



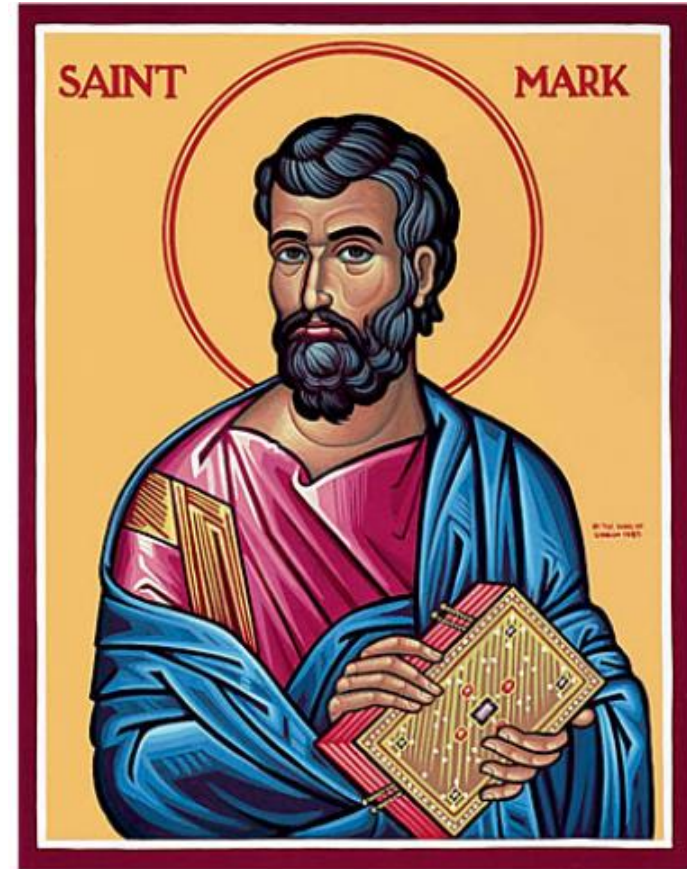
Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

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A Reflection on St Mark's Gospel

A wingèd lion, swift, immediate
Mark is the gospel of the sudden shift
From first to last, from grand to intimate,
From strength to weakness, and from debt to gift,
From a wide deserts haunted emptiness
To a close city's fervid atmosphere,
From a voice crying in the wilderness|
To angels in an empty sepulchre.
And Christ makes the most sudden shift of all;
From swift action as a strong Messiah
Casting the very demons back to hell
To slow pain, and death as a pariah.
We see our Saviour's life and death unmade
And flee his tomb dumbfounded and afraid. *(Malcolm Guite)*



Breathless Beginning to Unfinished Ending

Mark 1. 1 - 3

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight”

Mark 16. 5 - 8

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’

So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for

(NB – There is a Shorter or Longer Ending)



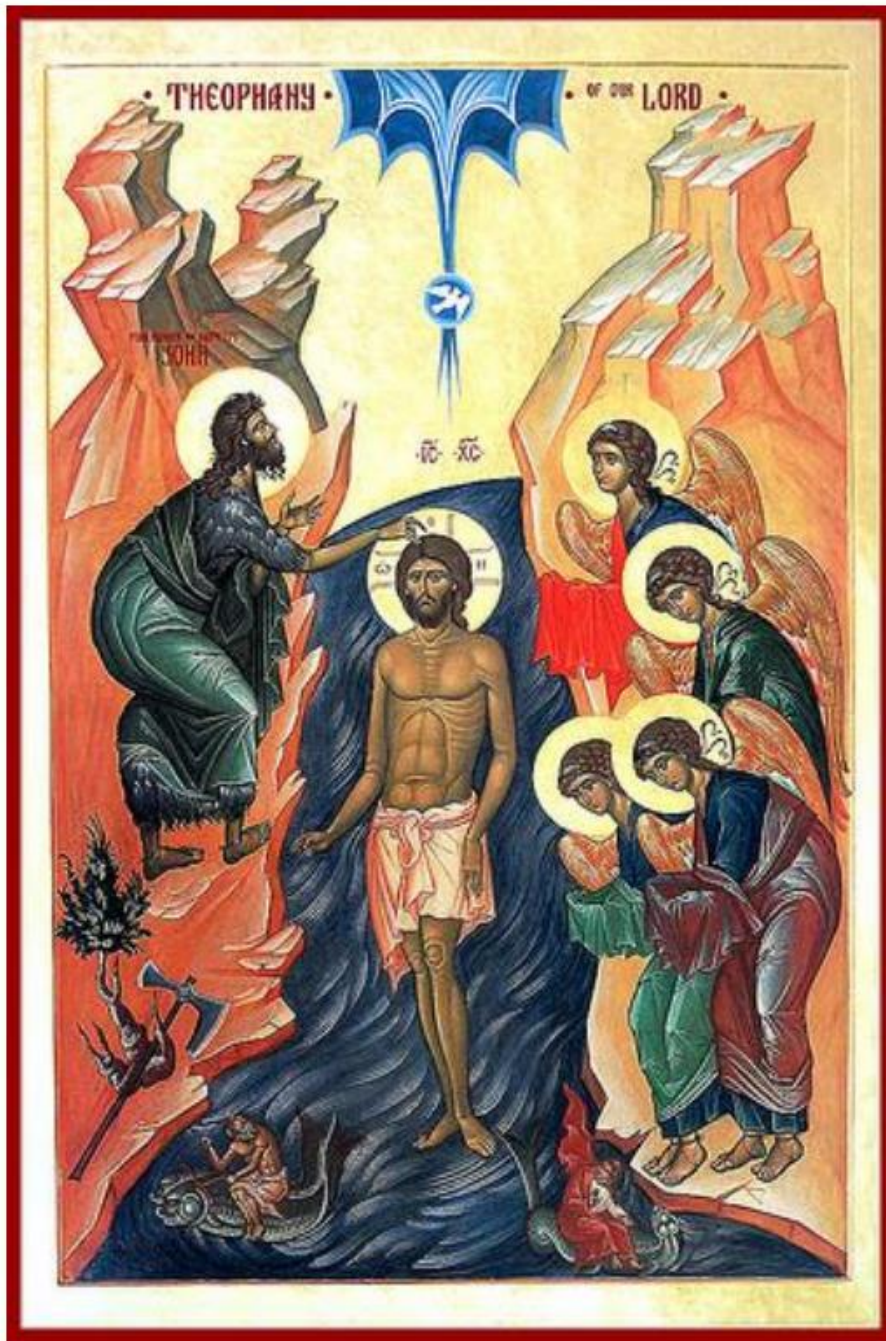
This photograph of a Roman/Byzantine road in north Syria, dating back perhaps to the 3rd century AD helps me visualise the metaphor of 'road/way/journey' (Greek: *odos*), which is a key to understand the presentation of Christ offered by the Gospel of Mark

Mark as Story

“Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel
by David Rhoads, Joanne Dewey and Donald Michie

Listen to the Gospel reading

What do you notice?



In this icon, which though modern reflects iconographic tradition, the dark waters of the river of Jesus' baptism are deliberately reminiscent of the darkness of death/Hades. The figures at the bottom of the icon are symbolic representations of the 'demons' of the waters.

The Structure of Mark's Gospel

A1 In the desert (1.2-13)

y1 First hinge (1.14-15)

B1 Galilee (1.16-8.21)

z1 Blindness-sight (8.22-26)

C On the Way(8.27-10.45)

z2 Blindness-sight (10.46-52)

B2 Jerusalem (11.1-15.39)

y2 Second hinge (15.40-41)|

A2 At the tomb (15.42-16.8)

Who is Jesus? What does his identity mean for us?

- **In the desert**
- **First hinge** - Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.' – (Mark 1.14-15)
- **Galilee**
- Blind man at Bethsaida – 'I see people like trees, walking' vs 'I see clearly.'
- **ON THE WAY**
- Blind Bartimaeus at Jericho – 'What do you want me to do for you?' vs 'Take heart, get up, he is calling you.' vs 'Your faith has made you well.'
- **Jerusalem**
- **Second hinge** - There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem. (Mark 15. 40-41)
- **At the tomb**

Key Questions:

1. Who is Jesus? - (Chapters 1 – 8)
2. What does Jesus' identity mean both for himself and his disciples? – (Chapters 9 – 16)

**The Crux of the Gospel of Mark:
“You are the Messiah” - Mark 8.29**



The frontispiece for the Gospel of Mark in the modern illustrated St John's Bible, depicts the baptism of Christ and the open heavens.

Mark's Slow Doublet Sequence:

- Two stories of feeding a multitude 6.30-44, 8.1-9
- Two crossings on the lake/sea. 6.45-52, 8.10
- Two disagreements with the Pharisees 7.1-13, 8.11-13
- Two sayings about bread 7.27-8, 8.17-21
- Two healing miracles, one of hearing, one of sight (prob. both linked to Isaiah 35) 7.31-37; 8.22-26

Thrown Alongside – (Parables)

Chapter 4 – The Sower

Chapter 12 – The Vineyard

What do you notice?

Two parables

Sower (chapter 4)

situated in 'Galilee' section
distance from the beginning
major emphasis on sowing time
production of corn
for the purpose of eating
stress on the outside
turns out well
meaning not understood
by supporters
is about Jesus' word
is explained

Vineyard (chapter 12)

situated in 'Jerusalem' section
distance from the end
major emphasis on harvest time
production of grapes
for the purpose of drinking
stress on the inside
turns out badly
meaning understood
by adversaries
is about Jesus' body
is not explained (*but perhaps doesn't need it!*)

How will you as Churches Together Mark the Way?

They were on the road,- way, *odos* - going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and 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; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.' (*Mark 10.32-34*)

A Passion Narrative with an Extended Introduction

- Rowan Williams: Meeting God in Mark
- Bas Van Iersel: Reading Mark
- Clare Amos: Marking the Way
- Christopher Burdon: Stumbling on God.
- Richard Burridge: Four Gospels, One Jesus
- St Paul's Cathedral: David Suchet reading St Mark's gospel in one go