

The Gospel according to Mark

Introduction

What is a Gospel?

- Ancient biography: life-story with a purpose
- Purpose: gospel = “good news of Jesus Christ”
- “A passion narrative with an extended introduction”? (Martin Kähler)

Which Gospels are Gospels?

- ‘Muratorian Canon/Fragment’ (c. AD 170) (see overleaf)
- The importance of eye-witness accounts

The relationship between the Gospels

- Early church → 19th century: Matthew wrote first, others separately
- 19th–20th centuries: Mark wrote first, Matthew and Luke afterwards, John separately
- More likely: independent accounts of the traditions of Jesus (Luke had read others)

What do we know about Mark?

- Papias (early 2nd century): Mark wrote down Peter’s preaching ‘in no particular order’
- Probably in Rome/Italy
- Probably mid-60s, either before or after Peter’s death
- Probably the same Mark who worked with Paul, Barnabas and others (Acts 12:12, Acts 15:29, Colossians 4:10, 1 Peter 5:13)

Key features of the Gospel of Mark

- Designed for *hearing*
 - Duplication (1:32, 2:20, 2:25)
 - Story-telling devices to aid memory, create pace: *εὐθὺς, πάλιν, ἤρξατο*
- Eye-witness perspective
 - Vivid, detailed descriptions of miracle accounts
 - Comments on Jesus’ state of mind
- Drama in three acts:
 - Galilee 1:1–8:21
 - Journey 8:22–10:52
 - Jerusalem 11–16

Muratorian Canon

... at which however he was present and so he has set it down. The third Gospel book, that according to Luke. This physician Luke after Christ's ascension (resurrection?), since Paul had taken him with him as an expert in the way (of the teaching), composed it in his own name according to (his) thinking. Yet neither did he himself see the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain it, so he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The fourth of the Gospels, that of John, (one) of the disciples. When his fellow-disciples and bishops urged him, he said: Fast with me from today for three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us relate to one another. In the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that, whilst all were to go over (it), John in his own name should write everything down. And therefore, though various rudiments (or: tendencies?) are taught in the several Gospel books, yet that matters nothing for the faith of believers, since by the one and guiding (original?) Spirit everything is declared in all: concerning the birth, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, concerning the intercourse with his disciples and concerning his two comings, the first despised in lowliness, which has come to pass, the second glorious in kingly power, which is yet to come. What wonder then if John, being thus always true to himself, adduces particular points in his epistles also, where he says of himself: What we have seen with our eyes and have heard with our ears and our hands have handled, that have we written to you. For so he confesses (himself) not merely an eye and ear witness, but also a writer of all the marvels of the Lord in order. But the acts of all apostles are written in one book. For the 'most excellent Theophilus' Luke summarizes the several things that in his own presence have come to pass, as also by the omission of the passion of Peter he makes quite clear, and equally by (the omission) of the journey of Paul, who from the city (of Rome) proceeded to Spain. The epistles, however, of Paul themselves make clear to those who wish to know it which there are (i.e. from Paul), from what place and for what cause they were written. First of all to the Corinthians (to whom) he forbids the heresy of schism, then to the Galatians (to whom he forbids) circumcision, and then to the Romans, (to whom) he explains that Christ is the rule of the scriptures and moreover their principle, he has written at considerable length. We must deal with these severally, since the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the rule of his predecessor John, writes by name only to seven churches in the following order: to the Corinthians the first (epistle), to the Ephesians the second, to the Philippians the third, to the Colossians the fourth, to the Galatians the fifth, to the Thessalonians the sixth, to the Romans the seventh. Although he wrote to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians once more for their reproof, it is yet clearly recognizable that over the whole earth one church is spread. For John also in the Revelation writes indeed to seven churches, yet speaks to all. But to Philemon one, and to Titus one, and to Timothy two, (written) out of goodwill and love, are yet held sacred to the glory of the catholic Church for the ordering of ecclesiastical discipline. There is current also (an epistle) to the Laodiceans, another to the Alexandrians, forged in Paul's name for the sect of Marcion, and several others, which cannot be received in the catholic Church; for it will not do to mix gall with honey. Further an epistle of Jude and two with the title (or: two of the above mentioned) John are accepted in the catholic Church, and the Wisdom written by friends of Solomon in his honour. Also of the revelations we accept only those of John and Peter, which (latter) some of our people do not want to have read in the Church. But Hermas wrote the Shepherd quite lately in our time in the city of Rome, when on the throne of the church of the city of Rome the bishop Pius, his brother, was seated. And therefore it ought indeed to be read, but it cannot be read publicly in the Church to the other people either among the prophets, whose number is settled, or among the apostles to the end of time. But we accept nothing whatever from Arsinous or Valentinus and Miltiades(?), who have also composed a new psalm book for Marcion, together with Basilides of Asia Minor, the founder of the Cataphrygians.