

## **A (Very Brief) User's Guide to the Gospel of Mark**

- **Who?**
  - A 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian, probably Gentile but familiar with the Jewish roots of Christianity
  - Likely was not an eyewitness but had access to one or more eyewitnesses
  - Possibly (but not necessarily) one of the Marks mentioned in the NT
  
- **When?**
  - Possibly as early as 50 AD
  - More likely around the time of the Jewish War (66-70 AD)
  - Makes reference to persecution, which increased around the time of the Jewish War
  - No reference, however, to tensions within the synagogue communities, which grew heated during the late 70s and the 80s AD
  
- **Where?**
  - Most likely in Galilee
  - Book has a strong Galilean focus
  - Mixed and Gentile Christian communities were common in Galilee
  - Rome is possible, but less likely
  
- **Why?**
  - To preserve the tradition as the first generation of Christians were dying off
  - More importantly, to lay claim to that tradition in particular ways
  - Mark (and the other evangelists) shape their stories of Jesus in order to show that their theological assertions are grounded in the words and deeds of Jesus

### **Key Theological Concerns**

- Openness to Gentiles, rootedness in Judaism
  
- Support for those who are wavering in the face of persecution
  
- Rightly understanding Jesus

## **Major Themes**

- The Reign of God (It has come near!)
- Son of Man, Son of God
- Discipleship of the Cross

## **Unique/Key Features**

- 1. An Unusual Sense of Urgency**
- 2. Emphasis on Deeds over Words**
- 3. Dominant Passion Narrative**
- 4. Less-Refined Linguistic Style**
- 5. Effective Use of Rhetorical Devices**
  - a. Narrative anticipations/foreshadowing
  - b. Two-step Progressions
  - c. Intercalations (Markan Sandwiches)
- 6. Geographical Focus on Galilee**
- 7. A Very Human Jesus**
- 8. The Messianic Secret**
- 9. Dense Disciples**