

The Gospel of Mark - Introduction

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

The Gospel of Mark is a record of Jesus Christ as the obedient Servant, emphasizing His service, toil, and love.

Scripture: Psalm 91:9, Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, Mark 10:45, John 20:31, Philippians 2:7

Topics: "Jesus As Servant", "Christian Service"

Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein delves into the Gospel of Mark, emphasizing the unique portrayal of Jesus as the obedient Servant, distinct from the other Gospels' focus on His roles as King, Son of Man, and true God. Mark's Gospel highlights Jesus' service, toil, love, patience, and mighty works as the perfect Servant prophesied by the Old Testament. The Gospel of Mark serves as a pattern for believers in their service to God, showcasing the importance of sonship and service going hand in hand, as seen in Jesus' perfect obedience as the Son of God.

Transcript

The Gospel of Mark is the briefest of the four Gospels. The traditional view, which holds that the Apostle Peter dictated this record into the pen of Mark, so that he was only an amanuensis, has been proven erroneous. Equally incorrect are other theories, that the Gospel of Mark was written first and served Matthew and Luke in giving their account, copying from it and making additions, or, the hypothesis that there was an original record, a common source, which the Evangelists used. All these opinions are mostly the inventions of men who disbelieve the inspiration of the chosen instruments of God in giving a fourfold picture of His blessed Son on earth. An unswerving faith in the inspiration of the four Evangelists solves all the supposed difficulties and discrepancies of which we hear so much in our days. Inspiration makes error impossible.

Mark was not an Apostle. Two Apostles were chosen to write Gospel records, Matthew and John. The other two, Mark and Luke, did not belong to the twelve. Mark's and John's Gospels give us the chronological account, while Matthew and Luke were led under the guidance of the Holy Spirit not to pen the events chronologically, but to arrange them in such a way as to bring out the distinctive features of their respective Gospels.

While Matthew describes the Lord Jesus Christ as the King, Luke as the Son of Man in His perfection, John as the true God and the eternal life, Mark was chosen to write the account of our Lord as the obedient Servant. It was announced by the Prophets that He would appear as a servant. Isaiah beheld Him as the Servant of God. Through Zechariah the Spirit of God announced, "Behold, I will bring forth my

Servant, the Branch" (Zechariah 3:8). And after He had been on earth in the form of a servant, the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Philippians tells us again that He who ever existed in the form of God "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). Mark, himself a servant, was graciously called to give a pen picture of this blessed Servant and to record His toil, His service of love and patience, as well as His mighty works. All which does not stand in definite relation to our Lord as the Servant is carefully omitted, and many other things omitted by the other Evangelists are added, to describe the manner and perfection of the Servant's work.

The purpose of the Gospel of Mark must never be lost sight of in studying it. Well may we call it the neglected Gospel, for it is the least studied. God gave it that we His redeemed people might as His servants have a pattern in our service. One thing, however, is absolutely necessary in the intelligent and spiritual study of Mark and that is a constant comparison with the Gospel of Matthew. Such a comparison will bring out the beauties of the record given by Mark and shows the divine power which guided infallibly these men of God.

We have therefore given in the analysis the parallel passages from the Gospel of Matthew and from the Gospel of Luke. The analysis contains many hints and annotations, which will help in a closer study. At the close of the analyzed Gospel the reader will find several articles on the personality of Mark, the characteristic features of this Gospel and other information, which, we hope, will prove of help to all students of this part of God's Holy Word.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Chapter 10:45.

Part I. The Servant; who He is and how He came. Chapter 1:1-13.

Part II. The Servant's work; not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Chapter 1:14-10:52.

Part III. The Servant in Jerusalem. Presented as King and rejected. Chapter 11-13.

Part IV. Giving His Life a ransom for many. Chapter 14-15:47.

Part V. The Servant Highly exalted. Risen and Ascended; His commission to His servants and working with them. Chapter 16.

PART I. THE SERVANT; WHO HE IS AND HOW HE CAME

Chapter 1:1-13

1. The Servant, the Son of God. Verse 1.
 2. His coming promised and announced. Verses 2-8. Matthew 3:1-11; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:19-30.
 3. The Servant comes forth. Verses 9-11. Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34.
 4. The Servant in the wilderness. Verses 12-13. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.
1. The Servant, the Son of God. Verse 1.

No other Gospel begins in this way. The Deity of our Lord is first of all emphasized. Nothing is said about the virgin birth, nor is a genealogy given. The miraculous birth is most fully brought out in Luke's Gospel, the Gospel of our Lord's humanity. No genealogy appears in Mark; a servant does not need such. Nor do we find Bethlehem mentioned, or the event which is characteristic to the Gospel of Matthew, the visit of the wise men, seeking the newborn King of the Jews. All these and other matters are omitted because they do not fall within the scope and purpose of the Gospel of Mark. The Servant is the Son of God. This great truth is fully attested by His obedience in always doing the will of Him that sent Him and by His mighty miracles which accompanied His loving service. If He were not the Son of God He could not have rendered the perfect service. Sonship and Service always go together. Only a Son of God can be a servant of God. Grace makes us, if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, sons of God. True service for God is the result of the enjoyment Of our sonplace in Christ Jesus. A deeper realization and enjoyment of our sonship will be followed by a more obedient and constant service. The Gospel of John gives the fullest witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). The Gospel of Mark shows that He is the Son of God by His wonderful character as the Servant.

2. His Coming promised and announced. Verses 2-8.

Prophets promised His Coming (Malachi 3:1). The passage proves Him to be Jehovah. In Malachi we read that Jehovah says "he shall prepare the way before Me." The Spirit of God changes the "Me" to "Thy Face." The servant is none other than Jehovah, who spoke to the Prophets. Isaiah 40:3 is likewise quoted. Here too we find the same testimony that Jesus the Servant is Jehovah. "Prepare ye the way of Jehovah."

The account of the ministry of John the Baptist is the briefest in the Gospel of Mark. A few sentences only describe his testimony in the wilderness and his person. All the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem went out to him. The baptism of John in the river of Jordan was the outward sign of repentance. They confessed their sins. A comparison with the record of the Baptist's ministry in Matthew, Luke and John is very instructive. In Mark all the preaching of John concerning the state of the nation is omitted, for the Holy Spirit describes in Mark John's ministry only as a necessary preliminary to introduce the Servant and His ministry. Of the baptism which Christ is to bring Mark mentions "the Holy Spirit;" "and with fire" is left out. The fire baptism is His judgment work stated in Matthew and Luke. Christ as the humble Servant does not execute judgment, but the coming King (Matthew) and the Son of Man coming again (Luke) will judge and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

3. The Servant comes forth. Verses 9-11

The Servant appears to begin His service. From Nazareth of Galilee He came forth. There too during the hidden years He had served. The Servant was absolutely sinless and yet He was baptized in Jordan. He showed His perfect willingness to take, in obedience to the Father's will, the sinner's place in death. In verse 10 the word "straightway" is found for the first in Mark. It is the characteristic word of this Gospel describing the promptness of His service. The anointing by the reception of the Spirit follows. In Matthew we read "heaven was opened unto Him." In Luke, "heaven was opened." In Mark "He saw the heavens opened." Encouraging sight for Him, who had taken the lowest place! All God's servants need the vision of this opened heavens. The Father's voice proclaimed Him then as His beloved Son.

4. The Servant in the Wilderness. Verses 12-13

Upon this He was driven immediately into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. His fitness to be the Servant to minister and give His life for a ransom was fully proven in His victorious conflict. The different

temptations are not reported by Mark; they belong to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, where we find them. But here we have a statement which is peculiar to Mark. "And was with the wild beasts." It tells of his deep humiliation. Moses and Elijah were in the wilderness being prepared for service. David also had been alone in the solitary places. None, however, was in the place which He took, whose eternal abode was the Father's bosom. The wilderness and the wild beasts are the witnesses of a marred creation; the mighty Creator had come in the form of the creature to meet and overcome under such conditions the fallen being, Satan. Some have taught that He was in danger of being attacked by the wild beasts. This was impossible (Psalm 91:9-13).

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