

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

# Mark

Mark is one of four reports of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These “Gospels” lay a factual base for, and form the centerpiece of, the good news of God’s salvation and eternal life. The word *gospel* is prominent (1:1, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9).

It’s author? John Mark, the only Gospel writer not an apostle. Mark probably received his eyewitness information about Jesus from Peter (Acts 12:12, 25; 1 Peter 5:13). His use of *kingdom of God* (rather than *of heaven*, as in Matthew) and his explanations of Jewish custom show he had Gentile readers in mind. A world mission is envisioned (11:17; 13:10; 14:9).

Second in New Testament order and perhaps written first (A.D. 45-65), Mark is the shortest Gospel. Written with fewer of Jesus’ words and faster report of His works, Mark is the most action-packed. *Immediately* occurs about 40 times (including 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 31, 42).

Mark reads like a short Matthew (many verses alike), but their tone and purpose vary. Matthew presents Jesus as King of the Jews, fulfilling prophecy, preaching a sermon on the mount, and speaking many parables. With little of this, Mark depicts Jesus as a miracle-working Servant whose life and death brought God’s kingdom near.

Mark stimulates interest and study by the stress he lays on Jesus’ requirement of silence regarding His miracles, transfiguration, etc. (1:25, 34, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9, 30). This “messianic secret” is explained in two ways:

- Jesus wished to avoid over-emphasis on signs and wonders that trigger spasmodic faith and excite popular expectation of a Messiah-King who would shortly overthrow Rome, which He did not intend to do; and
- Jesus knew the true purpose of His first coming and often cautioned His disciples that suffering and death would climax His ministry, which they misunderstood until after it happened (8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 34).

Mark plunges quickly into his Gospel with no mention of Jesus’ pre-existence, birth, or childhood and only abbreviated mentions of the baptism and temptation (1:2-13). By mid-chapter 1, Mark immerses Jesus into His brief years of public ministry (1:14ff). By contrast, that point is not reached until the third or fourth chapters of the other Gospels.

The ending of Mark (16:9-20) does not appear in many of the older manuscripts, causing some scholars to conclude that it was added by early Christians.

Mark notes the great popularity of Jesus, especially in Galilee where throngs gathered to see and hear Him (1:33, 45; 2:2, 13, 15; 3:7, 9, 20; 4:1, 36; 5:21, 24, 31; 6:34; 8:1; 9:15, 25; 10:1, 46).

**Passion** (i. e. “suffering”) and *compassion* (i. e., “with suffering” or “with feeling”) of Christ receive Mark’s emphasis. Nearly 40 percent of the Gospel (10:32ff) is given to Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem and the week of His death, burial, and resurrection there. Similarly,

His own emotions are displayed: compassion, indignation, sorrow, and sighing (1:41; 3:5; 6:34; 7:34; 8:2, 12; 10:14; 14:33, 34).

**We read about . . .**

kingdom gospel (1:14, 15)  
Sabbath Lord (2:27, 28)  
God family (3:35)  
peace word (4:39)  
mind and body (5:15)  
human need (6:31)  
Jesus’ reputation (7:37)  
gain and loss (8:35)  
service first (9:35)  
His mission (10:45)  
forgiving prayer (11:35)  
church and state (12:17)  
permanent word (13:31)  
I am coming (14:61, 62)  
silent suffering (15:3ff)  
our mission (16:15)

**Basic conflicts**

Jesus’ works and words of truth often brought a sword, not peace. Scribes, Pharisees, elders, and chief priests were His frequent foes. They objected when Jesus forgave sins, ate with sinners, ate instead of fasting, violated Sabbath tradition and other traditions (2:6, 7, 15, 16, 18, 24; 3:2-6; 7:1ff). They said He was demon-possessed (3:22). They tested Him, tried to trap Him, and plotted His death (8:11; 10:2ff; 11:18, 27ff; 12:13ff; 14:1, 43).

Jesus’ own people and disciples occasionally opposed Him as deranged, ridiculed Him, disbelieved Him, and rebuked/criticized Him (3:21; 5:40; 6:1-6; 8:32; 10:13; 14:4ff).

But the common people heard Him gladly (12:37)!

**Mark in a sentence:** Jesus Christ, God’s suffering Servant-Messiah, introduces the kingdom, preaches repentance, performs miracles, prepares twelve, predicts suffering, and promises return — then is crucified and resurrected to complete the gospel.