

# **MARK - A MAN CALLED MARK**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In this series we are looking at major characters in the Bible, the goal being to give us an overview of the whole Bible. We started in the Old Testament with A Man Called Adam, and continued with a study of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. This is the second study from the New Testament. We are following A Man Called Matthew with the present study, A Man Called Mark. Matthew and John were Apostles, Mark and Luke were not. Should that make a difference? I don't think so. We may look at Timothy, Titus, Stephen, Mary, or Mary. Or, Mary. And how about Priscilla? Can we overlook James the brother of our Lord, who was the key figure in the church at Jerusalem for many years? To whom did Paul report when he returned from one of his mission trips? James, the half-brother of our Lord.

I am somewhat biased when it comes to the name Mark because we named my younger son Mark. As a matter of fact, when I left my wife Rebecca in the hospital with Mark we were in agreement that his name would be Mark David Sanders. When I returned the next day I glanced at a chart or some papers and saw the name Mark Keith Sanders. I asked Becky where she got the name Keith and she said, "I don't know. Someone came in and asked for his name and I said, "Mark Keith Sanders. And I have no idea where I got it." My older son is Johnny L. Sanders II, but we have always called him John, and John he was until he returned from LSU Law School where he was called by the name on his records. Now, when I receive e-mail from Johnny Sanders to Johnny Sanders, I still get a little confused at times. If it comes from his office it will be from Johnny Sanders, but if it is from his home it will be from John Sanders. If Mark, the kinsman of Barnabas sent me an e-mail message he could really confuse me if he signed it with both of his names: John Mark.

If we stay with the Bible Character theme for this series, what do we do when we come to a character like Mark? Just what do we know about the man called Mark? We are given a lot of information on various Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Job. We have a lot of information about leaders of Israel during the Exodus: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and Joshua. We are given adequate information about King David and King Solomon, about the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. The same can be said Judges, Minor Prophets, various women, and Apostles. But where does that leave A Man Called Mark. Do we know enough to merit a separate study? We shall see. He was not an apostle, he was not one of the Old Testament prophets, and he certainly was no king. So, is there enough known about Mark for this type of study? Is it enough just to read the second Gospel, or do we want to know more?

I am going to go forward with A Man Called Mark because of what we read in the Second Gospel, and because young John Mark grew up in the heart of the religious community of his Jewish nation, and in the center of the ministry of Jesus Christ when he came to a major religious festival. While the twelve apostles lived in Galilee, John Mark grew up in Jerusalem, which David conquered and made the capitol of his kingdom a thousand years earlier. The Temple, the most holy place for the Jews, was located in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin, with permission from Rome, ruled over Jewish matters from Jerusalem. People traveled great distances to come to

Jerusalem for Passover and other holy days. Jerusalem, as you see, was the very center of Judaism, and Mark grew up in the home of very respectable and influential parents. We are not told about his father, but his mother was one of the most highly respected women among the early Christians.

## **I. HISTORIANS PROVIDE US WITH INFORMATION ABOUT MARK.**

### **A. Bible History Provides us with Insight.**

1. I am going to quote here from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE). It is one of the really good sources, as are other dictionaries and numerous Bible study guides, like the Holman Christian Study Bible and the Believer's Study Bible, and many others. The ISBE introduces the study on Mark in this way:

“His kinship with Barnabas, knowledge of Christian history and teaching, and proved efficiency account for his being taken along on the first missionary journey as "minister" (ὄπιηρ της, hupēretēs) to Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:5). Just what that term implies is not clear.” [ISBE]

I am in total agreement with that statement. I think. But that is not the first time a commentary or Bible research volume has left me scratching my head. The ISBE writers offered a number of possibilities in an effort to describe the work Mark did for Barnabas and Paul. Of course, at the beginning it was Barnabas and Saul, but before the First Missionary Journey was over, Paul the Hellenistic Jew was the leader. He knew and understood the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles in that district, which was not too far from his home town of Tarsus. After various views were expressed as to the responsibilities assigned to Mark, the ISBE concluded that “The more common view has been (Meyer, Swete, et al.) that he was to perform "personal service not evangelistic," "official service but not of the menial kind"—to be a sort of business agent. The view that he was to be a teacher, a catechist for converts, seems to fit best all the facts.” [ISBE] The view that he was to be “a teacher or catechist for converts” seems to be a little more realistic than a business agent.

While there is information here the average reader today may not find interesting, this paragraph provides information for those who would go a little deeper. I doubt that the average reader of the Gospel According to Mark ever stops to consider the specific role of Mark on this missionary journey. Who better than Mark to share eye witness testimony about the person and ministry of Jesus Christ? If many of the early Christian leaders met in his home he would have known them personally. How many miracles did he see? Did he actually hear Jesus preach or teach the people in the temple complex? Did he see Jesus in the Royal Entry into Jerusalem? Why do I say “Royal Entry” instead of Triumphant Entry? That is a fair question, especially since it is almost always listed as the Triumphant Entry.

When Adonijah tried to usurp the crown intended for Solomon, what did David tell Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet to do? He told them to put Solomon on the royal mule - not the King's royal stallion, the stallion of conquest - but the royal mule that assured the people that the entry was for peace. In end-time events Jesus will make a triumphant entry as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and there will be no mistake about His purpose then. When he returns as spelled out in

Revelation, there will be no misunderstanding His purpose. That really will be a triumphant return. He entered Jerusalem in Mark's day, however, not to challenge the might of Rome, or to lead in a revolt. He entered Jerusalem as the Prince of Peace.

Mark may well have been asked to teach the people, maintain records, or assist Paul when he had health problems. We are simply not told, and if we actually needed that information I am convinced that we would have been told. We may want to know more about Mark, but let us consider something here that is important. Mark fulfilled his place in the Lord's plan for him. His life was not Paul's life, nor that of Barnabas, even though either would have been a great example or role model. On the first day of my junior year in high school, our teacher, Miss "Boots" Hicks announced that she had attended Youth Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly Center in North Carolina (near Asheville), earlier in the summer, and that the theme of the week was, "God has a plan, a place, and a purpose for every life." I was one of three students she took with her to Ridgecrest the next summer for Youth Week, and it was a highlight of my teen age years, truly a mountain top experience. I already knew the Lord had a plan for my life because I was saved at age 12, called into the ministry at age 13, and already speaking for the Lord from time to time. I did not know the plan or place, but I did know He had a purpose for me.

2. The Lord is still calling men and women to serve him for special ministries. When my son John was in Law School at LSU, he was home for a break and accompanied me to the Nationwide Bible Conference at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis. Adrian Rogers was the amazing pastor of that church, a church that had been led by the late R. G. Lee for 33 years. I have never forgotten that one of our speakers, Ron Dunn, author of the book, *DON'T JUST STAND THERE-PRAY SOMETHING* (Thomas Nelson) called Adrian Rogers, "The greatest Christian gentleman in America." Those who met Adrian Roger personally could appreciate what Ron Dunn meant. At one point during one of the two days of the conference, Dr. Rogers staged a question and answer session, with four or five people, like Stephen Olford, John MacArthur, John Phillips and Jerry Vines answering questions submitted by those in attendance and asked by Adrian Rogers. One question was, "Do you believe that once a pastor has fallen (morally), he should never return to the pulpit?" It was interesting that this question was put to Stephen Olford first, which was interesting because many were beginning to recognize something in Stephen Olford that drew us to him and his ministry. I stood with Southern Baptist pastors and leaders in the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Atlanta and listened to leaders answer the question, "What preacher would you rather hear than anyone else?" A number of names were mentioned, but the conclusion seemed to be, "The one I get the most out of is Stephen Olford."

A few years later, while attending a Board meeting with LifeWay Christian Resources, that question came up prior to one of our plenary sessions. People like Dr. Jimmy Draper and other well-known ministers and denominational leaders were expressing their opinion when Dr. Draper (as I recall) said, "The preacher I get the most out of is Stephen Olford. I might add that preachers and teachers may well have felt that way more strongly than laymen. As John and I drove out of Memphis after the final session, John, who is not given to great emotions, said, "I enjoyed all of them, but I really liked Jerry Vines." I said, "We all loved Jerry Vines. He preached what we wanted to hear and he preached it the way we wanted to hear it. That is what we came to hear. On the other hand, Stephen Olford preached what we did not want to hear, but

we knew we needed to hear it. We did not come that distance to have someone walk all over our feet, talking with us about the sin of failing to study or failing to pray as we should. We knew we were guilty and we knew that, as servants of the Lord, we needed to make a fresh commitment to the Lord.”

When Adrian Rogers asked, “If a pastor should fall, should he ever return to the pulpit, Stephen Olford answered, “No!” Pointing to the pulpit, he went on: “That is a sacred pulpit and once a man has committed that sin he should not be returned to the pulpit! He can be forgiven, and he may be restored to a place of service, but never to that sacred pulpit.”

It might help to know that Stephen Olford, as a youth, stood with his abandoned father, mother, and brother in the heart of an African jungle, dying from thirst. They had been abandoned by natives who were guiding them and bearing their luggage. They were to get water at a certain river but when they arrived there they found only dust where there was supposed to have been a river. During the night the natives took all the water and slipped away, leaving them to die a horrible death. Dr. Olford said, I know what it is like to have your lips split and your tongue so thick you couldn’t speak.” At that time, his missionary father stepped out from under the tree where they were standing, lifted his hand toward heaven, and cried out, “Oh, Lord, I know you did not bring us all the way from England to this place for us to die like this.” Pointing to the sky, he commanded clouds to form and rain to fall.

Stephen Olford said, “Within ten minutes clouds had formed and it began to rain. We picked up everything that we could find that would hold water and began drinking water.” This was the man about whom Billy Graham once said he had spent a day with Stephen Olford in a hotel room discussing prayer and nothing had ever brought about a greater change in his life.

I am reminded of one of my family’s favorite senior citizens, a godly lady who lives for the Lord, and she is moved on past her 95th birthday and looking at the century mark. She still drives herself to church and to town, but she has finally let a family member drive her into the heart of the city. Once, many years ago, our “Miss Merle” was summoned for jury duty and when someone asked her if she could listen to the arguments and then render a fair judgment, she said, “Well, I am wishy-washy. When I am listening to one person I believe him, and when I listen to another person I listen to him.” She was dismissed! Stephen Olford was never accused of being wishy-washy.

## B. We are not told Why Mark Turned Back.

1. We are not told why, but Mark did turn back at this critical point in the First Missionary Journey. We are not given the specifics, but we know he did.

“One of the most puzzling questions about Mark, one that no doubt haunted him for years to come, had to do with his turning back from the work during the first Missionary Journey. Why did he do that? Did he deny himself the right or opportunity to serve the Lord faithfully thereafter? No, Mark, befriended by his cousin Barnabas when Paul refused to be associated with him on the Second Missionary Journey. At a time like that Mark was far better off with the caring Barnabas than the more narrow minded, somewhat legalistic Saul of Tarsus, the man who

had surpassed all the young Pharisee students in the school established to train them. There may come a time in anyone's life when he or she will be better served by an understanding Barnabas than a highly determined, but not so forgiving leader. There are church members who seemed to find it a part of their righteousness to judge those who have been guilty of certain failures. At the same time, certain discretions must not be overlooked when he comes to serving in the ministry of the church." [ISBE, bold added by this writer]

Let me comment on this one. First, Mark did turn back on the first missionary journey as they faced the interior region on Galatia. We are not told why he turned back, just that he did. How far had they gone on this journey? We are not given any more information on Mark's reason or reasons for turning back, but some will speculate anyway. The point I have made many times before discovering that the author of the material in the ISBE seems to be in agreement with me on one major point. I absolutely agree that there are times when a young person may well be in better hands with a loving, caring Barnabas, than a narrow minded, strict disciplinarian like Paul. There would come a time when Paul was very complimentary of Mark and his work, but the younger Paul was highly critical and judgmental: if he turned back one time, he may turn back again. When forced to choose, Barnabas chose to give his cousin Mark another opportunity to show his commitment to the Lord and to His ministry.

2. The ISBE assigns a reason for Mark's turning back. We will look at what the author assumed to have been the reason and then see if we agree with him. So, why did Mark turn back on the first mission trip into Gentile lands? The Scripture that records this is in Acts 13. The ISBE author insists that it was

Not because of homesickness, or anxiety for his mother's safety, or home duties, or the desire to rejoin Peter, or fear of the perils incident to the journey, but rather because he objected to the offer of salvation to the Gentiles on condition of faith alone. There are hints that Mark's family, like Paul's, were Hebrews of the Hebrews, and it is not without significance that in both verses (Acts 13:5, 13) he is given only his Hebrew name. The terms of Paul's remonstrance are very strong (Acts 15:38), and we know that nothing stirred Paul's feelings more deeply than this very question. The explanation of it all may be found in what happened at Paphos when the Roman Sergius Paulus became a believer. At that time Paul (the change of name is here noted by Luke) stepped to the front, and henceforth, with the exception of Acts 15:12, 25, where naturally enough the old order is maintained, Luke speaks of Paul and Barnabas, not Barnabas and Saul. We must remember that, at that time, Paul stood almost alone in his conviction. Barnabas, even later than that, had misgivings (Galatians 2:13). Perhaps, too, Mark was less able than Barnabas himself to see the latter take second place. [ISBE, bold added by this writer]

Let me comment on this again. It is true that Luke used John Mark's Hebrew name (John) in both 13:5 and 13:13. I would add that while Luke was informed about certain things by Paul, just as Mark was taught and tutored by Peter, the Holy Spirit is the One who inspired the Scripture. We must remember that while Mark was a Palestinian Jew, Paul was a Hellenistic Jew, having grown up in a Greek or Gentile city and country. Bumping into Gentiles in the market place was a common occurrence to Paul while it was not common at all to Mark in Jerusalem. The exception to that is that there were Roman soldiers and other officials there.

Have you ever quit on a job or project for the simple reason that (1) you were afraid you might embarrass yourself, (2) that it was too hard for you, (3) that you were simply not the man for the job, or (4) that others were obviously doing the job better than you were? When I was growing up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta it became obvious to me that my father would permit me to do things with a tractor he did not permit others to do on our farm at the time. That way he was probably determining just what a particular tractor - and driver - might be able to do. There were times when I would do more dangerous things when my father was not present. I was not reckless, I simply wanted to know what I could do safely and at the same time find a way to approach a project in an energy efficient manner. I had to get tractors over stumps a few times in a new ground where we had nothing to remove solid stumps, but a certain disc would cut loose parts of a rotten stump. I had to jump a tractor off some stumps and I figured out a way to do that. I had to cross ditches that were often a little too big, but if I could do that without too great a risk, I would soon figure out a way to stay on a job until I was finished, or until someone came to pull me out of a ditch.

During summers when I was in college and seminary, I worked for the Quitman County ASCS (USDA), using aerial photographs, a chain, and stakes to determine where the lines of the field were to be drawn on the "map." My brother was doing the same thing in Tunica County. He was new at it and I had been working at it about four years. He came in one day and told me he had to quit a farm because he could not plot it onto the photograph. I asked him and determined that he had all the measurements, so I plotted them onto the map as he showed me the rows were running. There were many offsets along the side of a field because the field was getting narrower as he went toward the end of the field. I showed him that the offsets had to fall the way I drew them, or in the exact opposite direction.

James told me later that the farmer paid to have the field re-measured because he didn't believe the reporter (James) knew what he was doing. On the re-check it was determined that I had it exactly right. My brother quit on that one job. Did he ever quit on another one. No, he did not. Have I ever quit on a project. I probably have and it may well have been a project James would not have left. James and I were in Memphis years ago and someone gave me directions to another place. I started to ask him to repeat it and James said, "That's all right, I have it." He did.

Mark may have felt justified when he quit on Barnabas and Paul at that moment, but we can imagine his doubts and regrets later. He may well had to do a lot of praying about his failure, and about disappointing Barnabas and Saul. Later on, he proved himself a loyal and dedicated worker. Some think Mark quit and turned back when he saw that they were going to be reaching out to Gentiles and not Jews. Do you really think Paul had withheld that information from Mark when they were planning the trip? I doubt it. However, once they got started there may have been some specific issues for which he was not prepared. He may have had a run-in with some Gentiles who didn't like Jews!

The ISBE adds:

"We hear nothing further of Mark until the beginning of the second missionary journey 2 years later, when Paul's unwillingness to take him with them led to the rupture between Paul and Barnabas and to the mission of Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). He is here called

Mark, and in that quiet way Luke may indicate his own conviction that Mark's mind had changed on the great question, as indeed his willingness to accompany Paul might suggest. He had learned from the discussions in the council at Jerusalem and from subsequent events at Antioch.” [ISBE, bold added by this writer]

This is historically accurate, but we are not given enough information to fully understand whether or not Mark had turned back because the going got rougher than he had expected, or that he could not accept the preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles. One question some seem to have entertained is whether or not Mark understood that they were going into Gentile territory to take the Gospel to Gentiles. How could he have missed that? And, was he the only one to have to deal with such prejudice? No, he wasn't. Let us look at what happened in Antioch of Syria after the great Jerusalem Conference in A. D. 51.

“But when Cephas[2] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. 12 For he used to eat with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. 13 Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, “If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?” [Gal 2:11-14, HCSB, bold added by this writer, bold italics focuses on Simon Peter)

How is it that Paul would have taken such a narrow view of Mark's decision to turn back if it were only on the basis of race and culture? He rebuked Peter and Barnabas, but refused to let a younger and less experienced Mark travel with them again over the issue of presenting the Gospel to Gentiles? Then, why else would Paul have refused to permit Mark to go with them on another mission trip? Paul was a driven man when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel in the school for the Pharisees. He was ahead of all the other students in the school. He was no quitter and Mark had quit. If he quit once might he not quit again?

The average pastor, Sunday School teacher, or Bible professor may find it very hard to understand the depth of commitment to a discipline he or she may see in a particular student. I once heard a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary say that when he was a student there, studying in the library, someone might stop by and suggest that they go get a cup of coffee. All the students, he said, would mark their place, close their book, and get up and leave with the group. All except one, that is. J. Hardee Kennedy would stop, but he would have to back out of a thousand years of Hebrew history before he could really relate to them. I spent a lot of time with the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who was a Math major at Mississippi College when the Lord called him. When he called him, he got all of him! Dr. Eddleman once told me that the greatest regret he had in his life was the way he had neglected his studies between age 15 and 19, when he could have learned five new languages. I was sitting there thinking, “I never would have thought of that!” Dr. Eddleman told me that he allowed himself one date a year between ages 19 - 25. I really couldn't identify with that! I had met the young lady who would become my wife and we had dated for three years, or until she graduated from Mississippi College so she could teach in a public school in New Orleans my last year in seminary. That is about as much discipline as I can recall. Paul would have understood Dr. Eddleman and Dr.

Kennedy. I really don't want to think what he would have thought of me.

As it worked out, Barnabas took Mark and began a mission trip to Cyprus with him. Paul chose Silas and started out on the Second Missionary Journey, going back to visit the churches planted on the First Missionary Journey and encouraging them with news from the Jerusalem Conference. Paul had taken Titus to the Jerusalem Conference, determined that, no matter what they said at the conference, he was not going to permit Titus to be circumcised. Interestingly, when he chose Timothy, who was part Jew, he had him circumcised. They would extend the Second Missionary Journey to include new areas, including Phillippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth.

The ISBE continues with the following verses, which shows a change in Paul's attitude toward Mark:

About 11 years elapse before we hear of him again (Col. 4:10f; Philemon 1:24). He is at Rome with Paul. The breach is healed. He is now one of the faithful few among Jewish Christians who stand by Paul. He is Paul's honored "fellow worker" and a great "comfort" to him.

The Colossian passage may imply a contemplated visit by Mark to Asia Minor. It may be that it was carried out, that he met Peter and went with him to Babylon. In 1 Peter 5:13 the apostle sends Mark's greeting along with that of the church in Babylon. Thence Mark returns to Asia Minor, and in 2 Tim. 4:11 Paul asks Timothy, who is at Ephesus, to come to him, pick up Mark by the way, and bring him along. In that connection Paul pays Mark his final tribute; he is "useful for ministering" (εὐχρηστος εἰς διακονίαν, eúchrēstos eis diakonían), so useful that his ministry is a joy to the veteran's heart. [ISBE, bold added by this writer]

Did others help change Paul's mind about Mark, or did he simply follow his ministry and realize that Mark had matured in the faith, that he had a great gift for writing about the Person, life, and ministry of Jesus?

C. Now Let Us Look at Some General Information.

1. Consider his name and his family. For this information we will be looking at that which is posted under the name, John Mark, in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE). The ISBE provides us with more details than most dictionaries. For example, there is the reminder that "his name is John Mark, and that "(ω ννης, Iōánnēs) represents his Jewish name, whereas Mark (Μ ρκος, Márkos) is his Roman name. "Why the latter was assumed we do not know." [ISBE] Assuming the ISBE to be correct here, one would wonder how early he became known as Mark. That may have taken place soon after he and his cousin Barnabas traveled to Antioch of Syria, but that only conjecture.

"Perhaps the aorist participle in Acts 12:25 may be intended to intimate that it dated from the time when, in company with Barnabas and Saul, he turned to service in the great Gentile city of Antioch. Possibly it was the badge of Roman citizenship, as in the case of Paul. The standing of the family would be quite consistent with such a supposition." [ISBE]

Mark's mother was named Mary (Acts 12:12). Mary's home became a popular meeting place for



those who embraced Jesus Christ as Savior. Agrippa I (AD 37-44), the grandson of Herod the Great beheaded James in A.D. 44, and then imprisoned Simon Peter [The Bible Navigator notes].

“About that time King Herod cruelly attacked some who belonged to the church, (2) and he killed James, John’s brother, with the sword. (3) When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too, during the days of Unleavened Bread. (4) After the arrest, he put him in prison and assigned four squads of four soldiers each to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. (5) So Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was being made earnestly to God for him by the church.” (Acts 12:1-5, HCSB, bold added for emphasis)

Herod was determined to stop this new movement which was identified with Jesus Christ, but a part of his zeal had to do with keeping the religious leaders happy and keeping them in his camp. The James who was martyred here was James, the son of Zebedee, brother of John. James, John, and Simon Peter made up Jesus’ inner circle, so the killing of James would have been a strong statement against the followers of Jesus. The Jews in Jerusalem were so pleased when Herod had James killed that he immediately set out to kill Simon Peter. However, the Lord sent an angel to deliver Simon Peter:

(11) “Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from Herod’s grasp and from all that the Jewish people expected.” (12) When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many had assembled and were praying. (13) He knocked at the door in the gateway, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer. (14)

She recognized Peter’s voice, and because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gateway.

(15) “You’re crazy!” they told her. But she kept insisting that it was true. Then they said, “It’s his angel!” (16) Peter, however, kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded.

(17) Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he explained to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. “Report these things to James and the brothers,” he said. Then he departed and went to a different place.” (Acts 12:11-17, HCSB, bold added for emphasis)

This passage reveals a number of things that concerned believers of this day. As soon as Peter was miraculously delivered from prison and death, he went straight to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, “where many had assembled and were praying.” Mark’s mother and father were obviously people of great wealth, because their home would accommodate a lot of the followers of Jesus Christ. For some time, believers would meet in their home and John Mark would come to know them and he was not only influenced by his cousin Barnabas, but in time, by the Apostle Paul. Barnabas was Paul’s companion in Antioch of Syria and his partner and companion on the first great missionary journey.

No information is given on Mark’s father, but he is presumed by many Bible scholars to have been dead at this time, but of course we do not know that. My point here is not to criticize every

claim we see in a commentary, dictionary, or encyclopedia, but when it comes to conjecture, even though a Bible scholar may well be better qualified to speculate, there is every reason for us to examine his speculation. I love the Holman Christian Standard Study Bible. In fact, my first vote as a member of the Broadman and Holman Committee, as a member of the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, was to recommend to the plenary session that we go forward with this new translation of the Bible. I encouraged leaders to consider using the Believer's Study Bible for a study Bible. When the HCS Study Bible came out I was glad no one listened to me. At the same time, I question any study Bible that lists dates for the Babylonian Captivity that falls short of 70 years, and while I realize that Peter was an influence on Mark's life and ministry, I place more emphasis on the Inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit than on the claims of even the best study Bibles and commentaries.

The home of Mary, Mark's mother, would be a favorite meeting place when the disciples were in Jerusalem. We read in Acts 12 that Herod cruelly attacked Christians and that he had James the brother of John martyred for the cause of Christ. When he saw that this pleased the people, he had Simon Peter arrested and thrown into jail where he assigned four squads of soldiers to guard him. Peter was kept in prison but the church prayed without ceasing for his release. While Mark's name is not mentioned here, there is no doubt in my mind that Mark was a part of that prayer group that prayed fervently and without ceasing for the release of Simon Peter.

(6) "On the night before Herod was to bring him out [for execution] , Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, while the sentries in front of the door guarded the prison. (7) Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. Striking Peter on the side, he woke him up and said, "Quick, get up!" Then the chains fell off his wrists. (8) "Get dressed," the angel told him, "and put on your sandals." And he did so. "Wrap your cloak around you," he told him, "and follow me." (9) So he went out and followed, and he did not know that what took place through the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. (10) After they passed the first and second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened to them by itself. They went outside and passed one street, and immediately the angel left him.

(11) Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's grasp and from all that the Jewish people expected." (12) When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many had assembled and were praying. (13) He knocked at the door in the gateway, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer. (14) She recognized Peter's voice, and because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gateway.

(15) "You're crazy!" they told her. But she kept insisting that it was true. Then they said, "It's his angel!" (16) Peter, however, kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded.

(17) Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he explained to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. "Report these things to James and the brothers," he said. Then he departed and went to a different place. (Acts 12:1-17, HCSB)

There is no way we can prove it, if John Mark was not a part of this prayer meeting that was going on in his home at this time, he would have known about it, especially since he was a youth at the time. In fact, I would be more surprised if he had not been praying for Simon Peter. This was the moral and spiritual environment in which Mark lived and in which he grew to spiritual maturity.

“The description of the house (with its large room and porch) and the mention of the Greek slave, suggest a family of wealth. They were probably among the many zealous Jews who, having become rich in the great world outside, retired to Jerusalem, the center of their nation and faith. Mark was ‘cousin’ to Barnabas of Cyprus (Col. 4:10) who also seems to have been a man of means (Acts 4:36). Possibly Cyprus was also Mark's former home.” [ISBE]

2. His record and ministry are known from the New Testament:

When first mentioned, Mark and his mother are already Christians (A.D. 44). He may well have been converted through Peter's personal influence. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter calls Mark his son, just as Paul calls Timothy his son (in the ministry). He had already won a place in the esteem of the brethren, as is shown by his being chosen to accompany Barnabas and Saul to Antioch a little later. The home was a resort for Christians, so that Mark had every opportunity to become acquainted with other leaders such as James and John, and James the brother of the Lord.

## **II. NOW, LET US CONSIDER SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT MARK.**

A. First, there are Some General Questions.

1. Did the young Mark witness Jesus perform miracles? I would not be surprised if Mark had seen Jesus perform some miracles, and can there be any doubt that he saw people who had been healed by Jesus. What about a man born blind who might have been seen by anyone who was paying attention in the temple complex?

2. Did the young Mark hear Jesus teach or preach the Gospel? If we needed to know that, there is no doubt that we would know it. However, the Scripture was not given to satisfy our curiosity, but to inform us about God the Father and His Son Jesus the Christ.

3. Did Mark see the Royal Entry? There is no way of knowing, but if he did not see it, he would have been aware of it before long. It would have been discussed in the temple complex and on the streets of Jerusalem. Furthermore, it may have been discussed in his own home, especially during those days while the disciples of our Lord waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

4. Did he see Jesus on the Cross? How could he have missed seeing Jesus on the cross, how could he have missed discussions and then sermons about it in and around his home. Did his mother permit him to leave his home during this time? Would he have slipped out to go out to see Jesus on the cross? If he had been the young man of whom we read in Mark 14, he may have slipped out of the house for that very purpose. However, as we have mentioned, the purpose of the Second Gospel is not to satisfy our curiosity, but to glorify Jesus Christ.

5. After the death of Jesus, did Mark see and hear early disciples? Can there be any doubt about that? Between the Resurrection and the Ascension it would seem that many believers, especially apostles spent time in his home. Was Mark the kind of young person to ask questions, or was he the kind to be sure to be in the right place to hear what the Apostles were saying? Will we be asking those questions in heaven, or will we simply be informed according to the Lord's plan for those who will spend eternity in heaven with Him? Will one of the great blessings of Heaven be having our questions answered?

6. Was Mark the young man of whom we read in Chapter 14? "Now a certain young man, having a linen cloth wrapped around his naked body, was following Him. They caught hold of him, (52) but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked." (Mark 14:51-52, HCSB) The way this is written it makes one suspect that he was.

#### B. Let Us Ask Mark Some Questions About His Ministry.

A number of years ago I sustained a strain in my left foot and before two "foot specialists" finished with me, I had to limit my walking and standing. I had to be sure to arrive at conventions and meetings early enough to find a parking place to avoid long walks because of some "appliances" a "foot specialist" had made for my shoes, devices that created some problems, but cured none. I entered the auditorium of the First Baptist Church in a well known city and when I looked up the aisle I saw a young man whose picture I had often seen in material from the Institute for Creation Research. I introduced myself to Ken Ham (who would go on to create the Answers in Genesis ministry) and enjoyed about an hour with him when there was no one else in the auditorium but the pastor, who walked through a few times. He seemed to have known who the visitor was, but mostly he circled around him, dropping a comment as he was walking away from us. As people came into the sanctuary of that great church, no one paid any attention to Ken Ham (even when some spoke to me). This was during the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention and Ken Ham was obviously aware of it, for he asked me questions about how I thought the people would receive his message. I assured him that we would be well received at the Pastor's Conference, and that those who would not want to hear him would only be there for the convention that night.

This was the day pastors in Louisiana discovered Ken Ham and would hear about Henry Morris and the Institute for Creation Research. I remember very distinctly hearing the former Australian High School teacher tell us he had suggested to children who heard a teacher deny the biblical account of Creation to raise their hand and when recognized say, "Excuse me, Sir? Were you there?" He went on to explain that God answers our questions about Creation, and He was there! Ken Ham asked me to hold some of his material while he was speaking. At the close of the service that day I could not get close enough to him to return his material, and I could not stand until everyone else left, so I asked a friend to return his material to him so I could ease out and return to my car.

Can you not imagine the people over the years who met John Mark and exclaimed, "You were there, weren't you? Tell us about what it was like!" Can you not imagine the questions Mark heard about Jesus, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Appearances of our Lord, and the Ascension? We will skip over many of the questions he must have heard: Did you see Him? Did

you ever touch Him? Did you see Him heal anyone? Did you see him give sight to the blind? Did you see Him raise the dead? Did you hear Him teach the people?

1. Did you meet Jesus personally? There must have been many personal questions thrown Mark's way: Did you actually see Him in person? What did he look like? What about His eyes? Did you ever eat in His presence? And on and on the questions would go. Some day, Mark may answer that very question for us.

2. Mark, it has been said that you wrote a fast moving, action packed account of the life of Christ. Was the Gospel that is named for you the first Gospel account written? As someone said, "Here is a picture of the Man called Jesus and now that we have seen your work, should we ask, "Who then is This?"

3. Was your Gospel the source for Matthew's Gospel, or was it the other way around? Some seem to think that Matthew may have been familiar with the Gospel account identified with your name, so it is not surprising that some would assume that your account was written first and that Matthew followed your basic outline and added to it.

4. Did you ever hear anyone refer to the Gospel of Mark as one of the Synoptic Gospels? I would have been surprised if anyone had mentioned that to you. Yet, modern Bible students study - and some not so modern - who study volumes like A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels in the classroom and at home are exposed to information about the synoptics Gospels. As we have seen, the word synoptic denotes "seeing alike" and Matthew, Mark, and Luke do follow the same stories and addresses. John will mention some of the same things, but at other times the column under John's name will be blank. Luke, we know from his introduction, did a lot of research over a period of time into the life and ministry of Jesus. Mark, whereas Matthew and John lived and traveled with Jesus for three years, you were a youth who saw and heard believers in Jerusalem, especially in your own home. Luke, on the other hand, spent a lot of time interviewing saints in Judea about the personal life and ministry of Jesus. Much of this research would have been done while Paul was in prison in Caesarea. Matthew was a personal witness to things Jesus did and said that you and Luke missed seeing and hearing. However, the end result proves that Robertson chose the right word for the title, Harmony of the Gospels. That is a very fitting title for those books.

5. Did you get all this information from Simon Peter for you Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ? No doubt you heard a lot of eye witness testimonies about the life and ministry of Jesus. So, you did not have wait for years to hear all of this from Peter. At the same time, you must have gleaned a lot of new insight into the ministry of Jesus as well as His teachings. Who better that Simon to answer your questions!

6. Matthew begins his account with the Genealogy of Christ and follows that with an account of the birth of Jesus. Why did you not do that? Of course, I understand that the Holy Spirit determined what would go into each Gospel.

7. Now, I have another question for you. Dr. Bill Cooper of London tells me that the Gospel According to Matthew reached the island of Brittan within ten to twelve years of the death of

Jesus. How could Matthew have copied your material, unless you wrote your account before he wrote the First Gospel. Of course, we could ask that of those who insist that Peter provided you with the information you needed for the Second Gospel. I am not overly concerned about those questions for the simple reason that I am confident that we will have a lot of serious questions answered when we are with the Lord in Heaven.

Thank you for considering these questions. I may continue to ask questions about your relationship with Jesus, His family, His Apostles, and His sermons and miracles.

C. Now, Consider Some of Mark's Associates in the Ministry.

We know he was a cousin to Barnabas and that Barnabas was both patient and long-suffering in his dealings with Mark. Then, there was Paul. We may criticize Saul of Tarsus for being so driven to excel, but the Lord used his commitment, determination, drive, and brilliance as he applied them in pursuit of a mission of goal. While this may have been challenging to the point of being overwhelming at first, Mark proved he was no quitter. The fact that he quit and turned back once did not mean that would be a characteristic of his life from that point forward. He would prove himself of value even to Paul, but let us remember that he served Peter faithfully at a later date.

“The most important and reliable tradition is that he was the close attendant and interpreter of Peter, and has given us in the Gospel that bears his name account of Peter's teaching. For that comradeship the New Testament facts furnish a basis, and the gaps in the New Testament history leave plenty of room.” [ISBE, bold added by this writer]

An examination of the tradition will be found in various sources.

“Other traditions add but little that is reliable. It is said that Mark had been a priest, and that after becoming a Christian he amputated a finger to disqualify himself for that service. Hence, the nickname κολοβοδ κτυλος, kolobodaktulos, which, however, is sometimes otherwise explained. He is represented as having remained in Cyprus until after the death of Barnabas (who was living in 57 AD according to 1 Cor. 9:5f) and then to have gone to Alexandria, founded the church there, become its first bishop and there died (or was martyred) in the 8th year of Nero (62-63). They add that in 815 AD Venetian soldiers stole his remains from Alexandria and placed them under the church of Mark at Venice.” [ISBE, bold added by this writer]

That brings us face to face with another issue. There may well be times when a well-known servant of our Lord may become so focused on a goal or a mission that he may disregard, or even humiliate some individual who obviously cannot help him with his ultimate goal. I was attending a meeting at LifeWay Christian Resources, either the inauguration of a new President or a farewell for the outgoing President. A friend was visiting with a man I did not personally know, but when I saw his name tag I realized that I had read a lot about him. And I had heard a lot about him. My friend introduced us and after speaking with this man I said, “I know someone who worked with you for several years.” He asked me who it was and I gave him the name. His response was, “Yeah, Billy worked for me for several years.” I turned again to my friend and as I started to leave the man who was so dismissive a moment before, said, “Oh, how is Billy?”

I told "Billy", who had worked under the "boss" and knew him well, about that conversation. Billy told me about the time he had flown to some distant city with his "boss". At the airport, he told me, the Head of his organization used his special pass to enter a privileged awaiting area, an area which was somewhat private, more comfortable, and out of all the traffic. He left Billy in the busy waiting area by himself. Billy had flown with him a number of times and this was his usual behavior. My friend even told me about the time his "boss" stepped out of the private waiting area into the general waiting area where Billy waited in plain sight. His "boss" looked off to the side and saw another man he knew who was walking by, and he invited him to join them in this special waiting area. Then, with the new man, the "boss" walked past Billy, without speaking, and went back into the privileged area. He only came out when their flight was announced.

Billy told a friend, "Tom", who had worked in an executive position under the ministry "boss" before he left to take another position - a well-known position where the visibility was even greater. Tom said, "Let me tell you what happened. When your friend mentioned your name he dismissed both you and your friend. Then, as he talked with the other person, the 'boss' thought, 'what if this is someone of importance?' Then as you were leaving, he decided that he should say something more about you, so he asked, 'By the way, how is Billy doing?'" Billy assured me that was exactly how he thinks.

Now, let me tell you about a man who held a higher position - with a humility I will never forget. Jimmy Draper was President of LifeWay Christian Resources when I was elected to serve on the Board of Trustees. I had met Dr. Draper in Bastrop, Louisiana a few years earlier when we discussed a letter he had written to me - the first of many, as it turned out. I was at LifeWay in Nashville for orientation for new Board members. My wife, Rebecca, and I drove to the Nashville area where we stayed with my sister and her family. I had driven into Nashville early and when we took the evening break, others went back to the hotel. I did not have time to drive to Mt. Juliet and eat supper and then get back in time for the evening session. If that seems unlikely you haven't spent a lot of time driving in Nashville!

As I started for the door, Jimmy Draper joined me and as we talked he asked where I was staying and I told him I was staying with my sister and her family in Mt. Juliet. I added that I had a book to read while I waited. He invited me to join him in his office. We spent a considerable amount of time together. I was told that when Dr. Draper came to LifeWay (Sunday School Board at the time), some retired, and some printed anti-Jimmy Draper flyers and left stacks on lavatories, taped in to walls in elevators, and in other places. No one ever heard Dr. Draper attack his attackers.

At the Retirement Banquet for Dr. Jimmy Draper, someone asked, "How many of you have received a personal letter from Jimmy Draper?" I knew I would not be the only one, but I was surprised when most of the 600 people there raised their hand. I not only received "a letter," I have received a number of cards and letters from Dr. and Mrs. Jimmy Draper. At one time, I asked Jimmy to write a letter to my granddaughter Abigail when she was a very young child. When she is 18 (or 21, if her father so decides), she will read a letter from one of Southern Baptists great leaders and in that letter he will introduce himself and explain the connection with

her Papaw. Then, she will be encouraged to commit herself to Jesus Christ, walk with him, and be faithful to Him). My Grandson Jacob will also open a letter from Dr. Draper when he is either 18 or 21. Jacob will be encouraged to love his Lord, love his family, and serve the Lord with all his heart.

Why, you may wonder, would anyone include something like this in a Bible Character Study? I am glad you asked! There will be times in life when you may become acquainted with people like “the boss”. Let us pray they will be few and far between. Let us also pray that the Lord will put a Jimmy Draper in your life to encourage you, lift you up, or help in some practical way. During an early pastorate a neighbor, who spoke at his Retirement Banquet, referred to the Draper home as the Draper Motel when he live in their town. Jimmy might come in most any time and introduce his very gracious wife Carol Ann to some new person who is down on his luck. They would let him live in a bedroom until Jimmy could help him find a job, a place to live, and transportation to and from work.

Again, I will not be surprised if you are wondering why I am including something like this in a Bible Character series. What does this story have to do with Mark? What do we accomplish by comparing someone like “the boss” to Jimmy Draper. Well, let me ask you this: You have some serious obstacles in your life, maybe a lot to lose, or possibly you have already lost it. Maybe you will have obstacles to face you never dreamed would come your way. In a situation in which you may become desperate, had you rather have “the boss” in your path, or Jimmy Draper? But what does that have to do with Mark? Maybe more than we think. As far as we know, Paul was the only one who was abusive and discouraging toward the young believer. Compare him to Barnabas who not only stood up for him, he left the single most gifted theologian, missionary, and scholar Christianity has ever known in order to assist and guide young Mark after he had turned back on the First Missionary journey..

We may need to remind ourselves that Mark came to Antioch with Barnabas, who was prepared to go with Paul on a second great missionary journey. When they show up, Paul sees Mark and immediately reacts, “No way! He is a quitter! If he quit once when the going got rough, he will quit again. I will not have him with me again! What happened to Mark? What might have happened to him? At the moment, was he better off with Barnabas or with Paul? Did Paul ever realize Mark’s worth to the Lord’s work? Yes, he did. Finally. But, would Mark have been serving the Lord so faithfully if his life and ministry had he depended upon Paul instead of Barnabas?

May I add a personal note here? I had worked as Youth Minister at First Baptist Church, Rayville, Louisiana between my second and third years in seminary. Following graduation, I returned to that position, only to discover that they had built two new buildings in my absence. They wanted me to be their Educational Director - but the Lord did not call me to do that kind of work and I did not want to do it. Neither did I want some church to receive a letter from some friend informing them that they knew an Educational Director who might make them a good pastor!

My pastor, Dr. H. R. Herrington, called pastors he knew in Jackson, Mississippi and asked them to help me, and they assured him they would. I went to a pastor’s conference and introduced



myself to them, telling them I was the one about whom Dr. Herrington had called. I received responses like, “Now what Herrington is that?” There was one pastor there that day who listened to me and assured me he would pray for me. Dr. Herrington told me that Brother Storey prays for many people all the time. When he retired, the church gave him an office and a phone line so he could call pastors and others with serious needs. He spent the rest of his life calling people, reassuring them, and praying with them. If you ever find yourself in a bind, to whom would you rather turn for help, one of those “busy” pastors or Bro Storey? What did I do that day? I made up my mind: I cannot do anything about the attitude of the pastor who ended our conversation with a, “Good luck, I hope you find something,” so, I will listen, pray, and help whenever I can.

Now, when we look at the Man Called Mark, I believe we will see the impact certain people had on him and on his ministry for the Lord. We may learn from Mark from three sources: (1) what others said about him, and (2) what his work says about him, and (3) what the Scripture tells us about him.

The Gospel According to Mark is a fast-moving, action-packed, dramatic account of Jesus Christ - Son of Man, Son of God. In rapid-fire sequence, Mark records events, parables, miracles, and gospel messages that were a part of the earthly ministry of Jesus. Mark is filled with action words and vivid detail.

The gospels are portraits of Christ. Mark makes no attempt to compile an exhaustive history of Jesus of Nazareth. He simply gives us an early and brief portrait of Christ. Mark seeks to communicate the meaning of the ministry, death, resurrection, and promised return of our Lord. He, like John, was inspired to write in such a way as to convince people that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the World (John 20:30-31).

Matthew, Mark, and Luke make up the Synoptic Gospels, which we may want to remind ourselves, means “seeing alike.” Most of Mark is reproduced in Matthew and Luke. Some have neglected Mark because most of its contents are found in the other gospel accounts - and in greater detail. This is unfortunate. Mark gives us one of the first portraits of Christ and there is a freshness about it we need today.

D. Now, Let Us Look at an Historical Study By Dr. Bill Cooper.

NOTE: I have quoted Dr. Cooper a number of times in this series, in part because he just happened to do research and then write about some of the people I have included in my studies, people who interest both of us. I will include a quote from the Believer’s Study Bible Notes here so that we may see how so many sincere Bible interpreters fall for the claim that the closing verses of Mark have been corrupted, dropped, and then amended. After reading this, consider carefully what Dr. Cooper has to say about it. Why Dr. Cooper, who was not a pastor or Bible professor? Because the Lord blessed him with a gift for languages and an opportunity to do intense research for some 40 years. He works in many different languages, and he has a go-to person in Greek in Dr. Gene Jeffries and in Hebrew in Dr. James J. S. Johnson. In his last eight volumes Dr. Cooper includes those names, plus my name and a couple of others under Acknowledgments. He has also dedicated a volume to each of us. That right there should make his work worth reading! Also, from his vantage point, he has a little better perspective on the German higher critics than many here in the states.

“The ending of the Gospel of Mark is a matter of considerable debate. Many textual critics believe that the text of Mark concludes with v. 8, the remainder having been added at a later time by a redactor (editor). Those who argue for a “shorter ending” (v. 8) base their conclusion primarily on internal evidence (difference of style and vocabulary between vv. 9-20 and the rest of Mark). Others argue that v. 8 is simply too abrupt for a conclusion. Therefore, the presence of the abrupt termination convincingly argues that the original ending has been lost. Two other and different endings are attached to ancient manuscripts. All of this is sufficient to suggest that the precise ending of Mark remains unknown. Properly interpreted, the verses included in the text here will not cause erroneous doctrinal concepts to arise. However, no doctrine ought to be built on the basis of these verses alone.” [Believer’s Study Bible Notes, bold added by this writer]

I have always liked the Believer’s Study Bible, and that makes Dr. Cooper’s response especially interesting.

It is interesting that theologians seem to be a little cautious about these closing verses in the Gospel According to Mark. Even the Holman Christian Standard Bible carries the note that these verses, 16:9-20, do not appear in the oldest and best manuscripts of the Gospel. If you will follow the reasoning of Dr. Bill Cooper, who has spent over 40 years researching early manuscripts of the Bible and that which was written about them (see below) you may question those claims. I well remember when I became aware of just how seriously some pastors take the claim that those verses were not a part of the original manuscript of Mark’s Gospel. Because I was on the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, I was invited to be a part of the ribbon cutting for three different LifeWay Christian Stores, Monroe, Shreveport, and Alexandria (all relocations). I was in standing with Dr. Dean Doster, the Executive Director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention when a man who knew Dr. Doster came over spoke to him.

It seemed obvious to me that the man had a burr under his saddle from the moment he began to speak. He and I discussed the new translation, the Holman Christian Bible and he reached over and jerked a copy for a shelf near me and opened it to Mark 16, looked at the note in the margin and said, “It says ‘other translations’ say. It should say, ‘the best translations say!’” He closed the Bible with a slap and replaced it on the shelf. The man’s attitude bordered on arrogance (actually, it crossed that border!), but Dr. Doster and I mostly listened. I was also on the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and Dr. Doster wanted to say something to me about the upcoming meeting, so we did not pursue the issue with our guest. I have, since that time, wondered why he was so intense about something like that. Of course, I have seen people become very intense over some seemingly trivial issues.

Dr. Bill Cooper will deal with this in the following comments from “The Authenticity of Mark’s Gospel,” in Chapter Six of *The Authenticity of the New Testament*, Vol. 1:

#### Chapter Six: The Authenticity of Mark’s Gospel

“We have already seen that the Gospel of Mark – or several very early fragments of it – has been discovered in Cave 7 at Qumran.<sup>1</sup> So we know from that one single fact that Mark was written and published well before AD 68, and belongs firmly, therefore, to the Eyewitness Period. That,

at least, spares us the arduous labour of trying to argue an early authorship for Mark. Like Matthew, Mark could well have been in circulation as early as the late 30s or early 40s, within just a few years of the Resurrection. But that hasn't stopped the critics from 'having a go' at it, and attempting by the most tortuous – not to say dishonest – means at their disposal to discredit Mark's Gospel as a truthful record. But, have they succeeded? The simple answer is no. After more than two hundred years of all-out effort, they haven't. We shall see that Mark is as historically accurate in his statements as he possibly can be, but first we need to put to bed the persistent and time-worn accusation that the Gospel of Mark is mutilated – incomplete, corrupt, sawn off at the end and with bits fallen off. The verses in contention are the last twelve of the Gospel – Mark 16:9-20.

“It is, to be sure, a recent accusation born of the German ‘Higher Critics’ of the 19th century that the original Gospel of Mark lacked the twelve verses that appear in its present-day form. However, those much closer in time to Mark were perfectly happy with these verses - and they could certainly spot a fraud when they saw one. The critics base their accusation on the fact that Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus – each of them containing 4th-century Gnostic mutilations of the New Testament – both omit Mk 16:9-20, and claim that the verses that we have today in our King James Bible were clearly added to the Gospel of Mark after these two codices were written – that is, at sometime after AD 400. But is there any factual basis to this contention? No, no there isn't; quite the contrary in fact, and here's why. (Bold added by JLS)

“Papias alluded to Mk 16:18 in ca AD 100. How he might have achieved that feat if the verses had not been written and in circulation by his day is not explained. Likewise, Justin Martyr, writing in AD 151, directly quotes verse 20 of Mk 16. Irenaeus (ca AD 180) remarks on verse 19. Hippolytus, ca AD 200, quotes verses 17 and 18. In the Seventh Council of Carthage (AD 256), two of the verses were directly quoted, with none of the eighty-seven bishops present raising so much as an eyebrow. With truly delicious irony, the *Acta Pilati* (sometimes called the Gospel of Nicodemus), though a Gnostic work of the 3rd century, quotes verses 15-18 of this chapter. The so-called Apostolic Constitutions of the same century quotes verses 15 and 16. Eusebius, ca AD 325, discusses favourably at some length the entire section of Mk 16:9-20. Marinus, a contemporary and student of Eusebius, asks positive questions about the entire section. Aphraates ‘the Persian’ writes about verses 16-18 in his First Homily of AD 337. Ambrose, writing ca AD 390, writes about verse 15 four times, verses 16-18 three times, and verse 20 but once. Chrysostom, ca AD 400, refers to verse 9 and quotes 19-20 directly. Jerome, in ca AD 400, is perfectly happy to include the entire section in his own Vulgate translation of the New Testament. Augustine, at this time, writes repeatedly about, and quotes directly from this entire section. Victor of Antioch, ca AD 425, speaks most emphatically and at great length on these verses.

“A hundred years later, Hesychius of Jerusalem likewise writes at length on them; and all this is not to mention the *Synopsis Scripturae Sanctae*, ascribed to Athanasius, which also speaks at length on Mark 16:9-20.<sup>2</sup> Much older than Sinaiticus or Vaticanus, by centuries in fact, are the following early translations and versions of Mark's Gospel, and they all contain 16:9-20 precisely as we have them: the Peshitta; the Curetonian Syriac; the Recension of Thomas of Harkel; the *Vetus Itala* (Old Latin); the Gothic; and all the Egyptian versions.<sup>3</sup> What more can we possibly say? How on earth can it ever be claimed that Mark 16:9-20 was added after

Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, when so much written evidence from at least twenty two more ancient witnesses than they stands to the contrary? It beggars belief. Whenever you read a modern edition of the Bible – in whichever version it might be – which tells you that the ‘oldest manuscripts’ do not attest to Mark 16:9-20, then know that that is absolutely false. The oldest manuscripts tell exactly the opposite story, as all the above authorities testify. Sometimes, of course, the entry will read ‘best manuscripts’ instead of oldest. But by any definition, the best manuscripts enjoy the best authority, which Sinaiticus and Vaticanus most notably lack. Far from being the oldest and the best, they are themselves of late manufacture, heavily mutilated and added to, and are no fit witnesses to the authenticity of the Gospels. We wonder that the critics use them.

“Why they use them will become more evident as we proceed – if it is not evident already. Meanwhile, we may derive a little merriment from the scholarly pickle that they have gotten themselves into by making such an unsubstantiated claim in the first place. You see, the two sources that they rely upon are hardly in agreement even with each other. Between just the ‘gospels’ of these two ‘authorities’, there are over 3000 discrepant readings, and together they are contradicted by the older and original Greek text (the Textus Receptus) no less than 8413 times – the Textus Receptus deriving, not from two, but from more than 5000 earlier manuscripts, all of which do agree with each other. In a word, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus – and we may here include Alexandrinus - are utterly worthless as authorities for anything other than the perverse methodology and teachings of the Gnostic philosophers who forged them.<sup>4</sup> They also speak volumes for the modern-day Bible critics who choose to rely upon them for their ‘authority’. (Bold added by JLS)

“What exactly is it then that these three Gnostic documents water down, or leave out of the Gospels altogether? Their main bias seems to be against our Lord’s Sonship of God, His Deity, His atonement for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead, all of these being the key points of doctrine of the Christian faith. Attacks in these directions had already been made by AD 400 in the many Gnostic ‘gospels’ which, though they bore the names of New Testament characters, seem to have fooled no one who had already been won to Christ. In fact, the Bible-believing Christian can do no better than to read one or two of the Gnostic ‘gospels’ to see what an immense gulf exists between them and the true Gospels. They are as repugnant to any who understand and love the Word of God as any tainted food can be to the taste buds - and are as easily discerned and rejected.<sup>5</sup>

“The problem for the Gnostics, then, was to create a false gospel in a better guise, and the obvious thing was to change and corrupt the true Gospels and pass off the corruptions as the real thing. This they did succeed in doing, except that the Church was still not fooled by them. It is why Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus have survived the past 1600 years in such good shape. Seen for what they truly are – pretentious counterfeits - they were simply put to one side and ignored, and hence were never worn out by constantly being thumbed, referred to, or by the constant copying that the earlier Textus Receptus manuscripts were subjected to. It’s as simple and as straightforward as that. (Bold added by JLS)

Historical Accuracy

“As for the accuracy of Mark’s historical statements, it would be quicker if we looked at the historical facts in his Gospel that he gets wrong, and which are inaccurate, mistaken, or just plain false. There aren’t any. As we are about to see, wherever and whenever the Gospel of Mark can be tested for historicity, it is seen to be utterly flawless.

“In purely human terms, this phenomenon could only have come about if the Gospel of Mark had been written at some point during the Eyewitness Period (AD 30–70). Had he written after that period, his work must necessarily have been full of blatant historical errors and guesswork. If a comparison is needed, then try examining any one of the Gnostic ‘gospels’ for historical accuracy. All power to your proverbial elbow with that one if you decide to go ahead with it, because scholars of all ranks have long since given up the attempt. But if you do decide to try, then compare the results with a check into Mark’s historical accuracy. We shall see, shortly, that he wasn’t bad at geography either, in spite of what the critics say.” [The Authenticity of the New Testament, Vol. One, by Dr. Bill Cooper, London, England, bold added by this writer]

## CONCLUSION

Please let me encourage you to study the many volumes written by Dr. Bill Cooper over the past two or three decades. He began reading Genesis more than 40 years ago and when he came to the Table of Nations, he didn’t see it like most of us would. I believe it was Dr. Mike Minnix, Creator and Editor of SermonCity.Com, who said, “You and I come to something like the table of nations and say, ‘That’s interesting. Dr. Cooper comes to it and thinks, ‘If this is legitimate there must be proof somewhere else,’ and he begins looking.”

After 25 years of research of research, Dr. Cooper found that, at the time Jesus was on earth, six nations in Europe could trace their royal line back to Noah, through Japheth. He includes those genealogical records in his early book, AFTER THE FLOOD. I also have a copy of his own family tree, which he begins with his grandsons and takes it back to Noah, through Japheth.

At some point, Dr. Cooper sent me a copy of his amazing book, OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH. After reading that volume three times I attended a Board of Trustees meeting for LifeWay in Nashville and when I had an opportunity I asked a few friends if they knew anything about Caradoc, Lady Pomponnia, Linus, Anacletus, Claudia, Rufus Pudens, or Richard Hunne. They were as ignorant of those people as I. I did not go into detail, but I doubt that anyone I talked with that day knew why Paul sent some of the greetings he did to various churches.

He wrote in Romans 16:10, “Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.” Why not send greetings to Aristobulus? Because he and gone to Brittan with Bran, son of Caradoc who was sent back as a governor under the emperor. Aristobulus went with him as a missionary and was martyred, as so many Christians were during that time.

Paul also wrote, “Greet Rufus, chosen of the Lord; also, his mother and mine.” (Rom. 16:13) Rufus was Rufus Pudens, son of Lady Pomponia, who had been charged with a foreign superstition, which charge always denoted one accused of being a Christian. Lady Pomponia was tried by her husband because of his status as a senator and it was decided that she could live if she did not mention Christ again. This lady’s son married the daughter of Cardoc, the king of

British king who defeated the Romans in 30 pitched battles before being betrayed when someone enabled the Romans to capture his family. Caradoc stood before the Roman emperor and refused to bow. Instead, he crossed his arms and gave the emperor a piece of his mind. The senate insisted he was too brave to sentence to death, so his family was committed to the care of Lady Pomponia, who led the family to faith in Jesus Christ.

For your information, Simon Peter was not the first Bishop of the church at Rome, Caradoc's son Linus was! After that, there was Anacletus and then Clement of Rome.

Why am I including all this information? It is simply this: If Dr. Bill Cooper can dig up the information on all these people, and if he can get to the bottom of the issues with Richard Hunne, and prove that Daniel and his three friends actually lived when the Bible reveals that they did, rather than being the creation of someone in 165 B. C., he can work out these issues. After 40 years of research in places like the London Museum, it is not surprising that he might have information that would surprise us. As you read the following information, please remember that Dr. Cooper is well grounded and that he has carefully researched the people and events of which he writes.

Lady Pomponia led Caradoc's son Linus and his daughter Claudia to trust in Jesus Christ. Linus became the first bishop of the Roman Church and Claudia, who married Lady Pomponia's son, Rufus Pudens, wrote many hymns the church sang in the first century.

Dr. Cooper has provided us with information here that I have only seen mentioned in one other source. You may not accept it, but I think we would do well to acquaint ourselves with it.

## APPENDIX 1

### A Question of Mathematics

As for the last twelve verses of Mark, ancient testimony is not the only authenticating evidence for them. It is becoming increasingly recognized by conservative scholars that, in their original languages, the Books of the Bible are built around a mathematical structure, often unsuspected, which is at once both simple and breathtakingly complex, and which, demonstrably, can only have been constructed by the deliberate and purposeful Mind of God.<sup>6</sup> Its wonders and very evident design lie well beyond any realm of chance, or even human ingenuity. Its application to the last twelve verses of Mark is given in detail in Appendix Two of this present book, and the reader is urged most strongly to examine it and to test its conclusions before taking them on board.

Suffice it to say here that the letters of the Greek alphabet (like those of the Hebrew) were also used to denote numbers, and that each letter therefore had its own numerical value. Thus, the letters of a given word, phrase or sentence can be added, multiplied or divided to reveal the mathematical values of that word, phrase or sentence. The products arrived at by such addition, multiplication and division are then shown to be structured and organized on a unique and mathematically logical basis. And this happens on not just the simple level, but on levels of such increasing complexity that they are beyond explanation if one looks purely to chance or the mind

of man for their occurrence.

Importantly, these phenomena, especially at their more complex levels, are discovered only within the Books of the Bible. As can be seen in Appendix Two, the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel (16:9-20) are no exception to this rule, and display a phenomenally complex mathematical structure that is evident throughout the rest of the New Testament. In this, these last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark share the same authenticating microscopic evidences of authenticity as the rest of his Gospel. Had they been fake additions, this could never have happened, for the discovery of the Bible's mathematical structures has only been made within the past hundred years or so. Those who wrote out the Books of the Bible - Old Testament or New - would have been entirely unconscious of the existence of these hidden structures, and if Mark was unconscious of them, then what chance would any forger of his last twelve verses have had of guessing not just the existence of such a structure, but its very nature and mathematical values so that he could seamlessly graft in his forgery? It's time we were told.

## APPENDIX II

The Gospel According to Mark

By

Johnny L. Sanders

NOTE: The following sample is from the opening to the study of the Gospel According to Mark by this writer.

The author of the Second Gospel has nothing to say about himself. "Christ, himself, and not those who wrote about him, claimed the attention of the earliest believers" [R. Brown]. But glimpses of Mark are found in other places in the N. T. He was the son of Mary, in whose house Jesus and His apostles observed the Last Supper (Passover Meal). The early disciples met in their home on a regular basis for some time after Pentecost (Acts 12:12). He was a young man when Christ was crucified. Some early church leaders claimed that Mark was not a follower of Jesus.

Luke and Paul reveal more about this young man from Jerusalem. He had many advantages in his youth at his mother's home. A. T. Robertson and others were convinced that Mark was well acquainted with the "the leading spirits of early Christianity" [ATR]. Visitors in his home would have included the apostles: James, the brother of Jesus; Barnabas, Mark's cousin; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and Philip, the deacon/evangelist. Mark sat at their feet night after night, listening to the exciting stories about Jesus. There is no doubt that he had an outstanding background for the ministry to which God called him. But, the road ahead would be rough for John Mark. Note some highlights in his life.

1. A Golden Opportunity - A missionary tour with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:5).
2. A Low Point - Defection at Perga (Acts 13:13). Luke is very kind to Mark in recording his turning back. Barnabas was understanding. Paul was outraged and unforgiving.
3. Humiliation - Paul refused to take Mark on a second missionary tour because he had

withdrawn of the first one Perga (Acts 15:38).

4. A Second Chance - Thanks to Barnabas, who parted with Paul and took Mark with him to Cypress.

5. Making Good with Simon Peter - Peter bears witness to this fact (I Peter 5:13).

6. A Comfort to Paul - By Paul's own testimony (Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11). Paul had to revise his judgement about Mark. Had he read the Gospel of Mark while in Rome during his first imprisonment? Some think it is a possibility.

## INFLUENCE OF SIMON PETER

It is generally agreed that the "discourses" of Peter became a chief source for Mark (this does not discount the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). Ancient writers agree. One wrote that John had said, "Mark, indeed, became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately as many things as he remembered of the things said or done by Christ, not, however, in order." This does not necessarily mean that the Gospel of Mark was dictated to Mark by Peter and that Mark served as an amanuensis, as Tertius and others had done for Paul's epistle to the Romans 16:22).

Now here is my question: If Mark got his material from Simon Peter, and if he wrote the first Gospel account, which was used by Matthew in the book that bears his name, how did the Gospel of Matthew reach the Island of Briton within 10 - 12 years of the crucifixion? That does pose a problem, does it not?

## PART ONE: MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN GALILEE (CHAPTERS 1- 10).

Introduction (1:1-14).

His Ministry in Galilee (1:15 - Ch. 9).

Withdrawal from Galilee (Chapter 10).

## PART TWO (CHAPTERS 11-16)

Appendix: The Last Week in Jerusalem, 16:9-20.

A. T. Robertson states that in Mark's Gospel "We catch the very atmosphere of the first generation of those who walked with Jesus over the hills and plains of Galilee. A note of wonder runs all through the Gospel of Mark. The people are seen aglow with excitement in the presence of Jesus, the wonder-worker" [ATR ]. Mark was filled with that excitement and preserves for us some of the freshness of the marvelous life and amazing ministry of our Savior.

In studying the Gospel of Mark, use several translations of the Scripture, commentaries, and a good Bible dictionary. A good study Bible or reference Bible can be helpful. Then, consider these two suggestions:



1. Read the Scripture at least once, taking time to meditate, pray and let God teach you. I would recommend the Holman Christian Standard Bible and the New American Standard Bible. I strongly recommend the Holman Christian Standard Study Bible.

2. Read carefully one time, without using other helps, and make notes from beginning to end. Just write down your thoughts, verse by verse. Then, read again, revising, or adding to your notes.

During a telephone conversation with his close friend, the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, a well known Southern Baptist educator, suggested a title for a study of Mark. It is found in Mark 4:41: "Who Then Is This?" Mark does not attempt to prove the virgin birth, or record the early life of Jesus. Instead, he seems to say, "I am going to put Him on center stage for sixteen chapters, and then you tell me, 'Who then is this?'"

## CHAPTER I

### THE PREACHING OF MARK, 1:1-8

1:1 - BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The word translated "gospel" means good news. It is a proclamation or a declaration that God has intervened in human history in the person of Jesus Christ. But what exactly does Mark mean by the "beginning" of the Gospel. Does Jesus answer that question for us in Revelation 1:8? He said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Jesus is not only the beginning of the Good News, He is the Good News.

In a small corner of the Mediterranean world, Jesus announced the gospel of the kingdom. This announcement came in the midst of political uproar as the armies and politicians of Rome jockeyed for position in these recently annexed territories of Judea and Galilee. Events in this part of the world were of interest to the imperial city of Rome, especially a claim by anyone to be the king of the Jews. And Jews living in the far corners of the Roman Empire certainly followed the news of their homeland. Though only a small corner, Judea and Galilee held a significance greater than their size [Believer's Study Bible, QuickVerse - BSB].

JESUS. God chose the name for His Son, not immediately prior to His Incarnation, but nearly 1400 years earlier when He made the prophetic announcement to Moses about his successor. There was an immediate Joshua. The son of Nun, and then there was the great Anointed One Who would come at a later date. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of Hebrew name Joshua, "Jehovah Saves," or "The salvation of Jehovah."

CHRIST. Christ, the title of the Lord's Anointed One, is the Greek equivalent of Hebrew word "Messiah," which means "The Anointed One."

"Christ" was originally a title for the Person of Jesus and later became so familiar in association with Him that it became a part of His name. That Mark uses it as a title which identifies Jesus as

the Messiah can be seen in 8:29 and 14:61, 62 [BSB].

SON OF GOD and “Son of Man” are titles for Jesus and stress both His divine and human nature.

1:2-3 - ISAIAH. “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’” The quote is actually from Malachi. 3:1 and Isaiah. 40:3. 4-6. There is a progressive revelation of God’s redemptive purpose throughout the Old Testament. By the time of Isaiah, one of the four great eighth century B.C. prophets (Isaiah and Micah in Judah and Amos and Hosea in Israel), Messianic prophecy reached its highest peaks. There are numerous promises of the coming Messiah in the Book of Isaiah.

THE MESSENGER. This denotes John the Baptist. The Jews believed Elijah would appear before the Messiah (Mal.4:5). Jesus identified John as the herald who would announce His coming. We must be clear about one point - John the Baptist was not the reincarnation of Elijah. Rather, Elijah was an Old Testament “type” of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was identified by Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecies of the “forerunner” to the Messiah.

MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. When a king was preparing to visit a province, a servant or a slave was sent ahead to herald his coming and to cry out to people along the way to make ready the coming of the king along their highway or road, They were to “make his paths straight.” By that they mean that the people who lived along the road were responsible for road maintenance and, whenever necessary, construction. There was no highway department to do the work. They had to fill in the holes, remove litter, cut bushes, drain ditches, and whatever else was necessary to be sure the king’s journey would not be delayed, which might put him in danger, and to make his journey as comfortable as possible.

John the Baptist was a lowly servant who cried for the people to prepare for the coming king. He never confused himself with the Messiah, and he wanted no one else to make that mistake. When asked by the Jews, John declared:

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease (John 3: 28-30, KJV).

1:4 - BAPTISM. “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Christian baptism is an outward symbol of an inner reality. It beautifully portrays the inner experience with Christ. It portrays the death burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and as Paul writes in Romans 6:4:

“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (NAS).

**REPENTANCE.** Repentance is a change of mind which is reflected in a change of behavior. It connotes a change of heart, mind and attitude which leads to a complete change in the direction of one's life.

“The Jews practiced self-immersion as a form of baptism, but John immersed others as a witness to their repentance. Christian baptism is performed in the name of the Trinity as a witness to one's faith in Christ. Some who followed John and who later believed in Christ were rebaptized (Acts 19:5)” [RSB].

**FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.** The word means dismissal, release, or forgiveness. Baptism follows the forgiveness of sins, and it is on the basis of repentance and confession of sin that one is baptized. This does not teach baptismal regeneration any more than Acts 2:38 does. Perhaps if we paraphrase it, “upon the remission of sins,” we will be reminded that those who were baptized were those who had repented.

1:5-6 - **ALL THE COUNTRY OF JUDEA.** “And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.” John the Baptist suddenly appeared on the scene, preaching the gospel of repentance. He was like a breath of fresh air in a land stifled by legalism, ritualism, and ceremony.

1:7 - **ONE MIGHTIER THAN I.** “And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.” John is the forerunner whose purpose it was to herald the imminent coming of the long awaited Messiah. .

**THONG OF HIS SANDALS.** The thong of one's sandals was usually loosened by a slave as the guest entered a home. John does not portray himself as the master of the home, but as a slave, who was given the most menial task.

**NOTE:** If you would like to read the rest of the commentary on The Gospel According to Mark, please go to [SermonCity.Com](http://SermonCity.Com) and click on “Authors” and then scroll down to this writer's name and then choose between Articles, Commentaries, and Sermons.