

**SCHOOL OF THE WORD 2017**  
St Mark's Gospel (1)

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**Programme**

- **Introduction to Mark's Gospel**
- What is a Gospel?
- Mark in the readings at Mass
- Reading Mark
- Mark's portrait of Jesus
- Mark's portrait the disciple

**Sequence**

- Sources: Mark's Gospel
- Technique: Attention to hints in the writing
- Eventually: location and dating.

**Greek and Aramaic**

- Written in Greek
- Aramaic is translated
- Jewish practices are explained
- Leadership groups
- Sabbath, fasting and purity
- Mark 5:41 Then, gently taking the child by the hand, he said to her, "**Talitha koum,**" which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up."
- Mark 7:34 Then he looked up to heaven and said with a sigh, "**Ephphatha**" (that is, "Be opened").
- Mark 14:36 He said, "**Abba,** Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
- Mark 15:22 They brought Jesus to a place called **Golgotha** (which is translated, "Place of the Skull").
- Mark 15:34 Around three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?**" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**Jewish practices**

- Mark 2:19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they do not fast.
- Mark 7:3 (For the Pharisees **and all the Jews** do not eat unless they perform a ritual washing, holding fast to the tradition of the elders. 4 And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. They hold fast to many other traditions: the washing of cups, pots, kettles, and dining couches. )
- Mark 10:2 Then some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"
- Mark 14:1 Two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the chief priests and the experts in the law were trying to find a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.
- Mark 14:12 Now on the first day of the feast of **Unleavened Bread**, when the **Passover** lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?"
- Mark 14:64 You have heard the **blasphemy!** What is your verdict?" They all condemned him as deserving death.
- Mark 15:42 Now when evening had already come, since it was the day of preparation (that is, the day before the Sabbath),

### Leadership groups

- Mark 3:6 So the Pharisees went out immediately and began plotting with the **Herodians**, as to how they could assassinate him.
- Mark 6:17 For **Herod** himself had sent men, arrested John, and bound him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her.
- Mark 8:15 And Jesus ordered them, "Watch out! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of **Herod!**"
- Mark 12:13 Then they sent some of the Pharisees and **Herodians** to trap him with his own words.

### Herod and John the Baptist

- Herod Antipas was a tetrarch, not a king,
- Herodias' first husband was not Philip (6:17) but another son of Herod the Great (called Herod II and Herod Boethus).
- Herodias and her first husband had a daughter named Salome, who is usually identified with the unnamed girl in the Markan tale.
- It was Salome, not Herodias, who married her half-uncle Philip.
- Antipas divorced his first wife, a Nabatean princess, in favour of Herodias, and contrary to Jewish law, Herodias divorced her first husband in order to marry his half-brother, her own half-uncle.

### Sabbath, fasting, purity

- 2:1-3:6
- Mark 7:17 Now when Jesus had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, "Are you so foolish? Don't you understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him? 19 For it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then goes out into the sewer." (This means all foods are clean.) 20 He said, "What comes out of a person defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly. 23 All these evils come from within and defile a person."
- Fasting (2:18)
- Patterns of Sabbath observance (2:23-27; 3:1-5)
- Ritual washing and offerings (7:1-23)
- Grounds for divorce (10:1-12),
- Roman taxes (12:13-17)
- Resurrection (12:18-27)
- The greatest commandment' (12:28-31)
- The Messiah (12:37)
- Robe length and synagogue seats (12:38-40)
- The relative value of offerings from rich and poor (12:41-44)
- The Temple (11:15-18; 13:2).

### And Gentiles?

- Mark has considerable interaction between Jesus and Gentiles.
- The healing of the demoniac in the **Decapolis** in 5:1-20
- The healing of the **Syro-Phoenician** woman's daughter near Tyre in 7:24-30
- The healing of the mute in the **Decapolis** in 7:31-37.
- It is noteworthy that this last story is unparalleled in any other gospel.
- A further Markan positive interaction between Jesus and a Gentile is at the death of Jesus (15:39) where the **centurion** is said to remark "Surely this was the/a son of God".

### And so...

- Greek-speaking community
- Uses the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint)
- Limited knowledge of Judaism
- Predominantly Gentiles, on the edge of Judaism

- Jewish rules still an issue
- Mixed community, with integration as a problem
- Only one large city (Jerusalem)
- Agricultural imagery
- No urban metaphors
- Protagonists: poor people
- Small denomination coins mentioned
- So, lower economic stratum

### Mark 13

- Serious earthquakes in 60 and 63 (Tacitus, Annals 15.44)
- The Roman army was defeated by the Parthians in 62 (Tacitus, Annals 15:13-17)
- In 64, Christians in Rome were blamed for the fire (Tacitus again)
- 68 Nero committed suicide.
- 69 The year of the three emperors
- During the siege of Jerusalem, the general in charge, Vespasian, become Emperor
- Titus, his son and later successor took charge.
- Eventually, Titus won the war and held a triumph in Rome.
- So, just before or just after the destruction of the city and its Temple.

### Charisms and prophecy

- Mark 13:11 When they arrest you and hand you over for trial, do not worry about what to speak. But say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.
- Mark 1:8 I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.”
- Mark 3:28 I tell you the truth, people will be forgiven for all sins, even all the blasphemies they utter. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin”
- Mark 13:6 Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and they will mislead many.
- Mark 13:22 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect.

### Location

- The Elder used to say: Mark, in his capacity as Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as he recalled from memory—though not in an ordered form—of the things either said or done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him, but later, as I said, Peter, who used to give his teachings in the form of chreiai, but had no intention of providing an ordered arrangement of the logia of the Lord. Consequently Mark did nothing wrong when he wrote down some individual items just as he related them from memory. For he made it his one concern not to omit anything he had heard or to falsify anything.
- Papias, preserved by Eusebius
- Rome?
- But no influence of Paul
- No special regard for Peter
- Not hinted at in 1 Peter and 1 Clement
- Different to the Old Roman Creed (next slide)
- Mark is known in Rome by the end of the second century
- So, most likely not written in Rome

### The Old Roman Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty;  
and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord,  
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,

on the third day rose again from the dead,  
 ascended to heaven,  
 sits at the right hand of the Father,  
 whence He will come to judge the living and the dead;  
 and in the Holy Spirit,  
 the holy Church,  
 the remission of sins,  
 the resurrection of the flesh  
 (the life everlasting).

### **Location**

- Galilee? But Mark's geography is vague and inaccurate.
- E.g. Then Jesus went out again from the region of Tyre and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis. (Mark 7:31)
- Syria — quite likely.
- Basis for Matthew, which comes from Antioch in Syria.
- Antioch had contacts with Cyrene and so the sons of Simon are still known.

### **Practices**

- Already in the Pauline churches, baptism and the Lord's Supper are practiced (Rom 6; 1 Cor 11).
- The Didache (Jewish-Christian) also has baptism and the Lord's Supper (usually first century ad).
- Baptism in Mark: John the Baptist (1:4-5, 8-9, 6:14, 24-25, 8:28 and 11:30); Jesus (1:8-9; 10:38-39); future believers (1:8; 10:38-39)
- Eucharist in Mark: see Mk 8:6 and Mk 14:22-25.

### **And so...**

- A mixed church
- Internal tensions
- External challenges
- Time of tremendous upheaval
- Question of faith, practice and identity
- Not so unlike our own time?

### **Conversation**

- Where to from here?