



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

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Gospel of Mark

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Overview

1. Distinctives

- a. The main theme is that Jesus is the **mighty Son of God** who obediently comes as a **suffering servant**. He did this to pay for our sins. But he also is a **model of suffering** and **sacrifice** for all his disciples to follow.

Mark 10:45 – “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to **serve**, and to **give his life** as a ransom for many.”

- b. This gospel **moves quicker** than any other Gospel.
 - It is **fast** and **action packed**. Things move quickly. The focus is on an **active Messiah**, very **energetic**. “Immediately” is used **forty-two** times. *euthus* (εὐθύς) – “immediately, at once”¹

Mark 1:10	And immediately , coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him
Mark 1:12	Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.
Mark 1:18	They immediately left their nets and followed Him.
Mark 1:20	And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and w
Mark 1:21	Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.
Mark 1:28	And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.
Mark 1:31	So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served the
Mark 1:42	As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.
Mark 2:2	Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive <i>them</i> , not even near the do
Mark 2:8	But immediately , when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to th
Mark 2:12	Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and
Mark 3:6	Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destr

¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 406. Chart from Logos Bible Software, 8.7.0.0042, Bible search for “immediately” in Mark, NKJV.

- c. The focus is on Christ's **actions**.
- Mark **stresses the works** not *words* of Jesus. It emphasizes **what Jesus did**, not so much what he said. It is more biographical than theological.²
 - Mark says **Jesus taught but doesn't give** what Jesus said (1:21, 39; 2:2, 13; 6:2, 6).
 - There's only **1 discourse** (13:3-37) and only **4 parables** (4:2-20, 26-29, 30-32; 12:1-9). But there are **18 miracles!**
- d. Mark emphasized the people were **amazed** at Jesus' **great authority**.
- The people were amazed at his power over the **natural world** (2:12; 5:42; 6:51) and even **demons** (supernatural world, 1:27; 2:12; 5:20; 6:2; 7:37).
 - Mark also emphasized the people were **amazed at his teaching** (1:22, 27; 11:18) because it had authority.
- e. Mark stresses the '**secrecy**' of Christ's **identity** (Mk. 1:23-25; 1:34; 1:42,44; 3:12; 5:7; 5:43; 7:36).
- f. Jesus is shown to have many **human emotions**.
- Compassion (1:41; 6:34), indignation (10:14), grief (3:5), amazement (6:6), anger (3:5), and love (10:21). He shows extreme anxiety in the Garden (14:33-34) but perseveres by trusting in God.³
- g. Mark has the **most negative description** of the disciples than any other Gospel.
- He paints the disciples in a very **negative light**. They **don't understand** his teaching (4:13; 7:18), his power (6:37, 52; 8:4) or his Messiahship (8:32; 9:32). They are **prideful** and **self-seeking** (9:38; 10:13, 37, 41). Jesus repeatedly **rebukes them** (4:13, 40; 7:18; 8:17-18, 9:19).
 - There is **no 'recovery'** of the disciples like the other Gospels.

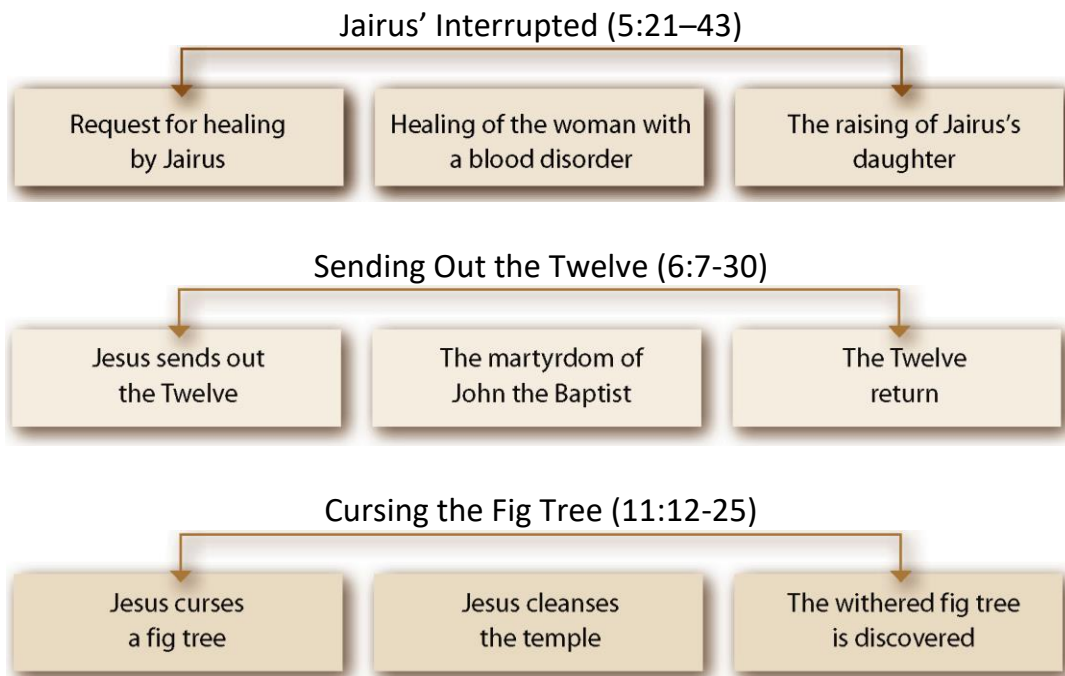
² Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 63.

³ Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 194.

- h. There's a strong **emphasis on discipleship** and **servant leadership** (8:31–38; 9:31–37; 10:32–45).
- i. The entire book can be outlined by **its key verse** (Mk. 10:45). We can then see how Mark emphasizes the **passion week**.⁴

<i>The Son of Man came to serve (Mk. 10:45a)</i>	<i>and give his life (Mk.10:45b)</i>
Christ's Deeds 64%	Christ's Death 36%
First 10 chapters	Last 6 chapters
3 years	1 week

- j. We see 'sandwiching' of events.
- Scholars see **intercalation** in Mark's gospel. This is where an event is **interrupted** by another event. The first event is eventually returned to and completed. Some examples:⁵



- k. **Key words and phrases:** *authority* (10×), *immediately* 40× and *spirit* (23×).⁶

⁴ Chart from Forrest Weiland, "NT510: New Testament Survey I," lecture, Veritas International University, Murrieta, CA, February, 2017, lectures 2, 3.

⁵ Charts from Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 176.

⁶ Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 62.

2. Author

- a. Church history says **Mark** was the author.
 - The early church Fathers unanimously agree that **Mark was the author**. This includes Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome, and Eusebius.⁷
 - Papias (AD 110) wrote:

“Mark **having become the interpreter of Peter**, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered... [Mark] neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, **he accompanied Peter...**”⁸
- b. Based on the above, Mark is **Peter's** Gospel
- c. What we about Mark from Scripture:⁹
 - He was an **associate of Peter** (1 Peter 5:13).
 - A missionary **companion of Paul** (Acts 13:5).
 - The **son** of one **Mary** (12:12).
 - A **nephew** (or cousin) of **Barnabas** (Col. 4:10).
 - The **subject of dispute** between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:37–40).
 - Later **reconciled to Paul** (2 Tim. 4:11).
 - Perhaps his home was the ‘upper room’ (Mk 14:12-16; Acts 12:12,14).

3. Date

- a. Mark was written between **AD 55** to **AD 60** -or- **AD 63** to **AD 67**.
 - It must have been written before the destruction of the temple in AD 70. We know it was written before AD 70 because the **Jewish temple was destroyed** in AD 70. But Mark describes it as **still standing** when he wrote the gospel (Mark 13:14).

⁷ Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 61.

⁸ Papias, “Fragments of Papias,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 154, 155.

⁹ Geisler, *A Popular Survey*, 60. He is also called John Mark because John was his Hebrew name; Mark was his Latin name. See Acts 12:12.

Key Passages

1. Jesus demonstrates his **authority**.

Mark argues that **Jesus had authority over every realm of life** because he was the Son of God.

- a. The people are **amazed at Jesus' teaching** because it had **authority**.

Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit

Mark 1:21–22

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were **amazed at his teaching**, because **he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law**.

- b. Jesus demonstrates **authority** over the **supernatural world**. He has authority over the **forces** of darkness.

(Continuing previous passage)

Mark 1:23–28

²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

²⁵ **“Be quiet!”** said Jesus sternly. **“Come out of him!”** ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and **with authority!** He even **gives orders to impure spirits** and **they obey him.**” ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

- c. Jesus demonstrates **authority** over the **natural** world.

Jesus Walks on the Water

Mark 6:45–51

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

⁴⁷ Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the

lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, **“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”** ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were **completely amazed...**

2. Mark stresses the ‘secrecy’ of Christ’s identity.

Throughout Mark, we see a strange motif where the demons seem to be telling people who he is (the Son of God). But Jesus keeps rebuking them and **telling them to be quiet**. He also tells people who recognize who he is not to tell anybody.¹⁰

- a. Jesus commanded **demons** to not reveal his identity.

Mark 1:23-25 – Jesus commands an impure spirit to be quiet
“Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? **I know who you are**—the Holy One of God!’ **“Be quiet!”** said **Jesus sternly**. **“Come out of him!”**

Mark 1:34 – Jesus would not let the demons speak
“Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak **because they knew who he was.**”

Mark 3:11, 12 – Jesus commands **unclean spirits to be quiet**
“Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God.’ But he gave them **strict orders not to tell** others about him.”

- b. Jesus commanded **people** to not reveal his identity.

Mark 1:42,44 – Jesus **commanded the leper** to not tell anybody
“Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed...” Jesus said, **“See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest...”**

¹⁰ A liberal scholar, William Wrede, first proposed there was a ‘messianic secret’ in Mark’s gospel. See Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, 1901. He argued Jesus never claimed to be Messiah. After the resurrection, his followers came to believe he was the messiah. He pointed to the verses in Mark where Jesus commanded his followers (and demons) to not tell anybody he was the Messiah. This theory has largely been rejected by scholars. See Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 180.

Mark 5:43-41 – He told people not to talk about **healing Jairus’ daughter** "He took her by the hand and said to her, **“Talitha koum!”** (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. **He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this**, and told them to give her something to eat.

Mark 7:36 – Healing a deaf and mute man – “Jesus **commanded them not to tell anyone**. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.”

- c. He commanded his own **disciples** to not reveal his identity.¹¹

Peter’s confession is a turning point in Mark, where Jesus’ identity is revealed.

Mark 8:27–30

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.

On the way he asked them, **“Who do people say I am?”**

²⁸ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹ **“But what about you?”** he asked. **“Who do you say I am?”**

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

³⁰ Jesus warned them **not to tell anyone** about him.

As soon as his identity is revealed, he brings up the cross (see next).

3. Mark emphasizes true discipleship and servanthood.

- a. Every time Jesus tells them about his death, he also gives a lesson about bearing one’s cross (humility) and the cost of discipleship. This seems to be a way in Mark’s Gospel where Jesus emphasizes true discipleship and servanthood.

Mark 8:31–36 (continuing previous)

³¹ He then began to teach them that the **Son of Man must suffer many things** and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and **Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.**

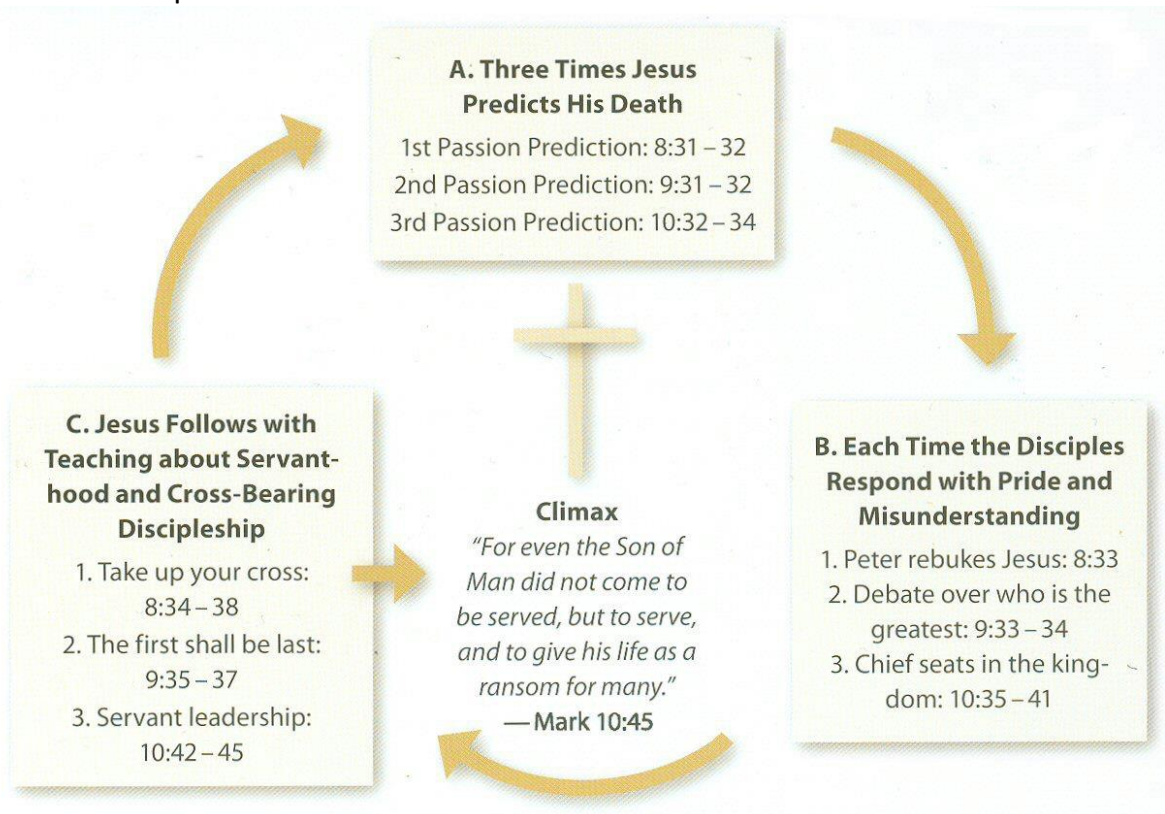
¹¹ This is also in Matthew 16:20 and Luke 9:21. But Mark has really been emphasizing keeping Jesus’ identity a secret until after the resurrection throughout.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, **he rebuked Peter**. **“Get behind me, Satan!”** he said. **“You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”**

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: **“Whoever wants to be my disciple **must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**** ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

b. We see this pattern three times:¹²



Remember: The main theme in Mark is that Jesus is the **mighty Son of God** who obediently comes as a **suffering servant**. He did this to pay for our sins. But he also is a **model** of suffering and **sacrifice** for all his disciples to follow.

¹² Chart from Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 185.

4. The different endings of Mark.

- a. There are **four** endings to Mark. The **Longer Ending** is verses 9-20 in most English translations. The **Freer Logion** has even more text. The **Shorter Ending** is just two sentences. The **Abrupt Ending** ends at verse 8.
- b. The Longer Ending includes **snake handling** and **drinking poison**:

Mark 16:17–18 – “And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will **drive out demons**; they will **speak in new tongues**; they will **pick up snakes** with their hands; and when they **drink deadly poison**, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

Note: The NIV has a footnote: “[The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20.]”

- c. No scholar supports the Freer Logion and the Shorter Ending. The debate is over the Longer Ending and the Abrupt Ending. **Most scholars reject the Longer Ending** saying it is not consistent in vocabulary, style and practice with the rest of Mark.
- d. This leaves the Abrupt Ending. But this is a **strange ending** too. This means it would end with “they were afraid...”:

Mark 16:8 – “Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, **because they were afraid.**”

There could be some good reasons for ending it here.

- Mark could have been prevented from ending it **because of imprisonment** or death. Or maybe he wanted to end abruptly to **keep with his style**. If so, Mark may have been **inviting his readers into the story** (like an abrupt movie ending today).¹³
- Either way, the **central teaching** of the Christian faith is not affected by any ending.

¹³ For details, see Shawn Nelson, “Which Ending of Mark’s Gospel Is Correct?” Nelson.Ink, March 1, 2017, <https://nelson.ink/which-ending-of-marks-gospel-is-correct/>.

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