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## Joshua Nations

# Mark

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

# Mark

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## A. Overview and Summary.

1. The early church fathers identified Mark as the writer of this gospel composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, probably in the 50s. Mark was a companion of the Apostle Peter and it is commonly believed that this gospel is in essence, Peter's gospel. Mark is mentioned several times in the book of Acts where he is known as "John, whose surname is Mark" (Acts 12:12; 25). He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) and accompanied the Apostle Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey. He left the two in Perga, its ruins now located on the southwestern coast of modern-day Turkey, and returned to Jerusalem. This caused a division between Paul and Barnabas when Paul refused to take him on the second missionary journey.
2. Mark proved his eventual maturity in Christ and Paul recognized this when he wrote to the Colossians to welcome Mark if he should come to them. He also listed Mark as a fellow worker (Philemon 24). This maturity is most likely attributed to the discipleship efforts of Peter.
3. Where Matthew's gospel is written with a Jewish reader in mind, Mark is written with a gentile viewpoint. It omits genealogies found in Matthew and Luke which are of interest to Jewish readers. It also makes fewer references to the Old Testament and makes less mention of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
4. There is some dispute as to which gospel came first. More modern scholars believe Mark was written first, but the nearly unanimous viewpoint of the church until the nineteenth century was that Matthew was written first. Some liberal scholars believe that the gospels were based upon a non-existent document or oral tradition called "Q", from the German word "Quelle" meaning source. But there is no archeological or other evidence to support this. The Synoptic gospels, of which Mark is one, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as they follow the earthly ministry of Jesus, so of course, there are similarities.
5. Mark presents the suffering servant of the Lord "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" (Vs. 10:45). Mark focuses on the deeds of Jesus more than on Jesus's teaching. He also presents the humanity of Jesus such as His emotions, human limitations and in doing so, emphasizes the human side of the Son of God.

6. As much of the narrative duplicates Matthew, this synopsis will summarize those verses and focus more on the passages that are unique.

B. Chapter One begins with John the Baptist preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is baptized and led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He is tempted by Satan. John is put into prison and Jesus continues the message of the good news of God and repentance. He calls His first disciples, Simon, Andrew, James and John. They go to Capernaum where Jesus drives out a demon possessed man in the synagogue. He heals Simon's mother-in-law and the news of His healing begins to attract many. The chapter closes with Jesus healing a man with leprosy who is charged to tell no one, but to go to the priest to offer the sacrifices Moses prescribed for healing. But instead, he goes and spreads the news so that Jesus could no longer enter a town but stay in lonely places.

C. Chapter Two begins with Jesus healing a paralyzed man who was let down through the roof due to the crowd around the house. He tells the man that his sins are forgiven and then, to prove that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins, He tells him to get up and walk. He goes out by the lake and calls Levi (Matthew) the tax collector to follow Him. One Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples are going through a grain field. As they are walking, the disciples pick some heads of grain which causes the Pharisees to accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath law. Jesus reminds them of David eating of the temple consecrated bread when fleeing from Saul. Jesus then declares that He is Lord of the Sabbath.

D. Chapter Three tells of Jesus healing a man with a withered arm on the Sabbath. Crowds follow Jesus and He tells His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him as they are crowding Him. "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James, son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him" (Vs. 3:13-19). The chapter closes with an account of Jesus's family coming to take charge of Him as they said, "He is out of His mind" (Vs. 3:21). When told that his family is outside, He affirms that those who do God's will are His brother, sister and mother.

E. Chapter Four repeats the parable of the Sower and the various soils. Jesus tells of the need to place a lamp on a lampstand where it will give light. He then says “For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear” (Vs. 4:22-23). He then likens the kingdom of God to a man who plants seed which matures and then when it is ripe, puts the sickle to it and harvests it. The parable of the mustard seed is repeated and then the narrative of how Jesus calmed the storm as they were traveling across the sea in a boat.

F. Chapter Five.

1. The chapter begins with Jesus and His disciples crossing to the region of the Gadarenes. They are met by a demon possessed man who has not been able to be chained or subdued. Jesus casts out the demons which are many. The demons request to be allowed to go into a herd of swine. Jesus gives His permission and the pigs numbering about 2,000 go down a steep cliff into the sea and are drowned. The man begs to go with Jesus. Jesus tells him to go and tell his own people what the Lord has done for him and how He has had mercy upon him.
2. Jesus and His disciples go back to the other side where they are met by a large crowd. A synagogue leader names Jairus comes asking that Jesus heal his sick daughter. Jesus goes to Jairus’s house but on the way, a woman who has had an issue of blood for twelve years, touched His garment and was healed. Jesus realizes that the power had gone out of Him asks who touched Him. The woman trembling with fear, comes and falls at his feet telling Him the truth. Jesus tells her that her faith has healed her.
3. While Jesus was still speaking, some people from Jairus’s house come and tell him that his daughter is dead and not to bother Jesus anymore. Jesus tells him not to be afraid but just believe. They go to Jairus’s house where lamentation over the girl’s death has begun. Jesus tells them that she is not dead but sleeping. They laugh at Him; He puts everyone out of the house and takes the parents and some of His disciples into the girl’s room. “He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha cumi!’ (which means ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old)” (Vs. 5:41-42).

G. Chapter Six covers the previously discussed narratives in Matthew. They include the sending out of the twelve, John the Baptist being beheaded, the feeding of the five thousand, and Jesus walking on water.

H. Chapter Seven opens with a discussion of what defiles a person. The Pharisees ask Him why His disciples eat with unwashed hands. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 29:13, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.” He continues the discussion privately with His disciples, “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality (fornication), theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person” (Vs. 7:18-23). The chapter concludes with the story of Jesus healing the Syrophenician’s daughter and the healing of a deaf and mute man.

I. Chapter Eight opens with Jesus feeding the four thousand. It continues with Jesus warning His disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod. It continues with Jesus healing a blind man at Bethsaida, Peter declaring that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus predicting His death and a message of the way of the Cross, “Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels’” (Vs. 8:34-38).

J. Chapter Nine opens with the Mount of Transfiguration and continues with Jesus healing a boy with an unclean spirit. He predicts His death a second time. He gives assurance to His disciples that anyone who is not against them is for them. The chapter concludes with a strong warning against anyone who causes one of His little ones to stumble, “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea” (Vs. 9:42).

K. Chapter Ten opens with Jesus’s teaching about divorce. His teaching is not as complete as was given in Matthew chapter 19. Here Jesus excludes the portion that sexual impurity (fornication or adultery) is the only reason for a divorce. This is why any passage must include study of parallel passages for a complete understanding.

The chapter continues with Jesus's expression of love for little children and that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Narratives given previously in Matthew follow with the rich man and how hard it is for such to enter the kingdom

of God, Jesus predicting His death a third time, James and John asking to sit on His left and right in Jesus's glory. The chapter concludes with blind Bartimaeus receiving his sight.

L. Chapter Eleven opens with the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The next day He curses the fig tree and clears the temple courts. The chapter concludes with His authority being questioned by the chief priests, teachers of the Law and the elders.

M. Chapter Twelve opens with the parable of the tenants. As was discussed in the synopsis of Matthew, this relates to Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah. It then transitions to Jesus being tested by the Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection with the hypothetical question about the woman who married seven brothers in succession. His answer that we do not marry or are given in marriage in the resurrection and that they do not know the Scriptures or the power of God struck to the very heart of their belief system. The chapter continues with Jesus's teaching about what is the greatest commandment, Jesus's question to His critics about whose son is the Messiah, a warning against false teachers of the Law and concludes with the story of the widow's offering.

N. Chapter Thirteen is the Olivet Discourse. The chapter concludes with Jesus warning about watching for His return, "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore, keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!" (Vs. 13:32-37).

O. Chapter Fourteen contains a story about the woman who anointed Jesus with costly perfume: "While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? It

could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor.' And they rebuked her harshly. 'Leave her alone,' said Jesus. 'Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her'" (Vs.14:3-9). The balance of the chapter contains the story of the last supper, Jesus's betrayal and his accusations before the high priest. This has all been discussed in the synopsis of Matthew.

P. Chapter Fifteen. Jesus is brought before Pilate and is sentenced to die. He is mocked by the soldiers. "At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (Which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Vs. 15:33-34). This cry to the Father can be misunderstood. Jesus was always in communication with His Father. This is the message and fact of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From His childhood, Jesus was united with God the Father. However, on the Cross, He took upon Himself the sins of all those who would accept Him as Savior. God the Father in His holiness, can have nothing to do with sin. He for that brief time, pulled back from Jesus. This was the basis of Jesus's cry.

Q. Chapter Sixteen documents Christ resurrection from the dead. Verses 9-20 do not appear in the earliest manuscripts and may have been added later. However, they do not contain any doctrine that contradicts other inspired writing of the Bible.

Discussion Questions, Application and Passing it on.

1. In chapter seven, Jesus discusses what can defile us. He said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality (fornication), theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person" (Vs. 7:20-23). He is not only talking about actions but thoughts. How is your thought life? Are your thoughts defiling you? What are you going to do about it?
2. In chapter eight, Jesus says, "what good is it to gain the whole world, but lose their soul?" Gaining the world means wealth, honor, fame or power. He goes on to say, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his

Father's glory with the holy angels" (Vs. 8:38). Being ashamed of Jesus is a direct reference to our testimony. Are we too ashamed of speaking about Jesus to our unsaved relatives, friends or co-workers? This is a dangerous situation. We do not want to be put to shame before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28). Begin today to consider how you can be a more effective witness of Jesus to others.

3. Chapter ten contains the story of the rich man who although led a good life according to the Law of Moses, had wealth as his idol which he did not want to lose. Where are his riches today? We hope he repented and followed Jesus but probably not. How do you hold money? Is it an idol to you?
4. In chapter fourteen, Jesus praises the woman who anointed Him with costly oil by saying, "she did what she could". We all can do something for the kingdom of God. At the judgement seat of Christ, before which all believers will appear (2 Corinthians 5:10), will he say that you did what you could?
5. Chapter sixteen contains several verses which are not in the earliest manuscripts. Critics of the Bible point this out to believers who are not aware of this as an attempt to discredit the Bible. How would you respond to someone who attempts to use this argument on you?

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*This New Testament survey was provided by Joshua Nations ([JoshuaNations.org](http://JoshuaNations.org))*