

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. First, we will learn about the origin of each Bible book: who wrote it and when and where he wrote it. Second, we will learn about how the Bible book may be divided into parts. Third, we will learn the main contents and messages of each Bible book. Finally, we will learn how to understand some difficult parts of the Bible book.

Today's teaching is: THE INTRODUCTION OF MARK - PART 2. Today we will learn about the purpose, the division and the main messages of the Gospel of Mark.

POINT 5. THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark wrote the Gospel according to the apostle Peter's preaching. How did Peter and Mark view Jesus?

First. Peter and Mark present Jesus as thoroughly human.

For example, Jesus eats and drinks, becomes hungry and falls asleep from fatigue, touches people and is touched, becomes grieved and indignant, has a mother, brother and sisters, has a human body and human spirit and even dies.

Second. Peter and Mark present Jesus as thoroughly divine.

In Mark chapter 1, Jesus is called the Son of God and he is called the LORD, which is JaHWeH in Isaiah 40:3! He baptises with the Holy Spirit (1:8) and he is served by angels (1:13). In chapter 2, he has divine authority to forgive sins (2:5-7) and he knows everything that is in the hearts of people (2:8). He is the Lord of the Sabbath (2:28) and later he is also called the Lord of king David (12:37). In chapter 3, he appoints whom he wants and gives them authority to do miracles (3:13-14). He does many miracles: he heals all kinds of diseases, casts out demons, restores the blind and the deaf, cures a leper and raises the dead. He controls the winds, walks on water, causes a tree to wither and multiplies food to feed thousands. In chapters 8,9 and 10, he predicts in detail his own future, namely that he will die and be resurrected in three days. In chapter 13, he predicts that his disciples will be persecuted, that Jerusalem and the temple will soon be destroyed and that the world will experience earthquakes, famines and wars. He teaches that the gospel will be preached to all nations in the world before the end comes (13). Up to the present time, all these prophecies of Jesus have been literally fulfilled! In chapter 16, he rises from the dead and thus conquers death! He also predicts that at his second coming to the earth, he will come in the glory of God the Father together with many angels (8:38) and with great power. Then he will send his angels to gather his elect (13:26-27).

Third. Peter and Mark present Jesus as the object of faith.

Because Jesus is the Son of God, therefore, in chapter 1:15 he demands people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. In chapter 9:37 he says that whoever welcomes him, welcomes God the Father, who sent him. In chapter 10, he challenges the rich young ruler to enter the kingdom of God and be saved (10:24-26). In chapter 8, he challenges people to deny their own interests, to follow him and to be willing to suffer with him (8:34).

POINT 6. THE CONTENTS OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

First. The Gospel of Mark compared to the Gospel of Matthew.

One. The account in the Gospel of Mark is frequently more detailed than that in the Gospel of Matthew. Although the Gospel of Mark has 661 verses, its contents are paralleled and compressed into about 500 of the 1068 verses in the Gospel of Matthew.

Two. The whole Gospel of Mark is contained in the Gospel of Matthew. Only 55 verses in the Gospel of Mark are not found in the Gospel of Matthew. Of these 55 verses, 24 verses are found in the Gospel of Luke. Thus only about 31 verses in the Gospel of Mark are unique!

Three. The division of the Gospel of Mark is generally the same as that of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Second. The most important material which is unique in the Gospel of Mark.

The 31 verses in the Gospel of Mark that are not found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, contain the following: The statement that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath in Mark 2:27, the parable of the growing

seed in Mark 4:26-29, the healing of the deaf and mute man in Mark 7:32-37, the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida in Mark 8:22-26, the exhortation to watchfulness in Mark 13:33-37 and the story of the young man who ran away naked in Mark 14:51-52.

Third. The ending of the Gospel of Mark.

Some people might point out to you that the most ancient and most reliable Greek manuscripts as well as other ancient translations in Latin and Syriac do not have the ending of the Gospel of Mark, that is, Mark 16:9-20. And according to the church fathers, the Gospel of Mark ended with chapter 16:8. How should we Christians view Mark 16:9-20?

One. The facts show that Mark 16:9-20 was not part of the original Gospel of Mark.

The oldest and most reliable manuscripts in Greek, Latin and Syriac show that the Gospel of Mark ended with chapter 16:8. The contents show that it did not belong to the original Gospel. For example, in Mark 16:7, the angel says that Jesus would meet the disciples in Galilee. But what follows tells that Jesus appeared to different people in different places and Galilee is not even mentioned. In Mark 15:47, Mary Magdalene is mentioned, but in Mark 16:9 she is introduced as if she had not been mentioned at all.

Two. Mark 16:9-20 is an interesting summary of the other Gospels.

Mark did not intend to end his Gospel at Mark 16:8, because it ends very abrupt. We do not know whether Mark ever finished his Gospel and if not, why not? And if he did, what happened to his concluding lines? A later writer added Mark 16:9-20 as an ending to the Gospel. The ending of the Gospel of Mark is an interesting summary of some of the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, of his ascension and of his continued work through the apostles. Mark 16:9-11 is a summary of the Gospel of John, especially of John 20:11-18, the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. Mark 16:12-13 is a summary of the Gospel of Luke, especially of Luke 24:13-35, the appearance of Jesus to two people going to Emmaus. Mark 16:14-18 is a summary of the Gospel of Matthew, especially of Matthew 28:16-20, the appearance of Jesus to the Eleven on a mountain in Galilee. And Mark 16:19-20 is a summary of the book of Acts, especially Acts 1:9-11, the ascension of Jesus and his continued work through the disciples.

Three. Mark 16:9-20 is binding for faith and practice *only to the extent* in which its teachings are definitely supported by Scripture in general.

Because the picking up of poisonous snakes and the drinking of deadly poison is not supported by any other passages in the Bible, they should not be considered as Scripture, but rather as apocryphal material, that is, material of doubtful authenticity; invented to resemble the words of Scripture. [The lack of faith and faith spoken of in this passage is particularly that of the disciples of Christ, who had been with him during his earthly sojourn (Mk 16:11,13,14,17). The miracles are particularly signs that authenticate the apostles of Christ (Mt 10:1,8; Lk 10:18-20; 2 Cor 12:12) and not necessarily all Christians.]

POINT 7. THE DIVISION OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The Gospel of Mark may be divided into five parts. They are exactly the same as the parts in the Gospel of Matthew. Only, the contents are less than the Gospel of Matthew.

Part one: The inauguration of Jesus. This is written in Mark 1:1-13.

Part two: The Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus. This is written in Mark 1:14 to 7:23.

Part three: The Retirement Ministry of Jesus. This is written in Mark 7:24 to 9:50.

Part four: The Perean Ministry of Jesus. This is written in Mark chapter 10.

Part five: The death and resurrection of Jesus. This is written in Mark chapters 11 to 16.

POINT 8. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

First. The Gospel of Mark teaches that Jesus is the conquering King.

One. Jesus is the swiftly moving King.

Mark uses the word 'immediately' more than forty times. This describes the irresistible forward movement of Jesus. He is continually on the move. Mark also frequently uses the word 'and'. It seems as if there is no break between one event and the next. Jesus works without stopping. He does not slacken at all. Mark pictures Jesus Christ as *the active, energetic, swiftly moving, warring and conquering King!*

Two. Jesus is the Saviour-King.

Mark pictures Jesus as the Victor over the destructive forces of nature, over sicknesses, over demons and even over death. This message is of special interest to the Romans, a people, who in their lust for power and exercise of power had conquered the world. To them Mark pictures a *King who excels* any earthly conqueror. *The kingdom* of Jesus Christ, the King, *is far more extensive* than the Roman Empire. *The weapons* of Jesus Christ, the King, *are far more effective* than the earthly weapons of the Roman army. *The rule* of Jesus Christ, the King, *is far more enduring* than anything that

originates on earth. *The victories* of Jesus Christ, the King, *are far more honourable* than the victories of the Roman armies, because Jesus causes the people he has conquered to share in the glory of his victory. Jesus Christ is the King who conquers sin in the heart and life man, who conquers the temptations of the world, who conquers the evil influences and practices of Satan and his evil spirits, and who conquers even death! Jesus saves people from all this. Mark pictures Jesus as *the Saviour-King*.

Three. Jesus is the divine-King.

When a Roman army general went out to war, he sent an officer ahead of him to command people to repair the roads on which the army will walk and to prepare for their coming. Likewise, In Mark 1:3 we read that the function of John the Baptist is to be “the herald” or “forerunner” of Jesus Christ, the King. The prophet Isaiah prophesies that the King who is coming is nobody less than “JEHOVAH”, “the LORD” himself. Jehovah, our God, comes to earth in Jesus Christ. Mark pictures Jesus as the *divine-King*!

Four. Jesus Christ, the King demands submission.

In Mark 1:15, Jesus Christ, the King, himself demands of all people to turn to him. He proclaims the good news of God and says, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” The Gospel of Mark calls people to turn in humble faith to the conquering Saviour-King.

Second. The Gospel of Mark teaches that Jesus is the Servant-King.

One. Jesus, the Servant-King takes time to get prepared.

The Gospel of Mark does not describe the genealogy or the birth or the childhood of Jesus. It takes much time for a plant to send its roots into the dark soil before it can bring forth leaves, flowers and fruit. Likewise with Jesus. The first thirty years of his life he spent in obscurity in Nazareth, before he appears for his three years of public ministry. The Servant-King sets an example for his followers: it is very important to take time to get ready for our life’s work. And we should not get annoyed if Jesus Christ uses a lot of time to prepare us for life.

Two. Jesus, the Servant-King receives the Holy Spirit in preparation.

Jesus went to John the Baptist to be baptised, not because he was a sinner himself, but because he thereby committed himself to bear the sins of the world. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 53:6 prophesied, “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all”. And John the Baptist proclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). At his baptism Jesus began his service of laying down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:11).

Also at his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. Jesus Christ has both a divine and a human nature. His human nature was both capable and in need of strengthening. His human nature needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit in order to qualify him for his service as Prophet, Priest, and King! The *dove* is a symbol for purity, gentleness, peacefulness and graciousness. Thus, Jesus Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, was not only pure and holy, but also gentle and peaceful. Again the Servant-King sets an example for his followers: He receives the Holy Spirit, who prepares his life for every task in God’s kingdom by giving character and equipment.

Three. Jesus, the Servant-King is prepared by testing.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to train him for his service. Temptations are the circumstances that develop character and perseverance. There is nothing wrong with being tempted, but it is wrong to give in to temptation. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 the Bible says, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

Four. Jesus, the Servant-King works for the good of people.

The Gospel of Mark describes many of the good works of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark describes no less than twenty miracles and each of the first eleven chapters contains a miracle. Besides performing miracles, some of his other good works were praying for people, teaching the truth and training disciples.

Five. Jesus, the Servant-King teaches that a real leader is a servant.

In Mark 10:35-45 we read about the mother of James and John, who asked Jesus if her two sons may sit at his left and right side in his kingdom. The other disciples heard this and became indignant with James and John. Then Jesus says that the leaders in the world lord it over people and their officials exercise authority over them. But among Christians it should not be so! He says, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” Then he says about himself, “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.” Jesus teaches that a real leader is a servant. He teaches that he, the Conquering King, is a Servant-King!

Third. The Gospel of Mark teaches what is important for our spiritual growth.

One. The parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1-20 emphasises the human responsibility with regard to spiritual growth. The *seed* represents God's Word. The four kinds of *soil* represent four different kinds of hearts: an unresponsive heart, an impulsive heart, a pre-occupied heart and a well-prepared heart. The noble and good soil represents a responsive, serious and well-prepared heart. Whenever we hear the word of God, our responsibilities are the following: In contrast to the first soil, our responsibility is *to hear* the word of God, to listen carefully to it and try *to understand* it, so that God's Word may save and change us. In contrast to the second soil, our responsibility is *to consider the cost* of believing and obeying these words, because we want to persevere being a believer, even when we face difficulties or persecution. In contrast to the third soil, our responsibility is *to keep our heart clean and free* from worries, money and sinful pleasures. The word of God can only work in a responsive, serious and well-prepared heart, causing us to grow to maturity and to bear lots of fruit for God. The condition of our hearts on any day will determine the effect of God's word on our lives that day! The attitude with which we hear, read and study the Bible determines if we will grow, change and bear fruit or not.

Two. The parable of the seed growing in secret in Mark 4:26-29 emphasises God's sovereignty with regard to spiritual growth.

Mark 4:26-27 explains that growth is a mystery to man. God is the sovereign Author of spiritual growth: only he begins it and only he continues it until the harvest. Our responsibility is to cover the seed, pull up weeds, loosen the soil, add fertiliser and channel water to our soil. But we cannot cause the seed to sprout and grow. We must trust God's sovereign work in our hearts and lives.

Mark 4:28 explains the potential power of the seed. Our responsibility is to preach God's Word everywhere. Nevertheless, apart from our human help, God's Word knows what to do, when to do it and how to do it. Little by little, God's Word travels from one person to another, from one nation to another and increasingly causes its power and influence to be felt in every sphere of life.

Mark 4:29 explains that the harvest-time will be the final victory. The victory of God's kingdom is sure. The harvest is all the time approaching. At the moment decided in God's plan, the kingdom of God will be revealed in all its splendour.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read through Luke chapters 6-10.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".