

THE BIBLE in a nutshell



Mark Part 1 —by Dr Peter Hammond

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

Who was Mark?

John Mark was born in Cyrene in Africa, of the tribe of Levi. John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). The home of John Mark’s mother was the venue for the Last Supper. It was in the same Upper Room that the Lord appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection and where Peter went, when freed from prison (Acts 12:12). John Mark was also privileged to be part of the Apostle Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13). Mark became a co-worker with the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Mark established churches in Pentapolis and in Alexandria, Egypt. It was under the apostolic authority of Peter that the Gospel according to Mark was written.



Mark’s Gospel is the shortest – full of rapid action and the easiest to read. Mark is breathless, fast-paced, compelling, and effectively builds up the dramatic tension to focus on the climactic last week of the Lord’s ministry on earth. Mark proclaims the greatest News of all time.

The structure of Mark

There are three phases in the ministry of Jesus:

- Jesus was very popular, as thousands came to Him to be healed
- Controversies, confrontation, and conflict with religious leaders
- Preparing the twelve disciples for His coming betrayal and death

The first 2½ years of Jesus’ public ministry are

question: *“Who do men say that I am?” They answered, John the Baptist, ...Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’ He asked, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered...“You are the Christ...”* Mark 8:27-30

Jesus warns His disciples

“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again... ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a

The home of Mark’s mother was the venue for the Last Supper. It was in the same Upper Room that the Lord appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection.

covered in chapters 1 to 9. Chapter 10 covers the next six weeks, and chapters 11 to 16 covers Jesus’ last week.

Geographic structure

The Gospel of Mark begins with the baptism of Jesus at the River Jordan, which is below sea level. Then there is a steady ascent through Galilee to Caesarea Philippi, climaxing at the watershed of the highest point in Israel, Mount Hermon, the snow-capped mountain where He was Transfigured.

Who is Jesus?

When He asked His disciples the critical

man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Mark 8:31-38

Mount of Transfiguration

After this Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain and He was transfigured before them. *“His clothes became shining, exceedingly white... And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.”* – Mark 9:3-4. *“And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’”* – Mark 9:7

The temptation of Jesus

Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness and He was there tempted by satan for forty days (1:12-13). We see baptism and temptation crowded together. Immediately after this anointing of the Lord for His earthly ministry, He is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He hears whispers from hell. The baptismal benediction from the Father is only a preparation for spiritual warfare in the wilderness with the evil one. Temptation can be part of our preparation for service. Suffering, testing and trials are as much a part of God’s plans, as success and triumphs. There is nothing wrong with being tempted. The sin comes when we give in to temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).



The Lord predicts His betrayal and death

From this watershed, the story rapidly progresses downhill to the final confrontation with the religious leaders in Jerusalem. *“The Son of man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.’ But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.”* – Mark 9:31-32

John the baptist

Mark’s Gospel begins with John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness: *“Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight...”* *“There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop*

heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from Heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.’” – Mark 1:10-11. Here we see a picture of the Trinity. God the Father speaking from Heaven, the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove, and the Lord Jesus Christ coming up out of the water.

Power packed ministry

Then follows a relentless whirlwind of activity as the Lord teaches those who are in darkness, encourages those without hope, heals those who are sick and suffering, frees those who are under the power and bondage of satan, pardons those who are sinful and

repentant, preaches by the sea shore, selects four fisherman to become His first disciples, so that they can learn to be fishers of men. *“And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”* – Mark 1:22. »

Although Jesus does not need to be baptised, he chose to identify with John and be an example for us by going through the waters of baptism.

down and loose.

I indeed baptise you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.” – Mark 1:1-8. Malachi 3 prophesied that a prophet like Elijah would come and prepare the way for the Lord who would come suddenly to His Temple.

The baptism of Jesus

In Mark 1:9, the public ministry of the Lord Jesus begins. Although Jesus did not need to be baptised, he chose to identify with John and be an example for us by going through the waters of baptism. *“And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the*



THE BIBLE

in a nutshell



Mark Part 1



Those who are of stony ground, who hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness, but have no root in themselves and so they endure only for a time. Afterwards when tribulation or persecution arises, for the Word's sake, they immediately stumble There are also those who are like thorny ground, who hear the Word, but the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the Word and it becomes unfruitful.

The Messianic secret

Mark is primarily concerned with what Jesus did. Mark makes it clear how the Lord revealed Himself to His followers gradually. Jesus would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was (1:25,34). After having healed the man of leprosy, Jesus sent him away with a strong warning: "See that you do not tell anyone about this" – 1:44. When speaking to the demons, Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone who He was (3:12). After having raised Jarius' daughter to life, He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this (5:43).

Even on Mount Hermon, the Lord required His disciples to keep quiet about His identity. This Messianic secret reflects the Lord's concern to complete His mission without interruption. Premature recognition of His Messiahship would lead to intense agitation and a demand that He become some kind of political Messiah.

Many in Judea were expecting the Messiah to be some kind of military and political deliverer. They were ignoring the Old Testament prophecies of the suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), the Shepherd who would be struck and the sheep scattered (Zechariah 13:7). This would hinder His ministry and hasten His death. He needed this time to train and prepare His Apostles to fulfil the Great Commission after His death.

Called to service

The Lord does not call people from idleness; He calls busy and successful workers to follow Him. "Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him." – Mark 1:17-18. "He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.'" – Mark 1:38

Who is the greatest?

The disciples began to argue amongst

a woman of haemorrhaging, healed a man with a withered hand, walked on the sea, healed the gentile woman's daughter, healed the epileptic boy, healed two blind men, healed a deaf mute, and healed the blind man at Bethsaida.

Crowded and harassed

As a result, the Lord was constantly pressed in and harassed by crowds. His devotions were interrupted (1:35-37), there was no time to even finish a meal (3:20), the Lord continually was pressed for help to such

The Lord's life was crowded with works of mercy, healing the sick, feeding the starving, exercising power over disease, power over nature, authority over demons, and authority over death.

themselves as to who was the greatest. The Lord rebuked them: "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Mark 9:35. "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them... Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." – Mark 10:38-45

The tireless servant of God

Mark gives us an insight to how crowded the Lord's life was with works of mercy, healing the sick, feeding the starving, exercising power over disease, power over nature, authority over demons, and authority over death. The Lord cleansed lepers, stilled the storm, delivered people who were demon possessed, healed a paralytic, raised Jarius' daughter, healed

an extent that His friends said that He was unbalanced (3:21), the Lord was pursued even when He sought rest (6:31-34). The key word that one reads over and over in Mark's Gospel is: immediately.

Overwhelmed by frenzied crowds

"When they had crossed over...immediately the people recognised Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well." – Mark 6:53-56

The suffering Servant

Mark presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the suffering Servant of the Lord. He focuses on the actions of Jesus, particularly emphasising His service, suffering, and sacrifice. Mark, along with emphasising Christ's divine power, also demonstrates

His humanity, His disappointments, His weariness, and His compassion.

The call of Matthew Levi

Jesus called Levi sitting at the tax office: "Follow Me" so he arose and followed Him. Matthew organised a feast at his house so that many tax collectors could hear teachings from the Lord: "And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?'"

Jesus said to them, 'Those who are well have

and warns of those who are so hard-hearted that the seed of the Word does not take root in their heart. Those who are of stony ground, who hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness, but have no root in themselves and so they endure only for a time. Afterwards when tribulation or persecution arises, for the Word's sake, they immediately stumble There are also those who are like thorny ground, who hear the Word, but the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the Word and it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:3-20).

In Mark 4, the Lord gives the parable of the sower and warns of those who are so hard-hearted that the seed of the Word does not take root in their heart.

no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." – Mark 2:16-17

Controversies over the Sabbath

Other controversies followed. The Pharisees complained about the Lord attending feasts and not fasting enough (1:18-22). When disciples ate some grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees complained "...He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" – Mark 2:28

When the Lord healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue, the Pharisees were ready to kill Him. "Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent." – Mark 3:4. Jesus healed a man. "Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him." – Mark 3:6

The parable of the sower

In Mark 4, the Lord gives the parable of the sower

You will reap what you sow

"...Take heed... With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you..." – Mark 4:24. When the Lord sent out His disciples, two by two, to evangelise, he taught: "And whoever will not receive you nor hear you... it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgement than for that city!" – Mark 6:11. When the Pharisees rebuked the Lord for His disciples not following the traditions of the Jews, Jesus answered and said to them: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" – Mark 7:6-9. ■

...PART 2 IS COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF JOY!

PETER HAMMOND is a Missionary, Bible teacher and author. Tel: 021 689 4480; or see www.frontline.org.za; mission@frontline.org.za