

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

1. *Who wrote the Gospel of Mark?*

1.1. Internal Evidence

The Gospel of Mark is anonymous; there is no internal, direct evidence for its authorship. Only sometime during the second century was the title “According to Mark” or “The Gospel According to Mark” affixed to the work, in order to distinguish it from the other gospels. There is, however, internal, indirect evidence to consider. This evidence consists of certain characteristics of the gospel from which one can infer something about the identity of its author.

1.1.1. The Gospel of Mark is non-literary, having a simple and popular style; it has affinities with the spoken Greek as revealed by the papyri and inscriptions. Moreover, the gospel has a Semitic flavor to it. By this is meant that Semitic syntactical features influence the form of the Greek. For example, corresponding to Hebrew and Aramaic syntax, frequently verbs are found at the beginning of a sentence in the Gospel of Mark. Two other examples of a Semitic syntactical feature is the abundant presence of asyndeta, the placing of clauses together without the use of conjunctions, and parataxis, the joining of clauses with the conjunction kai (“and”) (imitative of the waw-consecutive in Hebrew and Aramaic). (There are many other alleged examples of Semitisms in the Gospel of Mark.) What can you infer about the author from these stylistic features of the Gospel of Mark?

1.1.2. The Gospel of Mark has vividness of description that is consistent with its being an eyewitness account; details that are unnecessary to the flow of the narrative are included in the gospel. Examples include the following:

- James and John leave their father in the boat with the servants when they heed Jesus' call to follow him (1:20);
- James and John go with Jesus and the rest into the house of Simon and Andrew (1:29);
- Jesus takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and raises her to her feet (1:31);
- On the evening of the Sabbath, when the sun has set, the sick are brought to Jesus to be healed (1:32);
- In the morning, long before daylight, Jesus gets up and goes out (1:35);
- There are so many people crowded into the house that there is no room even near the door (2:2);
- The paralytic is carried by four men and the roof is dug out in order to lower the paralytic down (2:3-4)
- Jesus looks around at his critics with anger (3:5);
- Jesus sits in a boat in the water and teaches the crowd of people on the shore (4:1);
- Jesus is asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat (4:37-38);
- There are about two thousand pigs into which Jesus sends the legion of unclean spirits (5:13);
- Jesus instructs the people to sit down upon the green grass in groups of hundreds and fifties (6:39-40);
- Jesus puts his fingers in the ears of the deaf and dumb man, touches the man's tongue with saliva, looks to heaven with a deep sigh and says "Ephphatha" (7:33);
- Jesus spits on a blind man's eyes and laying his hands; the blind man is described as gradually regaining his sight (8:23-25);
- Peter asks Jesus whether he should build shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah (9:5);
- Jesus takes children into his arms, blesses them and lays his hands on them (10:16);
- The blind man who is healed in Jericho is identified as the son of Timaeus (10:46);
- Jesus is crucified at the third hour (15:25);
- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bring spices to the tomb very early, before the sun has risen (16:2).

What can you infer about the author from the vividness of description of the Gospel of Mark?

1.2. External Evidence

1.2.1. The earliest piece of external, direct evidence comes to us from Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, (c. 60-130) who quotes someone he identifies as "the elder" (*ho presbuteros*), probably John the elder, an authoritative figure among the churches in the province of Asia (*H.E.* 3.39.4, 15). Eusebius quotes from what he identifies as the five treatises written by Papias, entitled, *Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord*, which are no longer extant:

“And the presbyter used to say this, Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had followed him, but later on, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord’s oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.”

The first sentence is probably the statement of the elder, whereas the remainder is Papias’ elaboration of the meaning of the elder’s statement. Three claims are made in this quotation from Papias:

- A. Mark wrote the gospel identified in Eusebius’ day (and ours) as the Gospel of Mark.
- B. Mark obtained his information from Peter, not being an eyewitness himself.
- C. The gospel written by Mark lacks “order,” reflecting the piecemeal and occasional nature of Peter’s use of the gospel tradition in his preaching.

There are three questions raised by this quotation from Papias:

- A. What exactly did Papias mean when he called Mark the “interpreter” (*hermeneutês*) of Peter? Although this term normally means interpreter, the context suggests more the meaning of “translator.” It is possible that Mark translated into Greek or Latin the gospel tradition in Aramaic that Peter remembered. Perhaps Mark translated it in order that Peter could use it to teach the Roman Christians, not because Peter could not do so at all but because Mark could do it better.
- B. Does the phrase *pros tas chreias* translated as “as necessity demanded” mean rather “in the form of chreia”? Chreia is a technical rhetorical term describing the type of teaching material that Peter used in the Roman church. Aelius Theon, the Alexandrian sophist, defines a chreia as “a concise and pointed account of something said or done, attributed to some particular person” (*Progymnasmata* 3.2-3). The material in Mark could be accurately described as chreia since it consists largely of isolated, self-contained units of tradition. Both translation options are possible and neither conflicts with any other known facts.
- C. Why did the presbyter say that Mark wrote accurately what Peter remembered (*hosa emnemo-neusen akribôs egrapsen*) but not indeed in order (*ou mentoi taxei*)? It seems criticism was leveled against the Gospel of Mark for lacking chronological accuracy. In response, the presbyter points out that chronological accuracy was never Mark’s intention. Papias explains further that Mark’s method of composition was to collect the traditions used by Peter in his preaching and that there was nothing wrong with this.

If true, what do you conclude about the author of the Gospel of Mark from Papias' statement?

How trustworthy is this tradition in your judgment?

1.2.2. Another early identification of the Gospel of Mark with Peter is found in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (150): "It is said that he [Jesus] changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter; and it is written in his memoirs that he changed the names of others, two brothers, the sons of Zebedee, to Boanerges, which means 'sons of thunder'...." (106.3). If by "his memoirs" Justin means Peter's memoirs, then these memoirs must be the Gospel of Mark, since only in it are the sons of Zebedee called the sons of thunder (3:17).

1.2.3. There are other later sources that identify Mark as the author of the Gospel of Mark and Peter as his source.

A. Irenaeus (130-200) says that the Gospel of Mark was written "When Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there"; he adds, "After their departure, Mark, Peter's disciple, has himself delivered to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching" (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1; *H.E.* 5. 8. 2-4).

B. Eusebius reports that Clement of Alexandria (150-215), in his *Hypotyposesis*, citing an ancient tradition of the elders, described how the Gospel of Mark came into being as follows, "When Peter had preached the gospel publicly in Rome...those who were present...besought Mark, since he had followed him (Peter) for a long time and remembered the things that had been spoken, to write out the things that had been said; and when he had done this he gave the gospel to those who asked him. When Peter learned of it later, he neither obstructed nor commended" (*H.E.* 6.14.6-7). It should be noted that Clement gives as his source for this information not a particular source but "the elders from the beginning" (tôn anekathen presbuterôn).

C. The fragment of the *Anti-Marcionite Prologue* says, "Mark declared, who is called 'stump-fingered,' because he had rather small fingers in comparison with the stature of the rest of his body. He was the interpreter of Peter. After the death of Peter himself he wrote down this same gospel in the regions of Italy."

D. In his dispute with Marcion and his followers, Tertullian states about the Gospel of Mark, “While that [gospel] which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter’s whose interpreter Mark was” (*Adv. Marc.* 4.5).

(The first line of the Muratorian Fragment “But he was present among them, and so he put [the facts down in his Gospel]” probably refers to Mark’s presence at Peter’s discourses in Rome and his subsequent recording of these to become his gospel.)

Some scholars claim that some or all of these second and third century identifications of Mark as the author of the Gospel of Mark are dependent on Papias, in which case they are not independent testimonies. But there does not seem to be sufficient evidence to conclude in favor of such dependency. The burden of proof is on the one who asserts such dependence.

1.3. Considering all the evidence, what do you conclude about the authorship of the Gospel of Mark?

In spite of the evidence, however, many New Testament scholars are reluctant to identify the author of the Gospel of Mark as (John) Mark and to trace its contents to the apostle Peter. Any other possibility with respect to its origin is preferable to this, or so it seems. It is claimed that the connection between the gospel, written by an otherwise unknown author named Mark, and Peter arose because of the reference to (John) Mark in 1 Pet 5:13: “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.” It was naturally assumed that this Mark must be the Mark to whom Peter refers in his letter, who was one of Peter’s associates. Thus, the testimony of the early church, no matter how early, is discounted as mere speculation. It should be noted, however, that, if it were inventing authors for apologetic reasons to undergird the authority of the gospels against detractors, the early church would surely have given the Gospel of Mark a direct apostolic origin.

1.4. What can be known about (John) Mark from references to him in the New Testament? (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37-39; 2 Tim 4:11; Col 4:10; Philemon 24; 1 Pet 5:13)

1.5. Eusebius provides evidence that Mark was in Egypt for a time. He says that Mark was the first to preach the good news in Egypt, which he had put in writing, and established churches in Alexandria (*H.E.* 2.16.1). Eusebius also says that in the eighth year of Nero (62-63), Annianus was the first after Mark to receive the charge of the diocese of Alexandria (*H.E.* 2.24.1). What happened to Mark after this is not clear, although Jerome says that he died in the eighth year of Nero (*De vir. ill.* 8). Whether any of this is true is difficult to determine.

● 2. For whom was the Gospel of Mark written?

2.1. Internal Evidence

There is no internal, direct evidence for the intended readership. There is, however, some internal, indirect evidence:

2.1.1. Translations of Aramaic words are provided:

- Mark 3:17: And James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, to them He gave the name **Boanerges**, which means, “Sons of Thunder”
- Mark 5:41: Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, “**Talitha kum**,” which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up.”
- Mark 7:11: But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is **Korban**, that is to say, given to God.
- Mark 7:34: And looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, “**Ephphatha**,” that is, “Be opened.”
- Mark 10:46: Then they came to Jericho, and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named **Bartimaeus**, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road.
- Mark 15:22: Then they brought Him to the place **Golgotha**, which is translated, Place of a Skull.
- Mark 15:34: At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “**Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani**,” which is translated, “My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?”

What does this suggest about the intended readership of the Gospel of Mark?

2.1.2. There are several explanations of Jewish terms and customs:

- Mark 7:1-3: The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.
- Mark 14:12: On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?”
- Mark 15:6-9: Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”
- Mark 15:42-43: When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea came.

In addition, the location of the Mount of Olives in relation to the Temple is pointed out for the readers: “As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple...” (Mark 13:3). Presumably this is done because the readers do not know such an obvious geographical fact.

What do these data suggest about the intended readership of the Gospel of Mark?

2.1.3. The fact that there are Latinisms in a work written in Greek and full of Semitisms also constitutes internal, indirect evidence for intended readership. (Latinisms are Latin words that are transliterated into Greek.) Examples of Latinisms in the Gospel of Mark are as follows:

- Mark 4:27: modios = Lat. modius (a measure)
- Mark 5:9, 15: legiôn = Lat. legio (legion)

- Mark 6:27: spekoulator = Lat. speculator (guard)
- Mark 6:37: dênariôn = Lat. denarius (a Roman coin)
- Mark 7:4: xestês = Lat. sextarius (container)
- Mark 12:14: kênsos = Lat. census (tribute money)
- Mark 15:15: phragellan = Lat. fragellare (to whip)
- Mark 15:39, 44-45: kenturiôn = Lat. centurio (centurion) (Both Matthew and Luke use ekatontrachês, the equivalent term in Greek.)

In addition, on two occasions Mark provides his readers with Latin translations of Greek words:

- Mark 12:42: lepta duo, which is said to be the equivalent of a kordrantês = Lat. quadrans (the smallest Roman coin)
- Mark 15:16: aulês, which is said to be the praitôrion = Lat. Praetorium

Finally, there are also a few examples of Latin idioms translated into Greek in the Gospel of Mark:

- Mark 2:23 hodon poiein = Lat. iter facere (to make one's way)
- Mark 3:6 sumboulion edidoun = Lat. consilium dederunt (to give counsel)
- Mark 3:17; 7:11, 34; 12:42; 15:16, 42 ho estin = Lat. hoc est (that is)
- Mark 15:15: hikanon poiein = satis facere (to satisfy)
- Mark 15:19 tithentes ta gonata = Lat. genua ponentes (bending the knees)

What do the Latinisms, the Latin translations of Greek words and the Latin idioms in Greek in the Gospel of Mark suggest about its intended readership?

It should be noted that, according to ancient sources, Greek was widely spoken in Rome in the first century (Juvenal, *Sat.*, 3.60-61; 6.187-99) and Martial, *Epig.*, 14.58). So it is not at all unusual that Mark would write his gospel in Greek and not Latin, the first language of most of his readers and hearers. No doubt, he was thinking that a Greek gospel would be more useful in the Roman world than a Latin one, since Greek was the most common language spoken in the Roman empire.

2.1.4. Mark's reference to the woman in Tyre to whom he refers as "a Greek, racially a Syro-Phoenician" (Mark 7:24) implies a Roman readership, because such a designation would be most understood by Romans, who distinguished between Carthaginians, i.e., Phoenicians from Carthage and those from Syria.

2.1.5. Internal, indirect evidence for a Roman readership is the fact that in his passion narrative Mark unnecessarily (from a literary point of view) identifies Alexander and Rufus as the sons of Simon the Cyrene (15:21). The probable reason that Mark does this is that these men are known to his readers: Mark wants to ensure that they know that Simon the Cyrene mentioned in the text is the father of these two men. A man named Rufus is mentioned in Rom 16:13, being a member of the Roman church. If the Rufus in Rom 16:13 is the same as that in Mark 15:21, then likely Mark's intended readers were Roman Christians.

2.2. External Evidence

2.2.1. As already seen, Eusebius claims that Papias wrote that Mark composed his gospel for Peter's hearers in Rome (*H.E.* 2.15.2). In addition, both Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus imply that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome (see quotations above). What do these data suggest about the intended readers of the Gospel of Mark?

2.2.2. Further external, indirect evidence is found in the fact that Peter and Mark are placed together in Rome in the early sixties (1 Pet 5:13). On the assumption that it can be proven that the Gospel of Mark was written about this time (see below), who were the most likely intended readers of the gospel?

2.3. What do you conclude from the internal and external data about the intended readership of the Gospel of Mark?

● 3. When was the Gospel of Mark written?


The date of the gospel is difficult to determine with precision. There is no internal, direct evidence or any internal, indirect evidence, although traditionally scholars have tried to date it after the destruction of Jerusalem based on Mark 13: it is assumed that the reference to “the abomination that causes desolation” in Mark 13:14 is an allusion to Titus’ destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. But this is not so obvious as is often thought. The external, direct evidence is as follows. (It should be noted that tradition places Peter’s death in Rome during Nero’s persecutions [64-68].)

3.1. Irenaeus, as quoted above, says that it was after Peter’s death that Mark produced his gospel: “And after the death of these (Peter and Paul) Mark the disciple and interpreter (*hermeneutês*) of Peter, also handed down to us in writing the things preached by Peter” (*Adv. Haer.* 3. 1. 2 in *H.E.* 5.8.2-4).

3.2. Clement of Alexandria, as quoted above, writes in his *Hypotyposeis*: “When Peter had preached the gospel publicly in Rome...those who were present...besought Mark, since he had followed him (Peter) for a long time and remembered the things that had been spoken, to write out the things that had been said; and when he had done this he gave the gospel to those who asked him. When Peter learned of it later, he neither obstructed nor commended” (*H.E.* 6.14.6-7). The implication is that Peter was still alive at the time of the composition of the gospel.

3.3. The fragment of the Anti-Marcionite prologue, as already cited, says: “Mark declared, who is called ‘stump-fingered,’ because he had rather small fingers in comparison with the stature of the rest of his body. He was the interpreter of Peter. After the death of Peter himself he wrote down this same gospel in the regions of Italy.”

3.4. What do you conclude about the date of the composition of the Gospel of Mark?

	<p style="text-align: center;">Oldest Copy of the Gospel of Mark?</p> <p>Found in cave seven at Qumran was a very small papyrus fragment consisting of five lines of text and twenty visible letters (7Q5). Some have argued that this is actually a fragment of the the earliest copy of Gospel of Mark. They consider it to be part of Mark 6:52-53. If this identification is correct, then the date of the Gospel of Mark should be pushed back to the 40's CE, since the fragment has been dated between 50 BCE and 50 CE. The issue is complicated, but suffice it to say that the evidence for the identification of this fragment with the Gospel of Mark falls well short of proof.</p>
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4. Where was the Gospel of Mark written?

4.1. Internal Evidence

There is no internal, direct evidence to conclude where the Gospel of Mark was written (provenance). The internal, indirect evidence has already been considered in dealing with the intended readership. It is as follows.

4.1.1. The existence of Latinisms and Latin translations of Greek words in the Gospel of Mark implies Latin readers.

4.1.2. The reference to the woman in Tyre called “a Greek, racially a Syro-Phoenician” implies that the Gospel of Mark was written for Romans (Mark 7:24-30).

4.1.3. That Alexander and Rufus are identified as the sons of Simon the Cyrene suggests, as explained above, that the intended readers are Roman Christians; if true, this may imply that (John) Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark in Rome, where Alexander and Rufus reside.

What does this evidence suggest about the place of composition of the Gospel of Mark?

4.2. External Evidence

4.2.1. The external, direct evidence from the second-century points to the conclusion that Gospel of Mark was written in Rome:

A. As already seen, Eusebius claims that Papias wrote that Mark composed his gospel for Peter's hearers in Rome (*H.E.* 2.15.2). This implies that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome.

B. As cited above, Clement of Alexandria implies that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome.

C. Irenaeus, as already quoted above, implies that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome.

D. As cited earlier, the fragment of the Anti-Marcionite prologue placed the composition of the Gospel of Mark "in the regions of Italy."

4.2.2. The fact, as already indicated, that Peter and (John) Mark are placed together in Rome in the early sixties (1 Pet 5:13) constitutes external, indirect evidence that (John) Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark in Rome.

4.3. What do you conclude about the place of composition of the Gospel of Mark?

● 5. *What is the Gospel of Mark?*

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1. Mark 10:1 is the major transition in the gospel: when Jesus sets out from Galilee (Caper-naum) (9:33) to Judea. From what is said previously (8:31; 9:31) and is reiterated subsequently (10:32-34), Jesus leaves Galilee for Judea in order to allow himself to be arrested and executed by the Jewish authorities. Before the transition in 10:1, Jesus moves about in Galilee with some ex-cursions into the surrounding regions. After the transition he is either on his way to or in Jerusa-lem.

5.1.2. The section before the major transition can be divided into three sub-sections. Relevant events prior to the beginning of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God are provided in Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:1-13). Following this is the First Phase of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (1:14-5:43). This section ends with Jesus' returning to his hometown, Nazareth. Then comes the Second Phase of Jesus' Public Ministry in Galilee (6:6b-9:50).

5.1.3. The section after the major transition consists of two sub-sections: the Judean Period of Jesus' Ministry (10:1-13:37) and Passion and Resurrection narratives (14:1-16:20).

5.2. Outline of the Gospel of Mark

A. 1:1-13 Preparation for Jesus' ministry

1. 1:1-8: John the Baptist is introduced and said to be the fulfillment of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3. John preaches a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and predicts that after him would come one greater.

2. 1:9-11: John baptizes Jesus. Afterwards, the Spirit come upon Jesus like a dove and a voice announces, "This is my son in whom I am pleased."

3. 1:12-13: Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness.

B. 1:14-5:43 The First Phase of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

After his baptism, Jesus begins to preach that the Kingdom of God has drawn near and that people should repent and believe his message. With his disciples, he travels around Galilee for the most part, preaching, healing, exorcising and performing miracles. He encounters some opposition. This section ends with Jesus' returning to his hometown, Nazareth, where he is rejected.

1. 1:14-15: Jesus' begins his ministry, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God has drawn near and that people should repent and believe the good news.

2. 1:16-20: Jesus calling of four fishermen to be disciples, Simon, Andrew, James and John.

3. 1:21-28: In Capernaum, Jesus exorcises a man with an unclean spirit on the Sabbath in the synagogue.

4. 1:29-34: From the synagogue, Jesus goes to the house of Peter's mother-in-law, whom he heals. That evening many sick and demon-possessed come to the house to be healed and exorcised.

5. 1:35-39: Jesus travels around Galilee, preaching, healing and exorcising.

6. 1:40-45: Jesus heals a man with leprosy.

7. 2:1-12: In Capernaum, a paralyzed man is let down from an opening in the roof by four men in order that he be healed. Jesus says that his sins are forgiven, which offends scribes, because they claim that only God has that right. To prove that the son of man has the authority to forgive sins, Jesus heals the man.

8. 2:13-17: Beside the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calls Levi, the tax collector to be a disciple. While dining with Levi and other tax collectors and sinners, Jesus is criticized for associating with such people. He defends himself by saying that he has come to call sinners not the righteous.

9. 2:18-22: Jesus is criticized for not requiring his disciples to fast, as the disciples of John the Baptist do. Jesus responds by saying that only when the bridegroom is taken away will they fast. Following this are two sayings: no one sews a patch made of new cloth on an old garment; no one puts new wine in old wineskins.

10. 2:23-28: Jesus defends his disciples against the accusation that they broke the Sabbath by plucking grain. He uses the example of David's eating consecrated bread to prove that their actions were warranted. He concludes by saying that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

11. 3:1-6: In a synagogue, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The Pharisees take offense and plot to kill Jesus.

12. 3:7-12: Jesus heals and exorcises many near the Sea of Galilee.

13. 3:13-19: Jesus calls his twelve disciples to be with him, to send out to preach the good news and have authority over demons.

14. 3:20-30: Jesus responds to the accusation that he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebub by saying that Satan cannot drive out Satan, because this would mean that his kingdom would be divided. Following this are the sayings about the binding and plundering of the strong man and the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit.

15. 3:31-34: Jesus says that his true mother and brothers are those who do the will of God.

16. 4:1-34: In this section are found several of Jesus' parables, along with an explanation of why Jesus teaches in parable.

a. 4:1-9: Parable of the sower: A man sows seed in his field. Some of the seed falls on the path and is eaten by birds; some of the seed falls on rocky soil, grows up but withers under the hot sun, not having deep roots. Some of the seed falls on soil covered with thorns, grows up, but is choked out by the thorns. The rest of the seed falls on good soil, grows up, and produces fruit of varying quantities.

b. 4:10-12: Jesus says that his purpose in speaking in parables is to conceal his message for those on the outside; he cites Isa 6:9-10 as explanatory of his aim in using parables. Only to those on the inside is the mystery of the Kingdom of God given.

c. 4:13-20: At the request of his disciples, Jesus explains the parable of the sower. The seed is the word, which is received by four types of hearers, represented by the four types of soil. The path represents those who hear and immediately Satan takes the word that was sown in them. The rocky soil represents those who hear the word, receive it with joy, but later fall away under persecution, since the word does not have root in them. The soil covered with thorns represents those who hear, receive the word initially, but who have it choked out of them by worries, the deceitfulness of wealth and other desires. The good soil represents those who hear the word, receive it, and produce fruit of varying quantities.

d. 4:21-25: Several parabolic sayings are grouped together. Jesus warns against putting a lamp under a bowl or a bed. He says that whatever is hidden will be revealed, and then warns that with whatever measure one uses, it will be measured to you. Following this, Jesus says that whoever has more will be given and whoever lacks what little he has will be taken away.

e. 4:26-29: Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a seed that when sown grows up by itself without the help of anyone. When it is mature, the harvest then comes.

f. 4:30-32: Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed, which, although the smallest seed, grows to become the largest of all garden herbs.

g. 4:33-34: It is said that Jesus spoke other parables and that he used only parables, explaining them to his disciples in private.

17. 4:35-41: That day, when evening comes, Jesus and his disciples set out across the Sea of Galilee. Asleep in the stern, Jesus is awakened by his fearful disciples when a storm comes up. Jesus calms the storm and rebukes them for their unbelief. The disciples marvel that even the wind and the waves obey him.

18. 5:1-20: Jesus exorcises a demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes (Gadarenes or Gergesenes). The man was possessed by numerous demons, who called themselves "legion," and he dwelt among tombs. Jesus sends the demons into a herd of pigs, which rush headlong over a cliff. Becoming fearful of Jesus, the local people request that Jesus leave their district.

19. 5:21-43: Crossing the Sea of Galilee, Jesus' heals a woman with the bleeding problem, who touches the hem of Jesus' garment believing that she will be healed. He also raises Jairus' daughter from the dead.

20. 6:1-6a: Going to Nazareth, his hometown, Jesus is rejected. He remarks that a prophet has no honor in his hometown, and he cannot perform many works of power because of the unbelief of the Nazarenes.

C. 6:6b-9:50 The Second Phase of Jesus' Public Ministry in Galilee

After he is rejected at Nazareth, Jesus then sets out again to preach, heal and exorcise mostly in the region of Galilee, but with some notable exceptions. He sends out his disciples in pairs to do the same, giving them authority over unclean spirits. Jesus performs more miracles, and comes into conflict with the Pharisees. Also the death of John the Baptist is described. On two different occasions Jesus explains to his disciples that he must be rejected and executed.

1. 6:6b-13: Jesus' sends out of his disciples two by two, giving them authority over evil spirits. They preached that people should repent, exorcise and healed many by anointing them with oil.
2. 6:14-29: King Herod thinks that Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead. Herod unwillingly killed John at the request of the daughter of Herodias, his wife.
3. 6:30-44: With five loaves and two fish, Jesus feeds five thousand men along with women and children. Two baskets of leftovers were collected afterwards.
4. 6:45-52: Jesus sends his disciples ahead by boat to Bethsaida. The disciples have difficulty making headway because of the wind. That night Jesus walks out on the water to them, who are terrified until they realize that it is Jesus. When he climbs into the boat, the winds subside.
5. 6:53-56: When they have crossed over to Gennesaret, Jesus heals the sick there.
6. 7:1-23: Jesus criticizes the Pharisaic traditions of the fathers, and calls the Pharisees hypocrites, citing Isa 29:13 as descriptive of them. He accuses the Pharisees of using their traditions to avoid obeying the Law, giving the example of the Korban tradition. Jesus explains that what matters is not so much the ritual purity of food, but more the state of the heart, from which comes forth all sorts of uncleanness.
7. 7:24-30: Going to the region of Tyre, Jesus exorcises the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman, although at first he is reluctant because she is not a Jew.
8. 7:31-37: In the region of the Decapolis, Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man.
9. 8:1-10: Jesus feeds four thousand men along with women and children with seven loaves of bread.
10. 8:11-13: The Pharisees demand an authenticating sign from Jesus, who refuses.
11. 8:14-21: Jesus warns his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and that of Herod, which the disciples wrongly interpret to be a criticism of them for not bringing enough bread along.
12. 8:22-25: Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida.

13. 8:27-30: In the villages around Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks the disciple who they think he is. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, but Jesus warns him not to tell anyone.

14. 8:31-33: Jesus begins to teach his disciples that he must be rejected and killed, but will after three days be raised up. Peter objects to what Jesus says, but Jesus rebukes him as the mouthpiece of Satan.

15. 8:34-9:1: In this section is found a series of sayings relating to discipleship. Jesus teaches that becoming his disciple requires taking up one's cross and that whoever loses his life for him and the good news will save it. Following this is the saying that it profits nothing to gain the whole world but lose one's soul. Then there is attached the saying that when he comes in glory, Jesus, the son of man, will be ashamed of anyone who has been ashamed of him and his words. Jesus next says that some among his hearers will not die until they see the Kingdom of God come with power.

16. 9:2-13: Jesus is transfigured in the presence of Peter, James and John. On the mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared to him. As they are descending, Jesus is asked why the scribes teach that Elijah must come first and restore all things. He responds that Elijah has already come, and that they did to him whatever they pleased

17. 9:14-29: Jesus exorcises a boy with an unclean spirit, whom his disciples could not. Jesus tells his disciples that this type of unclean spirit only comes out with prayer.

18. 9:30-32: Passing through Galilee, for a second time, Jesus predicts that he must be betrayed, killed and raised from the dead after three days.

19. 9:33-37: In Capernaum, after the disciples argued over which of them would be the greatest, Jesus teaches that the true nature of greatness lies in service to others. Taking a child, he says that whoever welcomes such a one in his name welcomes him and the one who sent him.

20. 9:38-41: The disciples attempt to forbid a man unconnected with their circles from exorcising in Jesus' name. Jesus, however, allows it.

21. 9:42-50: In this section there are grouped together several sayings, connected with a shared word. In the first saying, Jesus teaches that it is perilous to cause a disciple to stumble; connected with this are a three related sayings stressing by means of hyperbole the need to remove all obstacles to entering life or the Kingdom of God. Then follows a saying about being salted with fire and another relating to the need to remain salty.

D. 10:1-13:37 The Judean Period of Jesus' Ministry

In this section Jesus goes to Judea, visiting Jerusalem more than once. Some of what Jesus says and does during this time is provided. Some of what Jesus says in this section relates to the consequences for Jerusalem and the Jewish people of the rejection of the Kingdom of God and its herald.

1. 10:1-12: At the instigation of the Pharisees, Jesus teaches that it was never God's will that a man divorce his wife, contrary to what is said in the Torah. A man or woman who divorces his spouse and marries another commits adultery.
2. 10:13-16: Jesus blesses some children, after his disciples attempt to deny them access to Jesus. He says that one must enter the Kingdom of God as a child.
3. 10:17-22: A rich, young ruler asks Jesus about how to inherit eternal life. Jesus answers that it is through obeying the commandments. His interlocutor responds that he has kept the commandments, to which Jesus says that there is one more condition that he must meet: he is to sell all his possessions and follow him.
4. 10:23-31: Jesus explains that it is difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. His disciples are surprised at this saying and wonder who then can be saved. Jesus responds by saying that what is impossible for man is possible for God. Then Peter says that he and the others have left everything for Jesus, and Jesus promises that anyone who has made sacrifices for him and the good new in this age will be rewarded in this age and receive eternal life in the age to come. But there will be a reversal in the age to come.
5. 10:32-34: On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus predicts for a third time that he will be killed and raised up after three days.
6. 10:35-45: James and John ask Jesus to grant to them the honor of sitting at his right and left hands when he comes into his kingdom. Jesus asks whether they are able to participate in the fate that awaits him, and says such honors are not his to give. When the other ten disciples hear what happen, they become indignant. Jesus then teaches them that greatness consists in service, just as the son of man came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.
7. 10:46-52: In Jericho, Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus, who calls Jesus "son of David."
8. 11:1-11: Jesus enters into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, and is received by the crowds reciting Ps 118:25-26.
9. 11:12-14: On the next day, Jesus' curses a fig tree because it has no figs, even though it is not the time for figs.
10. 11:15-19: Jesus clears the Temple of money changers and livestock dealers, saying that they have turned the Temple, which should be a house of prayer (Isa 56:7) into a den of thieves.
11. 11:20-26: The next day, the disciples are amazed to see that the fig tree that Jesus cursed has withered. Jesus takes this opportunity to encourage them to have faith in God. Following this are three more sayings about faith and prayer: Jesus says that by faith one can do what seems impossible, such as saying to a mountain to be removed to the sea; he then tells them to believe that they

have already received what they request in prayer and it will be given to them; finally, he tells them to forgive others before praying, in order that God may forgive them.

12. 11:27-33: The chief priest, scribes and elder question Jesus about his authority to do clear the Temple of money-changers and livestock dealers. He asks them by whose authority John the Baptist baptized. Jesus' opponents are silenced, because they are afraid to deny in public that John's authority came from heaven.

13. 12:1-12: Jesus tells the parable of vineyard and the tenants. A man leased his vineyard to tenant farmers who would not give him a portion of the harvest. Instead they killed all the agents he sent to them, including the owner's son. Jesus says that the only recourse open to the owner is to destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Jesus then quotes Ps 118:22-23, which speaks of the rejected cornerstone.

14. 12:13-17: Some Pharisees and Herodians, hoping to trap him, ask Jesus whether it allowed paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus evades the question by saying that they should give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.

15. Mark 12:18-27: The Sadducees challenge Jesus' belief in the resurrection by offering him the hypothetical situation of a woman who has been widowed seven times. They want to know which of her seven husbands will be the woman's legitimate husband after the resurrection. Jesus says that the Sadducees do not understand the scriptures or the power of God. He adds that, at the resurrection, there will no longer be any marriage.

16. Mark 12:28-34: A scribe asks Jesus which is the greatest commandment. Jesus says that there are two greatest commandments: to love God with one's whole being (Deut 6:4-5) and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18), to which the scribe assented and added that these are more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus says that the scribe is not far from the Kingdom of God.

17. Mark 12:35-37: Jesus asks how the Messiah can be David's son when in Ps 110:1 Yahweh says to David's lord, the Messiah, to sit at his right hand.

18. Mark 12:38-40: Jesus warns against the scribes who love to be honored and who exploit widows.

19. Mark 12:41-44: In the Temple, Jesus commends a woman for giving all that she had as a gift to the Temple.

20. Mark 13:1-37: In this section, Jesus describes the coming destruction of the Temple and the coming of the son of man.

a. 13:1-2: Jesus foretells the complete destruction of the Temple.

- b. 13:3-8: Later, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus is asked what the signs will be when all these things are about to occur. Jesus says that there will be those who will come in his name, claiming, "I am he," but the disciples should not be deceived. There will be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines.
- c. 13:9-13: Jesus warns his disciples that they will be hated and persecuted, but also reassures them that the Holy Spirit will give the words to say for their defense at their trial. The good news must first be proclaimed to the gentiles.
- d. 13:14-20: Jesus warns that when the abomination that causes desolation is set up where it ought not to be that those in Judea should flee. This will be a time of unparalleled suffering.
- e. 13:21-23: Jesus warns against being deceived by false Messiahs and prophets.
- f. 13:24-27: In those days, after that suffering, Jesus says that they will see the son of man coming in clouds; he will gather the elect from the four corners of the earth.
- g. 13:28-31: Jesus says when they see these things occurring that they should expect the coming of the son of man and that this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.
- h. 13:32-37: Jesus exhorts them to be watchful because the time of the coming of the son of man is unknown.

E. 14:1-16:20 Passion and Resurrection Narratives

This section contains the plot to kill Jesus, Jesus' last Passover meal with his disciples, his arrest, his trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

1. 14:1-2: The chief priest and scribes plot to kill Jesus.
2. 14:3-9: While dining, Jesus is anointed by a woman at Bethany. When some criticize her, he says that she has anointed his body for burial.
3. 14:10-11: Judas agrees to betray Jesus for money, and begins to look for an opportunity to do so.
4. 14:12-26: Jesus celebrates his last Passover with his disciples. He sends two disciples to make Passover preparations. During the meal, Jesus says that the bread is his body and the cup is the blood of the covenant poured out for many. He adds that he will not drink of the fruit of the vine until he drinks it anew in the Kingdom of God.
5. 14:27-31: Jesus predicts that his disciples will desert him, in fulfillment of Zech 13:7. When Peter objects, he says that Peter will deny him three times.

6. 14:32-42: Jesus prays in Gethsemane, asking God to remove this cup (i.e., destiny) from him. His disciples, however, cannot remain awake during his prayer ordeal. Then Jesus says that the hour has come for the son of man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

7. 14:43-50: Jesus is arrested. Judas kisses him as a sign that he is the one to be arrested. In Jesus' defense, one of his disciples cuts the ear off of one of the servants of the high priests. Jesus remarks that it is unnecessary to arrest him with such a show of force, since he was regularly in the Temple teaching; but this is to fulfill scripture.

8. 14:51-52: A young man follows, but, when his linen garment is taken hold of, he is forced to flee naked.

9. 14:53-65: Jesus is taken to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and scribes are as-

5.3. The Non-Chronological Nature of the Markan Narrative

5.3.1. The Episodic or Paratactic Nature of the Gospel of Mark

Within the larger framework of a Galilean and Judean period of Jesus' ministry, the Gospel of Mark exhibits no clearly defined structure. Rather one finds merely loosely connected single units of traditions and collections of traditions with some redactional connections supplied by the author. One could say that the gospel is episodic or paratactic in terms of its structure. This is what "the presbyter, as quoted by Papias, seems to mean when he writes that Peter "used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them" (see above). This lack of structure is most obvious in Mark 1:14 to 11:1, the point in the gospel when Jesus arrives in Jerusalem. (After this point, Jesus' last two weeks or so of life are described, so that the material is partially chronological in presentation.) These chapters consist of isolated narratives or chronologically connected complexes of narratives together with collections of parables and sayings. Mark usually links his material together with the connective "and" (*kai*). Even within the complexes of narrative the traditions are simply strung together, again usually using the connective "and" (*kai*). Thus, as K. L. Schmidt pointed out in 1919, "As a whole there is no life of Jesus in the sense of an evolving biography, no chronological sketch of the story of Jesus, but only single stories, pericopae, which are put into a framework" (*Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, 317).

Based on this evidence, how would you describe the nature of the Gospel of Mark?

This is not to say that the organization of the isolated material until 11:1 is chronologically arbitrary, but that a chronological arrangement of the material was not the primary concern of the author. Probably, the order of the appearance of many of the isolated traditions and complexes of traditions is chronologically correct. It makes sense, for example, that Jesus begins to speak about the necessity of his death for the first time only towards the end of his Galilean ministry (8:28), when opposition to him has solidified. Likewise, the four traditions in Mark 10:17-52 appropriately are set during Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Also, some sense of chronological progression may be provided in Mark by means of the author's uses of the adverb "again" (*palin*) (see Mark 2:1, 13; 3:1; 5:21; 8:13). (Whether this indicates real chronology or is for the sake of reminding the hearers/readers that previously Jesus had been to a particular place is open to question.) But clearly not every tradition is chronologically placed. The principle of the organization of the series of conflict stories in 2:1-3:6, for example, is thematic: Mark placed together a collection of similar traditions.

5.3.2. Connective Clauses in Mark

Typically the connective clauses between individual pericopes in Mark function merely as transitions between one pericope and another, as well as providing introductions to each pericope. See *Appendix B: Connective Clauses in Mark*. How do the connective clauses in the Gospel of Mark confirm that the author's interest was not to give a chronological account of the life of Jesus?

5.4. The Connecting of Sayings in Mark

It is probable that Mark or a pre-Markan redactor (perhaps Peter) joined together individual and originally isolated sayings of Jesus into larger units thematically or by means of link words.

5.4.1. Mark 2:1-3:6

At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark are found a collection of five conflict stories, in which Jesus comes into conflict with and answers the accusations of his opponents. These five pericopes are loosely connected with one another chronologically (see above). Probably, Mark or a pre-Markan redactor collected these conflict stories together based on their sharing the theme of conflict with opponents.

A. Mark 2:1-12 (Jesus' healing of a paralyzed man)

B. Mark 2:13-17 (Jesus' calling of Levi)

C. Mark 2:18-22 (The question about fasting)

D. Mark 2:23-28 (Plucking grain on the Sabbath)

E. Mark 3:1-6 (Healing of man with withered hand)

5.4.2. Mark 4:21-32

After the parable of the sower and its explanation, there are found four parables, sayings in which Jesus uses metaphorical language. Each is introduced by "And he said [to them]." It is possible that Mark or a pre-Markan redactor was responsible for grouping this material together, on the basis that thematically these traditions are all instances of parabolic discourse.

A. 4:21-23: Jesus' saying about the lamp's not coming in order to be hidden under a bushel, and how everything hidden will be revealed.

B. 4:24-25 Jesus' saying about how one receives in accordance with the measure with which one measures out and how the one who has will receive while the one who does not have will lose the little he has.

C. 4:26-29 Jesus' parable of the seed growing by itself

D. 4:30-32 Jesus' parable of the mustard seed

5.4.3. Mark 8:34-9:1

After Jesus explains to his disciples for the first time that he must die and be raised from the dead, Mark includes several of Jesus' sayings concerning discipleship. Thematically they belong together and serve to draw out the implications of following Jesus, whose destiny is to be executed.

A. 8:34 The need for self-denial and taking up one's cross

B. 8:35 Saving and losing one's soul

C. 8:36 Gaining the world and losing one's soul

D. 8:37 In exchange for one's soul

E. 8:38 Being ashamed

F. 9:1 The Kingdom of God in power

5.4.4. Mark or perhaps a pre-Markan redactor seems to have organized isolated sayings of Jesus together by means of link-words (A link word is a key word that two or more sayings have in common). The next two collections of sayings are examples of this.

A. Mark 9:42-50

42 Whoever **causes** one of these little ones who believe **to stumble**, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. 43 "If your hand **causes** you **to stumble**, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, [44] 45 "If your foot **causes** you **to stumble**, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell [46] 47 "If your eye **causes** you **to stumble**, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, 48 where their worm does not die, and the **fire** is not quenched. 49 "For everyone will be **salted** with **fire**. 50 "**Salt** is good; but if the **salt** becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have **salt** in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

How many sayings are there in the collection represented by Mark 9:42-50? How are these sayings connected to one another by means of link words?

B. Mark 11:22-25

1. 11:22 is linked to 11:23 by word “believe / belief” (pistis / pisteuô)
2. 11:23 is linked to 11:24 by word “believe”
3. 11:24 is linked to 11:25 by word “to pray” (proseuchomai)

5.4.5. Contrary to the views of many commentators, the material in Mark 13:1-37 requires a different explanation of its origin, since its component parts are not short sayings. From all appearances, it seems to be a summary of an extended eschatological discourse of Jesus, just as Mark records it.

5.5. Oral Legacy of Markan Material

It has been demonstrated that Markan narrative bears the traces of an “oral legacy”: Markan narrative style reflects the needs of oral presentation. This is consistent with the external tradition that traces the gospel’s origin to the preaching of Peter; Mark recorded his oral narrative material as Peter told it, not fully adapting it to the medium of written discourse. (As indicated, this also accounts for the episodic nature of Mark, since each narrative or narrative complex was likely a self-contained unit or oral tradition.) The following stylistic and rhetorical features contribute to the gospel’s oral flavor:

5.5.1. The use of the third person plural rather than the passive is a mark of oral narrative (e.g. 8:22; 10:13).

5.5.2. The excessive use of the historical present, which tends to magnify dramatic intensity, is a feature of oral presentation.

5.5.3. Preference for the use of direct speech rather than indirect speech is part of Mark's oral legacy (e.g. 's 9:11; 11:17).

5.5.4. Mark is characterized by duplicate features. These duplicate features consist of redundancies and repetitions. Markan duality derives from the origins of Mark's material in oral tradition. Oral presentation requires such duality, for without access to written texts repetition is required in order to retain the facts in memory.

● 6. *Why was the Gospel of Mark written?*

6.1. Internal, direct evidence for Mark's purpose in writing is found in Mark 1:1: "The *archê* of the gospel of Jesus Christ." It is possible to take this verse as a title for the entire work, so that Mark's intention is to explain to his Christian hearers/readers the beginning or the basis (*archê*) of the good news that they believed. If this is the meaning of the term *archê*, what is the purpose of the Gospel of Mark?

6.2. If Papias and others who hold the same view of the origin of the gospel are correct, what is the purpose of the Gospel of Mark?
