

Introduction to the *Gospel according to Mark*

Luke first introduces Mark with Barnabas and Paul, as they leave from Jerusalem on their return to Antioch, after distributing financial assistance from Antioch to the famine-stricken churches of Judea in Acts 12:25: "25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark."

Earlier in Acts 12:12-15, an angel delivered from prison by an angel, appeared at the house of mother of John Mark:

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

This passage shows us that John Mark's family was wealthy, with both Jewish and Roman histories, by his name John, Jewish and Mark, Roman. The house had a large gathering room, and an outer entrance, implying a courtyard. A servant answered the door. Mark's family as wealthy Jews with Roman history is consistent with the status of Mark's cousin, Barnabas. According to Col 4:10, He was Mark's cousin: "10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)" And according to Acts 4:36-37, Barnabas, himself, was wealthy enough to have and sell property for the good of the saints in:

36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Peter, by tradition, deeply influenced Mark, calling him in 1 Peter 5:13-14: "My Son":

"13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love."

Many believe that Mark, who was not an eyewitness to the Lord, recorded many of the incidents in his Gospel from conversations with Peter while together in Babylon. Some incidents in Mark's gospel, however, seem to come from other eyewitnesses; such as the following personal account told to him perhaps by James, brother of the Lord. Only an eyewitness, family member could give some of the details found in Mark 3:21-22

21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

And concluded in Mark 3:31-32:

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

Luke first noted John Mark's work with Paul in Acts 13:5: "When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their

helper.” Described as helper here, John quits the group in Acts 13:13, “13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.” Although we do not know, the dispute was probably a disagreement with Paul on the issue of the obligation of Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses. Mark, known by his Jewish name John turned back. We also learn that Barnabas also had reservation on the issue of how binding is the Law of Moses. In Gal 2:13, Paul said, “13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.”

The issue of circumcision and the Law of Moses boiled over; and in Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas took the issue to the elders and apostles in Jerusalem. It is interesting that Luke last called Paul by his Jewish name in Acts 13. In Acts 15:12-13, Luke records, “12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.”

After the issues were resolved and a letter written to the Gentile churches, Paul and Barnabas prepare for another missionary journey at express wishes of those in Jerusalem in Acts 15:25-26:

25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark once again desires to go. Paul resisted in Acts 15:37-39

Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

By Col 4:10, Paul mentions Mark directly: “10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Paul’s endorsement of Mark included paving the way for him with the Gentile churches. In Philem 24, Mark is a fellow worker with Paul, right there with Luke: “24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.”

The conclusion of the story of Paul and Mark is happy and encouraging, recorded in 2 Tim 4:11-13:

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

However, Mark’s association with Peter most probably resulted in the *Gospel According to Mark*. 1 Peter 5:13-14, concludes what we already know.

13 *She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.* 14 *Greet one another with a kiss of love.*