



The Gospel of Mark

- Mark is the only Gospel writer to use the word “gospel” to begin his composition: *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*
Mark 1:1
- The Greek word for “gospel” is “*euaggeliou*” from which we get the English word “evangelical.”
“Gospel” literally means “good news.”
- Mark announces his purpose at the very start of his gospel: to tell the world the “good news” of Jesus Christ (“Christ” is the Greek word for the Hebrew word “Messiah”) who is also “Son of God.” “Son of God” is a title signifying royal authority and salvific power common the Greek-speaking (now Roman controlled) world.
- Paul does not consider the “gospel” to be a book about Jesus Christ, but rather a message concerning salvation. Mark develops the good news of salvation in Jesus to include the whole story of Jesus’ ministry.



Who Was Mark?

- ▶ Like the other three gospels there is no name associated with authorship.
- ▶ A fairly early Church tradition ascribes authorship to “Mark.”
- ▶ This may be the same John Mark mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. (Acts 12:12, 15:37) John Mark knew the apostle Peter, and later may have composed the work as a summary of Peter’s preaching concerning Jesus.



Special Characteristics of Mark's Gospel

- 97% of Mark appears in either Matthew or Luke.
- Mark depicts Jesus as being constantly active. A favorite word in Mark is the Greek word meaning "immediately," or "at once" or "then." Used over 40 times in 16 chapters. Ex. Mark 1:17-20 ¹⁷And Jesus said to them (Simon and Andrew), "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸And *immediately* they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰*Immediately* he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Some other details unique to Mark's Gospel:

- "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." Mark 2:27
- Jesus is called a "carpenter." Mark 6:3 ("carpenter's son" in Matthew 13:55)
- Mark gives us Jesus' words in the original Aramaic "He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" Mark 5:41, and "Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." Mark 7:34
- Only Mark reports a young man running off naked when Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane "A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked." Mark 14:51-52 A later tradition holds that this may be the young Mark himself, though no evidence is available.
- The most unique aspect of Mark's Gospel is that it ends with the empty tomb and the women fleeing in fright. There are two alternative endings, the so-called "shorter ending" (Mark 16:8b) and the "longer ending" (Mark 16:9-20) but these are not original to Mark's Gospel. Whether Mark intended to leave out the resurrection appearances as an open-ended decision of faith, or the original ending with the resurrection appearances has been lost, is still a matter of scholarly debate.





Four Gospels: One Jesus

A Bible Study for Swamp Lutheran Church

The Rev. Kurt S. Strause



The Gospel of Matthew

- ▶ Author: Though there is no name associated with the Gospel, an early 2nd century A.D. tradition attributes authorship to the apostle Matthew. Modern scholars reject this due to lack of any internal or external evidence.
- ▶ Date: Most scholars date the Gospel to the last quarter of the 1st century A.D., most likely between 80 and 90 A.D.
- ▶ Place: Unknown, though possibilities include Antioch in Syria or maybe even the Galilee region of Judea.
- ▶ Sources: Draws heavily from Mark (56%), and “Q-Sayings” (24%). 20% is unique to Matthew.
- ▶ Audience: A predominately Greek-speaking Jewish community who had come to believe Jesus is Israel’s true Messiah. A few Gentile converts as well.



Judaism During the Time of Jesus


- ▶ Jesus lived at the end of what is called “Second Temple Judaism” which lasted from @520 B.C when the Jews returned from Babylonian exile to 70 A.D when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans.
- ▶ Judaism was centered at the Temple in Jerusalem which was run by priests who exercised considerable civil as well as religious authority for the Jewish community.
- ▶ The Temple was the center of all religious life. A cycle of sacrifices, both animal and vegetable (grain, oil, etc.), presided over by priests, governed the daily life of Jews.
- ▶ Although synagogues existed by the 2nd century B.C. they were not as important as Temple worship.
- ▶ Lay leaders, called Pharisees, emphasized strict adherence to the Law as found in the Torah in order to maintain strict separation from Gentiles.
- ▶ A lively religious belief held by many Jews was that the time was ripe for God to send his Messiah who would rule as a successor to King David and usher in a new age in which Israel would be freed from Roman rule.

The Temple in Jerusalem

Begun @520 B.C.

Greatly enlarged by King Herod the Great 1st Century B.C..





The First Jewish-Roman War and the Fall of Jerusalem, 66 to 73 A.D.

- ▶ Judea was a Roman province at the eastern edge of the Roman Empire, first ruled by vassal kings such as Herod and later by Procurators (“governors”) appointed directly by Rome.
- ▶ At first Roman rulers tried to respect Jewish laws and customs, but later rulers instituted harsh policies of taxation and oppression.
- ▶ The Zealots were a loosely organized band of Jews who sought to defeat the Roman occupation of Judea.
- ▶ Revolt broke out in 66 A.D. In 70 A.D. The Roman army, led by Titus who was later to become Emperor, laid siege to Jerusalem. After 5 months the Romans captured and destroyed most of the city, including the Temple, carrying its most sacred articles back to Rome.




The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem, David Roberts, 1850



The Arch of Titus, 81 A.D. on the Via Sacra In Rome. Constructed to commemorate the Roman victory over the Jewish rebels.



Panel on the inside of the arch showing the Roman army plundering treasures from the Temple.



Consequences of the Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

- The cycle of sacrifices comes to an end. These could only be performed in the Temple. The religious priesthood comes to an end as well. Subsequent revolts will lead to many, if not most, Jews leaving Judea and scattering throughout the Mediterranean area and beyond. The “Diaspora.”
- Jewish religious life now centers on the synagogue presided over by a Rabbi. The study of scripture and adherence to the laws and emerging customs of Judaism, as interpreted by the Rabbis, become important.
- The “Jesus Movement” within Judaism began at the same time synagogue-centered, rabbinic-led Judaism emerged. The two communities over-lapped with one another, with followers of Jesus often forming a sub-group within the synagogue. Conflicts between the two groups arose over Jesus’ identity.
- Followers of Jesus were expelled from the synagogues in the late 1st century A.D.



Purpose of Matthew's Gospel

- ▶ Jesus is presented as Israel's royal Messiah in the line of King David who is also the true giver of the Law, surpassing Moses.
- ▶ Jesus fulfills the prophetic expectations for the coming Messiah found in the Scriptures (what we call the "Old Testament.>").
- ▶ Jesus is the divine Son of God who, by his obedience to God, proves his Sonship.
- ▶ The followers of Jesus are the true Israel who gain divine forgiveness and fellowship with God. The priests and scribes have failed.
- ▶ The traditions associated with Judaism are not abolished but rather fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus.
- ▶ The teachers of the Law (Scribes and Pharisees) fail to understand the true will of God and are thus rejected by Jesus.

The Structure of Matthew's Gospel

Prologue: Genealogy, Nativity and Infancy 1:1-2:23

Five Discourses: Each discourse includes a *narrative* section followed by a *teaching* section, ending with the phrase “When Jesus had finished saying these things,” (see 7:28). Each discourse has its own theme. Scholars see this as Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as the new Moses who had given Israel the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.

First Discourse-Righteousness, The Sermon on the Mount 3:1-8:1

Second Discourse-Instructions for Missionary Disciples 8:2-11:1

Third Discourse-Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven 11:2-13:53

Fourth Discourse-On Sincere Discipleship 13:54-19:1

Fifth Discourse-On the End of the Present Age 19:2-26:1

Conclusion: Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection 26:2-28:20

Matthew's Purpose Illustrated in His Text

- ▶ Jesus is the Royal Messiah of Israel in the line of King David. Unlike Luke, Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy to Abraham, not Adam. Abraham begins Israel's history, as he is the first to be called by God. Matthew also makes more extensive use of the title "Son of David."
 - ▶ *¹An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,...Matthew 1:1-2*
- ▶ Jesus is the new and true law-giver who surpasses Moses. Jesus authoritatively interprets the law to show its true meaning.
 - ▶ *²¹"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.*

Matthew's Purpose, continued

- ▶ Jesus fulfills the prophetic expectations of the Messiah. While the other Gospel writers will quote passages to show Jesus is the Messiah, Matthew uses many more passages, usually beginning with the phrase, "This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet..." For example, the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry in Mt., Mk., & Lk.

13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, *in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali*, ¹⁴ *so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:*

¹⁵ *"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the
Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—*

¹⁶ *the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and
shadow of death
light has dawned."*

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^[a] of God,^[b] ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;^[c] repent, and believe in the good news."[[]

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

Matthew's Purpose, continued

- **Jesus is the divine Son of God who, by his obedience, proves his sonship.**
- All three synoptic Gospels report the voice from heaven declare Jesus to be the Son of God at his baptism.
- Matthew and Mark report the centurion declare Jesus to be “truly the Son of God” when he died on the cross. (“This man was innocent” in Luke)
- But only in Matthew does Peter confess that Jesus is the “Christ, Son of the Living God.” (16:15) (“You are the Christ” in Mark and Luke)
- The disciples declare “Truly you are the Son of God” after Jesus walks across the water to their boat (“They were utterly astounded” in Mark’s account)
- The crowd derisively mocks Jesus on the cross; “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (27:40) and, “He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said ‘I am God’s Son.’” (27:43)



Matthew's Purpose, continued

- ▶ Matthew's church is predominately Jewish-Christian with a minority of Gentile-Christians. The first believers in Jesus as the Messiah were Jews. At first Jewish-Christians continued to participate in the synagogues.
- ▶ After the destruction of the Temple Judaism began a transformation into a Torah-centered faith led by rabbis. The Jewish-Christians continued to advocate in the synagogues that Jesus was the true Messiah of Israel. This brought them into increasing conflict with the rabbinic leadership.
- ▶ An important question for the Jewish-Christians was how much of the Torah do they continue to observe.
- ▶ Is the Gospel for Jews only, or can Gentiles be saved also?
- ▶ Do Gentiles who come to believe in Jesus need to become Jews and follow the Law of Moses?
- ▶ Can Synagogue Jews and Jewish-Christian get along?


Tension in the Jesus Movement Illustrated in Matthew's Gospel

- ▶ Is the Mosaic Law of the Torah still valid for followers of Jesus?
 - ▶ ¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Matthew 5:17-18
- ▶ The current Jewish leaders lead disciples astray.
 - ▶ ¹²Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" ¹³He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." Matthew 15:12-14
- ▶ The Gospel is primarily for Jews, but for Gentiles the "times they are a-changing."
 - ▶ ²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a **Canaanite** woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴He answered, "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the **dogs** eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.



Persecutions Arise, The Jewish Mission Fails, Separation from Synagogue is Inevitable

- ▶ ¹⁶See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you **in their synagogues**; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. 10:16-18
- ▶ ³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching **in their synagogues**, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 4:23, 9:35
- ▶ ²⁸What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, **the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.** ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.



How does it affect your perception of Jesus to think of him as first and foremost a Jew?

What do you imagine might have happened to Christianity if the Temple in Jerusalem had not been destroyed?

How important are maintaining cherished traditions to your faith? What would you be willing to give up? What is essential?

What is your reaction to what a Jewish Rabbi once said to me? "Christians believe the Messiah will come again. Jews believe the Messiah is still coming. When it happens we hope it's the same person."