

Presentation 1

An Overview to “Gospel” and Mark’s Gospel



Mark the Evangelist's symbol is the winged lion, the Lion of Saint Mark. The inscription reads:
PAX TIBI MARCE EVANGELISTA MEVS ("peace be upon you, Mark, my evangelist").
The same lion is also symbol of Venice¹

1. Interpreting the Gospel

- Need to be aware of the ‘three worlds’:
 - The world behind the text= the Greco-Roman world in which the Gospel was written;
 - The world of the text = the narrative and internal dynamic of the gospel text;
 - The world in front of the text = our world.

2. What is a Gospel?

- The Gospel is unique literature in the ancient world. ‘Gospel’ means ‘good news (*evangelion*—Gk) and refers to the ‘good news’ of salvation (eg1 Thes3:2; 1 Cor4:15;2Cor2:12;Rom1:1; 1:16).

‘Gospel’ echo the theme of ‘good tidings’ in Isaiah: 52:7: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace,*

¹ [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/45/Leone_marciano_andante - Vittore Carpaccio - Google Cultural Institute.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/45/Leone_marciano_andante_-_Vittore_Carpaccio_-_Google_Cultural_Institute.jpg); public domain.

who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns"

- The Greek word reflects the ancient Hebrew root, BSR = joyful or important message delivered by a designated messenger.
- 9 CE Augustus' birth inscription: "the birthday of the god [=emperor] was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings which have been proclaimed on his account."
- Paul uses the term over 60X

3. *The focus for the 'Gospel'*

- Jesus IS the Gospel, the bringer of the 'good news'. His good news is about the in-breaking of the *basileia* of God. The means of this in-breaking is through the words and deeds in Jesus. The household which gathers around him is the concrete manifestation of this 'Gospel'
- The 'Gospel' —the experience and encounter of the *basileia* through the ministry of Jesus —was proclaimed through the first disciples of Jesus. Their experience was communicated to others, who became disciples of Jesus. They formed households of followers outside of Israel in the Greek-Roman world.

4. The written Gospel emerges in *three moments* of formation:

Moment 1: The Gospels are founded on the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus adapted his message according to the circumstances of his audience.

Moment 2: The first preachers adapted and shaped their message about Jesus according to the Jewish, Greek-Roman context of their respective audiences.

Moment 3: The evangelists of these households, faithful to the story that they had heard about Jesus, adapted and shaped the story of Jesus in such a way that it would address the relevant pastoral issues of their respective households.

- The four written Gospels encapsulate the meaning of **the** Gospel, Jesus, for latter households of disciples in differing cultural and historical settings.
- The Gospels are not biographies of Jesus or eye-witness descriptions of what exactly happened or was said.

- They are founded on events surrounding Jesus' ministry, witnessed by disciples and spoken about by them. These were meditated upon in Gospel households.
- The Gospels become mediated reflections on the meaning of Jesus' ministry. They seek to reveal how God was at work in Jesus bringing liberation to human beings (the *basileia*), and how this liberation is still active through the community of disciples in history.
- Central to the dynamic of the written Gospels is the memory of eye-witnesses and the role of the households of disciples.
- The householders' reflections on the story of Jesus communicated through the founding preacher/s who remember the eye-witness traditions lay at the heart of the Gospel story.



St Mark, Evangelist. Icon (1657)²

² By Emmanuel Tzanes - zQGLrbRI5mtUnA at Google Cultural Institute maximum zoom level, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23718141>

5. *Interpretation of Mark*

Over centuries and decades and more immediately, the Gospel of Mark has been interpreted in different ways, not all of them mutually exclusively:

- Regarded as a biography of Jesus, in earliest centuries and in contemporary expressions of biblical fundamentalism;
- Seen as an analogy of the spiritual life (Medieval Period);
- Viewed in pre-scientific terms (around the Enlightenment era);
- Appreciated within its historical critical context (in modern era);
- As a literary construction (late 20th century)
- Interpreted against the Gospel's cultural and social context (late 20th-21st century);
- Read 'against the grain' of the narrative with a liberationist or feminist hermeneutic (late 20th century);
- Appreciated as an 'intertext'—absorbing earlier 'texts' into its narrative frame (21st century);
- Regarded as a 'visual' piece of literary art;
- Interpreters are invited to 'engage' the Gospel in conversation from their own world;
- A growing appreciation of ways of praying with the Gospel through *Lectio Divina* and *Auditio Divina*.

6. *Summary*

- Gospel is Good News
- It is *christological*: about *Jesus*
- Gospel is *theological*: about Jesus' *story of God* in Jesus
- Concerns response ("discipleship") to Jesus and God
- Importance of the "household"
- Oral / aural world of the gospel
- Role of eye-witnesses
- Place of household "memory"

7. *Background to Mark*

- Rome?
- c 70 CE
- Written for Greco-Roman Jesus Households
- For a time of upheaval, change & tension
- Portrait of Jesus:
 - Misunderstood
 - Solitary
- Portrait of the Disciples:
 - Misunderstand
 - Divided

MARK'S GOSPEL

1 Title and Overview	1:1
2 Prologue	1:2-15
3 The revelation of Jesus	1:16-8:21
a Miraculous deeds	(1:16-45)
b Conflicts with authorities	(2:1-3:6)
c Various reactions to Jesus	(3:7-35)
d Parable teaching	(4:1-34)
e Miraculous deeds:	(4:35-6:6a)
f Mission of the twelve & three miraculous events	(6:6b-56)
g Controversy with leaders	(7:1-23)
h Three miraculous events& controversy	(7:24-8:21)
4 Catechism on discipleship	8:22-10:52
a Healing a blind person & first teaching on passion	(8:22-9:1)
b Transfiguration & exorcism of deaf and mute spirit	(9:2-29)
c Second teaching on passion & implications for discipleship	(9:30-50)
d Teaching for discipleship	
e. Third teaching on passion & Healing of Blind Bartimaeus	(10:1-52)
5 Ministry in Jerusalem	11:1-13:37
a Entrance into Jerusalem: Confrontation with authorities	(11:1-25)
b Conflicts with Sanhedrin	(11:27-12:37)
c Conflict confirmed	(12:38-44)
d. Apocalyptic teaching	(13:1-37)
6 Passion and Death	14: 1-15:39
7 Burial and Resurrection	15:40-16:20

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- What is your experience of reading the Gospels and/or of Mark's Gospel?
- In the light of this introduction, how might Mark's Gospel be relevant for Jesus followers today?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- In preparation for the next presentation, spend time reading the whole of Mark's Gospel, if possible in one sitting, using the outline above.
- As you read the Gospel....
 - What is the "feel" or "tone" of the Gospel?
 - How is Jesus portrayed?
 - How do the disciples appear?
 - What words or images does the evangelist use about the disciples?
 - What is "missing" in Mark's Gospel that you would have expected to hear?

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