

Questions:

Was Mark originally written in Aramaic? in Latin? What was the original ending of Mark? Why was it lost? Why did Mark spend one third of his book on the passion and resurrection? Is this a "passion narrative with an introduction? What was Mark's purpose in writing this Gospel (cf. Luke 1:1-4)?

Archaeology:

A synagogue found in Capernaum probably dates from the fourth century AD but some basalt steps under it may have belonged to the first century synagogue used by Jesus (1:21). The sites of religious buildings rarely changed, so it is fairly certain that the synagogue in which he preached was located on the same site. A question puzzling scholars for many years has been the correct spelling of the name of the town in which Jesus healed the demoniac (5:1). Road excavations on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee uncovered a first-century town called Kursi, which gives credence to the spellings of the region's name found in Mark and Luke (Gerasene) rather than Matthew (Gedarene). And stone blocks used to construct Herod's temple in Jerusalem stood three to four feet tall and up to 40 feet long (some of them over 100 tons!). They would certainly have elicited comments from out-of-towners like Jesus' disciples (13:1).

Keys:

The opening verse (1:1) sets the tone for the book, as does the divine approval in 1:11. Jesus' mission is described in 1:38, 8:31 and 10:45.

Study Tips:

Read through Mark at one sitting. Read it a second time with a Bible dictionary and atlas to consult for identity and locations. How is Mark's theme of action communicated (cf. 2:4, 4:37, etc.)? Find the four references to Jesus as "Son of God" in Mark. Who says them? What purpose do they serve in their contexts? In the context of the entire Gospel? One scholar suggests that Jesus' conflict with evil is the thread tying Mark together. Do you agree? Why, or why not? Trace the development of Pharisaic opposition to Jesus' ministry. How does the arrangement of material in Mark reflect the apostolic preaching (cf. Acts 3:13-26; 4:10-12; 5:30-32, 8:32-35, etc.)? Study all the New Testament references to John Mark. What type of person was he? How does this help your understanding of the his book?