# **The Gospel According to St. Mark**

**Concordia Commentary – Dr. James Voelz, 2013**

Introduction

* What is a “Gospel?”
  + euvagge,lion (euangelion) Good News
* Authorship
  + Early church fathers testify without question to Mark’s authorship
    - Papias (AD 130-140)
    - Irenaeus (Late Second Century AD)
    - Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215)
    - Origen (AD 185-253)
  + Which Mark?
    - 1 Peter 5:13
    - John Mark
      * Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39
    - Philemon 24
    - 2 Timothy 4:11
    - Whoever it is, they have a close connection to Peter and the Twelve
  + Does the exact identity really matter?
* Date
  + Evidence places the dating prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.
    - Such a disaster would have been noted
    - Possibly late 50s/early 60s
* Recipients
  + Evidence from the early church fathers points to those who heard Peter preaching in Rome.
  + The Gospel According to St. Mark is one that emphasizes seeing and believing.
    - We do not have the privilege of seeing and then believing.
      * Neither did many of the Roman citizens who were beginning to be persecuted for the faith in the late 50s and early 60s.
    - A book of evidence
* Composition
  + Unlike Luke’s Gospel, Mark does not give detail in regards to research.
    - Not investigative in nature
  + The church fathers Papias and Clement state that Mark composed from memory.
    - Also done in the same style as Peter
  + Debate as to Peter’s presence/editing in the writing of the Gospel
    - By the third century, Peter’s authority takes a greater role in the authorship.
      * Never questioned
* Genre
  + Voelz compares Mark’s Gospel to not only the other three, but other writings of the time period.
    - Emphasizes a comparison to a Greek tragedy
      * Human beings in action
        + Plot is important
      * The character of the protagonist is important
        + Moral purpose
        + Realistic
        + Falls into some misfortune (not necessarily on his/her own account)
      * This will give insight to the Gospel’s abrupt end.
    - Views the Gospel to be written after Matthew’s and Luke’s
      * Follows the more conventional presentation of Matthew and Luke with their facts of Jesus’ life.
      * A drama tends to follow the basic presentation of the story
        + Mark is to Matthew/Luke as *Jesus Christ Superstar* is to*The Greatest Story Ever Told*
* A Synoptic Problem
  + Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar
    - At times tell the same accounts
      * But there are contradictions
    - Mark appears to be a balance point
      * Matthew and Mark will be on the same page when Luke contradicts.
      * Mark and Luke will be on the same page when Matthew contradicts.
        + It is rare for Matthew and Luke to be similar while Mark contradicts.
  + John takes a more spiritual account
    - But both Mark and John are concerned about seeing and believing.
      * Note the Jewish leaders demand of Jesus in 15:32 compared to Jesus response to Thomas in John 20:29.
        + Mark treats the theme from below, while John views it from above.

The Beginning: The Ministry of John the Baptist (1:1-8)

* The beginning (1:1)
  + The focus is on the delivery of the Gospel
    - The church father Papias stated that Peter would shape his teaching to the needs of his hearers.
    - The facts are not the focus here as the genealogy accounts in Matthew
    - Sets up to pull the hearer in for “What is next?”
  + The Sonship’s importance
    - An affirmation of who Jesus is
      * Though the Gospel veils this
* An OT fulfilment (1:2-3)
  + Exodus 23:20 and/or Malachi 3:1 over Isaiah 40:3
    - Who is Jesus compared to these passages?
      * He is the people of God
      * He is the Lord who comes to His temple
      * Jesus is the central player in the “drama”
      * Jesus is the OT fulfilment who will speak to them God’s Word
  + The wilderness
    - The place where God’s people were formed after their exodus from Egypt
      * Precursor to their entrance into the Promised Land
  + The way/road of the Lord
    - In Isaiah 40:3 “Lord” refers to Yahweh, but here refers to Jesus
      * This Guy is going to fulfill the prophecy!
      * One in the same, but different
      * A given insight to the hearer/reader
* Introduction to The Baptizer (1:4-8)
  + He’s washing
    - OT washing with water is associated with renewal and purging people from guilt.
      * Ezekiel 36:25
      * Psalm 51:2,4,7
      * John was being the agent of washing and purging people of their sins in preparations for the One who is to come.
        + A move of the non-literal OT to the literal NT
        + No other Jewish baptism related to the new covenant is this way
    - Repentance: before or after the washing?
      * Greek grammar suggests repentance comes after
      * Baptism was a means to attain repentance
        + Why is this important?
        + God’s activity, not man’s

“God made for Himself a cleansed and repentant people, prepared for His visitation.”

* + - The Jordan
      * Naaman
        + 2 Kings 5:12
      * Location of Israel’s new life as the crossed over into the Promised Land
        + Joshua 3-4
  + He’s different
    - 2 Kings 1:8
    - Diet
      * Grasshoppers
        + They are clean

Leviticus 11:21-22

* + - * Wild honey
        + 2 Chronicles 31:5
        + How did God care for Israel in the wilderness?

Deuteronomy 32:13

Psalm 81:16

God is at work again in the wilderness.

* + - * + What is to come?

Numbers 14:8

Joshua 5:6

Isaiah 43:19

Amos 9:11-15

A renewal is coming

* + Not as strong as the next Guy
    - Elisha?
      * 2 Kings 2:9
    - Isaiah 40:10
    - Defender
      * Psalm 2
  + Another baptism will come
    - Joel 2:28
      * The coming of Israel’s God as foretold by the prophets is near.
    - Is John’s baptism the same as a Christian’s baptism today?
      * No
        + John’s did not bestow the Holy Spirit
        + John’s was preparatory
      * Galatians 5:22-23
        + A result of Christian Baptism