



THE GOSPEL OF MARK
CHRISTIANITY|**EXPLORED**

ESV

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READ THIS FIRST

You have just opened a truly remarkable book.

It tells the extraordinary story of the most influential man who ever lived – Jesus Christ. It’s a story that is both heart-warming and shocking. It’s a story that people died to write down and preserve so that you can hold it in your hands today and read it. It’s a story that has changed the lives of countless people around the world and throughout history.

Most of us will have heard something about Jesus, and know some of the details of his life and teaching. Perhaps you listened to some stories about Jesus when you were a child. Or maybe you learned something about him at school. But many people have never taken time as an adult to examine Jesus—to consider the meaning of the man from Galilee from a mature viewpoint.

The book you are holding is a great place to start. It was written by a man called Mark, who researched his information from people who were eyewitnesses of the life and death of Jesus. These same eyewitnesses were also there when the astonishing events of the first Easter unfolded. Mark writes his book knowing it to be the truth – not made-up stories, but history.

Mark’s Gospel is the shortest of four accounts of the life of Jesus in the Bible. The word “Gospel” means “good news.” These people that wrote the Gospels were convinced that Jesus was good news for the whole world.

In his opening words, Mark tells us what this good news is that he wants to share with us: it is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is about the identity of Jesus.

So can we encourage you to read this book with an open mind, and an open heart? As you read it, ask the question that Mark asks: Who is Jesus? You may be surprised by what you discover...

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Read it slowly...

You can read through Mark's Gospel in less than two hours. But to really think about what Mark is saying about Jesus, it is better to take it slowly. Use the reading plan on page 6 to work your way through a bit at a time.

Read it thoughtfully...

Many of the stories Jesus told were a bit like puzzles. The people at the time didn't "get them" immediately. So rather than speeding through to get to the end, take time to pause and think about the meaning of the stories and incidents. Because Mark's Gospel is so old, there are details that may be unfamiliar to you. There is a map on page 63 to show you where the events described in Mark happened.

Read it responsively...

There's a short section in the middle to help you think about some of the things raised in the first half. And after you have finished Mark, there is a section at the back – on page 53 – that explains how you might respond to what you have read. And finally...

Read it prayerfully...

Mark wrote his Gospel because he had found forgiveness and new meaning in life through Jesus. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, God wants to help you understand what you are reading. He is willing to answer even the most faltering prayer. The words below may help you.

A PRAYER TO USE BEFORE READING MARK

Lord God, please help me as I read Mark's Gospel.
Help me to understand why what he has written is good news.
Help me to understand who Jesus is and what he achieved.
Help me to understand the parts that I find difficult,
and above all help me to respond to Jesus in the right way.

Amen.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A READING PLAN: MARK IN THREE WEEKS

You can read through Mark's Gospel in less than two hours. But to really think about what he is telling us about Jesus, it is better to take it slowly. Use the reading plan below to work your way through Mark, taking time to think about what you read.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1. Mark 1:1-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 12. Mark 9:1-32 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2. Mark 1:29 – 2:12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 13. Mark 9:33 – 10:16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3. Mark 2:13 – 3:6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 14. Mark 10:17-52 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4. Mark 3:7-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 15. Mark 11:1-33 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5. Mark 4:1-41 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 16. Mark 12:1-44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6. Mark 5:1-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 17. Mark 13:1-37 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 7. Mark 5:21-43 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 18. Mark 14:1-52 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 8. Mark 6:1-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 19. Mark 14:53 – 15:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 9. Mark 6:30-56 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 20. Mark 15:16-47 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 10. Mark 7:1-37 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 21. Mark 16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 11. Mark 8:1-38 | |

A note about chapters and verses

Throughout this book you will see some large numbers and some smaller numbers. The larger numbers are chapters that Mark has been split into. The smaller numbers are the verses that make up each chapter. The chapters and verses weren't in the original but have been added later to help us find our way around. We often use a kind of shorthand so that Mark chapter 1 and verse 1 will be written as "Mark 1:1" or sometimes as "Mark 1 v 1."

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^a ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,^b

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,*

³ *the voice of one crying in the wilderness:*

*‘Prepare^c the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”*

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son;^d with you I am well pleased.”

The Temptation of Jesus

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

^a Some manuscripts omit the Son of God ^b Some manuscripts in the prophets ^c Or crying: Prepare in the wilderness
^d Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved

¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”^e ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Jesus Heals a Man with an Unclean Spirit

²¹ And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

^e The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women

Jesus Heals Many

²⁹ And immediately he^f left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus Preaches in Galilee

³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." ³⁸ And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." ³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

⁴⁰ And a leper⁹ came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And Jesus^h sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

^f Some manuscripts *they* ⁹ *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13 ^h Greek *he*; also verse 45

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

2 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’ ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

Jesus Calls Levi

¹³ He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

¹⁵ And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of^a the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat^b with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physi-

^a Some manuscripts and ^b Some manuscripts add and drink