

# The Gospel According to Mark

Commentary by Daniel Rogers



*Anástasis*

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## Introduction

I'm very excited to be writing this commentary on the Book of Mark. At the moment, I plan on posting portions of this work on my website [www.labornotinvain.com](http://www.labornotinvain.com) on Friday. While I do not know how often or how much I will be able to put this material out, I do hope that it will be beneficial to those that read.

The picture on the first page is a work entitled *Anastasis*. It depicts Jesus having conquered the gates of Hades and holding the hands of Adam and Eve. This painting is a depiction of the corporate nature of the resurrection and it is fitting for our study on Mark since Mark frames the entire story of Jesus in a New Exodus setting.

Jesus's life, death, and resurrection serve as the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies concerning the return to the land, the resurrection, the Davidic kingdom, and the reconciliation of the nations.

In this short introduction, I will not be talking about the author or the date of this work. Personally, I believe that such endeavors can only produce educated guesses at best and, at the end of the day, do not change the central message or theme of the gospel account. Instead, I simply wish to state my purpose and some sort of a philosophy in approaching the gospel accounts.

Notice, if you will, that I say gospel account and not simply gospel. The reason is that there are not four gospels but one. Each account is a telling of the same gospel message. Furthermore, the events, order, and details of the various gospels differ, are left out, or are included because the authors were often making theological points on top of telling the story of Jesus.

Had they wanted to stick to rigid, twenty-first century guidelines of storytelling, we would not have four accounts but one.

That being said, I will make no attempt in this commentary to “reconcile” or “harmonize” the gospels. That is not to say that those who do such

work are laboring in vain; I believe they are doing good. For me, however, such a task in this work is unnecessary because I am more concerned with what Mark has to say, what order he chooses to use, what details he wishes to include or omit, and why.

Harmonizing the gospel accounts, though necessary in some contexts, can cause one to miss additional themes of the individual books. In many cases we “murder to dissect.”

One of my reasons for wanting to study the gospel accounts in greater detail is because of my fascination with atonement theory. I am hoping that through a casual study of the gospels I will begin to see more clearly the *how* behind the death of Jesus.

Another goal I have is to examine the teaching of Jesus in answering the question “how then shall we live” in light of our belief in fulfilled prophecy. I want to see what Jesus’s vision of the world is and how we can incorporate his healing ministry, feeding of the poor, and critique of the rulers of His

day into our own lives in an attempt to let God's will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. That is, I want to bring the realities of the New Heavens and Earth into the world. I want to move them from their existence in academia into practical application for every person on Earth.

My desire is the same as God's: "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). I truly believe that preterism properly applied can make that more of a reality than any of us have previously thought.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the gospel according to Mark.

## Mark 1:1-8 – The Beginning

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; 3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’ ” 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 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. 6 John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 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. 8 “I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

## Mark 1:1

### “The beginning...”

The very first word of the book is the word *beginning*, from the Greek word *archē*. This word is used fifty-five times in the New Testament. Most notably, it is used in relation to the creation of Genesis 1 (Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19). It is utilized by John to start his gospel account as well in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Mark’s purpose here is to draw attention the work of Jesus in building a new creation. What I mean by that is, Mark’s desire is to show his readers a more excellent Way to live that is counterintuitive considering the lifestyle prescribed by the Roman Empire. Paul calls this the “foolishness of the Cross” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Since Genesis 3, man has traveled further and further East of Eden. Jesus’s main mission was to

“reconcile all things to Himself... whether things on earth or things in heaven.” This reconciliation of all things is bringing man back to Eden – not physically but spiritually. This is the essence of the good news. See notes on verse 2 for more information regarding the “beginning” in relation to the specific context of the chapter.

**“...of the gospel...”**

The term gospel, as many are aware, means good news. Originally, it was used in relation to reports of victory from the battlefield as in 1 Samuel 31:9:

“They cut off his head and stripped off his weapons, and sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the **good news** to the house of their idols and to the people.”

Thus, the expression “gospel of Jesus Christ” is a reference to the victory that Jesus had over Satan. The defeat of Satan means life and freedom for those who were in bondage because of the original lie told in Genesis 3 that murdered Adam and Eve.

The Hebrews writer spoke of the power that Satan had over the descendants of Abraham and all people:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (Hebrews 2:14-15; cf. John 8:31-47).

Jesus adds to the discussion by calling to our attention how Satan murdered Adam and Eve:

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

The original lie was that they were not good enough in their original state. Although God had made them in His image and fellowshiped with them continually, the Devil convinced them they needed something else, so she ate of the tree to be like God.

She wanted to reach another level of life on her own merits, but this only brought death because once the question is asked if a person is good enough or not, there is no end to the doubts, questions, and insecurities produced by that line of inquiry because fault will always be found at some level.

Jesus saves us from this lie by demonstrating the perfect love of God through the Cross. That is good news.

**“...of Jesus Christ...”**

This good news is concerning Jesus the Christ. Inserting the word “the” between Jesus and Christ brings about an important clarification that isn’t seen when simply reading the translation: Christ is

not Jesus's last name but is a term meaning The Anointed One. This designation identifies Jesus as The One who descended from David that would reconcile Israel in the last days.

This designation is used to describe prophets, priest, and kings in the Old Testament. Jesus, as all three, is the ultimate Anointed One and fulfills all these roles for all time.

Some are afraid to change the description "church of Christ" on their building because they do not want to remove the name of Jesus from the sign. While these brothers and sisters have good intentions, their reasoning is flawed because the term Christ is a title or description – not the name of Jesus.

### **"...the Son of God."**

The title Son of God is highly political. People who claim that religion and politics don't mix have missed out on the deliberate choices that Jesus and His followers used in their words and actions: kingdom of God, good news, and Son of God are

just a few of the terms that the first century saints used to pointedly criticize Rome for their empire of violence and oppression. This also served as a critique of the leaders of the Jewish people who were in league with Rome and benefited from the high taxation and mistreatment of their people.

This is why there are so many accusations levied at Jesus and His disciples for attempting to overthrow Rome. It was upon this basis that several of this number were brought to trial in the first century.

Peter, to help protect his flock, encouraged his audience to submit themselves to every human institution (1 Peter 2:12). This was done so that any slander their enemies would bring against them would be seen to be nothing (1 Peter 2:12, 15).

Armed with the terms Son of God, Christ, gospel, and kingdom, Mark is on a mission to distinguish the true Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, from the so-called sons of god that ruled in Rome. This distinction is important because the lives of the sons of god told one story about how

the world works while Jesus would reveal an alternative Way to live and, directly related to that, who God really is.

## **Mark 1:2-3**

**“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet...”**

The quotation here is from Isaiah 40:3. This is one of the only passages that is quoted in every gospel account near the beginning.

While Mark calls this “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ” it is interesting to note that the account of Jesus’s birth, persecution as a child by Herod, flight to Egypt, and events as a twelve-year-old are left out of Mark’s account.

“The beginning,” according to him, really begins with this quotation of Isaiah followed by the ministry of John the Baptist.

The importance of this quotation will be seen in the coming commentary, but just know for now that this text is in the midst of a discourse on the “New” or “Second Exodus.”

This frames the entirety of Mark's account of the life of Christ in a New Exodus setting. That is, Mark believed that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the promises in the Old Testament prophets concerning resurrection, a return to the land, reconciliation of the nations, and the Davidic kingdom.

Each of the other authors of the gospels, likewise, place the ministry of Jesus in a similar context, but the extent of that will not be seen in this commentary.

**“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; 3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’ ”**