

## **Commentary on Mark Chapter 1:1-22, by Chuck Smith 11.7.21**

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**November memory verse, Romans 3:23 (NKJV)** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

### **Commentary on Mark Chapter 1:1-22, by Chuck Smith 11.7.21 Includes Chuck Swindoll Overview of the Gospel of Mark**

Mark was a young man when Jesus was crucified, perhaps about twelve years old. So, the gospel that he writes is considered to be the understanding that he received from listening to Peter relate the stories of Jesus Christ. Peter does call Mark his son; that would be son in the faith. And Mark was a companion of Peter through much of Peter's ministry, and thus, heard Peter relate these stories of Jesus Christ. And so in his gospel, you have pretty much Peter's account as written by Mark of Jesus.

There is only one part of Mark's gospel that he probably wrote from personal experience. It's a little insertion in the gospel of Mark that you do not find in the other gospels, and it is concerning the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. And Mark's gospel tells us that there was a young boy there about twelve years old. And one of the soldiers grabbed him, but he wriggled out of his coat and left his coat in the soldier's hand and ran home. And that is believed to be Mark's personal account of his own experience as a little twelve-year-old boy. He happened to be there in the garden with Jesus and his disciples that night that Jesus was betrayed.

Mark's mother's name was Mary. She was a wealthy woman. She lived in Jerusalem and her home was a gathering place for the church. When Peter was imprisoned by Herod, the church had met in her home for that prayer meeting. And so when Peter was released by the action of the angel and came to the house and knocked on the door, and the young maiden came and saw it was Peter, and was so excited she didn't even open the door, but ran back in and told the people, "Peter's here." And they said, "Ah, you've seen a ghost." That was the home of Mark. His mother's name was Mary, a wealthy woman who lived in Jerusalem. Her home was the gathering place for the early church.

Her brother's name was Barnabas, and he was the companion of Paul on the first missionary journey. Mark also went with them on that first missionary journey, but Mark left them. And we don't know why he left. There is speculation that Mark was afraid to go on into the more hostile areas of Asia, but that is only speculation. We do not know why Mark left Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. But Paul evidently was offended by his leaving, so that when Barnabas and Paul were getting ready to leave on their second missionary journey and Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark along, Paul objected strenuously because of the fact that he had left the first time. And from this, the contention between Paul and Barnabas became so great that Barnabas took Mark and went off himself to the island of Cypress. And Paul took Silas and headed on

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out to Asia. However, this breach between Paul and Mark did not last long, for Paul makes mention of Mark being in Rome with him and ministering to his needs.

It was probably while Mark was in Rome with Paul that he wrote this gospel. It is one of the earliest gospels written, and thought to be written some time before the year sixty-three. It is thought to be written by Mark for the Romans, as he was there with Paul in Rome. Inasmuch as whenever he deals with any of the Jewish customs, he takes the time to explain it, which would not be necessary if he were writing to the Jews. But it is thought that he wrote this gospel for the Romans. Mark is brief in his style. He doesn't go into a lot of details, but he just briefly relates the stories and he covers, therefore, a lot of territory.

Later, as Paul was writing, he asked them to send Mark to him with some of his things, because he said Mark had been such a comfort and a help to him. So, here we have the gospel according to Mark.

In the Bible, we have three beginnings. John's gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God." [Genesis 1:1](#): "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But Mark's gospel is:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ([Mar 1:1](#));

So, Mark does not tell us about the birth of Jesus. He leaves that for Matthew and for Luke. But Mark begins his story at the baptism of John. But this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and so he is not going to tell us anything about the early years of Jesus, about his birth. But he starts right in with the ministry of Jesus Christ. So, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." And, being with Paul in Rome, probably he was thinking of Paul's declaration to the Romans in his epistle to them prior to his going there, where Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." We'll find John referring much to the gospel. He is quoting Jesus as making reference to the gospel in many places. Mark sets out--it's John Mark actually, Mark was his surname--he sets out Jesus as the servant. Matthew sets out Jesus as the King, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Mark emphasizes the servanthood of Jesus Christ. And so in Matthew, Jesus is the Lion; Mark, He is the servant; Luke, He is the Son of Man; and in John, He is the Son of God. These are the various aspects and the phases of Jesus' life that we see in the gospels.

As it is written in the prophets ([Mar 1:2](#)),

And he begins, first of all, with a quotation from Malachi, and then he jumps to Isaiah and quotes from Isaiah. As it is written in the prophets:

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee ([Mar 1:2](#)).

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That's a quotation from Malachi. It is a quotation concerning John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Now, quoting from Isaiah,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all of the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with Holy Ghost ([Mar 1:3-8](#)).

So, he briefly tells us of the ministry of John the Baptist, and he quotes the prophecies from the Old Testament that relate to the ministry of John the Baptist.

And then he tells us,

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in Jordan. And straightway [immediately] coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ([Mar 1:9-11](#)).

Here again we see the three persons of the godhead as Jesus is coming up out of the water, the Spirit of God is descending upon Him and the voice of the Father declaring, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

And now, he takes us from the baptism.

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him ([Mar 1:12-13](#)).

Now, Mark does not give us any of the details of the temptation of Jesus. He leaves that for the other gospel writers, Matthew and Luke.

Now after that John ([Mar 1:14](#))

Do you see the brevity? He doesn't go into details, where the other gospels give us a little bit more detail about that temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God [notice the gospel of the kingdom, the good news of God's kingdom], and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel ([Mar 1:14-15](#)).

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Believe the good news.

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway [immediately] they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence [from there], he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway [immediately] he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him ([Mar 1:16-20](#)).

Now as we read Mark's gospel, because he doesn't give us any background, it would appear that Jesus just walking along the shore of Galilee suddenly saw Peter and his brother Simon and said, "Come and follow me. I'll make you fishers of men," and they just left their nets and followed Him. Well, that is what happened, but this isn't the first time that they had met Jesus. This is when Jesus called them to discipleship, but they had met Jesus earlier. In fact, in the gospel of John, he tells us of their earlier meeting of Jesus. Andrew had met Jesus. And he came to Peter his brother and told him, "Hey, we have found the Messiah." And he brought his brother Peter to Jesus. And they knew Jesus; they had met Jesus. They had observed the miracles that He had done. But now, Jesus is calling them to a full commitment of discipleship. Knowing Jesus, immediately upon His call to them, they left their fishing, their nets to follow Jesus.

Notice James and John with their father Zebedee. Jesus later sort of nicknamed them the "sons of thunder." But they had hired servants. They left their father with the hired servants. So they evidently came from a well-to-do background. And so,

And they came into Capernaum [which, of course, is where Peter was living there in Capernaum]; and straightway [immediately] on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes ([Mar 1:21-22](#)).

Now, when the scribes would teach the people, express an opinion as their own, they would say, "Now, Rabbi Hallel says of this that it means this or that or the other." And they were always quoting other rabbis. They would never just say flat out, "Now this is what the Lord is saying to us." They never would speak with authority. They would always in their teaching just quote the other ideas, the other thoughts, the other rabbis and what they thought this might have meant. Thus, when Jesus came, He spoke with authority.

We remember in the Sermon on the Mount He said, "You've heard that it hath been said by those of old time, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but I say unto you," and He spoke with authority. And they marveled at this kind of teaching. They weren't use to this kind of teaching. They weren't used to someone speaking with authority concerning the word of God. And so, they were astonished at his teaching because it wasn't as they were used to hearing, but He spoke to them and He taught them with real authority.

## **Chuck Swindoll's overview of Mark**

### **Who wrote the book?**

The Bible records more information about Mark than any of the other gospel writers aside from the apostle John. Luke mentioned Mark's name several times in Acts. A budding Jerusalem church met in his mother's home. Mark also started the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas but went home early, though he later traveled with Barnabas to Cyprus for more mission work. He became significant in the life of Paul, being one of the last people the apostle mentioned in his final letter ([2 Timothy 4:11](#)).

However, Mark's most significant personal connection was the one he had with Peter, who was likely Mark's source for the material in the gospel. Mark's mother's house was a regular enough stop for Peter that the servants recognized him by voice alone ([Acts 12:12–14](#)). And it appears that Mark was present at Gethsemane, a young man watching the proceedings from a safe distance ([Mark 14:51–52](#)), leading some scholars to believe the Last Supper took place in Mark's home.

### **Where are we?**

Because Mark offered no further comment on Jesus's prophecy regarding the destruction of the temple—an event that occurred in AD 70—we can safely assume that Mark composed the gospel sometime before that tragic event. Also, the gospel has a distinctly Roman feel to it, particularly when compared with the Jewish emphasis of the book of Matthew. Mark chose to leave aside most comments on fulfilled prophecy (compare [Matthew 21:1–6](#) and [Mark 11:1–4](#)), and when he felt compelled to use an Aramaic term, he interpreted it ([Mark 3:17](#)). This suggests that Mark was in Rome, writing from Peter's recollections sometime before that apostle's death (ca. AD 64–68), possibly composing the gospel between AD 57 and AD 59.

### **Why is Mark so important?**

Mark's gospel portrays Jesus as constantly on the move. The forward motion in Mark's writing keeps the knowledgeable reader's mind continually looking ahead to the cross and the resurrection. Thirty-nine times Mark used the word *immediately*, giving a sense that Jesus's time on earth was short and that there was much to accomplish in His few years of ministry.

### **What's the big idea?**

While Matthew's gospel portrays Jesus as the King, Mark reveals Him as God's Servant. Jesus's work was always for a larger purpose, a point clearly summarized in [Mark 10:45](#), "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark filled his gospel with the miracles of Jesus, illustrating again and again both the power and the compassion of the Son of God. In

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these passages, Mark revealed more than Jesus as the good teacher who offered people spiritual renewal; the book also portrays Jesus as the true God and the true man, reaching into the lives of people and effecting physical and circumstantial change.

But Jesus's life as *the* agent of change wasn't without an ultimate purpose. Amid His hands-on ministry, Jesus constantly pointed to the definitive way in which He would serve humanity: His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. It is only through faith in these works of Jesus Christ that human beings find eternal redemption for their whole selves. Moreover, Jesus becomes our model for how to live our lives—serving others as He did.

### How do I apply this?

Three times in three consecutive chapters—8, 9, and 10—Mark pictured Jesus informing His disciples of His great sacrifice and ultimate victory. His disciples either rejected the teaching altogether ([Mark 8:31–32](#)) or they showed themselves concerned with other matters (9:31–34; 10:32–37). As Jesus prepared to perform the greatest service in the history of the human race, His disciples could only think about themselves—their position or safety.

Do you find it a struggle to get yourself oriented toward sacrificial service, as Jesus's disciples did? The temptations we all wrestle with when faced with an opportunity to serve another person are to pull back within ourselves, to seek our comfort, or to protect our own interests.

The challenge that Jesus presents to us in the book of Mark involves breaking out of those patterns of self-absorption and giving ourselves in service and love to others.

### Bible Study Aids: Mark Overview Chart

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# MARK

	<b>Introduction and Preparation</b> <b>A brief introduction sets Jesus's ministry in motion.</b> John the Baptizer prepares the way. Jesus is tempted in the wilderness.  <i>CHAPTER</i> 1:1-13	<b>The Servant at Work</b> <b>An unbroken chain of events reveals Jesus helping people in need.</b> Because people are in darkness, He enlightens. Because people are sick/afflicted, He heals. Because people are without hope, He encourages. Because people are in bondage to satanic control, He liberates. Because people are sinful, He forgives.  <i>CHAPTERS</i> 1:14-8:30	<b>The Servant Rejected . . . Then Exalted</b> <b>A growing discontent among the authorities leads to Jesus's suffering and death.</b> He presses the claim, "Messiah." He spends more time alone with His disciples. He comes into open conflict with His enemies. He is hated, deserted, tortured, crucified, and buried. He is raised bodily from the dead!  <i>CHAPTERS</i> 8:31-16:20
<b>Emphasis</b>	Service to others	Sacrifice for others	
<b>Scope</b>	Ministry to the multitudes	Ministry to the Twelve	
<b>Sections</b>	Action . . . reaction . . . confrontation	Revelation . . . crucifixion . . . exaltation	
<b>Theme</b>	Jesus is the Suffering Servant, who gives His life to save the world.		
<b>Key Verse</b>	10:45		
<b>Christ in Mark</b>	Jesus suffered and died so that salvation would be available to all people (10:45).		

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