Greek, common Greek, and maybe Aramaic, just like Jesus, but he didn't speak Latin. And so, John Mark was his assistant and his translator. And then church history says, when Peter was getting old, people were worried that Peter might die, and the eyewitness account of the closest disciple might disappear. And so, John Mark began to record all that Jesus did from the mouth of Peter. He was reporting from an Apostle, Peter.

Now, Peter was a man of action. In the Bible, Peter was always doing things, didn't like to talk too much, but he got into action. And that's why this gospel reflects Peter's personality, wanting to talk about what Jesus did, rather than what Jesus taught. And so this gospel is sometimes called the gospel of action.

17 times the word 'immediately' appears in the book of Mark (KJV version). Isn't that interesting? Immediately they did this, immediately they did that - doesn't it sound like Peter? He doesn't sit down and say, Let me think about it. A lot of Christians are always praying about something, and by the time they get to heaven, they're still praying about what to do.

Now, you will find certain words in the King James version, in the book of Mark.

The words Afraid, Fear, Amaze, Astonished appear 7 times each. This is exactly what a tract should do. The purpose of a tract to an unbeliever is to make him Fear. And then have Faith in this Messiah. Fear first, if you don't have fear, you don't turn. If he fears that one day he has to face this Messiah, and be judged for rejecting the Son of God, then fear makes him either run from what he heard, or run to safety, two possibilities.

So, that is the purpose of this book. Suddenly, you see the word fear, afraid, astonished, amazed so many times.

Let's look at another thing - you'll find in Matthew the Kingdom of heaven is mentioned 30 over times. Is there a difference between the Kingdom of heaven, which is mentioned in Matthew, and just about there only and nowhere else, and the Kingdom of God, which is mentioned elsewhere?

What's the difference? The difference is Matthew was written to Jews and Jews were always super careful of naming the name of God lest they use the name of the Lord God in vain. Even up till today, when I read Jewish religious explanations, they put G-D, they don't put the word God. Today, 2000 years later, they are still afraid to use the name of God. So, when Matthew was writing to Jewish believers, he used the word, Kingdom of heaven, 30 over times, because it's about the King.

In Mark, it's the Kingdom of God. So, I hope you'll begin to see these differences, otherwise we might think reading Mark is redundant.

The book is divided roughly into three parts. Chapter divisions are always in the wrong places. Chapter divisions don't exist in the Bible, they were put there for convenience for us. Not too long ago, people started putting divisions because most Christians don't like to read the whole Bible, they just like to read the verse. In the past the Bible was one entire book. You read the book, just like you read a normal book, but Christians began to dissect the book and see a lot of books and verses as irrelevant. That's why chapter and verse divisions are put in. Basically it makes us lazy and very selective in what we want to believe, and what we want to read.

Chapter 1 to Chapter 8, the first part, is basically the first two and a half years of Jesus ministry. Now you realize Jesus ministry was three years, so the bulk of his ministry is described here. This is about his ministry in Galilee. It was the northern irreligious part, far from Jerusalem. They were not the educated people, they were the farmers, shepherd, fishermen. And they were not the important people, they were the nobodies.

When Jesus was in Galilee, he was very popular but he was not popular when he went to the religious places. Now, if Jesus would come today and pop in into the church, he would not be very welcome. He wouldn't dress right, he wouldn't seem to be the kind of guy we would want as our pastor. He won't be scholarly looking enough, he would probably be too country-like, too simple. And he would probably spend too much of his time with the nobodies, rather than rubbing shoulders with the rich guys who support most of the church work, with those who love meetings, and who love Bible studies, he wouldn't be there because he would always be out with people.

What is Chapter 1 to Chapter 8 about? It's about what Jesus did- the miracles. The goal of this part was to see who Jesus is. To unbelievers, do you know who is Jesus? Is he a prophet, which most people think he is, a teacher, is he a good man? But most people would figure that out. I mean, very few will deny that Jesus is a figure in history. Very few will say, he's a bad man, very few. But Chapter 1 to Chapter 8 is telling the unbeliever who is reading, this man is not just a good man, not just a teacher, not just a prophet.....He is the Son of God!

How in the world do I know he's the Son of God? He did miracles, miracles, miracles! That's what Chapter 1 to Chapter 8 is trying to do - to shock the unbeliever who reads this "tract" of Mark to say, Oh my goodness, I thought he was just a good man, I thought he was just a prophet. That's what they told me in my religion. But my prophets never did all these things. No

prophets did all these miracles-the blind see the lame, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the storm is stopped, fed thousands at one time.

So Chapter 1 to 8 - Who is Jesus?

Second half of Chapter 8 to Chapter 10 says, He is the Son of God!

Now let's look at Chapter 8:29 - I call that the turning point of this book. And he (Jesus) asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."

The word Christ is the Greek word for 'anointed.' The Hebrew word is you are the Messiah, anointed one, the one to come.

So we see here a turning point. Jesus had been with Peter and the apostles for two and a half years and he finally asked the question. Imagine you are Peter and the apostles, and you see Jesus doing miracle after miracle everyday. And yet Jesus never said, I am the Messiah.

I always say, we rush it. After five minutes of sharing with an unbeliever, we ask Who is Jesus, you believe He's the Son of God? Two and a half years, miracle, miracle, miracle daily, then finally he says, Who do you think I am? He let it come from them. He didn't rush it.

And so we see Peter now- it clicks (understands) in his head. You thought it clicked completely, no, not yet. There's a lot of unlearning to do.

Let's read Mark, Chapter 8:29

Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."

Verse 30:

And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Jesus said, don't tell anybody, let them figure it out.

Verse 31 – 33:

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

At first when I read Chapter 8 verse 29, I thought Peter understood when he said, you are the Messiah. But no, not yet, one light came on, other lights had not come on. This is how we work, it takes time.

Then Jesus goes on to say, Peter, you're right, I am the Messiah, but then, I must suffer and be killed. Peter said, That never will that happen. You see Peter's idea of the Messiah is the Jewish idea. He had to unlearn that. The Jewish idea of the Messiah was the King will come as a conqueror, not the servant King. The Jews did not understand that Christ the King comes twice. The first coming as a servant to inaugurate His kingdom. And then he comes later, as a conquering King to consummate, complete His Kingdom, and there is a gap between these two events.

So Peter said, I just said you're the Messiah, but you said you will die. What's happening? And Jesus said, Get thee behind me. Why did he say that to Peter? Because he was going to the cross and Jesus as man feared the cross too. As God, 100% God, he knew his mission. As man, 100% man, he knew his mission, but as man he feared.

We see another event one week after this in Chapter 9, the second part of this book - who is he? He's the Messiah. What's the meaning of Messiah?

Chapter 9:2-6

And after 6 days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Verse 7 – 8:

And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

So Peter had now gone through one hurdle in his mind. Jesus is the Messiah. He's the one. But who is he really? Many unbelievers will say Jesus come and help us but who is he, really? And then this lesson tells

us, Jesus brought Peter, James and John up to this mountain. I think it's Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is a high mountain, north part of Israel, snow capped. And up there, Jesus is transfigured. What does that mean? It says he was radiant. It was like light shining through your shirt. Have you ever put a flashlight behind a piece of cloth, and then you see the light coming through that? Jesus is the light of the world. And He's shining through his clothes. And then they see two people next to Jesus, talking to Him. One is Moses, and one is Elijah. They are the three greatest men of all - Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. You see many people think the Messiah is the greatest of the prophet, but a voice says, This is my beloved SON! You thought they were three great prophets - Moses, Elijah and Jesus. No! This is my SON!

Peter was so excited. Before Peter heard this voice, Peter said, when he saw the three, let me build three tabernacles for the three of you. He treated them as three equals, then the voice said, This is my beloved Son, and then the other two disappeared. What is all this about?

This is telling the unbeliever who reads this book, the Messiah that Peter recognized is not another prophet, He is the Son of God. The other two are nothing, but He is my beloved Son.

I hope you understand that this book is trying to help unbelievers. So when you meet unbelievers, just tell them to read Mark. Read it through, don't try to figure every inch of it, get the feel of the book. And you know what, God will do some amazing things.

Then the third part is the largest part, Chapters 11 to 16. Almost one third of Mark is on the last week of Jesus' life. This is the time Jesus shows Himself as Servant King.

Mark 15:39

And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly, this man was the Son of God!"

See, there was a centurion watching over Jesus at the cross and watching him ebb away slowly; suffering, bleeding, dying and then suddenly with a loud voice, he hears Jesus shout - like a victory cry! Normally, when a man bleeds to death, he doesn't come up with a last battle cry. The Romans

soldier said this is not normal. I saw too many things happen today -the darkness, everything. A Roman gentile soldier said: Truly, this is the Son of God!

Who do you think this is recorded for - the unbeliever! A Roman soldier, not a very likely candidate, not a religious guy, a hardened soldier. You know you join the army because you want to kill and loot, but what he said was quite a statement because now this tract was going to be used by the new believers to go into a Gentile world.

Now the ending of this book is even stranger. Go to Chapter 16. After Chapter 16 verse 8, you will find that in many of your Bibles, some of the earliest manuscripts do not include verses 9 to 20.

In your Bible, you sometimes will see verses 9 to 20 as the ending of Chapter 16. If there is no statement that some of the earliest manuscripts do not include this, they will bracket Chapter 9, verses 9 to 20. Now the earliest manuscripts ended very strangely. I think it ended at verse 8.

Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early in the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back - it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

And that's where all the earlier manuscripts ended. There was no verse 9 and all the nice beautiful conclusions. You think it ended there? I think so, it fits the whole book. It shows these ladies going to anoint him. They went there, and they're told he is risen. Now, it's not normal when you see somebody bashed, bruised, beaten, hanging on the cross and you say he is risen. They trembled, they shook and they were afraid and it ends there. That's the purpose of this book.

The purpose of this book is to make you afraid. Sometimes it is said, 'they were fearful'. Words like "trembling", "astonishment" were used. Now, that's the purpose of this book - to shock you, to put fear in you and then ask you the question "What are you going to do about it?" Until we are afraid, we usually do nothing. Until you realize that cancer is going to kill you, you're not going to ask the surgeon to open you up. Until you are afraid of going to hell, you are not going to change your life. When you fear, then you will cry out for help. So the purpose of Mark's book is to push people to respond; not just to say "Oh, that's interesting", "I never saw that before", or "You gave me something to think about". You want an unbeliever to say, I've been mocking Jesus, I have been doubting Jesus all these years - that was my reaction when I was 33 years old. All my life I laughed when people talked about Jesus. I went to church, it was part of my family life, it was my habit, my family went so I went, my friends were there.

The turning point comes when one day something shocks you, or God allows you to go through some kind of crisis. So, I hope you see the reason for this type of ending. I believe the rest of the ending of Mark was added by somebody. But my point is, if you don't see this book for what it is, you're just going to see it as a redundancy in the Bible, which to your mind is full of redundancies. And so you can scrap this book and say if I read Matthew, I don't need to read Mark. And if I read Matthew, I don't even need to read Luke, but you know there are purposes for every book, because this is part of the beautiful book.

May God bless you as you read this book, and as you help unbelievers, to direct them to read this book in the right way.

God bless you!