

BOOK OF MARK

What is the purpose of the Book of Mark?

1. The book of Mark shows Jesus as a Servant while the book of Matthew shows Jesus as the King.
2. Matthew was written for new believers especially Jews but also for the Gentiles to understand that the root of Christianity came from the Jews!
3. After studying the book of Matthew, comes the book of Mark although the book of Mark was written first. Matthew 28:19-20 say that to make disciples, and the Gospel of Mark was written like a tract for making disciples. This order of arrangement is inspired by God. As a tract, the book of Mark is short and gripping in nature for the disciples to share the Gospel, so it was written with lots of actions. The book of Mark tells us about Jesus' miracles mainly (about 18 – similar to the number of miracles in the book of Matthew). The book of Matthew has 18 miracles and 18 long lectures for new believers but Mark has only 18 miracles and 4 discourses (or lectures). The book of Mark is not emphasizing who Jesus is but what He did and you will know who He is by what He did! The recorded miracles proved that Jesus is not just a Servant or Son of Man but much more! He is God!
4. The book of Mark is for unbelievers to be reached and answers their query as to who Jesus is. That is why it was placed after the book of Matthew though it was written before the book of Matthew. (The book of Mark is the first Gospel written). People wonder why they have to read the book of Mark after reading the book of Matthew which has more details. This is because it is not suitable to use the Gospel of Matthew or the Gospel of John for unbelievers. The book of Matthew is for new believers to know their key mission after believing and this key mission is in Matthew 28:19-20! Once they know the key mission, new believers can use the Gospel of Mark to make disciples! Therefore, it is not redundant to have two different books like these.
5. It is not easy for an unbeliever to read the book of Matthew. Most people will give up even within the first chapter of Matthew due to its long genealogy which only the Jews can understand.
6. The Gospel of Mark therefore, begins with the baptism of Jesus to inaugurate someone to start serving! Unfortunately today, baptism does not inaugurate people to serve but to become spectators!

Who is Mark?

1. His full name was John Mark as found in the Book of Acts.
2. He was an assistant to Paul and Barnabas on their 1st missionary trip. Travel was dangerous in those times and they needed a young man like Mark to accompany them.
3. In Acts 12:25, John Mark quitted on a missionary trip and thereafter, Paul refused to use him again. So, John Mark travelled with Barnabas after Paul and Barnabas went separate ways.
4. John Mark became an assistant to Peter in 1 Peter 5:13 and Peter addressed him as son!
5. "John" was his Hebrew name and "Mark" which is the same as Marcus was his Roman name. So Mark was a Jew with Roman influence. He could be from a prestigious family and could speak Roman (Latin) language and therefore he could extend help to Peter, a country man (fisherman) who only spoke Hebrew and Greek Aramaic.

6. When Peter was old, John Mark began to record Jesus' work from the mouth of Peter! Mark's account is therefore NOT an eyewitness account. Peter is a man of action; hence the book of Mark is written in a way that reflects the "Do" of Jesus. Peter is the "Do" guy unlike Paul who is the thinking guy! Therefore, the Gospel of Mark is also called the Gospel of Action!
7. The Gospel of Mark is very fast moving. Listen to the ESV version or read it aloud and you will feel the "Bang, Bang, Bang!" of actions. You will find the word "immediately" 17 times in this book and it sounds like Peter!
8. Peter's actions were very fast, unlike some Christians today who only keep praying and praying yet never act on it! And they wonder what to do?

What is the Focus of the Book of Mark?

1. Note these words that keep repeating in the book of Mark
 - a) Immediately – 17 times
 - b) Afraid – 7 times
 - c) Fear – 7 times
 - d) Amazed – 7 times
 - e) Astonished – 7 times

That should be how a tract should look like! A tract should make an unbeliever;

- a) fear because without fear, there is no turning around
- b) have faith in this Messiah

Fear makes you either run away from what you hear or run towards safety.

2. The book of Matthew mentions the "Kingdom of heaven" more than 30 times while the phrase Kingdom of God was used elsewhere. This is because the Jews are very careful to not to mention the name of God in case they use His name in vain. But in the book of Mark, the phrase "Kingdom of God" was used about 15 times because it is not meant for the Jews and the emphasis is not Jesus as King of Jews.

What is the Structure of the Book of Mark?

The book of Mark is divided into 3 sections:

1. Section 1 - Chapters 1 to 8 (roughly the 1st part of Chapter 8)
 - a) It shows the first 2½ years of Jesus' 3 years of ministry on Earth. It is a quick description of the vast majority of His ministry in Galilee which was the non-religious, non-educated area, a "nobody" area.
 - b) Jesus was very popular in Galilee but not popular in the religious places. Even today, Jesus may not be welcomed as a pastor in our church based on His attire and the fact that He spent most of His time mingling with poor people, etc.
 - c) This section is about the miracle-maker Jesus. About "Who is Jesus?" He is not a good man alone or just another prophet etc. But He is the Son of God. Therefore, Chapters 1-8 is to shock the unbelievers as no prophet can do the Messianic miracles (prophesized in Isaiah 35:5-6) and feed thousands people at one go.
2. Section 2 - Chapters 8 (2nd half) to 10
 - a) Jesus is the Son of God. This is in response to the question of unbelievers as to "Who is Jesus?" in Chapters 1 to 8 (i.e. Section 1 above).

- b) Mark 8:29 is the turning point when Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?" And Peter said, "You are the Christ" or the Messiah, the Anointed One. Here, Peter actually cleared his first mental hurdle. [Most world monotheistic religions (i.e. religions that believe that there is only ONE God in the whole universe) believe that there is a Messiah who will come and cure this sinful world.] It has been 2½ years now since the disciples were with Jesus and Jesus had never said He is the Messiah! We rush in witnessing to others and expect people to accept Jesus as Saviour in 5 minutes after sharing! Jesus let the disciples decipher and decide who He is over a period of 2½ years themselves!
- c) Even now at Mark 8:29, though it clicked in Peter's mind that Jesus is the Messiah, he did not completely understand and he had a lot of unlearning to do!
- d) In Mark 8:30-33, Jesus said, "Don't tell them" who He is, let them figure it out themselves basically. Jesus told His disciples that He must suffer and die but Peter said "No" to Jesus going to the Cross and then Jesus told Peter to "Get behind Me, Satan."
- e) In Peter's mind, was the Jewish idea of Jesus coming as a Conquering King and he had to unlearn (his 2nd mental hurdle) and know that Jesus must first come as the Suffering King to inaugurate His Kingdom and then as Conquering King to consummate His Kingdom
- f) Jesus also feared the suffering on the Cross as a Man of flesh and blood! Hence, He told Peter not to stop Him nor persuade Him.
- g) In Mark 9:2-8, we see another event that Jesus set up to help His disciples understand who He is:
 - i. It describes a transfiguration event that took place 6 days later where Jesus shines as light on Mount Hermon.
 - ii. Peter wanted to make 3 tents. The disciples were terrified and did not know what to say! They saw Moses, Elijah and Jesus standing together in this transfiguration. Many people, like the 3 disciples, think that Jesus is the greatest of the prophets but the voice from heaven said, "This is My Beloved Son" and then the other 2 men disappeared!
 - iii. The Messiah is not just another prophet or last prophet but the Son of God, the other 2 are just men! Nothing compared to Jesus!
- h) Unbelievers should read this book fast and get a feel on how God will do amazing things.

3. Section 3 - Chapters 11 to 16

1/3 of this book shows the last one week of Jesus' life.

- a) Jesus on the Cross.
- b) In Mark 15:39, we hear the centurion saying, "Jesus is the Son of God!" after He heard Jesus' victory cry! It is not normal to see a dying man shout with his last breath like this and also the whole place was darkened etc! It is clear that this book is written for unbelievers (especially the Romans such as the Roman soldiers or centurion) who are not religious people and have hardened their hearts. What the centurion said was a big statement from a Gentile.

The ending of this book is in Chapter 16:9-20 which were added later (as stated in ESV) and these verses are not found in some Bible versions:

- a) Earlier manuscript ended at Mark 16:8.
- b) Pastor Paul Choo believes that the verses after Mark 16:8 were added subsequently because of the purpose of the book. In verse 8, the women found an empty tomb and was told that Jesus was risen! They trembled and shook, and were afraid. The purpose of this book was to cause the reader to be astonished, instil fear and shock the reader into confronting the question, "What are you going to do?" Until we think the lump of cancer is going to kill us, we won't want an operation! Until an unbeliever sees he is going to hell, and fear, he would not act! Then you will cry out for help! The book of Mark was written to invoke action when a sinner realised, "Oh, all these years, I have mocked and laughed at Jesus!" Until you are broken, you would not be fixed.
- c) Therefore, don't see the book of Mark as redundant or just read one of the 4 Gospels and ignore the remaining 3 Gospels.
- d) We should help unbelievers to read this fast and let God impact them to fear in their hearts rather than head knowledge only.