

The Gospel of Mark

The Title, Author, and Date of Mark

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2. Author Mark (a.k.a. John Mark, John, who was also called Mark). Though the gospel writers do not identify themselves, and only John's gospel contains internal evidence that directly identifies the author, Mark has been uniformly identified as the author. Papias, the bishop in Hieropolis, writing about 140 A.D. said "*Mark, becoming the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, though not in order, whatever he remembered of what was either said or done by Christ; for he was neither a hearer of the Lord nor a follower of Him, but afterwards, as I said, he was a follower of Peter, who arranged the discourses for use...*". Irenaeus wrote "*...Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, he also gave forth to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter.*" Eusebius, Origen, Justin Martyr and Jerome identify Mark as the author as well.
 - a. Which Mark? Two possibilities
 - i) Familiar to Acts and Epistles (most popular)
 - a. Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:36-40
 - b. Col 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 1 Pet 5:13; 2 Tim 4:11
 - ii) A different Mark than mentioned in Acts or Epistles (1 Peter being exception).
 - a. Reasoning being he would have needed to spend more time with Peter than the bible references allot to him in order to be his interpreter for the gospel account. However, no evidence has been given for this.
3. Date: Uncertain. Most suggest in the 50s as Peter knew and approved of the manuscript. Jerome writes that Mark died in the 8th year of Nero (62 A.D.).

Background and Setting

1. Targeted to Roman believers, particularly Gentiles.
 - a. When using Aramaic terms, he translates them for his readers
 - i) 3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:36; 15:22, 34
 - b. Uses Latin expressions instead of Greek equivalents
 - i) 5:9; 6:27; 12:15, 42; 15:16, 39
 - c. Reckons time according to Roman system
 - i) 6:48; 13:35
 - d. Carefully explains Jewish customs
 - i) 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42
 - e. Omits Jewish elements such as genealogies. Contains fewer OT references. Only mentions Sadducees once, and fewer critiques of the Pharisees.
 - f. When mentioning Simon of Cyrene, Mark identifies him as the father of Rufus, a member of the church in Rome (Rom 16:13).
2. Jerome writes that Mark the evangelist, after composing his gospel, went to Egypt and founded the church at Alexandria.

Historical and Theological Themes, Key Verse

1. Theme: Christ as the suffering Servant of the Lord. Key verse: 10:45 "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*"
2. Rev 4:6-7, Ezek 1:10 4 living creature imagery possible illustrative of gospel themes. Unanimity among early church fathers concerning this; Irenaeus, Victorinus, Augustine and Athanasius all agreed but each had a different combination. Walvoord suggests Lion (king)

- is Matthew, Calf (servant) Mark, Man (humanity) Luke, and Eagle (divinity) John. Others say the 4 creatures are representative of nature. Scripture doesn't interpret the imagery.
3. Synoptic Problem. Some 19th and 20th century scholars believe Mark was first gospel written and that Matthew and Luke used it as a primary source document along with other documents.
 - a. Matthew incorporates 90% of Mark and Luke 40%. 600 of Mark's 661 verses are found in Matthew and Luke combined.
 - b. However the "source document" theory was not espoused by early church, no other source documents have been found, we should expect similarities to exist between books because they each cover the life of Jesus, also H.S. brought to remembrance words of Christ (fulfilling John 14:26).
 - c. See T. Vacek notes for good synopsis of issues.
 4. Briefest of Gospels.
 - a. Narrowest in historical limits. Baptism of Jesus to resurrection.
 - i. Abruptly ends after resurrection. Possibly 16:9-20 written at a different time or by different person.
 - a. Not in oldest manuscripts (Sinaitic, Vatican)
 - b. Eusebius, in 4th century, said *"these are not found in correct copies.."*
 - c. Internal evidence. No good connection between this passage and the one before it. It is unlike the rest of Mark in words and phrases used in other parts of Mark.
 - ii. Arguments for 16:9-20 included in canon of scripture.
 - a. All other manuscripts contain these verses.
 - b. Verse 19 quoted by Irenaeus in 170 A.D.
 - c. Used in lectionaries in 4th century.
 - d. Written about the same time as rest of Mark.
 - b. Division of words and deeds of Christ different than that of other gospels
 - i. Recorded miracles: Matthew and Luke = 20 each. Mark = 19
 - ii. Recorded parables: Matthew = 15, Luke = 23, Mark = 4
 - iii. Mark does not record Sermon on the Mount
 - iv. Mark's prophetic discourse on Mount of Olives is the briefest of synoptics
 - v. Mark emphasizes action. Note word "Immediately" 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43. Continues in subsequent chapters. Roman society & Peter
 - a. Motto could be Acts 10:38
 - c. Richness of language and detail. *"Although Mark's record is the briefest, it is given with a fullness and richness of detail that imparts to it a particular value. He scarcely mentions any event without adding something to our knowledge of it."* W.N. Clark
 - i. Compare Matt 15:21-31 with Mark 7:24-37
 - ii. Mark 3:17 Boagernes only found here

Recorded Events Unique to Mark

1. Lord heals Multitude at seaside 3:7-12
2. Cures blind man who is seeing people as trees 8:22-26
3. Jesus enters temple inspecting its affairs 11:11
4. Duty to forgive in order to be forgiven 11:25-26

Parables in Mark

1. Common: sower & soils 4:3-8; faith of mustard seed 4:30; wicked husbandmen 12:1-12
2. Unique: seed growing in secret 4:26-29

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6. There is an important section in Mark's Gospel (6:45 - 8:26) that is completely omitted in Luke. This omission suggests that Luke had not seen Mark's Gospel when he wrote his own.
7. As these men who wrote the Gospels moved throughout the Roman Empire and among the various churches, it's highly probable that their paths would have crossed from time to time. *Consider:* Mark and Luke were both companions of Paul. For a while, the early church met in the home of Mark's mother. Luke could have easily met Matthew during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea. As they prayed together and visited and compared notes, all that would seem to make any so-called mutual literary dependency completely unnecessary.

The hypothetical solution to the so-called "Synoptic Problem" has been recently espoused by some leading evangelicals — good, solid men, but men who (I would think!) ought to know better.

Note: The two-source theory reduces the Gospel writers to simple "cut and paste" men. They are editors and not authors; compilers, not composers. But more seriously, this theory completely ignores the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit.

QUOTE: JOHN F. MacARTHUR

"The simplest solution to the 'Synoptic Problem' is that no such problem exists! Because critics cannot prove literary dependence between the Gospel writers, there is no need to explain it. The traditional view that the Gospel writers were inspired by God and wrote independently of each other — except that all three were moved by the *same* Holy Spirit (*II Pet 1z:20*) — remains the only plausible view."

THE MacARTHUR STUDY BIBLE; © 1997; Word Publishing; p 1454; (italics mine).

I agree. I believe that this "question" is purely a fabrication of modern skepticism in an attempt to deny the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Gospels, and ultimately, the rest of Scripture.

The “SYNOPTIC PROBLEM”

From about the 4th through the 19th centuries, the Gospel of Mark has largely been considered to be an appendix to the Gospel of Matthew. Mark is shorter than Matthew, and it moves more quickly through the narratives. Thus, it has been somewhat neglected. However, in recent times, Mark has come under a greater scrutiny, due largely to some questions that have been put forth regarding the relationship between the three Synoptic Gospels — Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

THE SUPPOSED PROBLEM

As one reads through these three Gospels, it's obvious that there is a great deal of overlap in the material that's covered. The question has been raised as to how to explain this overlap and repetition. This is commonly referred to as “the Synoptic Problem.”

THE SOLUTION PROPOSED

19th and 20th century “*scholars*” began to assume what has become known as the “Two-Source” theory. According to this theory, Mark was the first Gospel to be written and then Matthew and Luke used that Gospel as a primary source in writing their own gospels. Support from this is drawn from Luke's comment (*Lk 1:1*) that there were many other written accounts of the events surrounding the Lord Jesus Christ. It's also noted that Mark's abbreviated accounts are given a much more detailed treatment by Matthew and Luke. This would be expected if Mark were the source document.

Secondly, it has been conjectured that there was another document (or a collection of documents) — extant then but lost now — which is known simply as Q (taken from the first letter of the German word for “source”). The Q document is said to be the source of the material in Matthew and Luke that does not appear in Mark.

THE SOLID PROOF

The fact is that these arguments prove nothing. The weight of historical and Biblical evidence is overwhelmingly *against* such a theory.

1. The almost unanimous testimony of the Church until the 19th century was that Matthew, not Mark, was the first Gospel that was written.
2. There is no historical evidence or manuscript evidence anywhere that the Q document ever existed. There is no reference anywhere in church history to such a document.
3. Matthew was an Apostle and an eyewitness to the events of Christ's life and ministry. Mark was neither. Therefore, thinking logically, why would Matthew have to depend upon Mark's account? By the way, this would include Matthew's account of his own conversion!
4. A statistical analysis of the Synoptic Gospels reveals that the similarities between them are not really that great after all. In fact, the differences between them are striking enough to argue *against* any literary dependence among them.
5. Since the Gospels follow the same historical events, it would be surprising if there were not some similarities in the recording of those events and the sequence of their occurrence. E.g.; any number of reliable books on American History will include the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the war in Viet Nam, and even the Gulf War — in that order. Important places and people will also be included in each work. This does not necessarily argue that the respective authors stole from each other's works. The historical facts stand fast and cannot legitimately be tampered with. Therefore, the books should be expected to have some similarities.