

Part 1

Introducing Mark's Gospel

Portraits of Jesus**Jesus for us today**

All of the four gospels are portraits of Jesus. They are not exactly 'biographies', and they leave out many things that a biography would include. Rather they help us to see **things that we need to know about Jesus**.

The Christian life is a matter of living on Jesus. '*Out of his fullness have we all received*'¹. We need to see a lot of Jesus. He stays the same '*yesterday, today and for ever*'². When we see the way He was when He walked around on planet earth, we can know He is like that today. We need to see His power, His authority, and supremely we need to see His dying for us on the cross. We need to know that He is alive for us today.

¹ John 1:16

² Heb. 13:8

Sufficient knowledge of Jesus

In different ways the four gospels make Jesus real to us. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus is still real to us today. Through the four gospels we have records concerning what Jesus was like and what He actually did. We do not know everything we would like to about the life of Jesus, but we have enough. We are given sufficient for us to know Jesus for ourself – by the Holy Spirit.

The story of Jesus as told by Mark**The flow of events**

Mark who wrote this gospel was the son of a widow named Mary whose home was used by the early Christians in Jerusalem¹. Barnabas was his cousin. It is likely that the gospel was written by Mark the friend of Peter in the AD 50s. In the first chapters he introduces Jesus², and then is clearly giving an explanation of the rise of **opposition** to Jesus. Commentators have often noticed how in Mark 1:21–3:6 we have the story of steadily rising opposition to Jesus. Mark is interested in pointing to the authority of Jesus both as a **teacher** and a **miracle-worker**, yet it was that authority that aroused intense **hatred** in His enemies.

¹ See Acts 12:12

² 1:1-20

In Mark 3:7–6:13 Jesus withdraws somewhat from the intense interest in Him, and concentrates on teaching His disciples. Then¹ there is further outreach but a greater rejection than ever. As Jesus travels towards Jerusalem² He teaches His disciples about many aspects of discipleship. Then comes the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the events that lead to His death³. Mark clearly has a special interest in the death of Jesus. There is a brief conclusion to the story. Jesus did not stay in the tomb. He was raised from the dead. Mark's Gospel ends abruptly at this point⁴; Mark 16:9–20 was a later addition).

¹ 6:14-8:26

² 8:27-10:52

³ 11:1-15:47

⁴ 16:8



A straightforward account

Mark's Gospel contains no hidden meanings.¹ We do not have to look for hidden theological controversies that caused it to be written. It does not have any symbolism except the symbolism that Jesus Himself used. Mark's meaning lies on the surface. He writes a straightforward account of basic facts about Jesus: how He was rejected, how He was a man of supernatural power and compelling authority, how He died on the cross as a ransom

for many.

1 My words echo the opening paragraphs of R. Gundry's Mark (Eerdmans, 1993, p. 1), although I emphasize the simplicity of Mark rather than his concern to defend the cross.



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