

Introduction to the Servant of the LORD in the Gospel of MARK

Do you want to be **Christlike**? ...To be like **Jesus**? If others could see **Jesus in you**, what would that look like? Shouldn't we go to the Gospels (the recording of Jesus' Life) to understand what **Christlikeness** looks like? Three of the Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels (from syn [together] and optic [to view]); i.e. the Gospels are to be "viewed together" even though each is unique and distinctive in Purpose. Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah-King of the Jews and Luke views Jesus in His Humanity as the Son of Man. The Gospel of John, though not one of the Synoptics, presents Jesus as the Son of God, God of very God. But the Synoptic Gospel of MARK presents Jesus as **the Servant of the LORD**. All my life I've heard people say "I want to be more like the Master!" If we would look like Jesus, would you be willing to **BE MORE LIKE JESUS, THE SERVANT, A SLAVE OF OUR LORD**?

I. The Theme of the Gospel of MARK

In our study of the Gospel of MARK we will see Jesus as the Servant/ Slave of the LORD (Jehovah). We see Jesus, the Mighty Servant AT WORK. What Jesus DID Proved Who He WAS, and What He DID Authenticated What He Taught, Mark 15:37-39. Mark's Focus is on the Deeds of Jesus more than His Teachings (e.g. the Sermon on the Mount and Olivet discourse are completely omitted (Mark covers in chapter one what Matthew takes eight chapters to cover.), particularly emphasizing Christ's Service and Sacrifice. Mark omits the lengthy discourses found in the other Gospels, often relating only brief excerpts to give the gist of Jesus' Teaching. In fact, it is solely the deliberate exclusion of Jesus' discourses that make MARK the shortest of the four Gospels. Yet MARK's account of Jesus' life as the LORD's Servant/ Slave isn't skimpy.

Rather, when you leave out Matthew's opening genealogy, the record of Christ's Nativity, and the account of Christ's teachings and parables, MARK is by far the longer of the two Gospels. Christ's Works, rather than His Words, are more characteristic of a True Servant.

Also in keeping with what you might expect to know about a SLAVE, there is no genealogy or record of Christ's Birth given in MARK's Gospel. Instead we are ushered right away to where Jesus' public Ministry/ Service begins with His Baptism (Submission, Matt. 3:13-15) by John the Baptist in the wilderness. Jesus is introduced as "One Mightier" and immediately His Miracle-Working Ministry begins. Jesus is the Servant/ Slave of His Father and Seeks only to Do His Father's Perfect Will, Mark 14:36; Psm. 40:6-8; John 4:34; 5:30; 14:31; 18:11; Heb. 5:7-8. Matthew, MARK and Luke ALL SAY,

"Whosoever Receives such a child in My Name Receives Me," but only MARK adds as portraying Christ in the Role of the Lord's Servant, "And whosoever receives Me, receives NOT ME, BUT HIM WHO SENT ME;" cf. Mark 13:32. Nevertheless, MARK maintains a perfect balance on every page throughout his Book between Christ's Human Servanthood and the Lordship of His Deity. Yet the emphasis is consistent throughout MARK's Gospel that Jesus is the Servant/ Slave of the Lord even now. The Book even ends with these Words: "16:19, So then after the Lord had Spoken unto them, He was Received up into Heaven, and Sat on the Right Hand of God. 20, And they went forth, and Preached everywhere, THE LORD WORKING with them, and Confirming the Word with signs following. Amen;" Luke 22:27.

II. Key Words in the Gospel of MARK

Mark is the Gospel of ACTION (typical of the WORK of a SLAVE); NOTE: the frequent use of “immediately,” “straightway” (in the KJV), εὐθέως (appears 9 times in chapter one alone, and 42 times in the whole Book). The word “then” keeps his narrative moving rapidly along, and He also uses the word “and” a lot; i.e. twelve chapters in MARK begin with the word “And.” The design of MARK is Purposely to present an unhalting succession of astonishing Miracles and Doings of Jesus, the Perfect Servant/ Slave of the LORD, to keep the story quickly moving along. In chapter one alone we read a rapid series of astounding exploits by Jesus: vs. 23-27, a demon is cast out in the synagogue; vs. 30-31, Peter’s mother-in-law is healed of a fever in her home; vs. 32-34, crowds of invalids are cured at Peter’s mother-in-law’s doorway of her house; vs. 40-42, a leper is cleansed by the wayside.

III. Background and Setting

While Matthew was written to a Jewish audience, Mark seems to have targeted Gentiles, particularly Romans. When employing Aramaic terms, Mark translated them for his readers, 3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:36; 15:22, 34. On the other hand, in some places he used Latin expressions instead of their Greek equivalents, 5:9; 15:16, 39. He also reckoned time according to the Roman system, 6:48; 13:35, and carefully explained Jewish customs, locations and places, 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42. Mark omitted Jewish elements, such as the genealogies found in Matthew and Luke. This Gospel also makes fewer references to the Old Testament and includes less material that would be of more particular interest to Jewish readers, such as those which were critical of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Sadducees are mentioned only once, in 12:18).

When mentioning Simon the Cyrene, 15:21, Mark identifies him as the father of Rufus, a prominent member of the church at Rome, Rom. 16:13. All of this supports the traditional view that Mark was written for a Gentile audience, probably initially to Gentiles in Rome.

IV. Author of the Gospel of MARK

John MARK, whose mother was Mary, Acts 12:12, is unanimously agreed to be the Author of the Gospel of MARK. It was to John Mark’s mother’s home in Jerusalem that Peter went when released from prison. John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas, Col. 4:10, who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first missionary journey, Acts 12:25–13:5, but he deserted them at Perga and returned to Jerusalem, Acts 13:13. When Barnabas wanted Paul to take John Mark on the second missionary journey, Paul refused and the resulting friction between Paul and Barnabas led to their separation, Acts 15:36–40.

John Mark’s earlier vacillation and failure, however, eventually gave way to Spiritual Strength and Maturity, and in time he proved himself even to the Apostle Paul.

When Paul wrote the Colossians, he instructed them that if John Mark were to come, they were to welcome him. Paul even listed Mark as a fellow worker, Philemon 23-24. Later, Paul told Timothy, “Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry,” II Tim. 4:11.

MARK, for whom this Gospel is named, was a close companion of the Apostle Peter and John Mark’s restoration to useful ministry was probably, in part, due to the ministry of Peter. Peter’s close

relationship with Mark is evident from his description of him as “Mark my son,” 1 Peter 5:13. Peter, of course, was no stranger to failure himself as he had denied our Lord, but his influence later on with John Mark was, no doubt, instrumental in helping him to grow out of the instability of his youth and led into the Strength and Maturity he would need for the Work to which God had called him.

The same young man who once turned back from Serving the Lord is the same according to Christian tradition that with Sacrificial Devotion became a Martyr for Christ Jesus his Lord. With a rope around his neck and dragged through the streets of Alexandria, Egypt, he was flung bruised and bleeding into a dungeon and then later was burned to death.

This should give us all HOPE that even failure doesn't prevent us from Repenting and being Restored to a profitable life of Service for the Lord; e.g. my naming my own son John Mark.

V. Application

Are you like Jesus? Christlike? Are you a Servant/ a Slave of our LORD? Phil. 2:5-8; cf. Psm. 123:1-2. How many others before us willingly became a servant/ a slave/ a bond slave of our LORD? 1 Cor. 4:1; Col. 3:22-25; cf. Prov. 25:13 w/ 26:6. Indeed, we shall all be Judged as to our Service, our Work for our LORD, Luke 19:12-27; Matt. 25:21; i.e. all believers are Called to be Servants of the LORD, NOT just SPECTATORS. George Mueller once said this: “90% of understanding what the Will of God is for your life is not really caring what the Will of God is.” He didn't mean “not caring” in the negative sense, but he meant that we should Thirst for God's Will so much that we don't even care what it is; we just want to “do it and be in it.” We know we are moving in the right direction when we really don't care what God's Will is; as a Good Servant of Jesus Christ, we just want His Will to be done in our lives. Are you a Servant/ a Slave of our LORD or still just a SPECTATOR? If you would truly be like Jesus, TRUST HIM, FOLLOW HIM, LOVE HIM and SERVE HIM. If you have failed to Serve Christ to this point, you can Repent and come back to Him with no pre-conditions or expectations, with only a Willing, Submissive Heart. God can give you beauty for ashes and blessing for cursing. You can choose to live the rest of your life as a servant, a Slave of Jesus for the Glory of God.

If you're an unbeliever, know that your “good works” can't Save you. In fact, it quite the opposite. All have sinned and fallen short of God's Glory, but Jesus Died on the Cross to Pay the Penalty for your sins. He Rose from the grave to Give you Forgiveness and Eternal Life. Trust in Jesus today as your Savior and Lord. Don't delay. Trust Him. You can Trust Him.