

MARK

Mark is one book of the Bible which can be read very comfortably with little introduction. It is the shortest Gospel. The 16 chapters quickly tell the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark wants the reader/listener to answer this question:

WHO IS JESUS?

Paying attention to this question will help you get the most of your reading.

A second question to keep asking is:

WHO ACCEPTS JESUS AS GOD AND SAVIOR?

WHO IS JESUS?

Sometimes the answer is spoken, such as the Father's voice which comes from heaven in Mark 1:11: "You are my Son, the Beloved." Sometimes the answer comes from an unlikely character. When Jesus visits his hometown synagogue, it is the man with a demon who says, "I know who you are, the Holy One of God." (Mark 1:21) Often Jesus says, "Do not tell others who I am." His authoritative teaching and miracles show that Jesus is God. He does things that only God can do: forgive sins (Mark 2:1-11), calm storms (Mark 4:23-41), and raise the dead (Mark 4:21-42). Watch for who "gets it" and who does not.

In Mark 8:27-30, Jesus bluntly asks the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answers, "You are the Messiah," but at first Peter will not accept that Jesus will go to Jerusalem and die. In Mark 10:44, Jesus clearly states his purpose: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." Then the story unfolds as Jesus said, with suffering, rejection, and death.

A Little Background on the Author: Mark is traditionally identified as John Mark who wrote the Gospel as a summary of the apostle Peter's preaching. Pappias, a bishop in Asia Minor around the year 130, wrote, "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter wrote down accurately everything he remembered..." John Mark may have been a nephew of Peter. He is named in Acts 12:12 as the son of Mary, perhaps one of the women who accompanied Jesus' mother at the cross or went to the tomb. In Acts 15:37, Mark is considered for a missionary journey, but Paul decides against him. There is nothing in the Gospel to confirm or discredit that John Mark is the author of the Gospel.

Mark is considered the earliest of the Gospels, likely completed after the death of Peter and before Jerusalem is destroyed, which places it between 65-70. Matthew and Luke follow the organization of Mark and contain much of the same material, some of it word for word. Matthew has more teaching material, such as the Sermon on the Mount. Luke has more stories about Jesus' life, notably the birth of Jesus and his relative John the Baptist.

You may enjoy reading a parallel layout of the Gospels. Then you can compare them for yourself. The message of each Gospel stands out more clearly when they are compared in this way. You can borrow a parallel Gospel Bible from Pastor Linda or the church library.

WHO ACCEPTS JESUS AS GOD AND SAVIOR?

Mark ends very abruptly. When you reach chapter 16, you will notice the regular print takes you through verse 8. Then the print changes or the text is put in brackets. You will find two endings. These endings are not found in all of the earliest manuscripts of Mark. If we consider verse 8 to be Mark's intended ending, the women have been to the tomb and did not find Jesus. They leave scared. Mark does not provide the answer that Jesus rose again and is the risen Savior. Mark ends with a question, not the answer. I rather like this ending because it leaves the answer to the reader. **WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? DO YOU GET IT? WILL YOU BELIEVE AND FOLLOW? WILL THE GOOD NEWS CONTINUE IN YOUR LIFE?**