

# The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

---

Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

Mark 1:1 . 1/22/23

---

## INTRODUCTION

- Please take your Bible and turn to the second Gospel in the New Testament, the Gospel of Mark
- Today we are going to begin a study of this gospel and its 16 chapters
- To begin I am only going to read verse 1 as we are introduced to this book

· It says...

- [Mark 1:1](#), “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

· As we begin our look at Mark’s gospel we are first brought to...

## I. The Title of the Book

- That’s what verse 1 is
- In that title, it summarizes "the contents of the entire gospel of Mark" (Hiebert) and it describes “the entire work” (Brooks) of Jesus Christ
- It is the history of Jesus’ earthly ministry, His teaching, and His death and resurrection
- It is a factual record (MacArthur)
- It is not only recorded here but also in Matthew, Luke and John
- All were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- Matthew and John were apostolic eyewitnesses to the events of which they wrote
- According to [Luke 1:3-4](#), Luke thoroughly investigated the details of our Lord’s ministry in order to produce his testimony
- According to early church tradition, Mark wrote his gospel based on the preaching of the apostle Peter (MacArthur)
- So the phrase “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ” cannot be confined to the ministry of John, since it goes far beyond his preparatory work (Hiebert)
- Neither is it closely connected grammatically with the verses immediately following (Hiebert)
- This is the message about Jesus Christ

- Mark doesn't include what the other gospel writers include as the "beginning"
- They begin with His birth
- He begins with a declaration and then mentions John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Christ
- R.C. Sproul says, "The facts Mark gives us are included to demonstrate two things: Jesus is the promised Messiah and the Son of God. Mark makes this affirmation at the beginning of his work, saying, The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (v. 1). That is the thematic statement for the entire gospel."
- So the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" starts in verse 1 with his royal declaration that Jesus is the Son of God
- He cuts to the chase and states this right at the "beginning"
- The phrase "of Jesus Christ" in Greek is called an objective genitive which means it is about Jesus Christ
- This is the glad news which tells about Jesus Christ
- Jesus is the subject of all 4 gospels
- This is exactly what Mark's Gospel presents
- If Mark intended his work to have a title, this is it (Edwards)
- The word for "gospel" (euangelion) literally means "good news"
- It appears 7 times in Mark (1:14–15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; and 14:9; 16:15) and 4 times in Matthew
- It doesn't appear at all in Luke and John in its noun form but it does in its verbal form
- Matthew uses it once in this way
- Luke uses it 10 times (Brooks)
- In both the OT and in Greek literature *euangelion* was commonly used of reports of victory from the battlefield
- When the Philistines defeated the troops of Saul on Mt. Gilboa, "they sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to proclaim the news (*euangelizesthai*) ... among the people" ([1 Sam 31:9](#); see also [2 Sam 1:20](#); [18:19–20](#); [1 Chr 10:9](#))
- The messenger who brought the report was the deliverer of "good news" ([2 Sam 4:10](#); [18:26](#))
- David said in [2 Samuel 4:10](#), "when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news."

- Among the Greeks the term was used...of victory in battle, as well as of other forms of good news
- In 9 B.C., within a decade of Jesus' birth, the birthday of Caesar Augustus (63 b.c.–a.d. 14) was hailed as *euangelion* (pl.)
- Since he was hailed as a god, his “birthday signaled the beginning of Good News for the world.”
- In the Greco-Roman world the word always appears in the plural, meaning one good tiding among others
- But in the NT *euangelion* appears only in the singular
- It is *the* good news of God in Jesus Christ, beside which there is no other (Edwards)
- In Mark's understanding...the gospel is more than a set of truths, or even a set of beliefs
- It is a *person*, “the gospel of Jesus Christ”
- So the announcement of Jesus is “good news”
- Good news is found not only in how He lived and what He said from the Father, but also in His name
- The name “Jesus” is the transliterated form of the Hebrew word Jehoshua, which means, “Jehovah saves” (Wuest)
- The title “Christ” (*christos*) is the transliterated form of the Greek word which means “the anointed one” (Wuest)
- It is also the transliteration of the Hebrew title “Messiah”
- The good news is Jesus saves
- He is the anointed one, the Messiah

· Mark concludes verse 1 with a bold statement about Christ

· Notice...

## II. The Person of the Book

- Mark says Jesus is “the Son of God”
- Luke includes this phrase in [Luke 3:38](#) when giving Jesus' genealogy
- But the greatest source is God Himself
- Mark records in [Mark 1:11](#), “and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.””
- This was at His baptism

- Mark mentions it again at His transfiguration in [Mark 9:7](#), “Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!””
- The name “son of God” speaks of Jesus’ lineage and right to rule (MacArthur)
- Jesus is one in nature with God
- He is coeternal and coequal with the Father
- For those Roman pagans who wrongly regarded Caesar as a god, Mark introduces them to the true divine King: the Lord Jesus Christ (MacArthur)
- Others recognized this:
  - Nathaniel said to Jesus in [John 1:49](#), “...“Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.””
  - Peter said in [Matthew 16:16](#), “...“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.””
  - The other disciples said in [Matthew 14:33](#), “You are truly God’s Son!”
- The demons recognized this:
  - The demons even said in [Matthew 8:29](#), “...“What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?””
- The angels recognized this:
  - Mary was told by the angel Gabriel in [Luke 1:35](#), “...“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”
- Jesus understood this:
  - He said in [John 17:1](#), “...“Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,”
- You and I read this and we don’t have a problem
- But it did generate a lot of controversy in the 4th century when Arius said Jesus was a created being (Sproul)
- R.C. Sproul said, “References to Jesus as “the firstborn of all creation” ([Col. 1:15](#)) and “the only begotten of the Father” ([John 1:14](#), KJV) led Arius to argue that Jesus had a beginning in time and was thus a creature.
- In Arias’ mind, if Jesus was begotten, it could only mean that He was not eternal, and if He was not eternal, then He was a creature.
- Thus, to ascribe deity to Jesus was to be guilty of blasphemy, because it involved the idolatrous worship of a created being” (*Who Is Jesus?*)

- The title “Son of God” refers to Jesus’ deity
- This is what theologians refer to as the eternal sonship view
- In the book, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Doctrine*, Edited by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, they say this view rests on the observation that the title *Son of God*, when applied to Christ in Scripture, seems to always speak of His essential deity and absolute equality with God, not his voluntary subordination.
- The Jewish leaders of Jesus’s time understood this
- [John 5:18](#) says that they sought the death penalty against Jesus, charging Him with blasphemy “because not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making himself equal with God.”
- In that culture, a dignitary’s adult son was deemed equal in stature and privilege with his father.
- The same deference demanded by a king was afforded to his adult son.
- The son was, after all, of the very same essence as his father, heir to all the father’s rights and privileges—and therefore equal in every significant regard.
- So when Jesus was called “Son of God,” it was understood categorically by all as a title of deity, declaring Him equal with God and (more significantly) of the same essence as the Father.
- That is precisely why the Jewish leaders regarded the title *Son of God* the ultimate high blasphemy.
- Mark uses other titles for Jesus:
  - He is called the “son of David” (10:47-48)
  - He is called the “King of Israel” (15:32)
  - He is called the “son of man” (2:10, 28)
  - He is called the “Holy One of God” (1:24)
  - He is called the “Lord of the Sabbath” (2:28)
  - He is called “Lord” (5:19)
  - He is called “King of the Jews” (15:2)
- If you haven’t noticed already there is no author mentioned in verse 1 for this Gospel
- Let’s consider now...

### III. The Author of the Book

- If you look at the first verse, you will not find his name

- But then again, no author of any of the four gospels identifies himself as the author
- While the story of Matthew’s conversion and Matthew’s inclusion among the apostles appears in Matthew, Matthew never says he’s the author
- Luke never appears in his gospel at all, nor does he claim to be the author of it (MacArthur)
- John never refers to himself by his name or as the author
- He always uses some descriptive title like “the one whom Jesus loved”
- However, we still know that Mark wrote this, that Matthew wrote his, that Luke wrote his, and that John wrote his
- That is the universal testimony of the early church going all the way back to the first century (MacArthur)
- Our most ancient testimony about who wrote the second Gospel comes from Papias (c. 60–130)
- He was the bishop of Hieropolis and a disciple of Polycarp
- Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John
- Writing in 140 A.D., Papias said, “The Elder, (referring to the apostle John), used to say this also: Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote down accurately, though not in order, all that [Peter] remembered concerning the things both said and done by the Lord.”
- This quotation was preserved by the fourth-century writer Eusebius of Caesarea in his Ecclesiastical History 3.39.15
- Justin Martyr, writing about A.D. 150, referred to the gospel of Mark as “the memoirs of Peter”
- He also suggested that Mark wrote his gospel while in Italy
- This agrees with early tradition, which says this gospel was written in Rome for the benefit of Roman Christians
- Irenaeus, writing about A.D. 185, called Mark “the disciple and interpreter of Peter”
- He said the second gospel consisted of what Peter preached about Christ
- The testimony of the church fathers differs as to whether this gospel was written before or after Peter’s death (ca. A.D. 67–68) (MacArthur)
- Other church fathers like Origen (230), Clement (300), Eusebius (362), all say the same thing
- John Mark’s name appears five times in the New Testament ([Ac. 12:12](#), [25](#); [15:37](#), [39](#); [2 Ti. 4:11](#))
- The first three references include the names John and Mark
- Twice he is called John ([Ac. 13:5](#), [13](#))

- In three other places he is referred to as “Marcus” ([Col. 4:10](#); [Phm. 24](#); and [1 Pe. 5:13](#)) (Hanke:TC)
- John (yohanan) was his Hebrew name
- It meant “Yahweh has shown grace”
- Mark or Marcus is his Latin name which means “large hammer”
- It was not uncommon for 1st century Jews to bear a Greek or Roman name in addition to their Hebrew name (Cole:TNBD)
- One writer believes that the Roman name Mark was perhaps a badge of Roman citizenship, as in Paul’s case, or was adopted when he left Jerusalem to serve the Gentile church in Antioch (TBD)
- Mark first appears in [Acts 12:12](#).
- Peter had been released from prison and led out of the city by an angel
- [Acts 12:11](#), “When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now truly I know that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.””
- Verse 12 continues, “And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.”
- Mark was not a pastor, preacher or elder in the church
- According to [Acts 13:5](#), he was a “helper”
- [Acts 13:5](#), “And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, and they also had John as their helper.”
- So Mark helped Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first missionary journey but according to [Acts 13:13](#), he deserted them along the way in Perga and returned to Jerusalem
- When Barnabas wanted Paul to take John Mark on the second missionary journey, Paul refused
- The friction that resulted between Paul and Barnabas led to their separation
- [Acts 15:38-40](#), “38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there was such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.”
- But John Mark’s earlier indecisiveness evidently gave way to great strength and maturity, and in time he proved himself even to the apostle Paul
- When Paul wrote the Colossians, he instructed them that if John Mark came, they were to welcome him ([Col. 4:10](#))

- Paul even listed Mark as a fellow worker ([Philem. 24](#))
- Later, Paul told Timothy to “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry” ([2 Tim. 4:11](#)). (MacArthur)
- Some believe that John Mark’s restoration to useful ministry may have been, in part, due to the ministry of Peter
- Peter’s close relationship with Mark is evident from his description of him as “Mark my son” in [1 Peter 5:13](#). (MacArthur)
- The date of this letter is in the late 50s (MacArthur)
- Somewhere between 50 and 60, Matthew writes
- Somewhere around 60, 61, Luke writes
- In 90 John writes
- And you can slip Mark in there between Matthew and Luke, as I said, perhaps in the late 50s (MacArthur)
- So the Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark in the late 50s to believers in Rome using Peter as his primary source (HSB)
- R.C. Sproul adds that the audience is Christians suffering persecution in Rome under Nero

## **CONCLUSION**

- As the dust settles in your mind of all that we have said this morning, there are a few principles that we can glean from the life and ministry of John Mark
- First, we learn that ministry will test you
- It will test your faithfulness when everyone or everything is against you
- You can either continue and push through the tests or do what Mark did, leave
- I’m sure that was extremely hard
- I’ve struggled with that at times
- Every pastor that I have met has told me they have struggled with this too
- Second, ministry is difficult
- It can take you to places you don’t want to go
- It can introduce you to people you otherwise would never meet
- It demands everything from you, both physically, mentally, and spiritually
- Paul said in [2 Corinthians 4:8-11](#), “8 in every way afflicted, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always



carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

- Third, ministry brings humility
- There is the temptation to be prideful with all the truths you're learning so God has to humble you like He did Paul
- Speaking of this, Paul said in [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#), “7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and hardships, for the sake of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong.”
- This is why Paul told Timothy in [2 Timothy 2:3](#), “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”
- Fourth, ministry is stressful
- There will be times when your motives will be questioned like Paul in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2
- As a pastor, I, like Paul, have on me “the daily pressure” of “concern” for the church ([2 Cor.11:28](#))
- This doesn't even take in consideration the stress of weekly preparation
- Sermon preparation, to me, is the hardest task I have
- I think Charles Spurgeon would agree
- He said, “I scarcely even prepare for my pulpit with pleasure. Study for the pulpit is to me the most irksome work in the world.”
- Fifth, ministry brings rejection, persecution and death
- Peter and John were arrested by the governing authorities for preaching about Jesus
- [Acts 4:1-3](#), “1 Now as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, 2 being greatly agitated because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.”
- When they were brought before the authorities the next day they were told “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (v.18) but they said “we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (v.20)

- In [Acts 7](#) Stephen was condemned and murdered by the Sanhedrin
- Paul was persecuted in Damascus ([Acts 9:23](#)), rejected by the Jews in Antioch ([Acts 13:46](#)), stoned and dragged out of the city at Lystra ([Acts 14:19](#)), beaten and thrown in jail in Philippi ([Acts 16](#)), chased out of Thessalonica ([Acts 17](#)) and Berea ([Acts 17:13](#))
- The story goes on
- He was eventually killed in Rome ([Acts 28](#); [2 Tim.4:6](#))
- So ministry can test you, it's difficult, it will humble you, it will be a daily stress, it can lead to rejection, persecution and ultimately death
- So in the words of Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Murray, "If there is anything else you can do, you should do it."
- But if not give it all you got and live in daily trust of the One who called you into ministry!
- John Brown of Edinburgh wrote in his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians*, "The Christian ministry, if entered on with appropriate sentiments, and prosecuted with conscientious fidelity, will be found replete with difficulties. Its toils are arduous and unceasing— its trials numerous and severe. He who would "war this good warfare" must "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The man who assumes the sacred character of a minister of Christ, with the honest intention of performing its duties (and he who resumes it without such an intention will find, in the ultimate result of things, that he had better have chosen any other profession) must lay his account with submitting to labours often ill-appreciated, sometimes unkindly requited, and with meeting with trials and afflictions which are the more severe as coming from a quarter from which nothing but support and encouragement had been expected."
- As we close, let me also say that if you have deserted Christ like Mark did, come back
- In the words of Chuck Swindoll, "It's never too late to do what is right!"
- Mark eventually came back and God restored Him to Himself
- God will do the same for you
- Instead of being known as a deserter, you now can be "useful" for ministry
- As we look at verse 1, we need to respond to what Mark says in his title
- This is the "gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"
- Have you repented of your sin?
- If you don't repent you cannot be forgiven ([Mk.1:4](#))
- So in the words of Jesus, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" ([Mk.1:15](#))
- Let's pray