

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#1: Welcome and Intro to the Book

I. Introduction to the RTS Women's Bible Study

- A. History of RTS Women's Bible Study
- B. Overview of Daily and Yearly Schedule (see handout in folder)

II. Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

- A. Why study the Gospel of Mark?
 - It is the least-studied Gospel of the four
 - It is the shortest Gospel, providing a clear and brief look at the person life and teachings of Jesus
 - It would be a good Gospel to study with a non-Christian friend
- B. Background to the Gospel of Mark
 - Authorship: Mark (or John Mark) was a disciple of Peter
 - Date: Probably the first Gospel written, dated to 50's or 60's
 - Audience: Written to Gentiles (perhaps in Rome) just starting to feel persecution from the Roman government

III. Overall Style of Mark

- A. Shortest Gospel
 - Mark is the briefest Gospel of the four because it tells fewer stories
 - But the stories it does tell often have unexpected details that appear nowhere else
 - For example, Mark tells us that Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross, was "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Mark 15:21). Why?
- B. Action Gospel
 - Mark has less extended teaching sections, and more actions/deeds of Jesus
 - Each story is rather brief, and then the narrative quickly moves onto the next story (in this way, Mark is the opposite of John)

IV. Overall Themes in Mark

A. Jesus as Fulfilling the Old Testament

- Mark wants to show that story of Jesus is a not a *new* story but the end of an *old* story
- Jesus's Mission Fulfilled Old Testament Promises about how God would send a deliverer to lead Israel to a "new Exodus" (Isaiah 43)
- This Exodus is not deliverance from physical bondage, but spiritual bondage. In other words, a key theme is the forgiveness of sins.

B. Jesus as the Divine Son of God

- The Gospel of Mark repeatedly focuses on Jesus as the divine "Son" (Mark 1:1, 9:7; 15:39)
- The coming of Jesus therefore is the coming of God himself—God is visiting is people just as he promised (Malachi 3:1)

C. Jesus as the King, ushering in the "Kingdom of God"

- Jesus is bringing in a new era of God's reign in the world
- The new kingdom is marked by miracles that roll back the curse—healings, exorcisms, and calming of storms

D. Jesus as Suffering Messiah

- The Jews expected the messiah to be a great conquering military leader. But, Jesus knew that his mission was to suffer and die.
- For example, Peter confronts Jesus about his plan to suffer and die (Mark 8:33). Then he says very important words:
 - "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (8:34)
- **Key point: Jesus' mission is one of service and sacrifice, not of power and domination. That means our posture must be the same:
 - We must be willing to suffer persecution
 - We must be willing to lead by serving, not by domineering (Mark 10:42-45)

Discussion Groups

1. Tell us about yourself and your family. How did you hear about the RTS women's Bible study? (If you already know each other, just give a brief update)
2. What makes you excited about studying the Gospel of Mark? What do you hope to get out of this time together?
3. Do you think the church needs to recover Jesus' mission of sacrifice and service, as opposed to modern fascinations with power and control? Why do you think that message is so important today?