

MARK

Introduction

Author. Although the author did not give direct indication of his identity, the unanimous testimony of the early Church points to John Mark. The author's eyewitness viewpoint and the mention of the fleet-footed young man (14:51-52) all fit Markan authorship well. His association with Peter would account for the apostolic authorization necessary for inspired scripture. Mark's presence in the New Testament as the "helper" to Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey and his rocky relationship with Paul are well documented.

Date. An exact date is impossible to determine. Based upon the probable destination of Rome and the emphasis upon suffering, it would seem likely that this book was written for the benefit of Roman Christians who found themselves in the midst of the Neronian persecution around 65 A. D.

Recipients. Because Mark explains Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42), translates certain Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22) and because of his interest in suffering (8:34-38; 13:9-13) a Roman audience would be appropriate. Also, because of the association with Peter and the fact that Peter was in Rome near this time, a Roman destination would seem likely.

Occasion. Because of the association of the Gospel with Rome it may have been Mark's answer to the Neronian persecution. The great fire of Rome, set by Nero in July of 64 A. D., but blamed on the Christians, set off a horrendous persecution of believers. Mark may have been writing with his emphasis upon suffering and even martyrdom to prepare the Romans for this persecution.

Message Statement. *Although He suffered and was rejected, Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world, triumphed over all powers against him and ultimately, even death.*

Argument

1A THE SUFFERING SERVANT REJECTED IN GALILEE 1:1--10:52
Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry demonstrates opposition and rejection from the earliest stages. That he serves unselfishly while enduring rejection throughout his career is evident. This first section carefully traces that rejection in his native region of Galilee.

1B Description of the Servant's Ministry 1:1-45
Before discussing the rejection of the Servant or his suffering, Mark appropriately describes His ministry. This section covers the highlights of Jesus' background and ministry. Mark quickly covers Jesus' introduction by the forerunner, John, and his endorsement by the Father and the Spirit at the Baptism. With this accomplished he moves on to a description of Jesus' message, followers and power. The emphasis seems to be upon Jesus' miracles, however, as his power over demons, disease and leprosy is demonstrated. All of this material is covered without a hint of suffering or opposition. That material will come soon

enough, but the purpose of the first chapter seems to be simply to introduce, and describe, the basic ministry of the Servant.

- 2B Opposition to the Servant's Ministry 2:1-3:6
 After introducing the basic aspects of Jesus ministry, Mark soon describes the opposition which began to build to it in the early Galilean campaign. The opposition detailed by Mark begins with three basic incidents: 1) His claim to forgive sin, (2:1-12); 2) his association with sinners, (2:13-18); and 3) His break with traditional religion, (2:19--3:6). Mark notes in the first incident that the Pharisees considered Jesus' words to be blasphemy (2:7), and in the final incident he records the intention of the Pharisees to *plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus* (3:6).
- 3B The Rejection of the Jesus' Ministry 3:7-35
 The account of Jesus' rejection in Mark is abbreviated but succinct. After demonstrating his power by 1) performing miracles among the multitudes and 2) by delegating it to the Twelve, it is denied by the leadership in their charge of His empowerment by Beelzebub. The consequences of this rejection are quickly illustrated by Jesus' reference to his true family. It is clear that such issues as the Beelzebub incident are more important than family ties. The physical relationship of Jesus' family (and thus the Jewish person's relationship to Abraham) was of little value without faith.
- 4B The Results of the Rejection of Jesus' Ministry 4:1--6:6
 The basic results of the rejection of Jesus were 1) his teaching and preparation of the twelve and 2) the delivering of messianic blessings to Gentiles who demonstrated faith. On the same day as the Beelzebub incident Jesus began to speak in parables to the multitudes. Mark is very explicit, however, that Jesus only interpreted these veiled truths to his own, "He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (4:34). Thus, the first result of the rejection was teaching for the twelve.
- The next result, according to Mark, was the benefit enjoyed by believing Gentiles. Jesus' arrival in a Gentile area, the Gerasenes, was a result of his rejection in Jewish territory. While there he healed a demon possessed man. Upon his return to Jewish regions he healed the daughter of one with faith but refused to perform any miracles in his home town, being "amazed at their lack of faith" (6:6).
- 5B The Ministry of the Twelve 6:7-52
 Mark records the ministry of the Twelve in a curious way. He shows their commission and then before they return from their ministry He inserts the reaction of Herod to Jesus' miracles and Herod's murder of John. As the twelve return to Jesus so also do the multitudes. Jesus then proceeds to feed the five thousand but it appears that he uses the incident as much to instruct his twelve as anything else. Jesus' challenge to the twelve, "You give them something to eat" (6:37) forces the disciples to trust in resources outside of themselves. His miracle of walking on water in the middle of the night was evidently also intended to minister to and instruct the select group of the Twelve as well (6:45-52).
- 6B The Rejection of the Ministry of the Twelve 6:53--7:23
 As soon as Jesus had commissioned the small group and begun to train them the Pharisees targeted them for certain objections. Eating food with "unclean" hands was the particular charge. Jesus responds to their hypocritical charges by focusing upon true defilement. Mark adds the parenthetical comment "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean'" to help his Gentile readership in Rome around 65 A. D. understand the significance of Jesus pronouncement for them (See Acts 15).
- 7B The Results of the Rejection 7:24--10:52
 Upon the Pharisees' criticism of Jesus' disciples he leaves the area for Gentile regions. He performs several miracles for the Gentiles, and spends a great deal of time teaching the Twelve.
- 1C Miracles for Gentiles 7:24--8:10
 Jesus spends his time in exclusively Gentile areas at this point. The beneficiaries of his Messianic miracles are a demon-possessed girl near Tyre, a deaf and dumb man in the region of Decapolis, and four thousand famished individuals in the same area.
- 2C Rejection of the Pharisees 8:10-13
 As soon as Jesus set foot back on Jewish soil he receives opposition and antagonism from the Pharisees. Jesus' response was to return to the other side of the sea.
- 3C Teaching of the disciples 8:14--10:52

In light of the blasphemy on the part of the Pharisees, Jesus once more warns the disciples to beware of the infiltrating influence of their unbelief. He next affirms the belief of the Twelve in His identity as Messiah (8:27-30). This is then followed by a series of predictions of his passion, three to be exact. Each time Jesus *informs the group of his impending suffering and death* the twelve or one of the twelve *responds incorrectly* and must be *instructed with a lesson* on either servanthood or humility.

The first prediction involves a wrong response on the part of Peter (8:31-38), which is followed by the encouragement of the transfiguration. The next prediction, wrong response (which involves the whole band of disciples), and resultant teaching is found in 9:30-50. The final cycle (10:1-52) particularly involves James and John.

- 1B THE SUFFERING SERVANT REJECTED AT JERUSALEM 11:1--16:20
This portion of the book basically centers upon the passion week of Jesus. The leaders' rejection of Jesus, his rejection of them, and his preparation of the Twelve are all clear in Mark's presentation.
- 1B The Background 11:1-26
The backdrop of the rejection in Jerusalem was the triumphal entry on Sunday and Jesus' cleansing and possession of the Temple courts on Monday. Mark records all of this background along with the murderous desires which it aroused on the part of the leadership (11:18)
- 2B The Conflict Leading to Rejection 11:27--12:34
On Tuesday morning Jesus found himself at the stormcenter of controversies with the leadership once again. Their intention was evidently to discredit Jesus but found that *they* were the ones looking for answers at the end of the day. The controversies recorded here in Mark are basically four: 1) the Chief priest's questioning of Jesus' authority, 2) the Pharisees' and Herodians' trap concerning treason, 3) the Sadducees questions about the resurrection, and 4) a scribe's question concerning the greatest commandment. The result of all these questions was amazement on the part of the people and humiliation on the part of the leadership which sealed their rejection of Jesus.
- 3B Teaching in Light of the Rejection 12:35--13:37
After the groups which were antagonistic to Jesus ran out of questions for him He began to do some teaching of his own. He first demonstrated the deity of Messiah from Psalm 110 and then discussed the practice of true religion from a negative (teachers of the law) and a positive (a generous widow) perspective. On the way out of the city and on the Mount of Olives with his twelve, Jesus affirmed and, expanded upon, Daniel's seventieth week.
- 4B Realization of the Rejection 14:1--15:47
Mark introduces the actual record of the rejection with the account of Judas' embarrassment at the house of Simon the Leper and his contract to deliver Jesus at a private moment to the Jewish leadership. The upper room discourse is relatively abbreviated with emphasis upon the identification of the betrayer. The account of Gethsemane, and Jesus' agony there, is fully explained along with his arrest and desertion by Peter. The mocking by the soldiers and his loneliness at the crucifixion are emphasized, points with which Mark's readership might have easily identified.
- 1C THE SUFFERING SERVANT ACCEPTED 16:1-20
The resurrection is, of course, the preeminent sign of approval by God the father of the Son's work on Calvary. Mark records this approval and acceptance not only by God but also by the faithful.

