

# Mark 1:1

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/mark/mark-1/mark-11/>

*Mark, writing to the Gentiles, begins his gospel emphasizing the deity of Jesus and His role as Savior of the world.*

The parallel gospel accounts for this passage are Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 1:1-4, and John 1:1-18.

Mark begins his *gospel* account of *Jesus's* life with a direct statement:

*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

*The beginning* means the starting point. And Mark begins with *the beginning of Jesus's* ministry and message as the starting point for his *gospel* narrative.

Matthew begins his *gospel* record with *Jesus's* Messianic genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17). Luke introduces his *gospel* narrative with a salutation to his readers (Luke 1:1-4) before describing the angelic announcements foretelling the births of John the Baptizer (Luke 1:5-25) and *Jesus* (Luke 1:26-38). John begins his *gospel* account with a philosophical lens and goes all the way back to *THE BEGINNING* of creation in Genesis 1:1 (John 1:1-18).

Perhaps the reason Mark begins his *gospel* account at *the beginning of Jesus's* ministry is because he is introducing *Jesus* to the Gentile world. (More about this later point will come further into this commentary).

All four gospels begin with a unique perspective because even though they all tell the same story and core message of *Jesus*; they each offer a different portrait whereby we can see and know the person of *Jesus*.

Matthew portrays *Jesus* as the Messiah He was, as well as the prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19) and the shepherd-king like David (2 Samuel 7:8-17; Ezekiel 34:23-24).

Luke repeatedly emphasizes the humanity of *Jesus* as the *Son of Man*. It details the circumstances of His conception and birth (Luke 1:30-35; 2:1-7). He is the picture of what *God* looks like in human form (Colossians 2:9).

John stresses the deity of *Jesus* as the living *Word of God* made flesh (John 1:1,14)

But Mark depicts *Jesus* as a dynamic and divine miracle-worker who serves people and suffers on their behalf. In Mark, we see *Jesus* as the world's Servant and Savior.

The church traditionally associated different beasts to symbolize these different perspectives. The *gospel* of Matthew was symbolized by a Lion because *Jesus* is the king, the Son of David, the Lion of Judah. The *gospel* of Mark was symbolized by an Ox because *Jesus* is a strong

servant. The *gospel* of Luke was symbolized by a Man because *Jesus* became human. And the *gospel* of John was symbolized by an Eagle because *Jesus*'s divinity soars over everything. Note that these four symbols (lion, ox, man, and eagle) are the exact beasts recorded by John that surround God's heavenly throne in Revelation 4:6-8.

All the four *gospels*' portrayals of *Jesus* are different. And all are true.

*Gospel* literally means "good news". It comes from the Greek word "εὐαγγέλιον" (pronounced "eu-an-gel-i-on"). This word is comprised of two parts: the prefix "eu," meaning "good"; and the root word "angelion," meaning "message," "statement," "announcement," or "proclamation."

Mark's narrative tells the incredible story of the good news of *Jesus Christ*.

The name *Jesus* is the Greek word "Ἰησοῦς" (pronounced "ee-ay-sooce"). Ἰησοῦς is transliterated from the Hebrew word יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (pronounced "Yeshua," or in English "Joshua"). The name *Jesus* literally means, "The Lord's salvation" or more loosely, "savior" (Matthew 1:1, 16, 21). In addition to being the second Moses, in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:18, *Jesus* was the second Joshua, who will conquer and take back the earth (Revelation 19:11-16). He is already our spiritual Savior, and will in time also redeem the physical earth.

After stating *Jesus*'s name, Mark identifies Him as the *Christ*. *Christ* is the Greek word Χριστός (pronounced: "Chri-stos"). It is from the Hebrew word, מָשִׁיחַ (pronounced "maw-shee'-akh"). This Hebrew word is translated as "Messiah" or "Anointed One."

*God* promised the Jews that He would send them a Messiah to teach them His laws (Deuteronomy 18:15-19) and to prosperously rule over them forever (2 Samuel 7:8-17). Matthew's *gospel* was written to the Jews and it goes to great lengths to demonstrate the many, many ways that *Jesus* can be seen as this promised Messiah. Mark, however, seems to take *Jesus*'s Messianic identity as a given and begins his *gospel* from this starting point.

The other *beginning* point from which Mark starts is that *Jesus* is *the Son of God*. Not only was *Jesus* the promised Messiah, He was *God* Himself. This fact is authenticated by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the church at Colossae (Colossians 2:9). Mark identifies *Jesus* as *God's Son* sent to earth to restore the world unto Himself. Mark's point is verified by another of the *gospel* writers, John (John 3:16).

## **The Second Gospel, its Author, and its Primary Audience**

This *gospel* account has since the earliest days of the Christian church been referred to as "The *Gospel* according to Mark." Many believe that it was the first of the four gospels that was written. It may even have been one of the sources for the Gospels of Matthew and/or Luke. All three of these gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—bear striking similarities in their narratives and language, while they all have substantial differences when compared to "The *Gospel* according to John." For this reason, these first three gospels are often referred to as the "Synoptic Gospels" because there is an apparent synthesis to them.

Like all four gospels, the author of “The *Gospel* according to Mark” never names himself as the author. The one place where Mark may have alluded to himself was as the young man who fled naked at Jesus’s arrest in Gethsemane when the authorities grabbed the linen sheet covering him (Mark 14:51-52). Perhaps the reason that none of them name themselves is because each writer wanted *Jesus Christ, the Son of God* to be the focus of his message, and none of them wanted to encroach upon His glory in any way.

It was the early Church that identified Mark (also known as John-Mark, Acts 12:12) as the writer of this *Gospel* and they claimed he did so under the direction of *Jesus*’s close follower: Peter the Apostle.

The 4<sup>th</sup>-century church historian, Eusebius, quoted a 2<sup>nd</sup>-century Christian writer, Papias, who said, “Mark, being the interpreter of St. Peter, wrote down exactly whatever things he [Peter] remembered, yet not in the order in which Christ either spoke or did them; for he [Mark] was neither a hearer nor a follower of our Lord, but he was afterwards a follower of St. Peter.”

While the Bible does not provide conclusive confirmation of Papias’s assertion, it does offer supporting evidence for Papias’s claim that Mark wrote this *gospel* on behalf of Peter. When Peter was miraculously rescued from Prison he went to the home of Mark’s mother (Acts 12:12-14). And Peter was with Mark in Rome and referred to him as “my son” when he wrote his first epistle (1 Peter 5:13).

Ever the man of action, Peter did not seem to have the same penchant for recording every detail with even uniformity. Capture the main point, share what is recalled, and move on appeared to be Peter’s mode of operation. For instance, the action-oriented and narrative-moving expression, “and immediately” (in Greek “καὶ εὐθέως” and pronounced “kai eu-th-ē-ōs”) occurs more times in Mark’s *Gospel* than the rest of the New Testament combined.

Additionally, Mark, was the son of the Mary whose home in Jerusalem served as a gathering place for Christians (Acts 12:12). Per Church tradition, his mother’s home was where the Upper Room was located. The Upper Room was the place where *Jesus* shared His last Passover Meal with His disciples and was the place where the disciples first received the Holy Spirit.

Mark was also the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). And in addition to working with Peter in his ministry to spread *the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* across the Roman world, Mark also traveled with Paul (“the apostle to the Gentiles” Romans 11:13), and Barnabas on their missionary journeys to the Jews and Gentiles of the Roman Empire (Acts 12:25; 15:39). On Paul and Barnabas’s first missionary journey, for some reason Mark returned home, to the frustration of Paul (Acts 15:37-38).

But Paul and Mark reconnected (and apparently reconciled) because they ministered together in Rome when Paul was first imprisoned there (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24). And one of Paul’s final requests was for Timothy to bring Mark to him “because he is useful to me for service” as the apostle awaited execution in Rome during a later imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:11).

These few accounts of Mark in the Book of Acts and the Epistles reveal that Mark spent a great deal of time outside Judea working to share the good news of *Jesus Christ* to the Gentile world.

Mark's circumstances and work among the Romans is one reason some people think that his *Gospel* account was written to and for Gentiles. Another reason Mark's *gospel* is believed to have been intended for a Gentile audience is that his *gospel*, relative to Matthew's, does not seem to dwell upon or emphasize Jewish aspects that would be less important to a non-Jewish reader.

And a third support for a Gentile audience is that when Mark does mention Jewish elements, he often takes time to explain them as though his readers would not naturally understand them. (See Mark 3:17; 5:41; 7:1-4, 11, 19). It would not make sense for him to explain these things if he were writing primarily for Jews who already knew them.

Therefore, it seems that the main purpose of Mark writing this *Gospel* was to introduce *Jesus* as the *Christ, the Son of God* to the Gentile world. Biblical scholars through the ages identify Gentiles as the intended audience of Mark's *gospel*.

## **Biblical Text**

### **1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**