

BIB203 NT1 Life of Christ

Unit 3a The Content of Mark

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Hello. This is Unit 3 of Life of Christ, and this week, we will be dealing with Mark and its arrangement in Matthew and Luke. We are going to start off with the content of Mark. That will be followed by Matthew's use of Mark. And then that will be followed by Luke's use of Mark. And the fourth segment will involve summary and concluding thoughts on the usage of Mark by both Matthew and Luke. The conclusions that we would draw will tend towards the implications of such a viewpoint on the interrelationship of the Synoptic Gospels.

So we're going to start off with the content of Mark. First thing I would like to say is that Mark's Gospel is usually divided by scholars into seven discourses. Those involve, and you can write these down if you like, 1:1 to 1:13 (these are chapters), 1:16 to 3:6; 3:13 to 5:43; 6:7 to 8:26; 8:27 to 10:52; 11:1 to 13:37; and 15:1 to 16:8 if you hold to the shorter version or the shorter ending, or 16:20 if you adhere to the longer ending of Mark. Yes, that is, in fact, a debate that is ongoing. So with respect to the content of these seven discourses, the content of the Gospel begins with the ministry of Jesus' forerunner. That would be John the Baptist. And then that is followed by Jesus' baptism and temptation.

So if you have your Bibles, please open to Mark 1. So what we read in Mark 1 and following, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet. 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" And then in verse 4, we read, "John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. So right off the bat, with the reading that we've done so far, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ begins effectively with the ministry of John the Baptist, or more accurately, John the Baptizer. All the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey."

This echoes, ironically, 2 Kings. I believe it's chapter 1 where King Ahaziah is looking for Elijah or gets wind of a guy fitting Elijah's description, and he asks about his attire and he is told that he is a hairy man. He's clothed with camel's hair. He's got a leather belt around his waist. And Ahaziah knows immediately that that is Elijah. Verse 7 of Mark 1 reads, "And he preached, saying, 'After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'" So that first segment there, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mark has that beginning with John the Baptizer or John the Baptist. Then that's followed by Jesus' baptism. Jesus comes from Nazareth. That's verse 9. "He came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven saying, 'You are my beloved son; in you I am well pleased.'"

Just to give you a moving picture, an example of what we're talking about here, the content of the Gospel starts with the ministry of Jesus' forerunner, followed by Jesus' baptism and temptation. So that's what you see. Mark only includes two verses on the matter of the temptation, and that's verses 12 and 13. "The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him." So after this, you have his entry into Galilee. You have the call of the first disciples. You have his initial teaching in Capernaum and the first exorcism.

The content of Mark moves rapidly. There are 38 to 40 occurrences of the Greek adverb *euthus* meaning immediately. So it has a quick flow to it. It reads like a movie clip. And so that's been noted about the Gospel of Mark. Mark also presents what are called historic presents, which is to say those are Greek verbs that are in the present tense but they ought to be read as past tenses, so they're called historic presents. And that adds the sense of movement to the Marcan narrative. So you've got his initial teaching in Capernaum. You've got the first exorcism in Capernaum. This event attracts large crowds that come together to Peter's home at sunset at the end of Sabbath. And Jesus travels to other towns in Galilee as a result. And then you have controversy with Jewish leaders coming into play in the narrative. There are more accounts of Jesus healing and casting out demons. That seems to be a feature of the Marcan Gospel. And all of this focuses in on his ministry in the region of the province of Galilee. Twelve apostles are picked by Jesus to be his disciples. Jewish leaders are increasingly opposed to Jesus as the narrative goes on. And that opposition can even be found in his family. And at this juncture, Jesus begins to speak in parables while more miracles are highlighted.

So at this point, where have we gotten in the Marcan Gospel? Well, we've started in chapter 1, and by the time Jesus starts to speak in parables, we are at chapter 4. And of course, after he gives the parable of the soils, which is what opens chapter 4, he begins to explain how parables work to his disciples and to all others who are interested in finding out what the parables that he's talking about mean. Then Mark adds the story of Jesus calming the storm at the end of what we call chapter 4. Jesus eventually moves away from the region of the Sea of Galilee, getting back to the content. He goes to Nazareth. You still see miracles in Mark's Gospel, but Mark now focuses on the disciples' lack of perception of who Jesus is, what he's about, his teaching, and more besides.

The death of John the Baptist is portrayed in the Gospel. You see that in Mark 6 and it runs from verses 14 of chapter 6 to 29. So we see John the Baptist die. This is in line with the rumor juxtaposed by Mark that Jesus is John the Baptist come back from the dead. You see that starting in verse 14 of chapter 6, which I will read. "King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known." He heard of the miracles that the apostles were working. He heard of Jesus working miracles. He heard of the teaching that was going abroad. "Some said, 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'He is Elijah.' And others said, 'He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.' But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'" And then you are given the description starting in verse 17 and culminating in verse 29.

So the disciples are sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and after their return, Jesus feeds 5000 people in the wilderness and walks on the water. On the western shore of the Galilean Sea, more healings are described. And we say western shore because when you read through these cities that are referenced in the Marcan Gospel, it's on the western shore of the Galilean Sea. So you have more healings, and of course, you have ever-increasing criticism from Jewish leaders. In light of this criticism and opposition, Jesus leaves Galilee for Tyre and Sidon, which is north, further north. There he encounters a Gentile woman. She's called a Gentile woman. Matthew calls her a Canaanite. He lauds her faith in light of her persistent request that he cast the demon out of her daughter. And of course, they have an interchange. "It's not meet to take the children's food and give it to the dogs." And then she says, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs are fed with the crumbs that fall from the master's tables." And he commends her faith and heals her daughter on the spot with a word.

He returns to Galilee. He feeds 4000 people. Of course, he's fed 5000 people prior. The disciples are still struggling through a lack of perception and we see this in Mark's depiction of the healing of a blind man, a congenitally blind man from birth. And I want to take you to that passage. It is in Mark 8:22. If you'll follow along with me, "They came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Do you see anything?' And he looked up and said, 'I see men, but they look like trees, walking.' Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, 'Do not even enter the village.'"

That story is juxtaposed with the very next pericope, the very next paragraphic section, verses 27 to 29. "Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea and Philippi. And on the way, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And some say John the Baptist. Some say Elijah. Some say one of the prophets. But Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ." And so he tells them not to tell anyone about him. In other words, not to noise it abroad that he is, in fact, the Christ." And so what you see there in terms of the content of Mark, and in Matthew in particular, even though we're not dealing with Matthew right now, is the message of the Gospel. The Gospel of the kingdom begins to become more obscured where Jesus begins to turn away his focus from the crowds and begins to personally instruct his disciples, pouring into them, as it were, the teachings of the kingdom of God, explaining all the parables. When he speaks to crowds on a regular basis, the general view of the Gospels is that he speaks to the crowds in parables after a certain juncture of his ministry. But in private, he expounds everything to his disciples.

So after feeding the 4000, after the healing of the congenitally blind man, Peter recognizes Jesus as Messiah. And this is the impetus in Mark's Gospel, Mark's composition that shows Jesus unveiling his impending arrest and crucifixion. And it's only at the moment of the confession of who he is that Jesus then reveals his purpose. This is interspersed with teaching on true discipleship. So in Mark 8:31-37, he begins to teach that he must suffer many things. He must be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and scribes, be killed, rise again after three days. And Peter seeks to dissuade him and he rebukes Peter and he calls him adversary. It's doubtful that he calls Peter Satan outright, as in the fallen angel. The term Satan, which would be how you'd pronounce it, is used in Job a couple of times and it means "the adversary." By the time you get to the New Testament and filter that through 2000 years of church history, it becomes a proper name. But it isn't actually a proper name. It's just an appellation meaning adversary. So he basically, as it were, shrugs Peter off and says, "Adversary, get behind me." In other words, "We are not in agreement. You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." And he calls the disciples to take up the cross and follow him because it's far better to take the cross and follow him than to attempt to save one's life and lose it, or to gain the whole world and forfeit his own soul.

So in light of that, then you start to have teaching. But first, in chapter 9, you have a transfiguration experience. Peter, James, and John are taken by Jesus to a mountain. Traditionally understood to be Mount Tabor, but in all likelihood, it is probably Mount Hermon which is further up and it fits the narrative shape of the Gospel of Mark and of Matthew. Tabor is not high enough. Hermon is over 9000 feet. It's snowcapped at certain junctures. Tabor is in full view of everyone. You can stand on the top of it. It's pretty much a super hill, as it were, and you can stand and you can look all around and you could

see the landscape all around you and people can see you. So for Jesus to have been transfigured on Mount Tabor would have been quite the event. It was quite likely in Mount Hermon.

So you have the transfiguration. Jesus tells these three disciples not to talk about it, and so they don't. And he continues to persistently teach about his death and his resurrection. So you start to see teaching about the kingdom. With respect to chapter 9 verse 33, you see that they are already starting to quibble about who is the greatest. John actually excludes someone from working miracles because he is not one of the twelve and Jesus forbids him to do it. That's verses 38 to 41. Jesus talks about temptations to sin by way of not offending one of these little ones. We see teaching about divorce. We see the rich young man come to Jesus and ask him about eternal life. That's in Mark 10. And so you see more teaching in light of what Jesus has unveiled about his arrest and execution. Jesus enters Jerusalem, which precipitates a series of confrontations with the religious authorities. He cleanses the temple, curses a fig tree. And after more confrontations with the leadership, the issue of his Messiahship is brought to center stage when he asks the question, "The Christ, whose son is he?" and they say, "Son of David." Well, how then does David in Spirit say? "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"

All of this starts in chapter 11, which features the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Jesus observes a widow's giving. This is followed by the Olivet discourse which is in chapter 13, which features, previews Jesus' return in glory, his second advent. And that brings us to chapter 14 where Mark talks about the plot to kill Jesus. And of course, that plot gets set in motion. Jesus is subsequently arrested, tried, and crucified. Prior to the arrest, he is anointed at Bethany. He arranges to have a Passover meal with his disciples. Concurrently, Judas is plotting to have Jesus apprehended. After the meal, Jesus goes to Gethsemane with his disciples, where he is arrested after agonizing prayer. He is tried twice by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council, once by Pilate, and then he's condemned to death. He is mocked by the soldiers and crucified at Golgotha and buried the same day. And subsequently, there is an empty tomb and an angelic announcement of the resurrection. That's 14 and 15.

Events depicted in the manuscripts underlying this Gospel have been in existence since the 2nd century. We're dealing at this point now in chapter 16. And so, again, at the beginning of this segment, I talked about the longer and the shorter ending of Mark. The longer and shorter ending of Mark is still a matter for debate. The earliest manuscripts end at verse 8 and the older manuscripts end at verse 20. There are any number of studies arguing for one position or another. It is not the intention of this course to force you to choose one viewpoint or another; simply to make you aware that this debate is out there. And I wouldn't be surprised if some of you are already aware of it.