

## NOTES

Mark Bible study - Week 1 - Overview

(Adapted from Rowan Williams" and William Placher's commentaries on Mark)

It's the earliest and most brief of all the gospels. Unlikely to receive the attention as do the others.

Two stories of conversion reading this Gospel -  
Jurgen Moltmann - the cry of dereliction  
Anthony Bloom - the Presence

Gospel - *Evangelion* - "a bit of good news"

*It is also a public even political announcement.* "A gospel is a message about something that significantly alters the climate in which people live, changing the politics and the possibilities; it transforms the landscape of social life."

This is a **public announcement** of Jesus as Son of God whose ministry was characterized by a succession of mighty works that, **to those who have eyes to see**, were signs of the presence of God's power and kingdom.

**A regime change is underway. The gospel announces this in the most terse language. "The world is under new management."**

The favorite word in Mark's gospel is "immediately" or "at once". It occurs 40 times in Mark's gospel. Mark records fewer words of Jesus than any other; it contains one collection of sayings in the form of a discourse (Ch. 13) and a few parables (eg. Ch 4)

Author - John Mark is the one that Rowan Williams commends though it's true that we cannot know the fact of authorship, other than the name Mark was a very common name in Rome - summary of Peter's preaching (see I Peter 5:13). The presence of the several Latinisms, as well as Aramaic words and phrases (3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34) that are translated into Greek, points to a Gentile circle of readers living probably in Italy.

Date - Probably prior to fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Likely around 64-68 AD during the persecution of Christians by Nero. Mark refers to "Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus" hence Mark was likely writing to the sons of the man who carried Jesus' cross, probably members of Mark's community.

One example of persecution by Nero - "Christian prisoners were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and when daylight failed, were burned to sever as lamps by night." (Historian Tacitus) Likely that both Paul and Peter were killed at the time.

A collection of anecdotes - Episodes - *Pericopai* - "short snappy stories with a punchline" But Mark is very much in control of this materials. But he did not write very well; but Placher and Williams both think he is a genius

**"Ancient writers generally, including historians, and in this perhaps they were just being more honest than we are today - understood their purpose as affecting their readers in some way, accomplishing something rather than representing some independent reality." Bill Placher.**

Mark, like all the gospel writers, wants you to know about Jesus -the Son of God - the special relationship he had with one he called Father. This is not a historical detail. It's a relationship that Mark is trying convey.

So we have to understand this clearly: Mark is trying to tell us what is important about Jesus; he wants us to know him - truly - not merely as a formal figure with dates all accurate. He is telling us about a person.

"Only the suffering God can help." Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Moltmann, etc.) This is a theme picked up in the 20th century - Barth, Moltmann, etc. . Whatever the reason when we come to believe in God understood first of all in terms of suffering love, we will find Mark waiting for us, with as story he is eager to tell. (Placher)

**Main point**

1. **let yourself be addressed by this person.**
2. **you have to grasp and share in the changed state of affairs this story testifies**

**Therefore:**

**Can you allow yourself to be addressed personally by the central figure of this gospel?  
Can you enter into the changed state of affairs of this story**