



Intro to the New Testament:

The Gospel of Mark

Session Two

Genre

- With the appearance of the Gospel of Mark, the world received a new literary category called Gospel
- Within this new genre there are some familiar features: it also has elements of tragedy, the novel, and biography
- However, it differs from modern biographies: no historical background, character and personality assessment, or probing the inner thoughts of the hero
- It also differs from Hellenistic narrative which simply celebrate the real or supposed acts of ancient miracle workers

Author

- The author of a Gospel is called an evangelist, which is a proclaimer of good news, in this case in written form
- Titles were added sometime after the Gospel had been written and lacking any internal evidence for identity we depend on mainly early external evidence to answer the question of authorship
- The Gospel of Mark follows the Jewish tradition of not adding a name to a writing concerning the things of God

Audience & Writing Setting

- There is little agreement as to who Mark's audience is. What has been agreed on is that it is comprised of both Jewish and Gentile Jesus followers who were undergoing external persecution from both Jewish and Roman quarters and internal tensions that arise from that persecution
- While there are arguments for Galilee and Syria as the place where Mark wrote his Gospel, Rome remains the strongest possibility

Date: 4 Possibilities

- **40s:** several ancient sources assign Mark's Gospel to the 40s with some modern scholars in agreement; Clement of Alexandria gives an account that Mark went with Peter to Rome in 42, drawing up a record of Peter's preaching 3 years later
- **50s:** this date is formulated from a chain of reason: 1) Luke is dependent on Mark, 2) Luke should be dated no later than Paul's first Roman imprisonment in the early 60's, and 3) Luke's use of Mark requires a lead time of several years
- **60s:** is most widely accepted—usually late 60s, a year or two before the destruction of the temple in 70
- **70s:** for those who see Mark 13 providing a reflection of the events of the destruction of Jerusalem the early 70s are attractive

Purposes

- There are a number of theories as to why Mark wrote his Gospel:
 - Some think for catechetical instruction, however there is not much teaching from Jesus in this Gospel
 - Some think for liturgical use, however the document seems to lack the smoothness and symmetry that characterized liturgical documents
 - Some believe he writes to explain why Jesus did not proclaim himself messiah, inventing a messianic secret putting prohibitions into Jesus's mouth against revelation of his messiahship

Features

- Mark's is the most inelegant of style among the four Gospels; he starts with an abrupt beginning and finishes with an even more abrupt ending (16:8)
- Mark likes threefold repetitions: in Mark 4 Jesus tells three seed parables, there are 3 opinions about John's identity, there are three passion predictions, there are three points where the disciples fall asleep, Peter denies Jesus three times
- Suspense is also a feature of Mark especially in the ending; according to our best manuscripts the risen Christ does not appear: the women see the empty tomb, hear the instructions to report to Peter, and then the women say nothing to anyone out of fear (16:8)

Outline: Part 1

Galilee: Who Is This Jesus?

- Prologue/Introduction (1:1–2)
- Ministry of John the Baptizer (1:4–9)
- Jesus is prepared for ministry (1:9–13)
- Jesus begins his ministry (1:14–45)
- Jesus conflicts with religious authority (2:1–3:6)
- Summary of ministry (3:7–12)
- Calling and preparation of the Twelve (3:1–6:13)
- The nature of Jesus' messiahship (6:14–8:38)

Outline: Part 2

Journey to Jerusalem

- Jesus's identity revealed by transfiguration (9:1–13)
- The nature of discipleship is explored (9:14–10:52)
- Jesus clashes with Jerusalem leadership (11:1–12:44)
- The parting of the ways (13:1–14:31)

Outline: Part 3

Passion and Resurrection

- Jesus's arrest (14:32–52)
- Jesus before Jewish leadership (14:53–65)
- Peter Denies (14:66–72)
- Jesus before Pilate (15:1–15)
- Jesus crucified (15:16–39)
- Followers respond (15:40–47)
- Followers are told Jesus has been raised (16:1–8)