

BOOK OF MARK

STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR

Historically, Mark has been considered the author. In fact, it is believed to be John Mark, the same Mark who traveled extensively with Peter and was considered by Peter to be his spiritual son (1 Pet. 5:13), was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), and traveled with Paul as well for a time (Acts 13:5, 2 Tim. 4:11). John Mark was a native of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), but likely wrote his gospel in Rome while with Peter. So, it is important to note that Mark was not an eyewitness of Jesus as one of the original Disciples, but he gained his information about Jesus directly from Peter, who was part of the original group. Mark recorded Peter's remembrances with accuracy, but not necessarily in a strict chronological format – though many believe his is the most chronological of all the gospels.

DATE

There are 601 verses from Mark's gospel appearing in the Book of Matthew and many appear in Luke's gospel as well. So, was Mark the first of the gospel writers? We may never know. If Mark was written first, it would put the date somewhere around AD 45-60. However, many believe the book was written after Peter's death during Nero's persecutions, around AD 64-67. Others base the date on Mark's writing during Peter's life, therefore between AD 40-60. What we know from the text itself (ch. 13) is that it was written before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. This makes the reasonable dating of Mark somewhere between AD 45-70, with most believing around the early to mid 60s.

LITERARY GENRE & STRUCTURE

Mentioned earlier, Mark is an accurate recording of Peter's recollections. Where Matthew focused on the teachings of Jesus, Mark emphasizes Jesus' works. There is a faster pacing to Mark's gospel. In fact, the Greek word "euthys" (translated "immediately or suddenly") is used 42 times in the book, more than anywhere else in the whole New Testament. Mark shows the supernatural nature & works of Jesus, calling for absolute commitment through discipleship & preaching of the gospel, even if that requires suffering. Jesus is portrayed as God's Son and therefore supernatural in His works, but also a Servant exposed to life's troubles, especially when it comes to conflict with the Pharisees. Jesus' humanity is a strong focus in this gospel.

Mark clearly wrote for Gentiles, Romans in particular, as the book was written in Rome. He interprets Jewish words for Gentiles (Mark 3:17, 5:41, 7:11, 10:46, 14:36, 15:34) and interprets Jesus as saying all foods are acceptable (Mark 7:19). Go bacon! Mark also uses some Latin words not used in any other gospel. Mark's inclusion of the Roman centurion confessing Jesus as the Son of God therefore becomes a powerful testimony to the Romans and all Gentiles (Mark 15:39).

Here are a couple ways to outline Mark:

Servant Focus	Geographic Ministry Focus
Presentation of the Servant (1:1-2:12)	Preparation for Ministry (1:1-13)
Opposition to the Servant (2:13-8:26)	Galilean Ministry (1:14-9:50)
Instruction by the Servant (8:27-10:52)	Journey to Jerusalem (10:1-52)
Rejection of the Servant (11:1-15:47)	Jerusalem Ministry (11:1-13:37)
Resurrection of the Servant (16:1-20)	Suffering & Death in Jerusalem (14:1-15:47)
	Resurrection & Appearances (16:1-13)
	Great Commission & Work from Heaven (16:14-20)

CONTROVERSIAL ENDING

Earliest manuscripts have the ending of the book at Mark 16:8. So what about verses 9-20 then? Scholars believe those verses were added sometime in the early 2nd century to fill in the perceived abrupt ending of the book. The earlier ending (vs. 8) is open-ended, but sometimes that's how things are when it comes to Jesus' revelation of Himself – His power, authority, & divinity can render one speechless and overwhelmed. But the additional verses are not without biblical merit and repeat much of what is found in other gospels.

vs. 9	Appearance to Mary Magdalene	Luke 8:2; John 20:11-17
vs. 10	Mary Magdalene as messenger	John 20:18
vs. 11, 13	Disciples' unbelief	Luke 24:11, 41
vs. 12-13	Walk to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35
vs. 14	Appearance to the Eleven disciples	Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23
vs. 14	Rebuke of unbelief	John 20:24-29
vs. 15	Evangelistic Commission	Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47
vs. 16	Baptismal confession vs. condemnation	John 3:18, 36; Matt. 28:19-20
vs. 19	Ascension	Luke 24:50-51 (also Hebrews)

What about verses 17-18 and verse 20? These verses are not without biblical backup either! These verses echo many of the signs, miracles, & wonders featured in the Book of Acts and verse 20 could serve as the summary statement for Acts. Granted, verse 18 is a bit different (snakes & drinking poison), but this too is backed up by the single incident in Acts 28:3-6 and carries the overall expectation of miraculous deliverance & demonstration of divine power for Jesus' followers.

For these reasons, we can consider the controversial ending of Mark 16:9-20 as infallible & trustworthy as any other part of Scripture!

- What did you learn about discipleship? What is required? What comes along with discipleship? In what ways can you be a better disciple?

- There are times when Jesus said to be quiet. Why? Visit the following passages once again & give your thoughts as to why Jesus said to be silent.
 - Mark 1:23-26, 34

 - Mark 1:40-45; 7:32-37

 - Mark 8:27-30; 9:1-9

 - What do these passages mean for us as believers in present day?

- What differences do you see between Matthew and Mark?
 - How Jesus is portrayed

 - Things Matthew covered that Mark did not

 - Things Mark focused on that Matthew didn't or emphasized less

 - Anything else you see

- Describe Jesus' authority & how He used His authority on earth. What can we learn about His authority & the authority we have as His disciples? What differences do you see between Jesus' authority & how people use their authority?

KEY WORD – How do you summarize the whole book in one word or short phrase?

KEY VERSE & CHAPTER – What verse & chapter stands out to you as the summary of the whole book, or that the Lord used to teach you something important. Why did you choose these?