

Answers to tough questions in Mark

1. How did Mark come to write one of the gospels if he wasn't one of the original disciples?

Although Mark was not one of the original apostles of Jesus, he was involved in many of the events recorded in the NT. He traveled as a close companion of the apostle Peter and appears repeatedly throughout the Book of Acts, where he is known as “John whose surname was Mark” (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39). When Peter was miraculously freed from prison, his first action was to go to John Mark's mother's home in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). John Mark's restoration to useful ministry and preparation for writing his gospel was due, in part, to his extended close relationship with Peter (1 Pet. 5:13). Mark's gospel represents primarily Peter's version of the life of Jesus.

2. How should one interpret the end times passages in Mark?

Jesus' great sermon in Mark 13 is known as the Olivet Discourse because he delivered it on the Mt. of Olives. Here he predicted the coming destruction of the temple, which prompted a question from the disciples about the character of the end times. When Jesus talks about “the end,” he means the consummation of the present age. Among other things, He predicts the great tribulation in the future, and his coming again in power and glory.

3. Where the last twelve verses of chapter 16 originally part of Mark's gospel?

The external evidence strongly suggests that Mark 16:9-20 were not originally part of Mark's gospel. While the majority of Greek manuscripts contain these verses, the earliest and most reliable ones do not. A shorter ending also existed, but it is not included in some texts. Further, some manuscripts that include the passage note that it was missing from older Greek copies, while others have scribal marks indicating the passage was considered doubtful. The fourth-century church fathers Eusebius and Jerome noted that almost all Greek manuscripts available to them lacked verses 9-20.

The internal evidence from this brief passage also weighs heavily against Mark's authorship. The grammatical transition between verses 8 and 9 is abrupt and awkward. The vocabulary in these verses does not match with the rest of Mark. Even the events and people mentioned in these verses appear in awkward fashion. For example, Mary Magdalene is introduced as if she was a new person on the scene rather than someone Mark has mentioned three times (verse 1; 15:40, 47). Clearly, Mark 16:9-20 represents an early attempt to complete Mark's gospel.

While for the most part summarizing truths taught elsewhere in Scripture, these verses should always be compared with the rest of Scripture, and no doctrines should be formulated based solely on them. Further, in spite of all these considerations of the likely unreliability of this section, it is possible to be wrong on the issue. Therefore, it is good to consider the meaning of this passage and leave it in the text, just as is done with the other text with a similar history, John 7:53-8:11.

4. Does Mark include any material not found in the other gospels?

There are three passages found in Mark that are only recorded in his gospel:

1- The parable of the growing seed (4:26-29)

2- A deaf and mute man is healed (7:31-37)

3- A blind man is healed (8:22-26)