

Mark 1

Mark is the most action-oriented gospel. It is the opposite of a long-winded theological discourse. You have talkers and philosophers, and then you have urgency-oriented doers out there getting stuff done. Mark focuses on how obedient and loyal and trustworthy Jesus is. He does not waste time. He showed us that we are all accountable for our time on earth.

The gospel of Mark portrays Jesus carrying on purposefully anonymous; so that he can get stuff done without the fanfare. Mark focuses on how quickly Jesus responded to the task at hand. As we read it, we need to consider the task and hand in our lives. John Mark was a disciple of Peter. Peter was not a wordsmith or philosopher either. Mark and Peter were action junkies.

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. (1 Peter 5)

Mark may be intended for a Roman audience, as he explains the significance of some Jewish traditions. It appears that both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke got some of their information from this Mark. It is assumed that Mark was the first gospel written. Wherever Matthew or Luke show a differing perspective from Mark, they feel compelled to cite their independent sources.

Mark is a crudely-written source of information from first-hand witnesses. Mark's style simply records: "He said this; or he immediately did that". It is like a police report. There is not a lot of emotion, opinion or conjecture. Matthew and Luke appear to take Mark's information and weave it into a polished setting with a developed theological backdrop for its relation to prophecy or cultural expectations, etc...

Aramaic became the everyday language of the Hebrews after the Jewish captivity. It was the language of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Mark re-quotes more Aramaic than other gospels. The New Testament is written in Greek, because that was the international language common to all. **There is good reason to believe that the gospels were actually spoken in Aramaic, and then, reduced to Greek on paper.**

Many scholars believe the Gospels were likely spoken or preached in Aramaic (or a dialect of it called Galilean Aramaic) by Jesus and his disciples, but then written down in Koine Greek by the Gospel authors.

This theory is based on several factors:

- The Gospels contain Aramaic phrases and quotes (e.g., "Abba," "Talitha kum," "Ephphatha") that were likely original.
- The Greek texts often have Semitic syntax and idioms, suggesting translation from an Aramaic source.
- Early Church Fathers like Papias (c. 60-130 CE) and Irenaeus (c. 130-202 CE) implied that the Gospels were initially spoken in Aramaic or Hebrew.

However, the exact relationship between the spoken Aramaic (or Hebrew) and the written Greek texts is still a topic of scholarly debate. Some possibilities include:

- **Aramaic/Hebrew oral tradition → Greek written Gospel:** The authors wrote in Greek, drawing from oral traditions in Aramaic/Hebrew.
- **Aramaic/Hebrew written sources → Greek written Gospel:** The authors used written Aramaic/Hebrew sources, which they then translated into Greek.

Regardless, it's clear that Aramaic (or a related Semitic language) was likely the primary spoken language of Jesus and his followers, while Koine Greek was the language of the written Gospels.

Instances where Mark preserves Aramaic (or Semitic) words and phrases

- Mark 5:41 — "Talitha (k)umi" ("Little girl, I say to you, get up")
- Mark 7:11, 13 — "Corban" (a term related to a vow/offering; Mark explains it)
- Mark 11:9-10 — "Hosanna" (Hebrew/Aramaic interjection; crowds cry "Hosanna")
- Mark 11:14, 15 — uses "denarius" (Latin) less relevant but Mark also notes Semitic phrases in crowd acclamations
- Mark 14:36 — "Abba" ("Father") in Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane
- Mark 15:34 — "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (Aramaic: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") — Mark translates or glosses elsewhere in some manuscripts
- Mark 15:22-23, 29 — place names and sayings with Semitic resonance (e.g., "Golgotha" = "place of a skull")

Does this make Mark unique?

- Not entirely unique. Matthew and Luke also preserve Aramaic/Hebrew words (e.g., Matthew preserves "Eli, Eli..." in 27:46 and "Amen I say to you" from Semitic idiom; Luke has "Ephphatha" in 7:14 and uses "Abba" in 23:46 in some manuscripts). John preserves distinct Aramaic terms (e.g., "Rabboni" in John 20:16).
- Mark is notable for several well-known Aramaic quotations (especially "Talitha cumi," "Abba," and the cry from the cross) and for occasionally explaining Semitic terms for a Gentile audience, which supports the view that his readers were not familiar with Jewish customs and languages.
- So Mark is distinctive for the frequency and prominence of preserved Aramaic in key scenes, but not wholly unique among the four Gospels.

Read Mark 1:1-20: It is interesting that Mark begins with John the Baptist. Peter's brother Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist before he became a disciple of Jesus. John the Baptist was born into a priestly family; but he left all of that to meet God in the wilderness and encourage others to simplify their lives and do the same. John The Baptist was not drawn to all of the rituals and facades and ceremonies included in the priesthood. John the Baptist was like the working man's pastor. He is all in and he is getting his hands dirty. He is not holding back.

Either way, Mark begins with Jesus' commissioning for official work. If we are studying Jesus the servant, instead of Jesus as God-incarnate we see that his *work permit and readiness* for service was authorized by the Father and the Holy Spirit. His Jewishness, his family influence or community are disregarded by Mark. That has nothing to do with his output and productivity. Mark focuses on Jesus the nondescript servant of his father. Jesus is officially introduced per Isaiah's prophecy, by the one who comes in the spirit of Elijah. Elijah himself will return before Jesus' second coming.

⁵ *"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."* (Malachi 4)

Jesus receives baptism. It is easy to see Jesus as a member of the trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit all conversing and present in the act of his baptism. People say that the word trinity is not listed in scripture. The trinity is obvious right here. Why did Jesus need to fast and be tempted for 40 days? He had to provide a pattern of dealing with temptation. He also displayed that even his physical ministry was something that required his flesh to yield to his spirit. It is

also like a military protocol. All machinery has to be vetted and put through the paces before it is released for use. Jesus could have started healing as a teenager if he was just following his own human logic; but he only said and did what his father told him. Jesus did really not give us his own independent opinions.

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (John 5:19)

²⁸ So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. (John 8:28)

There were other reasons that Jesus needed to wait for John the Baptist to prepare the people announce his arrival? There were a lot of fraudulent spiritual posers and false teachers. Jesus had to be distinguished from all of the fake religious noise.

Jesus was not a self-promoter, so somebody had to point him out. Besides, a witness was required to verify a testimony. John the Baptist is also a *partial caricature* of the Holy Spirit. He was a purist who had no interest in man’s expectations. Perhaps if it was us in those days, we would have walked right past Jesus; thinking that he was just another want-to-be prophet.

The relationship with John the Baptist and Jesus was similar to Moses and Joshua. The precursor was all about staging and teaching readiness, but someone more full of mighty works would be needed to push through.

Fasting brings you to a place of weakness in the flesh; with more focus on the flesh. Jesus was getting the full hazing from Satan and the wild animals. I find that Satan hangs around doorways of opportunity and scares us from crossing that threshold. He is less effective once we have crossed over and begun a new pattern of living.

Like Mark, it can be better to be invisible and record the action. John the Baptist has handed off the baton; so he must not continue as a focus. He had to decrease in the eyes of the people, so that Jesus could take over. John the Baptist only worked one shift. He completed his work and stepped out of the way for the next act. He knew his place in history; and he did not try to extend it. Similarly, Jesus subsequently stepped to the side when the Holy Spirit replaced him on earth after his crucifixion.

⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness

and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. ¹² “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” (John 16)

Read Mark 1:21-45 : Jesus kept the demons quiet and unceremoniously removed them from those who were suffering. He was teaching and healing in a small fishing village. Jesus never gave demons a microphone. They ask simple and logical questions as conversation starters. We should learn from Jesus here and refuse to interview the crazy people who are under demonic influence in our politics and in our counterculture. They only say things that weaken the hearers. Satan is 0/100 for all quotes in the scripture for never having a word of encouragement.

Mark probably hung out at Peter’s house. Peter’s mother-in-law was healed. Jesus started working the street people. There were some who were demon-possessed, some were ill, some had birth defects as well. Ministry (especially physical ministry) is a dirty business. Shepherds get grimy, and they stink like sheep.

Jesus showed up early for work every day. He started in prayer all by himself. He needed to get his father’s instructions for each day. Jesus touches a leprous man, which is normally a death sentence. Jesus did not want to turn his ministry into a freak show. He wanted to selectively meet people one by one and meet their needs. Now that the word of his healings has gotten out, it will become a circus.