

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

LESSON SERIES

UNIT II - THE FOUR GOSPELS

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Mark

for

**CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
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INTRODUCTION

The four Gospels are the crux of the Bible. They are the historical focus of Old Testament prophecy, and the factual basis of New Testament theology. They are not the terminus of Old Testament prophecy, much of which runs on into times even yet future; but they are the mainline junction, on which all Old Testament branch-lines converge. All lines now become one main line in the historical JESUS OF NAZARETH. We change here from that which is distinctively Jewish to that which is distinctively Christian; from the old covenant and dispensation to the new covenant and dispensation; from Moses to Christ; from law to grace.

Let us now look at the parallel which can be seen between the four Gospels and the "living creatures" or cherubim in the opening vision of the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel 1:10 describes them as thus: "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." The lion symbolizes strength, kingship; the man, highest intelligence; the ox, lowly service; the eagle, heavenliness, mystery, Divinity.

These "living creatures" symbolically express the four basic social aspects of the Divine Nature; and it was inevitable that when the Divine Son Himself became incarnate the same four aspects should again conspicuously manifest themselves - as they do in the characteristic emphases of the four Gospels.

- In Matthew we see the Messiah-King (the lion).
- In Mark we see Jehovah's Servant (the ox).
- In Luke we see the Son of Man (the man).
- In John we see the Son of God (the eagle).

It needs all four aspects to give the full truth. As Sovereign He comes to reign and rule. As Servant He comes to serve and suffer. As Son of Man He comes to share and sympathies. As Son of God He comes to reveal and redeem. Wonderful fourfold blending - sovereignty and humility; humanity and deity!

Likewise Ezekiel's vision shows - "they four had one likeness" and two wings of every one were joined to another" - so it is with the four Gospels: amid their marked diversity they all portray "one likeness," the same wonderful Person, and all the way through their "wings are joined one to another."

A. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

We know only four things about Matthew with certainty, but they are most revealing.

- **He was a "publican"** (10:3), a Jew who had become a tax collector for the hated Romans, which was regarded as dishonorable. We read of "publicans and sinners", which indicates the general moral level. Matthew in a self humbling

reminder calls himself a publican (Matthew 9:9, 10:3) and places publicans in the group with harlots, (21:31). Matthew's reporting of them reveals his self-abasing humility.

- **He became a disciple of Jesus** (9:9). Mark and Luke tell that when he left the "receipt of custom" he opened "his own house" to our Lord; that he gave a "great feast" for many other publicans to hear Jesus; and (a hint of his considerable wealth) that "he left all." Not one of these things does Matthew himself tell. His omissions also reveal humility.
- **He was later appointed an apostle** (10:3). In the three accounts, our Lord sent the apostles out two by two (Mark 6:7). In each account Matthew and Thomas go together and are given in that order by both Mark and Luke; but Matthew puts Thomas first, another token of humility.
- **He became the writer of the Gospel which bears his name** - of which it is said: "The book is probably the most useful ever written; it comes first in the New Testament collection, and has done more than any other to create the impression of Jesus that the world has obtained.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

It is of primary importance as we approach the Gospel of Matthew that we know what is meant by the expression "kingdom of Heaven." This expression is peculiar to this Gospel. It occurs 32 times. The word "kingdom" occurs 50 times. The kingdom of heaven was the main subject of our Lord's preaching. A proper understanding of this phrase is essential to the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew and the Bible.

It is supposed by many that the "kingdom of heaven" is a spiritual kingdom, more or less identical with the Church - however, to identify it as the Church is to obscure the clear teaching of the Word.

Both John and our Lord began by proclaiming, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; yet neither explained what that kingdom was. Why? Because the people knew, without need of explanation, that it meant the Messianic kingdom long-promised through the Old Testament prophets. A kingdom, which, was to be set up, by the coming Messiah from heaven, on this earth with heaven's standards (Daniel 2:44; 7:14,27).

That which is foretold is a visible kingdom, not a spiritual kingdom. The Messiah is to reign on the throne of David, over a reunited Israel and the Gentile nations, in a world empire. There are exalted ethical and spiritual aspects forecast of the kingdom, but the kingdom itself is to be visible, a physical kingdom here on earth.

The kingdom was rejected and the King crucified. So the kingdom is withdrawn. "His blood be upon us, and on our children!" yelled the Jewish leaders. "How often would I!.. .Ye would not.. Ye shall not..." (Matthew 23:37,39). Israel would not see, and now cannot see. "Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25).

The Church is not the kingdom; NOR IS THIS PRESENT AGE THE KINGDOM AGE. Judgment fell on Israel; THAT AGE ENDED: the kingdom of heaven was withdrawn for the time being; and now, meanwhile, there swings into view God's further purpose, the wonderful new movement through the Church, in this present dispensation (age) of grace.

The kingdom will be set up when the King returns and a repentant Israel says, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

THE COMPOSITION OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

The structure of the Gospel of Matthew is quite simple. It is built around two geographical statements concerning Jesus.

"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, HE DEPARTED INTO GALILEE" (Matthew 4:12).

"And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these sayings, HE DEPARTED FROM GALILEE, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan" (Matthew 19:1).

Up to the first of these (4:12) all is introductory - and in Judea. After the second (19:1) all is culminative (moving toward! and preparing for the climax, the crescendo) - back in Judea. Between the two is the ministry in Galilee, which occupies the bulk of the book.

I. INTRODUCTION, Chapters 1 - 4:11

A. Genealogy and Record of Virgin Birth, chapter 1

Genealogy (1:1-17) - Matthew's genealogy identifies Jesus with the family of Abraham; thus he starts with Abraham, the progenitor of the covenant nation, and then shows the descent through David, head of Judah's royal line in which the covenant promise of the coming Messiah-King. Because Matthew is writing primarily to the Jews, he must show that Jesus truly was the Son of Abraham and Heir of David.

In verse 17 Matthew writes:

"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations."

There are fourteen from Abraham to David, and from David to Jehoiachin; but only thirteen in the last list. Verse 11 says: "And Josiah begat Jeconiah (Jehojachin). . . about the time they were carried away into Babylon." Now Josiah did not beget Jeconiah, but rather was his grandfather. Josiah beget Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim beget Jeconiah (I Chronicles 3:15). Thus there is an omission of Jehojakim between Josiah and Jeconiah (Jehoiachin). Some few Greek manuscripts do insert Jehojakim which then make the third of the fourteens.

B. Visit of Wise Men - Flight into Egypt - Return to Nazareth, chapter 2

C. John the Baptist, fore runner of the King, announces the Kingdom and baptizes Jesus, chapter 3

D. Temptation in the Wilderness, chapter 4:1-11**II. JESUS' DETOUR IN GALILEE (THE GALILEAN MINISTRY), Chapter 4:12 - Chapter 18**

The ministry in Galilee is divided according to three groupings.

1. First, in chapters 5-7, there is a grouping of our Lord's teachings, in what is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount.
2. Next, in chapters 8-10, there is a grouping together of our Lord's miracles.
3. Next, in chapters 11-18, there is a grouping of the various reactions to our Lord and His ministry, accompanied by His own counter-reactions or verdicts.

These three groupings seem to run in tens.

1. The Sermon on the Mount consists of ten principal components.
2. The next three chapters bring ten miracles.
3. And the next chain of chapters register ten representative reactions. Design or undesigned, this repeated ten-fold feature is helpful to the memory.

1. What Jesus Taught - the tenfold message, chapters 5-7

1. The Beatitudes (5:3-16). Or the subjects of the kingdom.
 2. Moral Standards (5:17-48). Or Christ versus 'It was said.'
 3. Religious Motives (6:1-18). Alms; prayer; fasting.
 4. Mammon Worship (6:19-24). Or earthiness versus godliness.
 5. Temporal Cares (6:25-34). Or Anxiety versus trust in God.
 6. Social Discernment (7:1-6). Censuring; indiscretion.
 7. Encouragements (7:7-11). Prayer makes it all practicable.
 8. Summary in a sentence (7:12). Such LIFE FULFILS Scripture.
 9. The Alternatives (7:13-14). Two ways: broad versus narrow.
 10. Final Warnings (7:15-27). False prophets; false profession; false foundation.
- Notice, the first three concern **virtues, morals, motives**.
 - The next three concern things **material, temporal, social**.
 - The next three give **encouragement, summary, exhortation**.

- Then the discourse closes with **three solemn warnings**.

2. What Jesus Wrought - the ten "mighty works", chapters 8-10.

1. The cleansing of the leper (8:1-4).
 2. The Centurian S servant: palsy (8:5-13).
 3. Peter's wife's mother: fever (8:14,15).
 4. The stilling of the storm (8:23-27).
 5. Gergesene demoniacs healed (8:28-34).
 6. The man cured of the palsy (9:1-8).
 7. The women with hemorrhage (9:18-22).
 8. The ruler's daughter raised (9:23-26).
 9. Two blind men given sight (9:27-31).
 10. The dumb demoniac healed (9:32-4).
- Additionally, in these three chapters which group the miracles there are also two generalizing statements that Jesus healed "all" and "every" sickness; yet, it remains that only the above-noted ten are mentioned.
 - Moreover, the third of these chapters, chapter 10, narrates the most comprehensive miracle of all, namely, the imparting of this miracle-working power to the twelve apostles - yet, no particular exercise of that imparted power is recorded. Our gaze is still kept focused on the ten miracles described.
 - Is there, then, something specially significant about them? There is. There is a representativeness and completeness about them.
 - The first three belong together; then there is a break in which our Lord answers certain would-be followers who had become enthused by His mighty works.
 - The next three also run together; then there is another break in which our Lord answers the Pharisees and John's disciples.
 - The remaining four also belong together; after which there is the comment: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, healing every sickness and every disease among the people."
 - The first three heal physical diseases which affect the whole body.
 - The next three show our Lord's power in other spheres.
 - The final four concern local ailments of the body and the crowning power-display of raising the dead.

- The effect produced by the first trio was an eager desire of some to follow "whithersoever Thou goest."
- The response after the second trio was that the multitude "marveled and glorified God."
- The result after the third group was that "the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel."

C. What People thought - the ten reactions, chapters 9-18.

By this time we are wanting to know more definitely what were the various reactions to the wonder-working Preacher and His exposition of the kingdom of heaven. In this new grouping Matthew gives us ten reactions. Incidental episodes intermingle with these, giving color and sequence to the on-moving story, but the spot light is now on these responses which were provoked. Here are the ten and Jesus counter-response:

1. **John the Baptist - undecided** (11:2-15) (3). Jesus' reaction to the undecided John is an eye-opening explanation of the forerunner's prophetic identity and positional significance (11:7-15).
2. **"This generation" - unresponsive** (11:16-19) (17). Jesus' reaction to the unresponsiveness of "this generation" is sad resignation with the comment, "But wisdom is justified of her children"; although there had not been a worthy response either to ascetic John or to His own social friendliness, the fault lay in the hearers not in the approach (11:19).
3. **Galilean cities - unrepentant** (11:20-30) (20). Jesus reaction to the impenitent cities was to predict judgment, and turn away from them with a new message for the individual: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden..." (23-30).
4. **The Pharisees - unreasonable** (12: 2,10,14,24,38). Jesus' response to the unreasonable Pharisees is an awesome warning against perverting the truth too far and perpetrating unpardonable insult to the Holy Spirit. (25-37).
5. **The multitudes - undiscerning** (chapter 13) (13-15). It is quite clear that in the parables of chapter 13, our Lord was summing up the results of His preaching thus far. The first of the parables shows that only a small number among the multitudes were "good ground" hearers. All through, He has the multitudes in mind; and His verdict on them is seen in verses 13-15. Jesus reaction to the undiscerning multitudes is that henceforth His kingdom teaching will be mainly by parable (13:10,34).
6. **The Nazarethites - unbelieving** (13:53-58) (58). Jesus reaction to the unbelieving people of His home town was the suspension of His might works among them (verse 58).
7. **Herod the king - unintelligent** (14:1-13) (2). Jesus' reaction toward Herod is silence and avoidance.

8. **Jerusalem scribes - unconcillatory** (15:1-20) (2,12). Jesus reaction to the Jerusalem scribes is to charge them with hypocritically nullifying the very Scriptures of which they were professedly the custodians.
9. **Pharisees, Sadducees - unrelenting** (16:1-12) (16:1). Jesus' reaction to the unrelenting Pharisees and Sadducees is rebuke and refusal.
10. **The twelve Apostles - glad recognition** (16:13-20) (16). Jesus reaction to the Twelve, who recognize and confess Him, is, "Blessed!...flesh and blood hath not revealed it.. and upon this rock I will build My church." After this, until His departure from Galilee, our Lord no more addresses the public, but devotes instruction to His disciples alone (chapters 17 -18).

This, then, is the sum of all these factors and features: there is widespread, enthusiastic interest in the miracles, the message, the Man; but those who respond with spiritual sincerity and intelligence are a very small minority, while the religious and political leaders are hostile. Already, as the Galilean detour nears its end, our Lord sees Israel's rejection of the King and Kingdom, and announces the coming new dispensational turning-point: **"I will build My CHURCH."**

III. THE CLIMAX IN JUDEA - Chapters 19 - 28.

Chapter 19 begins:

"And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea..."

Thereafter, Matthew's narrative quite naturally forms itself around the three successive developments:

1. The Presentation - Jesus offered as King, chapters 19 - 25.
By the "Presentation" we mean, of course, our Lord's public presentation of Himself at Jerusalem as Israel's Messiah/King. This part of the narrative runs in a **fourfold** sequence:
 1. **First** is the **journey** to the city (19-20) we are to see that our Lord foreknew the outcome of His timed appearance at Jerusalem before he ever entered its gates. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples, apart in the way, and said to them: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles, to mock and to scourge and to crucify Him; and the third day He shall rise again" (20:17-19). "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (20:28).
 2. **Second**, is our Lord's **triumphal entry** (21:1-17), we are meant to see that He DID offer Himself as Israel's Messiah-King, and that the Jewish leaders so understood. **Knowingly and most deliberately He fulfilled Zech. 9:9.**
"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of

Jerusalem: behold, the King cometh unto thee: he is just, and and salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9).

"Tell ye the daughter of Zion: Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matthew 21:5).

Jesus not only accepted from the multitude their continuous "Hosanna to the Son of David!" but, rebuked the chief priests, who provoked by the children's hosannas, asked, "Hearest Thou what these say?" Jesus replied, "Yea, have ye never read: Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" Without a doubt, these Jewish leaders knew and understood the significance of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem "riding upon and ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." It was no accident that a little later there was a superscription over His Cross: **"THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS."**

3. **Third**, in the **collisions** which now ensued inside the city between Jesus and the Jewish sects (21:18 - chapter 23), we are meant to see not only that they had set themselves implacably to reject Him; but that He also had now rejected them. The barren fig tree which He cursed was His symbol of them (21:18-27).

From the moment of His entry, the Herodians, Sadducees and Pharisees close in upon Him (22). But all the way through Jesus has the upper hand. They are not only answered, but they are humiliatingly silenced (22:46). Moreover, Jesus exposes them in parable after parable (21:28 - 23:14), and finalises His utter aversion in that public and deadly denunciation punctuated eight times with, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (23:13-36).

So now, the broken hearted Redeemer withdrew with that sob which was the sudden outgushing of an infinite deep: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

4. **Fourth**, is the **Olivet Discourse** (24-25), we first notice that it was given outside the city, by Christ who had now withdrawn. Second, the predicted happenings were because He and His kingdom were rejected. The chapter break should not be allowed to obscure the connection between the last words of chapter 23 and the opening of chapter 24: "... Ye shall not see Me henceforth.. And Jesus went out.. There shall not be left here one stone upon another... When shall these things be?.. And Jesus answered..." Jesus' answer is the Olivet Discourse.

1. The Crucifixion - Jesus Slain as a Criminal, chapters 26-27.

We now come to the two chapters on the crucifixion. Again there is a fourfold sequence. **Four scenes succeeding each other to dramatic culmination.** Once again we would see that there are certain main significances in these four moving scenes which Matthew would have us grasp. These four settings are:

1. **In the first**, where our Lord is withdrawn with the twelve (26:1-56) the emphasized feature is that He perfectly foresaw every detail of that which was to come. When Mary anoints Him with the precious ointment He says, "She hath done it for my burial" (26:12). When the twelve sit at supper with Him He tells them that it is actually one of themselves who is about to betray Him, and indicates Judas (26:25). When Peter boasts, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended," Jesus tells him, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." We also notice how this foreknowledge expresses itself as to the Cross. He links it with the Jewish Passover in such a way as to say that He is to be the Passover sacrifice (26:2). He links it with Jeremiah 31:31, etc., and designates His blood as "the blood of the new covenant" (26:28). He links it with the old Testament prophecies of Isaiah 53, for His bloodshedding is to be substitutionary ("shed for many"), and propitiatory ("for the remission of sins"). In the Gethsemane agony the Father's sovereignty is recognized in it all, and the incarnate Son bows in total yieldedness to the will of the Father.
2. **In scene two**, where our Lord is before the Jewish Sanhedrin (26:57-75), the big fact is that Jesus was condemned specifically for claiming that He was Israel's Messiah. His silence, eventually, provoked the high priest to cry out: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus' answer was, "Thou has said; moreover I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right had of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." That was all the Sanhedrin wanted. They at once charged Him with "blasphemy" and declared Him "guilty of death" (verses 65-68). Jesus was crucified for that, and for nothing else.
3. **In scene three**, Jesus is before the Roman Governor (27:1-26). Here we are meant to note that the Jews handed Him over for claiming to be their Christ, only they had now twisted the charge to make it seem that Jesus had proclaimed Himself King of the Jews in opposition to the Cesar of Rome.
4. And now, **that fourth scene**, that awe-inspiring, soul-abasing spectacle, the Crucifixion (27:27-66).

1. There are two things which Matthew would impress upon about the crucifixion.
 1. **First**, as he describes (more fully than Mark, Luke, or John) the accompanying abnormalities surrounding the actual crucifixion the midday darkness, the earthquake, the cleaving of the rocks, the disturbed graves - he would have us exclaim with the Roman Centurian. "Truly this was the Son of God!!" (verse 54).
 2. **Second**, as he reports the simultaneous rending of the temple veil into the Holy of Holies, not by a human hand from below, but by a Divine "from the top to the bottom," he would have us see the profound Godward significance of that Cross. That Sufferer is "the Son of God"; and that Cross has affected something tremendous between earth and heaven.
2. The after details ensure that physical life became extinct, and that the corpse was really entombed. There could be no bodily re-emergence except by a miraculous resurrection.

1. **The Resurrection - Jesus risen as Savior, chapter 28.**

Just one short chapter of twenty verses given to the super-climax - to that event which of all "Christian evidences is the most basic and vital. Matthew's concern is to proclaim the resurrection miracle and to make the tremendous pronouncement which now comes from the lips of the risen Christ, "All power (authority, speaking of Jesus' now, administrative authority) is given unto Me, in heaven and in earth; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I AM with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age)."

Jesus! Israel's rejected Christ, the world's Savior is now lifted up "far above all principality and power and authority, and every name that is named" (Eph. 1:21) and crowned the Administrator of the whole universe!

B. THE GOSPEL OF MARK

There is no doubt about the authorship of this second Gospel. Right from sub-Apostolic days tradition firmly testifies three facts:

- that a record of our Lord's words and works was written by one called Mark;
- that this record was what we now know as the Gospel according to Mark;
- that this Mark is the John Mark who figures in the Acts and the epistles of the New Testament. Such has been the view uniformly held. It is also the renewed verdict of present day scholarship.

We first come across Mark in Acts 12:12. His mother's name, "Mary," indicates that she was Jewish. Mark himself had a Jewish forename and a Roman surname, John" and "Mark"; indicating that his father was most likely a Roman. Their home was evidently large and used as a meeting place for the early Christians. They were presumably well-to-do, as also Marks' uncle Barnabas seems to have been (Acts 4:37).

In Acts 12:25 Barnabas and Paul take Mark with them to Antioch, and later take him on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). However, when they reach Perga, on the frontiers of the great heathen world, he decides to return home (Acts 13:13). When Barnabas would take Mark again at a later date, Paul and he so disagree that they separate; and Barnabas goes off with Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41).

From that point we hear no more of Barnabas; but Mark reappears in the epistles, and most commendably so. Almost twenty years have past. Paul, now a battle-scarred veteran in the Lord's army, is in prison at Rome. He sends a letter to some Christians believers in a faraway little Phryian town - the "Epistle to the Colossians." In chapter 4:10 he says: "Aristarchus, my-fellow prisoner, saluteth you, **and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas (touching whoa ye received commandments: if he come unto you receive him).**") Thus we see that Mark **is still alive**, still active for Christ, and with Paul again and that he is purposing a missionary journey to Asia Minor, the very place from which he had once turned back. That seemingly, is why Paul tells the Colossians, whose town lay in Mark's possible line of travel: "If he should call on you, receive him."

But even more interesting is what Paul adds to this, in verse 11: "These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me." Only three Christians in Rome have remained actively loyal to Paul, and one of those three is Mark. Paul now speaks of Mark as a "fellow-worker" and "a comfort". (See also Philemon 24.) So there is complete restoration between Paul and Mark.

Again in his second letter to Timothy Paul writes: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.. Only Luke is with me. take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Paul, still or once again in prison, was longing to have Mark by him again. Mark had now so proved his courageous devotion to Christ through the years that his early default at Perga was utterly erased.

Once again we find mention of mark, this time by Peter (I Peter 5:13). "She that is elected with you at Babylon saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son." This affectionate designation indicates that it was Peter who had begotten Mark as a convert to Christ: but

it also shows that through all the years Mark had proved himself truly a "son" in the faith to Peter. There are clear evidences that there was a special bond between them, as we shall mention later.

But what had Mark been doing all those years between that day at Perga and his reappearance in Paul's later epistles? Tradition which there is no reason to distrust tells of his remarkable ministry in Egypt, his winning many converts, and his founding the first Christian church at Alexandria.

Thus not only was Mark gratefully reinstated by the Apostles Paul and Peter, but the Holy Spirit came specially upon this man, and by supernatural inspiration used him as one of the four Gospel writers to whom we owe the priceless records of our Savior's life on earth.

Moreover, this young man, in deathless devotion to the dearest of all masters, gave himself to be dragged through the streets by exasperated Egyptians, flung bruised and bleeding into a dungeon, then burned to death.

PETER'S INFLUENCE ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

As you read Mark's Gospel one of the striking features that comes to your attention is the first hand familiarity with detail. Such familiarity presupposes them to have been related by one of the apostles or by someone directly transcribing for an apostle. Who but a personal observer, an apostle, could have given us this?

"And the same day, when even was come, He saith unto them: Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship; and there were also with Him other little ships. and there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship so that it was now being filled. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow..." (Mark 4:35-38).

In place after place, comparison of Mark with Matthew or Luke indicates the same first-handed familiarity with detail.

Indeed, Mark's first-hand familiarity does come from an apostle. There is a tradition, going back to sub-Apostolic days, that this second Gospel, although attributed to Mark, was, in reality, written by him as the scribe of Peter, or else as the translator and continuator of an original by Peter in Aramaic.

The most important evidence for this is that of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, a disciple and pupil of the Apostle John, writing about 130 A.D. Papias wrote a book in five volumes, long since lost, An Exposition of Oracles of the Lord. But Eusebius, at the end of the third century, quotes three excerpts from it in his Ecclesiastical History. Here are the first two:

"Whatsoever I have at any time accurately ascertained and treasured up in my memory, I have received it from the Elders, and have recorded it in order to give additional confirmation to the truth by my testimony... If I met with anyone who had been a follower of the Elders anywhere, I made it a point to enquire what were the declarations of the Elders; what had been said by Andrew, Peter, or Philip; what by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any of the disciples of our Lord; what was said by Aristion and the

presbyter John, disciples of the Lord; for I do not think that I derived so much benefit from books as by the living voice of those that were still surviving.

Notice how close this excerpt from Papias comes to the days of the apostles. In the second excerpt, Papias is quoting an earlier "apostolic Presbyter".

"And John the presbyter also said this: MARK, being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy, but not however in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord; for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but as before said, he was in company with Peter, who gave him instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses. Wherefore Mark has not erred in anything, by writing some things as he has recorded them; for he was carefully attentive to one thing: not to pass by anything that he heard, or to state anything falsely in these accounts."

Papias leaves no doubt as to the special influence of Peter on this "Gospel according to Mark".

As this truth soaks in and is appreciated, Mark's Gospel comes alive with new interests. IT IS PETER'S STORY. Peter is everywhere in it. The narrative throbs with his energetic spirit. We can see why this second Gospel could be accurately concentrated into one sentence of Peter, as spoken to the household of Cornelius, in Acts 10:37,38.

"That word . . . which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him."

We, also, can see why some things are included and other things excluded about Peter himself. It is noticeable how certain incidents which reflect honor on Peter are omitted from this Gospel, from a motive which we can admire, knowing that this Gospel is Peter's account of things.

There is no mention of his walking on the water; no mention of the grateful benediction pronounced upon him when he avowed on behalf of the twelve: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Compare Mark 8:29 with Matthew 16:16-19.) In the resurrection account we do not find here, as in Luke 24:34, "The Lord is risen indeed! and hath appeared to Simon!" No, the honorable distinction is given to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9).

On the other hand, Peter's denial of his Lord is told most fully in Mark, with the added circumstance that it was not until "the second time the cock crew" that Peter suddenly "called to mind" the sad prediction of Jesus. Both Matthew and Luke say that Peter "went out and wept bitterly." In Mark it is only "And when He thought thereon he wept", lest reference to the bitterness of his tears should seem to give the appearance of artificial humility.

And, of course, there is that final touch which is found only in Mark, and which the once fallen but restored Simon must have thrilled to record and speak of, namely, the first message sent from the empty sepulchre on the resurrection morning: "Go your way: tell His disciples, AND PETER, that He goeth before you into Galilee" (Mark 16:7).

What those two little words "and Peter" must have meant to the brokenhearted Simon. With fond gratitude Peter makes sure those words are restored. These touches are like Peter's initials to the narrative, showing us that this second Gospel is really "the Gospel according to Mark - and Peter".

MARK'S FIRST-INTENDED READERS

Of equal interest is the question as to who were the first-intended readers of this second Gospel. It soon becomes plain that the writer has Gentiles in mind. If he had been writing to the Jews he would not have explained Jewish customs. For example:

"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders" (7:3).

"And now when evening was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath . . ." (15:42).

Nor would he have explained that the Mount of Olives was "over against the Temple" (13:3), - or that the disciples of John and of the Pharisees "used to fast" (2:18). Other examples: he explains how John the Baptist was dressed (1:6); the meaning of the word Bo-anerges which Jesus used to describe the brothers James and John (3:17); and the Aramaic words Talitha cumi, used by Jesus (5:41). Other explanations of Palestinian places and Jewish customs and terms in such passages as Mark 7:4,11,34; 12:42; 15:22.

It has been long held that Mark wrote his Gospel in Greek, at Rome, for Gentile Christians there. This may well have been so, though my own view is somewhat otherwise. No doubt Mark wrote his Gospel in Greek, but I am inclined to think that the place of writing was Palestine rather than Rome.²⁹

For one thing, the narrative seems to assume throughout that the readers are familiar with the localities of Palestine. There are no topographical explanations such as you find in Luke (Luke 1:39, 65; 2:4 etc.) and would expect in Mark if written for readers in Rome.

Again, although the explanatory comments on Jewish practices indicate that the intended readers were not Jews, they seem equally to presuppose a degree of knowledge and experience with, especially the Jewish festivals and the Sabbath. For instance, the difference between the two closely connected feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread is assumed known (14:1). References here and there to other Jewish festivals and the Sabbath are made without any such comment as might have been expected for readers entirely strange to Jewery.

We might, also, note that there were many gentiles, Romans in Palestine. Many who no doubt, like "a certain man in Cesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:1,2), and then also like, Cornelius, and his household, had gone the further step of becoming Christians, who had need to have in writing in their native tongue the gospel story and message which the Apostle Peter and the other apostles preached.

Thus the Gospel according to Mark was a record for those persons, just as much as Matthew's for the Jews, and Luke's for the Gentiles. Somehow, those Palestine non-Jewish proselytes to Judaism and converts to Christianity seem to belong between out-

right Jews and out-right Gentiles; and that is where John Mark seems to fit, too, if as seems likely he was both of Jewish and Roman parenthood. John Mark would have a dominant interest in those Palestine Gentiles, Romans, proselytes, Christians; and an aptitude to write the kind of record best adapted to them.

If this is the case, that Mark wrote from Palestine and that his first intended readers were these Palestine Gentiles, Romans, proselytes, Christians; then how appropriate that Mark's is the second Gospel. There are some who seem to think it a sign of scholarship to put Mark first and Matthew after it. **No, Matthew must come first - "to the Jew first" -** being the obvious first link-up of the New Testament with the Old. And **Luke must come third - "also to the Gentile" -** because Mark is the between Gospel for Gentile-Jews. Those who were Gentiles by birth and Jews by faith; and because it was moving out from Jewish exclusiveness, as in Matthew, to a universal outlook, as in Luke, we leave Mark where it is in its proper place between Matthew and Luke, **being written in Palestine to these Gentile-Jews.**

THE LAST TWELVE VERSES

Almost certainly someone asks: What about those last twelve verses of this Gospel? Are they genuine or spurious? The question is not easily answered. That Mark would end at verse 5, with the words, "for they were afraid" is unthinkable. This would be a strange anti-climax, leaving the resurrection finale incomplete and, even more so, this is unthinkable on grammatical grounds, (in the Greek) the final word is the little conjunction "for."

The Scofield" note in loco rightly says: "The passage from verse 9 to the end is not found in the two most ancient manuscripts, the Sinaitic and Vatican, and others have it with partial omissions and variations. But it is quoted by Ireneus and Hyppolytus in the second or third century."

It might have been added that the Vatican manuscript does have a space left after our verse 8, indicating a known absence of some complete portion. And, as the Angus Bible Handbook says: "The overwhelming mass of MSS., versions and Fathers are in favor of the verses." Moreover, doubt concerning them does not seem to have been expressed until the fourth century.

MARK' S INTENDED PURPOSE

Mark's purpose in writing this Gospel account is quickly revealed. He wants us to see Jesus at work. It is as though he is saying: "Look! What Jesus did proves who He was. What He wrought authenticates what He taught. The mighty works verify the startling words. Watch Him at work, and marvel at this supernatural Wonder-worker! That will convince you."

So, there is no opening genealogy as in Matthew, no introductory account of what preceded and attended and succeeded the birth of Jesus. Right away we are at the Jordan, to hear John announce that "One mightier" is at hand. Forthwith Jesus is on the scene; the miracle-ministry begins; and by eager, graphic strokes Mark reaches in chapter one what Matthew takes eight chapters to overtake. He covers in nine chapters what Matthew

covers in twice as many. Not that his account is skimpy, for, on the contrary, it is alive with detail; but he focuses on what Jesus did, and omits much of what Jesus said.

Mark is distinctively the Gospel of what Jesus did. Even the "kingdom," which filled our Lord's preaching and is named over fifty times in Matthew, is on our Lord's lips only fourteen times in Mark. It is clear as can be what Mark intends: we are meant to look and marvel at the "mighty works" - and well we may!

This procedure of Mark's, also, gives us his picture of Jesus. We recall the four faces of the cherubim in Ezekiel 5 vision - lion, ox, man, eagle; speaking respectively of kingship, service, manhood, Godhead. As we have noted, those four are paralleled in the four Gospel accounts. In Mark, our Lord is uniquely transcribed as the SERVANT. corresponding with the second of the faces. In Mark's Gospel the Lordship is on every page, yet everywhere the Lord is the SERVANT. The Apostle Paul says it this way: "He took upon Himself the form of a **servant...** and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7,8).

THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

There are no designed groupings like Matthew's. That is not Mark's policy. he wants us to catch the wonder of this Mighty-One in Action. So, instead of specialized groupings or methodical sectioning, we have a purposely unhalting succession of astonishing doings. Mark is the camera-man of the four Gospel-writers, giving us shots of unforgettable scenes. There are certain main breaks in his story, as we soon see; but even they are not allowed to interrupt these rapid, one after another snapshots of breath-taking marvels.

One mighty work follows another across the screen, sometimes with abrupt transition, until by force of cumulative impact we are compelled to exclaim - just as Mark intends - "Surely this was the Son of God!"

We want to now look through the earlier chapters and see how this is so. Right away, in the short preface, four voices announce the Wonder-worker now being introduced.

- **Mark - "Jesus Christ, the SON OF GOD" (verses 1).**
- **Isaiah - "Prepare ye the way of THE LORD" (verse 3).**
- **John - "There cometh ONE MIGHTIER" (verse 7).**
- **God - "Thou art MY BELOVED SON" (verse 11).**

Then at once the public ministry begins. Straightway we have a rapid series of astounding exploits:

- **A demon cast out in the synagogue (verse 26).**
- **A fever case healed in the home (verse 31).**
- **Crowds of invalids cured at the door (verse 34).**
- **A leper cleansed by the wayside (verse 42).**

All this is in chapter one. The word euthios (straightway, "immediately") is everywhere. The people are "astonished" at His "doctrine," and are "amazed" at His "authority." His "fame" spreads "throughout all the region" and is "blazed abroad."

On the very heels of all this, chapter two beings a quick succession of hostile criticisms:

- **The Scribes** - "This man speaketh blasphemy. Who can forgive sins but God only?" verse 7".
- **The Pharisees** - "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" (verse 16).
- **John's disciples** - "Why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?" (verse 18).
- **The Pharisees** - "Behold, why do they (His disciples) on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?" (verse 24).

And in each case we marvel at our Lord's replies. He moves from one encounter to another in perfect control of every situation.

Chapter three begins with "And" (out of sixteen chapters twelve begin with "And," indicating the unhalting continuity of the narrative.) And the march of marvels continues

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- **a man with a withered hand is healed -**
- **He healed many -**
- **unclean spirits... fell down before Him.**

Specimen parables follow briefly in chapter 4, but are quickly followed by even mightier miracles -

- **the quelling of the tempest -**
- **the expulsion of a whole demon "legion" -**
- **the curing of the incurable -**
- **and the raising of the dead.**

Still more spectacular wonders follow in chapters 6, 7, 8 -

- **the feeding of the five thousand by the creative multiplication of a few morsels -**
- **the walk over the gale-swept sea -**
- **demons cast out -**
- **deafness and dumbness healed -**
- **and the feeding of the four thousand with the seven loaves."**

All this is so few chapters, with such energetic rapidity - and punctuated by references of the effect on the people:

- "They were astonished at His doctrine" (1:22).
- "And they were all amazed" (1:27).
- "His frame spread abroad throughout all the region" (1:28).
- "They came to Him from every quarter" (1:45).
- "Many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them" (2:2).
- "They were all amazed.. We never saw it on this fashion (2:12).
- "All the multitude resorted unto Him" (2:13).
- "A great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon; a great Multitude, when they had heard what great things He did" (3:7,8).
- "The multitude . . . lest they should throng Him" (3:9).
- "And unclean spirits . . . fell down before Him, and cried, Thou art the Son of God!" (3:11).
- "The multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread" (3:20).
- "He began again to teach... and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude" (4:1)
- "What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41).
- "Much people gathered unto Him" (5:21).
- "They were astonished with a great astonishment" (5:42).
- "The people ran afoot out of all cities , and came together unto Him" (6:33) - verse 44 shows they were thousands.
- "They.. ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages or cities or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole!" (6:55,56).

- "They were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well!" (7:37).

So runs the incomparable story. The like had never been witnessed from the foundation of the world. **THIS TRULY IS THE SON OF GOD, THE MESSIAH, THE CHRIST OF ISRAEL!** At long last the KING had come. All are flocking to Him. The healed, the blessed, the grateful, the applauding are everywhere. Public acclaim has reached high-tide. SURELY THE KING will now take up the crown and sceptre which rightly belong to Him and establish the long awaited everlasting kingdom of which Daniel the prophet spoke. (Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27).

BUT NO; suddenly the light dims, the air chills, there is a sharp and distinct mood change; for at chapter 8:31 we read, with utter surprise if you have really gotten the feel of the story up to now.

"And He began to teach then that the Son of Man must SUFFER many things, and be REJECTED of the elders and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be KILLED."

There it is, right after the open declaration of Peter on behalf of himself and the disciples: "Thou art the Christ" (verse 29). Just when it seems a peak-point is reached, hopes are dashed, and there comes this ABRUPT, ASTOUNDING TRANSITION. Instead of a throne waiting at Jerusalem, THERE IS A CROSS! Instead of royal purple, A CRIMINAL'S DEATH!

That such a one as HE should be thus spurned, killed, shamed, and that SUCH a ministry of mighty works and gracious cures and super-wisdom should end in such a disgraceful and dishonorable way, is almost too hard to be believable. It is completely inconsistent with the direction things were going. It is the most tragic rejection and mystery of the ages.

Thus in verse 32 we have Peter rebuking Jesus.

"Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" -Matthew 16:22.

The sudden change at chapter 8:31 is staggering. It is quite clear from the way Mark relates these events that we are meant to see it so, for there is no mistaking it - from that point onward the cross is uppermost in our Lord's mind, and repeatedly on His lips (9:12, 31; 10:21, 32-34, 38, 45; 12:7, 8; 14:8, 18, 22-25). **In Mark's narrative it is (8:31) "THE GREAT DIVIDE," so that the story falls into two vivid parts**

- the **MIGHTY WORKS WHICH HE WROUGHT** (1:14 - 8:30), and
- the **TRAGIC ENIGMA OF HIS REJECTION** (8:31 - 15:47).

We may see the whole of the Gospel of Mark in the following outline.

OUTLINE OF MARK'S GOSPEL

- **Key idea:** Jesus Jehovah's Servant, the Mighty Worker.
- **Key verse:** 10:45 - "To minister.. .and give His life."
- **Key word:** Euthios , "straight," "immediately," etc.

Forward: Four voices Announce Him: Chapter 1:1-13. "Son of God," "The Lord," "One Mightier," "My Son."**I. The Mighty Works, Chapters 1:14 - 8:30.**

1. First message and disciples, 1:14-20.
2. First mighty works and effect, 1:21 - 2:12.
3. First critics - and replies, 2:13 - 3:6.
4. Crowds flock: Twelve chosen, 3:7-19.
5. Scribes warned: reply to same, 3:20-35.
6. Parables = few "good" hears, 4:1-34.
7. More mighty works and effects, 4:35 - 6:6.
8. The Twelve endowed and sent out, 6:7-13.
9. Herod's idea: the twelve report, 6:14-31.
10. Still mightier works, 6:32-56.
11. Critics; sighs; final signs, 7:1 - 8:26.
12. Avowal: "Thou art the Christ", 8:27-30.

II. The Tragic Enigma, Chapters 8:31 - 15:47

1. Strange new note: The Cross, 8:31 - 9:1.
2. Transfiguration: Cross again, 9:2-13.
3. Mighty miracle: Cross again, 9:14-32.
4. Apostles rebuked; counseled, 9:33-50.
5. Judea again: sayings, doings, 10:1-31.
6. To Jerusalem: Cross in view, 10:32-52.
7. The triumphal entry, 11:1-11.
8. Fig tree: Temple purge, 11:12-19.
9. Foes: Olivet discourse, 11:20- 13:37.
10. Bethany - and betrayal, 14:1-11.
11. Passover - Garden Trial, 14:12-72.
12. Pilate; Cross; Burial, 15:1-47.

Finale: Four fold triumph, Chapter 16.

1. Risen (1-8).
2. Appearing (9-18).
3. Ascended (19)
4. Working (20)

END of Lesson

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