

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 79
Mark

Key Concepts: The key concept in this book is that God has sent the messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, into the world and that event is Good News.

Central Concepts: The key concepts in the Gospel of Mark are that Jesus is referred to as Son of God who carries out a series of mighty acts which, for those who are open to seeing them, demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is breaking into the world in Jesus. Please notice how often the term “immediately” is used, especially in the opening chapters of the book. For the author, this concept of Jesus being in constant motion lends emphasis to the importance of the Good News, which needed to be told immediately, even so this book also contains what some have called the Messianic Secret, meaning that when Jesus does something amazing he tells people to keep it to themselves.

Brief Summary: The Book of Mark can be divided into five main sections. There is a prologue (1:1-13), Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (1:14-8:21), Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52), Jesus’ confrontation with the authorities and his death (11:1-15:41) and Jesus’ burial and resurrection (15:42-16:8).

The prologue in Mark is the shortest in all of the Gospels. It offers us the barest of introductions. We learn that the book is about the Good News of Jesus, that John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for Jesus, that he baptized Jesus and that after the baptism Jesus is driven into the wilderness to be tempted; in a mere 13 verses. The author also refers to the book as the “beginning” of the Good News, meaning that the Good News is to continue through the life and work of the church.

The reader is then led into Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. This section begins with the calling of the first disciples and then quickly moves into a series of stories about Jesus’ power. We watch Jesus cast out a demon, heal people from sickness and leprosy. Jesus then engages in a series of disagreements with the religious establishment over things such as his ability to forgive sins and to ignore Sabbath observances. These stories lead us into accounts of Jesus calling the rest of his disciples (a new family) while rejecting his old family and then a long series of healings and other acts of power (stilling the storm, etc.). The initial rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders is found here as well.

The next section, which takes place on the road to Jerusalem, opens with Peter declaring that Jesus is the messiah; followed by Jesus’ explanation that he will die and be raised; something that is central to this part of the Gospel. While there is a healing story in this section the focus is on teaching about discipleship. He is preparing his disciples for the difficult road ahead.

The fourth section is centered in Jerusalem where Jesus turns over the tables of the money changers and then teaches in the Temple, where his authority is challenged by the religious leaders. Between his teaching and his arrest we find what is called The Small Apocalypse in Chapter 13. This chapter contains the usual apocalyptic images of terrible things happening in heaven and on earth. It concludes with a charge to stay alert as we wait for Jesus’ return. This is followed by the events leading to Jesus burial (the plot against him, the last supper, the betrayal, his arrest, trial, crucifixion and death).

The final portion of Mark deals with Jesus burial and resurrection. Joseph of Arimathea, a follower of Jesus, asks for Jesus’ body in order to bury him. In terms of Jesus’ resurrection, the oldest manuscripts do not contain any reference to it. Evidently the resurrection account was added at a later date.

1. What was your favorite part of Mark, and why?
2. How do you see the church as continuing the Good News of Jesus?
3. Why do you suppose the earliest copies of Mark do not contain an account of the resurrection?