Gospel of Mark

Introductory Notes

* Mark –mostly likely first among 4 “proclamations” of Jesus life.
* While his Greek is bumpy, begins and ends with a dramatic flair.
* Written circa 70 AD, locales: Rome, Syria, perhaps.
* Eusebius says Mark is Peter’s reminisces, although not in order. 1 peter 5 – mark as an associate of imprisoned Peter.
* Papias suggests mark is an attempt to capture witness of apostles as that Generation fades.
* Gospel has nothing about birth, ancestry, early years.
* More than any other Gospel emphasizes miracles and faith healing.
* Had a few sources: some material is duplicated.
* Characterized by intensity and immediacy. By first chapter Jesus’ fame is spreading; by 3rd enemies are ready to kill.
* Some literary features:
  + Reader knows more than characters in the story.
  + Characters don’t understand: disciples, family, religious authorities.
    - Everyone abandons him in the end.
    - Audience: persecuted Roman Christians? Roman house churches? Jesus seems to be going into houses to teach. Also, Mark was not familiar with geography of Palestine.
    - Has to explain Israelite customs, does so with some uncertainty.
    - Explains semitic words. Declares all foods clean, poses challenges to Sabbath observances – all issues non-Israelite church would have faced.
    - Contains a few Latinisms.
    - Mark makes the cross a key to Jesus identity.
      * Nero’s persecution? 4:17 many will fade away; 13:9 fraternal betrayal.
  + Ambiguity: centurion calls Jesus “a” or “the son of God”.
  + Irony: King of Jews (mockery but truth).
  + Paradox: parables reveal but also conceal (parable of the sower).
* Main message: kingdom of God is near, and that is good news.

* Interesting titles for Jesus:
  + Christ: mentioned 3 times; doesn’t seem to like that title – can’t be understood until after cross and resurrection.
  + Son of God: kings of Israel were called sons of God; denotes a heroic person; also spoken by demons🡪 they understand his participation in the deity.
  + Son of Man: human beings (Ps.8:4); more than human figure of Dan. 7? Jesus prefers this title; when Peter calls Jesus Messiah Jesus corrects him by using son of man and speaks of passion.

* Messianic secret:
  + No understanding of Messiahship is possible until after death and resurrection. Eg Transfiguration.
* Discipleship: term used 40 times. Disciples initially portrayed favorably, but then fail to understand. End of Galilean ministry: “Do you not yet understand?”
  + Failure: can’t heal boy possessed; betray, deny, fall asleep, flee, run away in fear.