

Preaching Through the Bible - Chapter 1 Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:1-3

Portraits of Jesus

All of the four gospels are portraits of Jesus. They are not exactly *biographies*, and they leave out many things that a biography would include. Rather they help us to see **things that we need to know about Jesus**.

Jesus for us today

The Christian life is a matter of living on Jesus. ‘*Out of His fullness have we all received...*’¹ We need to see a lot of Jesus. He stays the same ‘*... yesterday, today and forever.*’² When we see the way He was when He walked around on planet earth, we can know He is like that today. We need to see His power, His authority, and supremely we need to see His dying for us on the cross. We need to know that He is alive for us today.

¹ John 1:16

² Heb. 13:8

Sufficient knowledge of Jesus

In different ways the four gospels make Jesus real to us. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus is still real to us today. Through the four gospels we have records concerning what Jesus was like and what He actually did. We do not know everything we would like to about the life of Jesus, but we have enough. We are given sufficient for us to know Jesus for ourselves - by the Holy Spirit.

The story of Jesus as told by Mark

Mark, who wrote this gospel, was the son of a widow named Mary whose home was used by the early Christians in Jerusalem¹. Barnabas was his cousin. It is likely that the gospel was written by Mark, the friend of Peter, in the AD 50s. In the first chapters he introduces Jesus², and then is clearly giving an explanation of the rise of opposition to Jesus. Commentators have often noticed how in *Mark 1:21–3:6* we have the story of steadily rising **opposition** to Jesus. Mark is interested in pointing to the authority of Jesus both as a **teacher** and a **miracle-worker**, yet it was that authority that aroused intense hatred in His enemies.

¹ See Acts 12:12

² 1:1–20

The flow of events

In *Mark 3:7–6:13* Jesus withdraws somewhat from the intense interest in Him, and concentrates on teaching His disciples. Then¹ there is further outreach but a greater rejection than ever. As Jesus travels towards Jerusalem², He teaches His disciples about many aspects of discipleship. Then comes the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and the events that lead to His death³. Mark clearly has a special interest in the death of Jesus. There is a brief conclusion to the story. Jesus did not stay in the tomb; He was raised from the dead. Mark’s Gospel ends abruptly at this point⁴; *Mark 16:9–20* was a later addition.

¹ 6:14–8:26

² 8:27–10:52

³ 11:1–15:47

⁴ 16:8

A straightforward account

Mark’s Gospel contains no hidden meanings.¹ We do not have to look for hidden theological controversies that caused it to be written. It does not have any symbolism except the symbolism that Jesus Himself used. Mark’s meaning lies on the surface. He writes a straightforward account of basic facts about Jesus: how He was rejected, how He was a man of supernatural power and compelling authority, how He died on the cross as a ransom for many.

¹ My words echo the opening paragraphs of R Gundry’s *Mark* (Eerdmans: 1993, p. 1), although I emphasise the simplicity of Mark rather than his concern to defend the cross.

Study 1

Introducing Mark's Gospel

Read: Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:1-3

Read: **Preaching Through the Bible: Mark**, Chapter 1 (see page 7)

A. Portraits of Jesus

1. How many portraits of Jesus are there in the New Testament?
2. Why are they not exactly biographies?
.....
3. **True** or **false**:
 - a. Mark's Gospel tells us everything we would like to know.
 - b. Mark's Gospel tells us a lot about Jesus' childhood.
 - c. Mark tells us what Jesus was like and what He did.
 - d. The gospels help us to see the things we need to know about Jesus.
4. The Christian life is a matter of
5. When we see the way Jesus was, when He walked around on planet earth, we can know that
6. What does *Hebrews 13:8* tell us?
.....
7. What four things do we particularly need to see?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
8. **True** or **false**? We are given sufficient description:
 - a. To get a general picture of Jesus.
 - b. To know Jesus for ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit.

B. The story of Jesus as told by Mark

1. What do we learn from *Acts 12:12* about Mark?
 - a. His mother was called
 - b. She was a
 - c. What do we learn about her home?
2. Who was Mark's cousin? B.....
3. Who was Mark's friend? P.....
4. When is it likely that Mark wrote his gospel? AD .
5. The flow of events as Mark records them are:

I.	Jesus i.....	<i>1:1-20</i>
II.	The steady rise of o..... to Jesus the t..... and m.....-w.....	<i>1:21-3:6</i>
III.	Jesus w.....to t..... His disciples.	<i>3:7-6:13</i>
IV.	Further outreach and gr..... rejection.	<i>6:14 – 8:26</i>
V.	Journey to J.....	<i>8:27-10:52</i>
VI.	Entry to Jerusalem and events leading to Jesus' d.....	<i>11:1-15:47</i>
VII.	Jesus' r..... and a..... end to the gospel	<i>16:1-8</i>

6. **True** or **false** about Mark's account of Jesus?
 - a. Complicated.
 - b. Straightforward.
 - c. Full of hidden meanings under the surface.
 - d. Gives the basic facts.
 - e. Gives the reason for Jesus' death on the cross.
 - f. Gives clues about hidden theological disputes.

