

## Liking Mark

- ◆ I could be wrong, but my perception is that for most people Mark is not their favorite gospel. I am not suggesting that people don't enjoy Mark, but that relatively speaking most people tend to enjoy Matthew, Luke, or John more.
- ◆ *Why? What is it about Mark? What is it about the other gospels that you really enjoy?*
- ◆ More on this later; specifically, some thoughts about our perceptions about Mark and why Mark is wonderful.

## Background

- ◆ Basic background information for the gospel of Mark:
  - **Date:** Most scholars believe that the gospel of Mark was written between 60-75<sup>1</sup>.
  - **Authorship:** Like all the gospels, Mark was written anonymously. Second century Christian tradition identifies the author as Mark (John Mark in Acts 12:12). Traditionally, he is identified as a follower of or as someone who has a close association with Peter. In Acts he accompanies Paul and Barnabas on a mission (Acts 12:25).
  - **Where:** Where was the gospel written? The traditional location is Rome. Other proposed locations include the following: Syria, northern Transjordan, Decapolis, and Galilee.<sup>2</sup> The tradition for Rome seems likely to be linked with Mark's traditional link with Peter. On the other hand, scholars point to Latin loan words (e.g., Mark's use of the word, centurion) as evidence in support of Rome as the location.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ How is Mark related to the other gospels?
  - Matthew, Mark, and Luke all contain many similar stories (this is why they are referred to as synoptic gospels (seen together)). It is not just that these gospels share similar stories; they often use the same words.<sup>4</sup>
  - Most scholars believe that Mark is the first gospel and both Matthew and Luke use it as a source (Markan Priority).
- ◆ **Markan Priority**
  - "Sometimes Matthew and Mark share the wording of a story when Luke differs, and sometimes Mark and Luke share the wording when Matthew differs. But it is extremely rare to find Matthew and Luke sharing the wording of a story that is also found in Mark when Mark differs."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Raymond, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday, 163-164

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Raymond, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday, 163-164

<sup>3</sup>Barton, John, and John Muddiman (Editors), 2001, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford University Press, 886-887.

<sup>4</sup>Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction*, p 84.

<sup>5</sup>Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction*, p 85)

- Scholars point out that Mark’s Greek writing is somewhat awkward. Awkward phrases used in Mark are often fixed by Luke and Matthew. It seems less likely that Mark copied Matthew and inserted awkward language than Matthew used Mark as a source and smoothed out awkward phrases.

## Gospel

- ◆ Read Mark 1:1-3:

(1) The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; (2) As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (3) The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

- ◆ *What is meant by the word, “gospel?”*
- ◆ First, its important to remember what it doesn’t refer to in this context. Mark isn’t telling us about his literary genre. the word gospel isn’t used to refer to a literary genre until centuries later.
- ◆ The word translated as gospel is euaggelion, and means “good announcement” or “good news.”
- ◆ **Use of the word, gospel (euaggelion):**
  - **Non-Christian:** It was certainly used by the non-Christian world during this time period. Often the context was a victory in battle, birth of a son, or a wedding. A good example of its use is the following:<sup>6</sup>

“An inscription from 9 BCE uses the noun (in the plural) to refer to the past event of the Birth of emperor Augustus: ‘the birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of joyful messages which have gone forth because of him.’”

    - ◆ *With the preceding usage of the word, gospel, as a backdrop, what is Mark doing when he uses the the word, gospel? What is he trying to tell us about Jesus Christ?*
    - ◆ *How might his original audience have viewed or understood his use of the word?*
    - ◆ *Do other parts of the first verse contrast with this inscription?*
  - **Old Testament:** In the Greek Septuagint, various forms of the word gospel (euaggelion) is used to translate the Hebrew *bsr*.<sup>7</sup> In the King James version, what the Greek Septuagint translates as gospel, we often see rendered as good tidings. The word gets associated with military victories (2 Samuel 4:10) and also with more theologically significant passages. A good example of where the word gospel is used in the Greek Septuagint is Isaiah 61:1-4 (note: Jesus himself quote this passage during the synagogue experience in Luke 4):

(1) The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;  
because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;

<sup>6</sup>Coogan, Michael D. (Editor), 2001, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press

<sup>7</sup>Brown, Raymond, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday

he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
 and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;  
**(2)** To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,  
 and the day of vengeance of our God;  
 to comfort all that mourn;  
**(3)** To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,  
 to give unto them beauty for ashes,  
 the oil of joy for mourning,  
 the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
 that they might be called trees of righteousness,  
 the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.  
**(4)** And they shall build the old wastes,  
 they shall raise up the former desolations,  
 and they shall repair the waste cities,  
 the desolations of many generations.

- ◆ *The phrase good tidings can be replaced with the word gospel in these verses. Does this give us any insight into what this word meant to early Christians? Remember, this is probably not an obscure verse to early Christians. For example, Luke recorded that Jesus read from it while in the synagogue (Luke 4).*
- **New Testament:** The other gospel writers use the word as well, but Mark was probably written earlier and hence his use probably predates their use of the word. On the other hand, Paul uses the term gospel and his writings most likely predates the gospel of Mark. Read 1 Cor 15:1-5:
 

**(1)** Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; **(2)** By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. **(3)** For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; **(4)** And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: **(5)** And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:
- ◆ *How Does Paul use the term? What is the good news according to Paul? Is Mark's use of the word similar or different? Is there overlap?*
- ◆ *What do you think Mark means when he uses the phrase, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ?"*
  - *Does the phrase "gospel of Jesus Christ" mean the "good news about or concerning Jesus Christ?"*
  - *Does the phrase "gospel of Jesus Christ" mean the "good news preached by Jesus Christ?"*
  - *Does the phrase mean something else?*
  - *Does the Non-Christian use or the use of the word in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 61:1-4) give us any insight into what Mark might have meant?*

- Read Mark 1:14-15:

(14) Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

- *How about verses 14-15 in Mark chapter 1? Do they give us insight into how Mark uses the word gospel?*
- ◆ *Why does Mark say that this is the beginning? What is he referring to? Is he saying that this is the beginning of the good news. What do you think he means when he says that this is the beginning of the good news? What is he referring to?*
- ◆ **The Beginning**
  - Beginning could mean something like the first principle or basics of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, Mark's account gives us or imparts the first principles or basics of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - Maybe he is referring to his immediate introduction of the book. The introduction may tell us about the beginning, origins, or starting point of the good news. *Does this fit the context Mark begins by telling us about John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, his temptation, and a summary of his public teaching? How could this be the beginning of the good news? Shouldn't mark start with the birth of Jesus?*
  - *Let's look at verses 14-15 again. Do these verses provide insight or give us another possibility in terms of how Mark's account could be the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ?*

### The Quote from "Isaiah"

- ◆ Read Mark 1:1-3:

(1) The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; (2) As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (3) The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

- ◆ The phrase "written in the prophets" is almost certainly a later scribal gloss. The original is, "written in Isaiah."<sup>8</sup> The change is pretty understandable since Mark seems to be quoting from a combination of sources: Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3.
- ◆ *Why would John start this way. He proclaims that this is the good news of Jesus, but then immediately launches into a quotation of scripture that he applies to John. Why? How is John connected to the good news?*

### Back to verses 14-15

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<sup>8</sup>Barnet, Kevin (Editor), *Footnotes to the New Testament for Latter-day Saints*.

- ◆ Read Mark 1:14-15:

(14) Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

- ◆ *Why mention that John was put in prison? Is it an important detail?*

- ◆ This verses seems to conflict with John 3:22-24:

(22) After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. (23) And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. (24) For John was not yet cast into prison.

- ◆ The verse in John are clearly post public ministry (the public ministry starts in John 2), but yet John specifically mentions that John the Baptist is not in prison yet.

- ◆ It is certainly possible that John or Mark have a confused chronology. However, I don't think Mark's point is about chronology. I think it is about theology; it is about connecting Jesus and John the Baptist.

- *Why mention John's arrest right before the start of Jesus' public ministry?*
- *Why end John's involvement in the gospel with his arrest?*
- *Is it related to the idea that John prepared the way for the Lord?*
- *What does Mark want his reader to think about?*

- ◆ Another way to translate that phrase is the following (WBC):

After John had been handed over

- ◆ *Does this change the imagery for you? Does it connect John's story with Jesus in a different way?*

- ◆ It reminds me of Mark 9:31:

(31) For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

- ◆ *Why doesn't mark mention any details about the arrest of Mark here? He clearly knows them since he includes them in Mark 6.*

- ◆ I think the reason is literary. Mark wants us to focus on Jesus. The arrest of John is only important here because it informs us about the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. The environment He now preached in, and what will eventually happen to him. Details about the arrest of John would distract from Mark's focus.

- ◆ *Do you see a literary connection between verse 7 and verses 14-15?*

(7) And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

- ◆ Pretty cool parallel construction between “preach and come” in each of these passages. It connects verses 14-15 as the fulfillment of John’s prophetic words in verse 7.
- ◆ *What about verse 4 and verses 14-15? Do you see a connection between the two passages? Is it a contrasting or synonymous connection?*

(4) John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

- ◆ Notice we have more than one parallel construction in these verses:

The time is fulfilled,  
and the kingdom of God is at hand

- ◆ *These two phrase are synthetically parallel to each other. This means the phrases don’t mean the same thing and they are not antithetical to each other. The two phrases build up or around the same theme. What do you think that theme is?*
- ◆ *How can the time be fulfilled but the Kingdom of God only be at hand?*

### **Mark, Behavioral Finance, and Framing**

- ◆ Some thoughts about how framing affects perceptions about Mark. The following is a question I ask my students in my Behavioral finance lecture.
- ◆ For the next question you will need a target date. Take the last three digits of your student ID number and add 400. That is your target date<sup>9</sup>.

Your Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- The Huns under Attila invaded Europe and penetrated deep into what is now France where they were defeated and forced to return eastward. Did these events occur before or after “Your Date?” \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your best guess of the year in which Attila’s defeat actually occurred? Enter a three or four-digit (numerical, historical) date, A.D.: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>9</sup>Source: Womack (2005)

### B722 Fall 2006: Atilla

