

## **Lesson 1: Intro Reading Notes, Gospel of Mark**

\*Author – traditionally, John Mark (friend of Paul, Peter, Timothy, and Barnabus), but far from certain. Not an eyewitness account of Jesus’ teachings and ministry.

\*Written to Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians, likely for people in Rome or maybe Egypt. (Traditionally, Mark settles in north Egypt after the death of Peter and Paul, who both died in Rome in mid to late 60’s. Mark established the Church in Alexandria sometime afterward.)

\*Likely written AD 60’s up to AD 70, during extreme persecution of the Church. First Gospel written, likely used as reference book for both Matthew and Luke. These three Gospels are often called, “Synoptic” Gospels, referring to their similarities in content.

\*Composed to preserve Jesus’ teachings (through Peter, Mark’s mentor) and encourage (and give hope to) Christians in the face of great hardship. These are first-generation Christians, some of whom witnessed Jesus’ teachings and miracles. Some of these people would have also witnessed Jesus’ death and resurrection.

\*The Gospel of Mark is the shortest Gospel, with only 16 chapters. The Gospel does not contain a resurrection story, or at least, your Bible may or may not contain it. The Gospel is written with a focus on urgency – the “here and now” is vital. Salvation, for ancient Israel, meant salvation from the dangers of this world as much as the next. Thus, the Messiah would be one who delivered from this world’s dangers, which in the first century, included the realities of slavery, illness, war, famine, and drought.

\*Mark stresses the secrecy of Jesus’ identity during Jesus’ ministry. However, Mark writes the Gospel to allow the reader the advanced-knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah, and the promised one of God’s choosing.

\*Mark outlines the danger of following Christ, but Mark does not suggest that anyone is supposed to die as martyrs. Instead, Mark is clear to encourage faith, hope, and trust, even in the most severe circumstances. Hope in this life is critical to Mark, especially in danger.

\*The Gospel of Mark is often illustrated as a winged lion, which represents Jesus’ kingship and authority. The symbolism, which was widely used throughout the Middle Ages and still visible throughout Europe. The lion conveys traits such as courage, strength, and power. The Lion also represents God’s voice (ie, John the Baptist as the one crying out in the wilderness, Mark 1: 3) that sounds like the roar of a lion (Rev 4:7), water, trumpets, etc.

\*The Greek/Non-Jewish audience that receives the Gospel had a strong heritage of paternal heroism and divine succession (Greek and Roman gods). Thus, Mark’s reference to the Divinity, Power, and Authority of Jesus would carry special contextual meaning that would be easier for the common person to understand.