

The Gospel of Mark

And an Introduction to Narrative Criticism

What is Mark?

Summary of Matthew (cf. the later Griesbach hypothesis)

Markan priority (closer links with oral transmission)

Not simply a random collection of units, but a carefully woven account.

Who was Mark?

‘Mark, who had been Peter’s interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord’s sayings and doings’ (Papias, quoted by Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History*).

He is traditionally linked to John Mark, the companion of Paul (cf. Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37-39; Philemon 24).

Mark's Original Setting

Rome - link with Peter; 'Latinisms' (3:6; 15:39); anti-Jewish sentiment.

Galilee - setting of the narrative; no explanation of place names; response to events surrounding 70 CE.

Antioch – key city for Rome, Jews and Christians; links with Peter (Gal. 2:11) and John Mark (Acts 11:22-26).

Date of Mark's Gospel

Tradition and the Markan text offer clues.

Link with Peter - late 60s

Response to events surrounding the Jewish War - 69-70 CE

Content of Mark's Gospel

Prologue (1:1-13)

The kingdom proclaimed (1:14-8:26)

Watershed (8:27-30)

The road to Jerusalem (8:31-15:39)

Epilogue (15:40-16:8)

[Later ending?]

Style and Message

Direct style of writing gives an 'immediate' feel to the narrative

Interpretation as well as reporting

No 'gospel' without the cross (the sufferings of early Christians in the late 60s)

The crucified Jesus is the Son of God (important christological theme)

The 'Messianic Secret'

First identified by Wilhelm Wrede (1901):
Jesus commands silence from those
whom he heals (1:34; 1:44; 5:43; 7:36;
9:9; 9:30).

Attempt by Early Church to explain why
Jesus made no such claim?

'Messianic' Titles

Others, not Jesus, refer to him as the Son of God (1:1; 1:11; 15:39).

Son of Man -Jesus' form of self-reference:

a) Aramaic: 'one such as I'

b) Daniel 7: 'one like a son of man' (title?)

Mark and Narrative Criticism

Implied author and reader - what clues does the narrative offer about the author and reader?

Point of view - what worldview is assumed by the text?

Narration - shaping of perception of characters and events.

Symbolism and irony - universal, cultural, and text symbols

Narrative patterns - structure and content, patterns.

Mark as Narrative

Mark develops the narrative through the plot, characters and setting.

Note use of repetition and intercalation ('sandwich effect').

Ending of Mark: torn scroll or attempt to draw the reader into the story