

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

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LESSON TWO

MARK

As Matthew wrote for the Jew's distinctively, so it is thought Mark wrote for the Gentile.

The internal evidence of this is as follows:

For example, unlike Matthew, he omits practically all reference to the Old Testament prophets. With the exception of the one such reference at the beginning of his Gospel, I do not think he refers to them again except as he quotes CHRIST's references to them. This is remarkable as showing that he is addressing a people to whom such references were not necessary even if intelligible, for the Gentiles knew nothing of the sacred oracles and were not in expectation of any Great One of whom they spake.

To the same purport, observe that Mark omits any genealogical table, it is not necessary for him to prove the Abrahamic descent of JESUS. All allusion to His birth and infancy is also omitted doubtless for the same reason, and so on through the whole Gospel.

It will be found on careful examination, I think, that all the omissions in Mark as compared with Matthew are of a specially Jewish character.

Furthermore, it will be discovered that Mark feels a necessity to explain certain Jewish words and customs which he would pass over unnoticed if addressing Jews. Illustrations in point are found in 5:41; 7:34, and especially 7:1-4.

But it may be further surmised that Mark is not only addressing a Gentile people, but of the two great Gentile peoples of that day, the Romans and the Greeks, he is addressing the first-named.

The Romans, as others have pointed out, represented the idea of active power in the world. Their ideal was military glory. They were the people who, most of all, did things. Moreover, their highest conception of power, and might, and authority was themselves, i. e., the Roman state.

Although they worshiped the Emperor yet they were really worshiping the state considered as represented in him. And, indeed, their spiritual need as a people grew out of this fact; it grew out of their failure to attain their ideal in the state; for with all their power, and might, and authority they saw that injustice cruelty and suffering still prevailed, and would inevitably continue to do so.

Those who have not access to larger books on this subject will find the thought sufficiently wrought out in Gregory's *Why Four Gospels?* previously referred to.

Now the Gospel of Mark will be found on close examination to peculiarly fit this condition of things, and to suggest that it was written distinctively to meet the Roman need.

For example, it very noticeably sets forth JESUS from the point of view spoken of in our first lesson on the Gospels, i. e., as the active servant of the Lord. The whole trend of the Gospel vibrates with energy, power, movement, conquest, as attractive to such a people as the Romans.

To begin with, it is the briefest Gospel, 16 chapters only as compared with 28 in Matthew, evidently it was intended for a people not given to thought as much as action.

It omits chiefly the discourses rather than the deeds of JESUS, for example, the Sermon on the Mount, a large part of the charge to the twelve and of the discourse on the second coming.

Moreover, the things which Mark adds, as distinguished from Matthew, are those calculated to arrest the attention of men of affairs and action.

Speaking further of the energetic movement of the Gospel, it is interesting to note the frequent employment of the word "straightway," which occurs something like 20 times.

And yet what has been said does not quite exhaust, or better yet, does not quite express, what is found in Mark as distinct from Matthew, and indeed from all the Gospels. It represents JESUS, indeed, as the man of mighty energy and power - a servant in that sense, and yet it represents Him in the lowly and patient sense of service as well.

To quote Jukes on the *Differences of the Four Gospels*, the early church fathers employed the four cherubim or "**living creatures**" as emblematic of the four Gospels - the lion, the ox, the man, the eagle (Revelation 4:7).

It is under the first figure, "**the lion of the tribe of Judah.**" that JESUS is presented in Matthew, but under the second, the figure for service, that He is presented in Mark. He is here the patient

laborer for others, if need be offering Himself in His service as a perfect sacrifice. And the same writer points out a fitness in Mark for presenting JESUS from that point of view, for he himself was the minister, the servant of the apostles, Acts 12:11, 12; II Timothy 4:11, etc.

Let us bear in mind then, in studying Mark, that side by side with the thoughts of CHRIST's energy and power we are to keep the other thought of His humility and patience.

Nor does this latter conception militate against the idea of applying the Gospel especially to the needs of the Roman mind. Indeed, it strengthens such application, since the more the humility and patience of JESUS are dwelt upon in the light of His mighty works, the mightier they appear.

Outline of the Gospel

The outline of Mark's Gospel might be made in connection with the same general periods suggested in the study of Matthew:

I. Period of the Advent, 1:1-2:12

It might be well to study this period in connection with the corresponding division in Matthew, to discover what Mark omits and what, if anything, he adds, and the bearing of these omissions and additions on the distinctive character of Mark's record as compared with that of Matthew.

How abruptly he approaches the period of JESUS' active ministry, how he even hastens over the preaching of John the Baptist, and the details of the wilderness temptation of the call of the disciples, and the mighty works which JESUS at once began to do!

The study of this period will be helped by the following analysis:

- The introduction, 1:1.
- The testimony of John, 1:2-8.
- The testimony of GOD, 1:9-11.
- The wilderness victory, 1:12, 13.
- The call of the disciples, 1:14-20.
- The works of power, 1:21-2:12.

Notice in the reading of this section how the wilderness victory of the Conqueror manifests His authority over Satan and the wild beasts not only, but also the holy angels as well.

Moreover, in analyzing the sphere of the manifestation of His miraculous works, it will be seen that beginning in the synagogue at Capernaum, He next makes a circuit of Galilee, returning to Capernaum again. A map would be of great value, of course, in fixing these important details in mind, and surrounding them with the force and power of reality.

II. Period of the Conflict, 2:13-8:26

This is a period covering about the same ground as that designated in Matthew as "*the ministry of the Messiah.*"

The subjects and laws of His kingdom, 2:13-3:35.
The growth of His kingdom, 4:1-34.
The power of the King, 4:35-5:43.
The conflicts and withdrawals of the King, 6:1-8, 26.

In reading this division one will be impressed by the quiet growth of the kingdom, its entire independence of human will, and its complete conquest of the earth.

This last is true no matter which view we take of the interpretation of 4:32, for whether that refers to a true or a false Christendom (see our study of Matthew), it is a demonstration of CHRIST's power likely to rivet the attention and command the respect of a people of power like the Romans.

In the same connection notice His power as especially portrayed in subdivision 3. See how it is exhibited over the elements of nature, over Satan, over human disease, and even over death itself.

Finally, under the head of His conflicts and withdrawals we will recall the similar feature of this part of JESUS' earthly life as given in the first Gospel. But notice here the four localities in which these experiences took place:

- at Nazareth (6:1-6),
- in Galilee at large (6:32),
- at Gennesaret (6:53-8:9), and
- at Dalmanutha (8:10-26).

Examine the map carefully.

III. Period of the Claim, 8:27-13:37

As preliminary to a direct claim to be the King of the kingdom on the part of JESUS, Mark sets forth His teachings as to the way in which the kingdom was to be won, viz: through sufferings and rejection. This is revealed in 8:27-10:45, which show the sufferings to include:

- (a) Rejection by the Sanhedrin, 8:31.
- (b) Treachery of His followers, 9:31.
- (c) Death by the Romans, 10:32-45.

The kingdom, however, was claimed by JESUS, as we saw in Matthew's Gospel, by His public entry into Jerusalem as the heir of David, 10:46-13:37.

The subject is divided again into:

- (a) The public advent, 10:46-11:26.
- (b) The triumph over the leaders, 11:27-12:44.
- (c) The revelation of the future, 13:1-37.

IV. Period of the Sacrifice, 14:1-15:17

Under this division we perceive the preliminary preparations for His death (14:1-41), and, secondly, the actual circumstances under which that death was brought about (14:42-15:47).

V. Period of the Triumph, 16:1-20

This period is not essentially different in its character from the similar record given by Matthew, except as to the promised cooperation of power in the execution of the Great Commission, so-called.

This, too, is fitting and appropriate as harmonizing with the distinctive purpose of Mark in presenting JESUS to the Romans - the people whose ideal was power, power to accomplish things.

~ end of Lesson 2 ~
