



Class 3 - Mark

New Testament Seminar - Immanuel Church

Mark: The Servant King

What kind of king is Jesus? While we in the United States don't live under a monarchy, we are all accustomed to a certain image or expectation for what a royal person is like.

Do you want a king who seems to be more interested in serving his dinner guests than in making laws? Do you expect a king to think of himself as a servant, or a ruler? Most people want their kings to be surrounded with servants and treated as royalty, and there is an allure to this idea of royalty. This is what we would expect for ourselves if we were kings—to be respected and served so that we could get on with the business of ruling.

We don't like the idea of serving. Yes, maybe we like the idea of service, it's noble, but we despise the idea of anyone actually treating us like a servant. Yet this is exactly what the Son of Man came to be, both to be a servant and to be treated as a servant, a suffering servant. And why did He come in this manner? Because He wanted to be despised, rejected, and trampled down? No, He came to be this kind of King, a suffering, servant king, because this is precisely the kind of King you and I needed.

Background

The gospel of Mark reveals Jesus as the arriving king, who is at the same time the suffering servant. This book intends to help its readers understand who Jesus was and what true discipleship involves, as Mark records, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Many think the Gospel of Mark is the oldest of the Gospels, written sometime in the 60's AD. The author is Mark, also known as John Mark, who was a visible figure in the New Testament. He was from a wealthy and prominent early church family (it was his mother's house in Jerusalem, where many were praying for Peter to be released and where Peter went after he escaped from jail, Acts 12:12). Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) and a younger companion of Paul, Barnabas and Peter during the first Christian missionary efforts (Acts 12:24-25 and 13:5). Later,

his departure from Antioch on the first missionary journey caused the rift between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:13). According to historical tradition, Mark was the unidentified young man who fled, forgetting his clothes, during the arrest of Christ (Mark 14:51).

Evidence points to this Gospel being written in Rome to Gentile Christians in the Roman church. For example in Mark, there are Greek translations of Aramaic terms and the presence of many Greek transliterations of Latin words, which lends credibility to the claim that it was written for a Greek/Roman audience.

The source for the gospel of Mark probably would have been Peter. Mark was not one of the disciples, but Scripture suggests that Mark and Peter knew one another well:

- Acts 12:11-12 – Peter goes to Mark’s house after he escapes from prison.
- We know from I Peter 5:13 that Mark was with Peter at the time he wrote that letter.
- In addition, the late first-century church leader Papias, who knew the disciples themselves, said that Mark wrote everything Peter told him about the sayings and deeds of Jesus

But on to the gospel itself. Probably the most striking feature of the book of Mark is how action-filled it is. Mark’s most repeated word (used 47 times) is the word “immediately” (“euthus” in the Greek). Compared to the other Gospels, it is short on teaching. For example – there are only seven parables of Jesus as compared to 20 for Matthew and 27 for Luke. And it covers fewer events than the other gospels. But despite being the shortest of the gospels, when Mark does cover an event in the life of Jesus, he generally provides more detail than do the other gospel writers.

The gospel is marked by concise phrases and vivid details, which add to its action-oriented flavor. As the shortest of all the Gospels, Mark gets right to the point. His first words in the book are a summary of his message: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (1:15) And by verse 16 of the first chapter, Jesus has begun his ministry and is calling his disciples. In Matthew, this same incident is not recorded until 4:12. Mark records the key facts about what Jesus came to do and leaves out parable and teaching sections included in the other Gospels. Mark spends nearly a third of his 16 chapters on the action oriented last week of Jesus’ life.

Because it’s short and simple, it’s a great book to use for introducing the gospel and Jesus to non-Christians. Ask them what they make of Jesus and his claims. Who do they say that Jesus is? But it is not just for evangelism, Mark is also a great book for you to read when you need to be reminded of what Jesus did!

Structure of the Gospel

The Gospel of Mark is basically divided into 2 main sections: what happens before Peter acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah, and what happens after his confession.

In the first half (1:1-8:26) we see Jesus public ministry in Galilee where He established himself as one who had authority as a teacher and one who could perform miracles. And then, like in Matthew's Gospel, the turning point of the Gospel occurs when Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah (8:29). Mark sets this up in a very interesting way, using the healing of a blind man to explain what is happening.

Take a look at chapter 8, verse 22.

“They came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village. Spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” He looked up and said, “I see people—they look like trees walking.” Again Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes. The man looked intently and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him home, saying, “Don't even go into the village.”

Jesus went out with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the road he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They answered him, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, one of the prophets.” “But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” And he strictly warned them to tell no one about him.

Incredible parallelism between these two accounts at the core of the book. Verses 22 and 27 set up the two stories: in the first, they're coming to Bethsaida; in the second they're going on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. Then we see miracles of partial sight. The blind man sees people, but they look like trees walking around. The people see Jesus, but think he is John, Elijah, or one of the prophets. Then we get full sight. The blind man sees clearly. Peter sees that Jesus is more than one of the prophets risen to life: he is the Messiah. And then a command to silence: both for the blind man, and for the disciples. Don't tell anyone what you've understood. At least not yet.

This is the pivot point of the entire book. Up until now, the people have seen partially — as the blind man illustrates. But suddenly, clarity has been had, and everything changes. Until now, all the locational details have pointed to places around Galilee. But chapter 8, verse 27 shows

Jesus on the way to Ceasarea Philippi, from whence he goes to Jerusalem. From the moment that clarity is first achieved, Jesus begins his walk to the cross.

Ultimately, then, that means that in the first part of book Mark asks the question: **“Who is Jesus?” and giving the answer: “Jesus is the Christ!”** But once that answer is understood, the second half of the book asks a different question: “What kind of Messiah is Jesus?” Answer: “He is the Suffering servant.” As Jesus says later on in chapter 10, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (10:45)

The second half of Mark includes Jesus’ private teaching of the disciples (8:27-10:52): Jesus provides private and intense teaching about his coming suffering, death, and resurrection, and what it means to follow Him. The book concludes with six chapters focused on the final week of Christ life, His death, and Resurrection.

Well—that’s a high-level overview of the book. But what is the message of Mark? As I’ve just mentioned, it’s all about who Jesus is. So... what does Mark teach us about Jesus?

What Does Mark Teach Us About Jesus

Jesus is the “Son of Man”¹

First of all, we see that Jesus is the son of man. Sixteen times in this gospel, Christ uses the term “Son of Man” to refer to himself. Is he just being polite?

Hardly. “Son of Man” carried massive significance, and it stressed both continuity and discontinuity with prevailing Jewish expectations of the Messiah.

By using the term, Jesus certainly picked up the mantle of everything the Jews thought about the Messiah. Daniel 7:13-14: “I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. He was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.”

So when he calls himself the “Son of Man,” Jesus is identifying himself with this awesome figure

¹The phrase “son of man” was used in the first half of the Old Testament to distinguish between man and God. The poetry of Numbers 23:19 uses this term to indicate mere mortal man as opposed to God. So, there it says: “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.” The point is clear: God is not like man. But Jesus also clearly understood himself to be more than man. Daniel 7:13-14 refers to son of man.

who inaugurates the everlasting kingdom. And in the first half of the book of Mark, this is the side of the “Son of Man” that we get. Divine authority.

But from the people’s perspective, there is also discontinuity with their expectations.

“Son of Man” also refers to human frailty. It’s used 93 times to refer to the suffering Ezekiel. And it is often used in the first half of the Old Testament to emphasize the difference between man and God. Contradiction in terms? In fact, no. Jesus was both the deific figure of Daniel 7 and the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. As we see in John’s Gospel (12:34), the crowd clearly equates the “Son of Man” with the Messiah. “Then the crowd replied to him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

Clearly Jesus’ portrayal of the son of man as one who was to suffer and die was contrary to the crowds understanding of the expected Messiah.

So, the first thing we learn in the book of Mark about Jesus is that he is the Son of Man — in seemingly opposite context of the term in the Old Testament.

Jesus has Authority

But secondly, we see that Jesus has authority. The striking feature of the first half of the book is the extraordinary portrayal of Jesus’ authority in different realms. The demonstration of the Son of Man’s power and authority is compelling. We see that He has authority: Over people (1:14-20); over sickness and demons (1:29-34); over sins (2:1-12); over nature (4:35-41); over sickness and death (5:21-43); over those not even in Israel or in His presence (7:24-30); to open blind eyes twice (8:22-26)

The first half of Mark’s Gospel is leading us to ask, Who is this? So, in Mark 4:41, we see that the disciples were terrified and asked each other, “**Who** is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

And, Jesus himself poses this question to the disciples in Mark 8:27-30, as we just saw — leading to Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ and the turning point of the entire book.

But Jesus not just the authoritative, divine Son of man. He is also the Suffering Servant — the other half of that term. And that’s the third theme in Mark that we want to consider.

Jesus came with a Mission: To Die As a Ransom for Many

Jesus' mission as the arriving king was to die as a ransom for many. Right after Peter's confession that Christ is the Messiah we see this clear purpose statement:

Read Mark 8:31-38

Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns."

Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? What can anyone give in exchange for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Unlike the conquering King that they had been hoping for and were expecting, Jesus arrives on the scene, introduces himself as the Messiah, and then teaches that He must suffer and die! And if they are to follow Him, they must be willing to forfeit claim to their own lives. So, his instruction to the disciples concerning his identity is full of the servant language of Isaiah 53.

How counter-intuitive this must have been to the Jews of that day. Jesus mentions his mission to die four times in Mark:

- 8:31 "Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days."
- 9:31 For he was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after he is killed, he will rise three days later."
- 10:33 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief

priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles,”

- 10:45 **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

And in the crucifixion narrative, that is exactly what we see Jesus doing. We see that after his arrest, Jesus is utterly deserted [14:50]. In chapter 15, we see that a guilty man is released in place of the innocent. And in Mark 15:21-31, we read of the crucifixion and death of Jesus:

They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus’s cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull). They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get.

Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge written against him was: THE KING OF THE JEWS. They crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, “Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross!”

In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe.” Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

His suffering on the cross is the greatest display of his service to us. Reflect for a moment on this truth of the Son of Man – who bears all authority and will return to judge – this one suffering. What does this say about the character of God? What does it suggest about His love for repentant sinners?

And then most immediately, what does this mean for us? Jesus prepares His disciples for what lies ahead. What did he say to them in Mark 8? To follow this servant King means to take up our cross and share in the cost of discipleship. It means to surrender our lives for Christ knowing how much we have been forgiven by His service. It means, for example, to share the cost of discipleship and suffering in evangelism by telling others about Christ even though that may be difficult in various ways; and it means to obey and trust Him in the difficult things as well as the

easy ones.

In *The Message* of the NT, Dever writes, “If the Gospel of Mark is about who Jesus is, it is also about who we are and his claim on our lives. His claim is total... True repentance often begins with realizing the weight of your sins and the greatness of your need. It can come like a thunderclap. Then it can cause showers of regretful weeping. If it is godly sorrow, it brings change. It brings the kind of change that transforms a boastful traitor like Peter into a faithful pastor, who, according to church history, would one day walk onto a Roman road, take up his cross, and follow Christ. Tradition tells us that Peter would not let himself be crucified in the same way Christ was. He did not feel worthy. So he was crucified upside down. Peter may have been the leader of the disciples in confusion and confession, as well as in cowardly denials and bold promises. But he could also weep. If you want to see Jesus for who he is, you must see yourself for who you are.”

The question remains, what do you do with this suffering servant?

Jesus Evokes a Response

We considered in Matthew how others responded to Jesus, and this is a critical aspect of the Gospels, especially in Mark. As we use this book in our evangelism, it is useful to draw people’s attention to the ways people responded to Jesus when they heard Him in person. It may be an easy thing for some to claim that if only they had been there during the time of Christ and seen Him, then they’d have believed. Well, we should take account of the varying reactions to Jesus by individuals during Jesus’ time and let this instruct us today. While the times and cultures have changed, the types of responses remain the same!

1. Some Believed

Some believed that Jesus was who he said He was; we read that they had faith; like the friends of the paralyzed man when they lowered him through the roof to meet Jesus. In Mark 2:5, we read that Jesus saw their faith.

There is also the woman who had been subject to bleeding for a long time who touched Jesus’ cloak, and then fell at his feet. In Mark (5:34), Jesus tells her that her faith has healed her. There are others: Jairus the synagogue ruler (5:23), the Syrophenician woman (7:29), etc.

It is interesting to note, that many of those who responded most positively and decisively were the outcast of society. Again, this is a great testament to the veracity of the Gospels, what kind of followers would we want to brag about. Probably the kinds we find ourselves “dreaming” about coming to Christ... the influential, the powerful, the rich. Now while the New Testament certainly gives account of these types of people coming to Christ, the preponderance of followers seem to be outsiders in the view of society. Mark, as someone from a family of means, would have had every reason to focus on some well-known, wealthy converts in order to convince a Greek/Roman audience of why Christ should be followed — but this is not what he does.

2. Some were Confused

We also see that it wasn't always a clean-cut response to Jesus of true belief or rejection. Some reacted to Jesus with confusion. We see this mainly with the disciples. Although the disciples responded in faith by following Jesus when he called them, they are slow to understand who He is. When the disciples did not understand the parable of the sower and asked Jesus to explain it, he responded, “Don't you understand this parable?” [Mark 4:13]. When they were surprised by his ability to calm the storm on the lake, Jesus asked, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” [4:40]. When Jesus fed a large crowd of people a second time, the disciples were just as uncomprehending and surprised as after the first time. [8:14].

Isn't this the way we often are? We are slow to learn; we think we believe rightly, but when confronted with false ideas we have about Jesus, we are often more like the disciples than the outcasts in the way we respond to Jesus.

Also, we should be encouraged as we minister to others that Jesus didn't cast off the disciples because of their confusion or slowness in learning. Likewise, we should be patient and humble in the way we consider the growth and maturation of other believers. We should not be exasperated when others get confused or seem unable to comprehend a spiritual truth that seems simple...Jesus has never been exasperated with us!

3. Some were antagonistic

There was third type of individual though, another clear cut category, those who rejected Jesus, many of whom were antagonistic to Jesus. Plots on Jesus' life started early, in response to his claims. In chapter 2, Jesus made several provocative claims, including professing to be the one

who could forgive sins, [Mark 2:7, 10], the bridegroom of Israel [Mark 2:19-20], and the Lord of the Sabbath [Mark 2:28].

The teachers of the law responded to his claim to forgive sins as blasphemy in the beginning of chapter 2. The Pharisees objected to his healing on the Sabbath and, as early as chapter 3, began to plot how they might kill him [3:6].

But others that you might not expect reacted antagonistically as well. Jesus' family thought he was out of his mind and tried to take custody of him. [3:21]. The residents of his hometown were offended by Him (6:4-5).

In the end, the opposition to Jesus became so comprehensive it engulfed the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jews and Gentiles, foes and even friends. Not only Judas, but the rest of the disciples played their parts in betraying, denying and deserting Jesus. After Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples melted away into the night, deserting their rabbi.

Some people believed, some were confused, and some were antagonistic. We may be tempted to think there is a fourth response, ambivalence towards Christ. And yet we see throughout this book — and we will see, the rest of the New Testament for that matter — that while this may seem like an attractive post-modern position, it doesn't actually exist. Apparent ambivalence towards Christ is merely disguised opposition.

How about us? Can you think of times when each one of these responses characterized you? While it is true that, as Christians, Christ has granted us the gifts of faith and repentance, we can react in all of these ways at various points in our discipleship — just as Peter, the source for the book of Mark, at various times reacts in all three of these ways. In what ways might you be confused or antagonistic to what Jesus requires of you?

But the message of this book is that no matter the opposition, no matter the confusion, no matter the wrong expectations and hopes for the Messiah, there is only one rightful response. The book concludes with Jesus' death and resurrection, leaving us with the glorious answer of who Jesus is. He is the Divine king, God Himself, and the suffering servant. And our response, to quote from Jesus' very first words in this gospel, is to repent and believe. Repent and believe on the day of our conversion; repent and believe every day God gives us on this earth, for our good and for his glory.

has been condensed to fit our time schedule. The original version is available on their website at <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars/series/new-testament-overview/>.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.