

## **A brief introduction to reading Mark's Gospel**

Mark's gospel is one of the earliest accounts of the life of Jesus. It is traditionally thought to be based on the eye-witness evidence of Jesus' disciple, the Apostle Simon Peter.

Like the rest of the bible, Mark is divided up in to chapters and verses. For example, "Mark 4:1-20" means "chapter 4 verses 1 to 20", Jesus' parable of the Sower. These notes might help you as you read (or listen to) Mark's gospel for yourself. You can find it online at <https://www.biblegateway.com/> You might try "The New International Version" translation (NIV).

The first line of the gospel gives us a kind of heading or headline to introduce the book. This is the best news in the world ever about a real man, Jesus (which means "God saves"), the Christ or Messiah (the anointed one), the long-promised Rescuer-King the Old Testament Scriptures had predicted, the Son of God.

As you read the gospel, you might think about three issues:

- Jesus' identity: who is he?
- Jesus' purpose: why did he come?
- And our response to him: what does it mean to be disciple (learner / apprentice) or follower of Jesus?

Jesus announces the kingdom of God (1:15). Because Jesus, God's appointed king, has come, the kingdom of God is present. He calls us to repent, to change our minds, to turn away from sin and turn to him and to believe the good news. Jesus wants us to put our trust in him and follow him.

The first half of the gospel especially shows us Jesus' unique authority as God the Son. He calls his disciples, drives out evil spirits and heals many (chapter 1). He does what only God can do: he forgives sins (2:1-12). As the Creator God, he can command the storm (4:35-end).

8:27-38 is the central turning point of the gospel. Jesus asks his disciples who they believe he is, and explains that he must suffer and die, and what it means to follow him.

Notice how much of the gospel is devoted to the last week of Jesus' life (chapters 11-16), to his death and resurrection. Jesus came to die. Jesus' death is necessary as part of God's plan to save us. Jesus gives his life as a ransom for many (10:45). He dies in our place that we might be forgiven and live. He faces the holy anger of God against sin so that the way to God is open for all who trust in him (15:33-39). Jesus rose from the grave, victorious over sin and death.