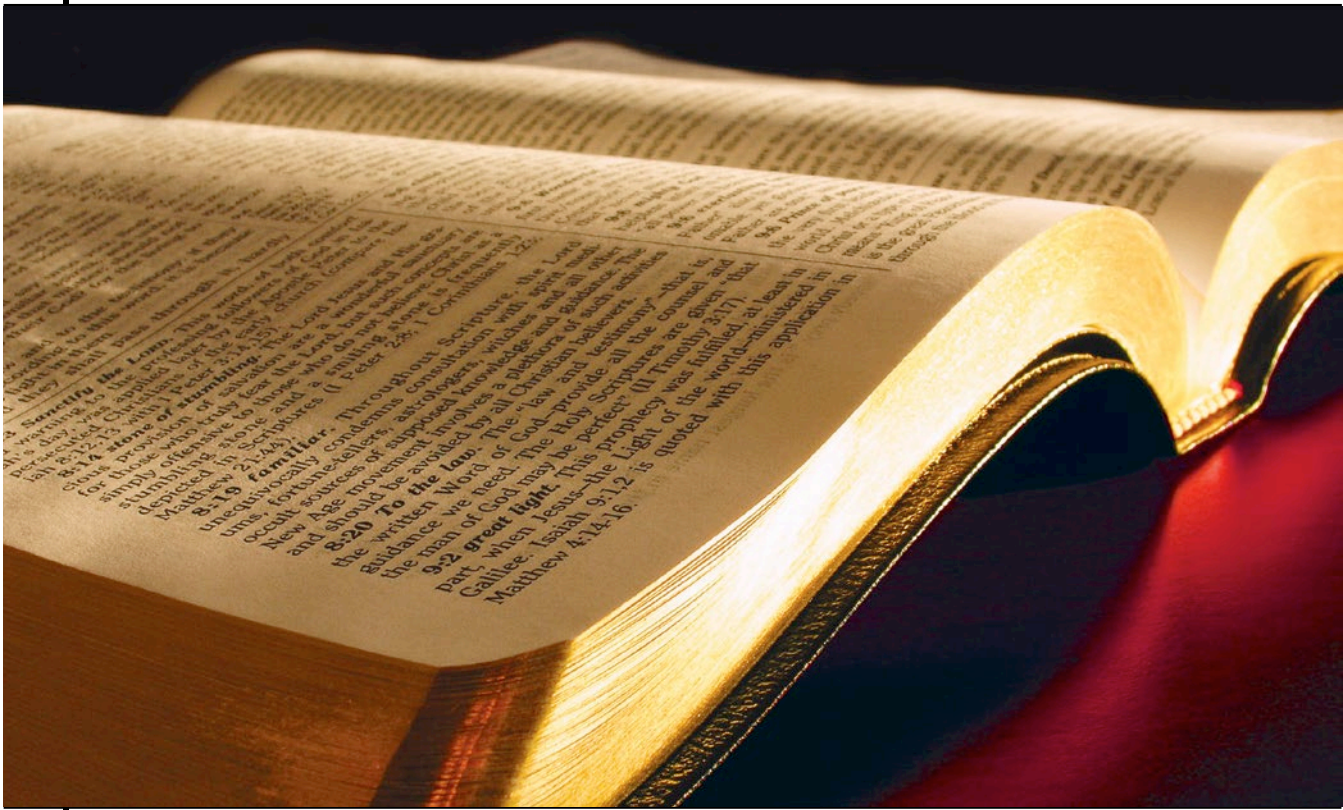




BIBLE OVERVIEW



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Reasons to Study the Bible

To know God. God created the heaven and the earth and everyone in it (Gen. 1–3). To know God is to have eternal life (John 17:3).

To enjoy and love God. Meditate on God’s character, principles, and promises. Rejoice in his love, care, and forgiveness (Ps. 119:12–18, 160–162; 1 Tim. 6:17).

To know God’s Word. The Scriptures were inspired by God. They teach us the truth and show us what is wrong in our lives. They straighten us out (2 Tim. 3:16).

To understand the Word. Jesus is called the Word because he is the ultimate communication from God. He existed from the beginning with God, he is God, and he created everything. He said that those who have seen him have seen the Father (John 1:1–3; 10:30; 12:44, 45; 14:7–9).

To learn direction in life. The Bible shows us what to do (Ps. 119:11).

To find comfort and hope. The Scriptures give us encouragement (Rom. 15:4).

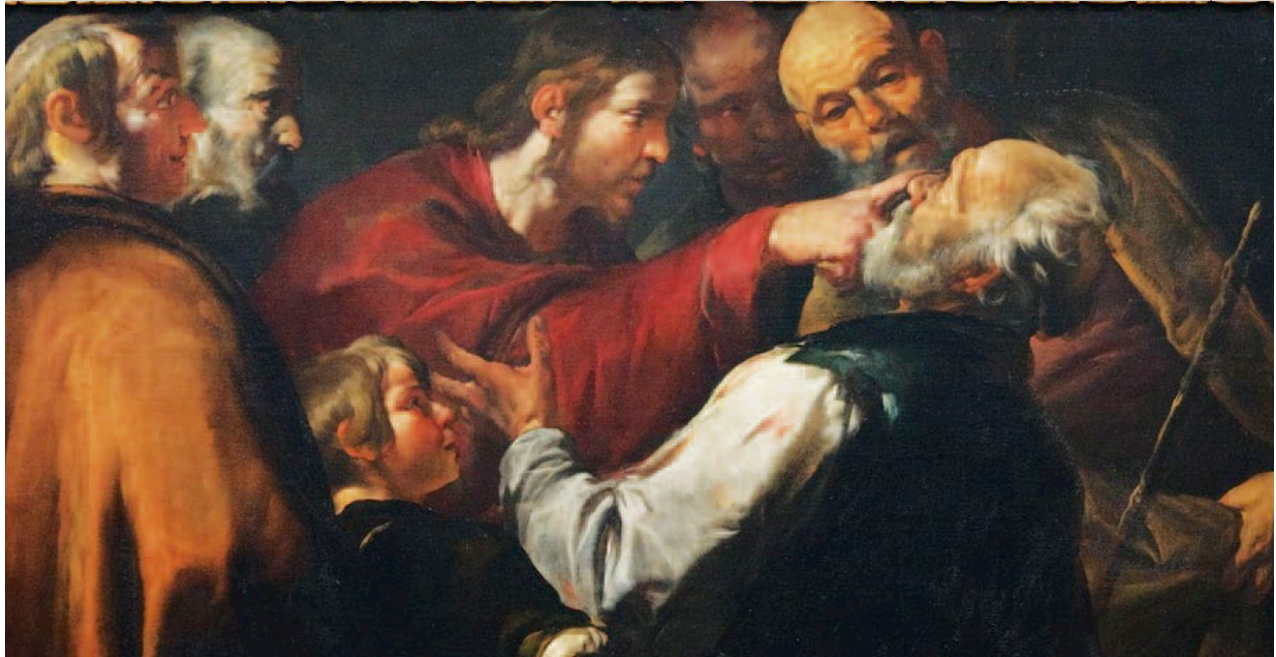
To let God expose our innermost thoughts and desires. God’s Word helps us see ourselves as we really are and convicts us of sin so that we repent and change (Heb. 4:12–16).

To become pure and holy. Jesus prayed this for all believers that they would be set apart for God and his holy purposes (John 17:17–23).

To obey the Great Commandment. The more we know God, the more we can love him. The Great Commandment is to love God with all of our being and our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:29–31). And Jesus gave us a new commandment to love one another (John 13:34–35).

MARK

JESUS IS THE HUMBLE SERVANT



Christ Healing the Blind Man (Mark 8:22–25) by Gioacchino Assereto

Purpose

The Gospel of Mark presents “the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God” (1:1). Mark’s Gospel, then, is the starting point of the good news (the gospel) that the awaited Messiah has come. This Messiah is the Son of God. In Mark, a variety of characters identify Jesus as the Son of God:

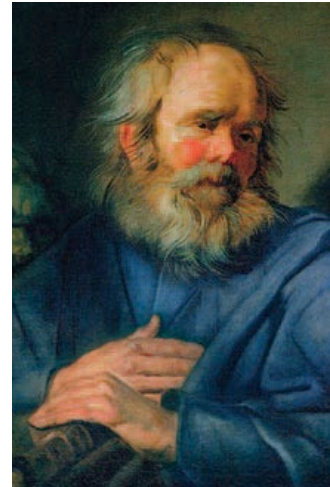
- God the Father (1:11; 9:7)
- The demons (3:11; 5:7)
- Jesus himself (13:32; 14:61)
- The Roman centurion (15:39)

Mark’s main interest is to present the good news. Jesus’ first words in the Gospel introduce the good news: “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (1:15). Mark shows that the good news of God’s rule over all things has come near. This rule is revealed by Jesus’ teachings and miracles. Mark presents Jesus as God’s active agent, his power in the world, and his means of defeating sin, death, and the Devil (1:27–28).

In Mark, Jesus, although the Messiah with divine authority (2:1–12; 9:2–8), appears in humility, weakness, and suffering. These themes suggest that Mark is probably writing to a community in distress and persecution. The Gospel of Mark, then, is an account of the good news, Jesus' life in words and actions, and is meant to encourage, comfort, and give hope to a community under duress.

Outline

1. Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (1:1–13)
 - a. John the Baptist prepares the way (1:1–8)
 - b. Jesus' baptism and temptation (1:9–13)
2. Jesus' Public Ministry (1:14–8:26)
 - a. Calling of disciples (1:14–45)
 - b. Controversies with the Jewish authorities (2:1–3:12)
 - c. Teachings and power of the kingdom (3:13–6:6a)
 - d. Jesus' ministry beyond Galilee (6:6b–8:26)
3. Toward Jerusalem, Passion, Death, and Resurrection (8:27–16:8)
 - a. Crisis foretold (8:27–10:52)
 - b. Arrest, death, and resurrection (11:1–16:8)



St. Mark by Frans Hals

A Personal Touch

Both Matthew and Mark give the name of the man who helped Jesus carry his cross, Simon of Cyrene. But only Mark names him as the father of Alexander and Rufus (15:21). Years later in Paul's letter to the Romans we hear of another Rufus and his mother in Rome (Rom. 16:13), who might be the same person Mark names in his Gospel. Mark's reference might be a personal touch naming someone whom the Roman Christians might know.

Background

Author: An early church tradition holds that John Mark, a friend of Paul and cousin to Barnabas (Acts 12:12; Col. 4:10), wrote this work after being a disciple of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). The church leaders Papias, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria, in the first and second centuries AD, are the source of this tradition. The rapid-fire style of the Gospel may show some influence from Peter's own writing style. We first learn about Mark in connection to his mother. Believers met at her house to worship (Acts 12:12). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas in their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). After deserting them in Perga (Acts 13:13), he followed Barnabas to Cyprus.

Date: Many scholars believe Mark was the first to write his Gospel. If this is true, Mark might have written the Gospel in the late AD 50s. Other scholars suggest a later date just before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.

Audience: If Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome, as many scholars think, it is possible his intended audience was Roman. The theme of suffering, power of God, and hope for the future, as well as the explanation of Jewish customs, suggest that Mark's audience could have been a community of Gentile believers under persecution and suffering, such as the church in Rome.

The Son of God and Son of Man

Son of God

As Christians, when we read the words “Son of God,” we immediately and correctly think of the second member of the Trinity, Jesus. However, at the time Jesus lived on earth, that was not the natural meaning of the expression.

The expression is connected to God’s promise to David. God promised that one of David’s descendants would be on the throne of Israel forever: “I will be his father, and he will be my son” (2 Sam. 7:14). The expression is also connected to Israel as a people. God is the “father of Israel” (Isa. 64:8; Jer. 31:9). The expression, then, “Son of God” referred back to the king; it was royal language. Initially, calling Jesus “the Son of God” meant that he was Israel’s king, descendant of David, the Messiah.

Most non-Jewish people within the Roman Empire would recognize the expression “Son of God” as referring to the Caesar. By affirming that Jesus is “the Son of God,” the Gospels indirectly deny that any Caesar can truly hold that title.

However, in time, the disciples and all the people realized that Jesus was more than just David’s son. As the Roman centurion confessed, “surely this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). Jesus is King, but he is not King of Israel alone. He is the King of kings and God himself in the flesh.



Son of Man

Mark also affirms that Jesus is the “Son of Man.” This expression occurs in three different contexts:

1. Jesus’ earthly ministry (Mark 2:10, 28; 8:20; 13:37; 16:13; 18:11)
2. Jesus’ humiliation and suffering (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33; 9:12; 10:45)
3. The future coming in judgment (Mark 8:38; 14:62)

The expression “Son of Man” is likely connected to the prophet Daniel’s vision of one “like a son of man” who receives victory and dominion from God (Dan. 7:14–18). “Son of Man,” then, also expresses the promise of a King, one who would defeat the forces of evil (the four beasts in Daniel) and establish God’s eternal kingdom. Thus, the two expressions, Son of God and Son of Man, are complementary and point to Jesus’ role as King and Messiah.

Themes

- **The Gospel.** The gospel must be preached (8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9).
- **The Nature of God.** God is passionate and compassionate.
- **Jesus' Emotions.** Mark shows us Jesus' emotions: compassion (1:41; 6:34; 8:2); anger (3:5; 10:14); weariness (7:34; 8:12); overwhelming sorrow (14:33–34).
- **Jesus' Passion.** Mark focuses a major portion of his work on Jesus' Passion (his last hours and crucifixion) and the events leading up to it (chapters 10–16).
- **The Goodness of God.** God is unstoppably good. (1:32–34; 3:10–11; 5:18–20; 6:47–56; 7:33–37; 10:27; 11:22–23; 16:6–7).
- **The Messianic Mystery.** In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus warned different people to not reveal to others that he was the Messiah (Mark 1:43–44; 1:34; 3:11–12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9). Because first century Jews expected the Messiah to be a conquering hero, Jesus revealed slowly his true nature as the Messiah.

Curious Details

Some think that the unnamed “young man wearing nothing but a linen garment” in Mark 14:51–52 is a reference to Mark himself. This may be so, but it is certainly an example of detail that often Mark alone provides. Alternatively, the reference might be one of those curious details that an aged witness—perhaps Peter—would recall in his memoirs of those amazing events surrounding the death of Jesus.

Key Verses

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”—Mark 8:3

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.—Mark 1:41

“Don't be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.”—Mark 16:6

Being God's People

Marks presents two equally important sides of Jesus. On the one hand, Jesus is “the Son of God,” full of power and authority, which he demonstrates through many miracles and teaching with authority. On the other hand, Jesus is humble, unassuming, obedient, and a servant.

With that presentation, the Gospel challenges our normal concept of leadership: to be a leader does not mean having power and being feared like the Caesars. Rather, it means to be humble, obedient, and have the heart of a servant. Jesus was a servant-leader through whom God's power shone brightly.

The Gospel of Mark presents the “beginning of the gospel ... ” The gospel continues through the life and ministry of each and every Christian since Christ ascended until he returns in power and glory.



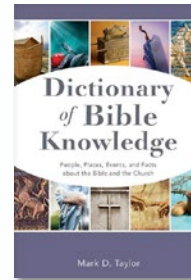
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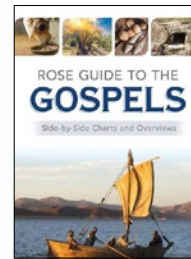


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