

THE LIFE OF MARK



KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT FAST



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I'd like to dedicate this short paper to Aristopolis and Mary, his parents. DH

Outline on the Life of Mark the Evangelist Based on Church Tradition:

Early Life and Background in Jerusalem:

Mark is traditionally identified as John Mark, possessing both a Hebrew name (John) and a Roman cognomen (Mark). He was almost certainly called John growing up, as Mark was his middle name, but as he grew and worked with the disciples, Mark was easier to use as you already had plenty of John's in the time/place of the Gospels and after.

According to early Christian tradition, his mother's name was Miriam, (after the sister of Moses), or Mary in translation to English, and his father was Aristopolis. Aristopolis and Mary were prominent and wealthy believers in the God of scripture, and embraced the Messiahship of Jesus early on. They owned homes in Jerusalem and Alexandria, and rental properties. One in particular is called the Cenacle. You would know this as the "Upper Room".



The Cenacle or Upper Room, in Jerusalem today

The Cenacle is a house in Jerusalem that served as a gathering place and refuge for the early apostles (such as when Peter sought shelter after escaping prison).

"¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now truly I know that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."¹² And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying."

Acts 12:11-12

Pious tradition also associates his family's home with the location of the Last Supper and the upper room of Pentecost.

Hippolytus of Rome claimed Mark was among the wider circle of the **Seventy Disciples** appointed by Jesus.

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." — Luke 10:1

(see more on the 70 at the end of this paper)

As Mark was growing up his parents were worried about the effects affluence might have on him and Mary his mother sent him to her brother-in-law's business to work on the boats. That couple would be Peter and Perpetua. He could enjoy the academic life in winter, and learn the value of a hard days work with fair days wage in the summer.



Mark is sometimes traditionally identified as the young man who fled naked during Christ's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind." — Mark 14:51–52

The reason for this is 1. that they came to the garden after leaving the upper room. Mark's home. 2. If it were a disciple, that disciple would most likely have been named, and 3. as Mark is the Author, and the story is only mentioned in this Gospel, it gave Mark a watermark for his efforts.

Early Missionary Journeys with Paul and Barnabas:

Mark was a cousin of the Apostle Barnabas.

He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on parts of their first missionary journey as an assistant.

Acts 12:25: "When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark."

Acts 13:5: "When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them."

For reasons debated in tradition, John Mark left the mission early and returned to Jerusalem, which later caused a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, leading them to temporarily part ways.

Acts 13:13: "From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem."

However, tradition and later New Testament letters indicate this rift was successfully healed, with Paul later describing Mark as helpful to his ministry.

"Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)"
Colossians 4:10

"And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."
Philemon 1:24

"Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry." 2 Timothy 4:11

Relationship with Peter and Authorship of the Gospel: Church tradition heavily links Mark with the Apostle Peter, who affectionately referred to him as his spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13).

"She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark." — 1 Peter 5:13

Early church fathers (like Papias and Irenaeus) stated that the Gospel of Mark is actually Peter's eyewitness testimony, which Mark simply recorded and structured. This verse places the two men together in the exact environment where that Gospel was written. Most biblical scholars agree that "Babylon" in this verse is a cryptogram or code name for Rome. Just as ancient Babylon was the historic oppressor of God's people, Rome had become the new center of persecution.

According to early church fathers like Papias of Hierapolis, Mark became Peter's close companion, disciple, and interpreter in Rome, translating Peter's preaching and eyewitness accounts into written form.

Tradition holds that Mark authored his Gospel in Rome either shortly before or after Peter's martyrdom, structuring it to capture the dynamic, fast-paced actions and eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Peter for a Gentile audience.

Founding of the Church in Alexandria and African Ministry:

Following his time in Rome, church tradition states that Mark traveled to Egypt, where he founded the Christian Church in Alexandria.



He is recognized as the first Bishop of Alexandria, planting the roots of Christianity across North Africa, which forms the historical foundation of the Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Churches of Alexandria. Below, P45 Gospel of Mark from 200AD.



Martyrdom and Legacy

According to ancient hagiography and church tradition, Mark suffered martyrdom in Alexandria around 68 AD.

His ministry was so vast the Alexandrian idol worshippers tied him up behind a horse and dragged him through the city for an entire day.



He lived, so they tossed him in jail, and when he survived the night, they did it again. But tied the rope around his neck this time. Upon death, they beheaded him and buried the head separate from the body because he was so convincing in his preaching on the resurrection of the dead they were frightened he would rise from the dead. They hoped by separating his head from his body, they would make it harder for God to resurrect him.

The body is in Alexandria Egypt, the Head in Venice Italy.

Several early church fathers and historical texts addressed the Identity of the Seventy Disciples (or 72) commissioned in Luke 10. While some attempted to compile exhaustive directories, others focused on the theological meaning or named just a few specific individuals.

1. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339 AD)

In his famous work Ecclesiastical History (Book I, Chapter 12), Eusebius explicitly stated that no official roster of the Seventy existed in his time. [\[1\]](#)

However, he gathered oral traditions and earlier writings to mention a few notable figures who were believed to belong to the group: [\[1, 2\]](#)

Barnabas and Sosthenes (companions of Paul).

Matthias (who later replaced Judas as one of the Twelve).

Thaddeus of Edessa (the disciple sent to heal King Abgar, distinct from the Apostle Thaddeus).

A "Cephas" whom Paul rebuked at Antioch, who shared a name with Simon Peter but was a distinct member of the Seventy. [\[1, 2, 3\]](#)

2. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD)

Clement did not write a complete list, but in his lost work Hypotyposes (Outlines), quoted by Eusebius, he provided structural context for how the Seventy operated. Clement noted that after the Resurrection, Peter, James, and John were entrusted with higher knowledge, which they passed to the rest of the Twelve, who then imparted it to the Seventy. Clement is also the source for the tradition that the "Cephas" rebuked by Paul in Galatians 2 was actually this specific member of the Seventy, rather than Peter the Apostle. [\[1, 2, 3\]](#)

3. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD)

Augustine focused heavily on the theological and ecclesial structure of the Seventy. In his commentaries, he interpreted the appointment of the Twelve Apostles as the foundation for the office of Bishops, while the commissioning of the Seventy-Two foreshadowed the ministerial priesthood. [\[1\]](#)

4. Dorotheus of Tyre (Traditional Attribution, c. 255–362 AD)

Similar to Pseudo-Hippolytus, a comprehensive list titled The Synopsis of the Seventy Apostles is traditionally attributed to Bishop Dorotheus of Tyre. While modern scholarship considers the text to be from a later, anonymous Byzantine origin, it stands alongside the Hippolytan list as

one of the two foundational compilations used by Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions to venerate the Seventy individually. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

5. Solomon of Basra (13th Century)

Though much later than the classic Church Fathers, this Nestorian bishop compiled a unique Eastern Christian perspective in his book [The Book of the Bee](#). His list includes several distinct names not found in Western or Byzantine catalogs, showing how traditions regarding the Seventy continued to evolve across different regional branches of the early Church. [[1](#)]

The Symbolism Behind the Number 70 (or 72)

The choice of this specific number is deeply rooted in Jewish theology and Old Testament history, functioning as a deliberate sign from Jesus.

The Table of Nations: In Genesis 10, the Bible lists the descendants of Noah who repopulated the earth. In the Hebrew text, there are 70 nations listed; in the Greek Septuagint translation, there are 72 nations. By sending out 70 (or 72) disciples, Jesus was symbolically signaling that the Gospel was ultimately destined for all the nations of the known world, not just Israel.

The Elders of Israel: In Numbers 11:16–25, Moses is told by God to gather 70 elders to help him lead Israel, upon whom God places His Spirit. (Notably, two extra elders, Eldad and Medad, remained in the camp but also prophesied, totaling 72). Jesus appointing this group mirrors Moses, positioning Himself as the leader establishing a new leadership structure for the Church.

The Sanhedrin: The supreme Jewish ruling council (the Sanhedrin) traditionally consisted of 70 or 72 elders plus the High Priest. Jesus creating His own council of 70/72 was a direct, parallel claim of spiritual authority.

ITINERARIUM ET LOCI SANCTI MARCI EVANGELISTAE



ORIENS

SEPTENTRIO

OCCIDENS

MERIDIES

SELEUCIA
& ANTIOCHIA
(Antioch)

Fons
Christianitatis

HIEROSOLYMA

Fons Christianitatis

Domus Mariae



LEO DE IUDA

CYPRUS
Salamis
Paphos
INSULA

ALEXANDRIA
fons salutaris

MARTYRIUM

CATHEDRA PRIMA SANCTI MARCI

CATHEDRA PRIMA SANCTI MARCI

AEGYPTUS

PENTAPOLIS

MARE INTERNUM

ROMA

ROMA
MARCUS
SCRIBA PETRI

MARTYRIUM
SANCTI PETRI

ALEXANDRIA

FUNDATIO
ECCLESIAE

ALEXANDRIAE

