

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 46 – February 15th – Mark 1:1-28

Introduction to Mark

Authorship

The earliest traditions concerning this 'Gospel' come from Papias who is quoted by Eusebius and other writers in the early church. Papias, writing at the beginning of the second century, quotes 'the Elder' (whom Gundry considers to have been the apostle John). In introducing the quotation from Papias, France comments, "it is not clear at what point in the quotation, if at all, Papias moves on from the Elder's report to his own comment." The quotation runs as follows:

"This is what the Elder used to say: Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not himself heard the Lord or been his follower, but later, as I said, he followed Peter. Peter delivered teachings as occasion required, rather than compiling a sort of orderly presentation of the traditions about the Lord. So Mark was not wrong in recording in this way the individual items as he remembered them. His one concern was to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in reporting them."

France comments further, "If Papias's information is correct, Peter, even if not 'systematic' enough for some tastes, must have been a lively preacher. The vivid narrative style and content of the Marcan stories may well derive as much from the way Peter used to tell them as from Mark's own skill as a raconteur. The events are told and the teaching heard mainly from within the experience of the disciple group. This means that Mark's book reflects not the distant evaluation of a scholarly admirer of Jesus but the subjective experience of one of those who shared most closely in the stirring and yet profoundly disturbing events of Jesus' public ministry and his confrontation with the Jerusalem establishment. And it reflects those experiences as they were passed on in the day-to-day teaching ministry, 'as occasion required', of a living community of followers of Jesus (within which Mark no doubt himself also followed Peter as a recognised teller of the stories of Jesus). It is, perhaps, this grounding in the active life of the church which gives much of the special flavour (and 'feeling of otherness') to the 'good news' as told by Mark."

France makes the further point that Mark's Gospel was written to be read out loud, quoting C Bryan, "Mark was designed for oral transmission – and for transmission as a continuous whole – rather than for private study or silent reading." It has the character of storytelling and of drama. France comments, "Whether by exploiting Peter's memory or by exercising his own imagination, Mark has contrived to give his readers the feeling of 'being there', and that is in large part what makes his story so easy and rewarding to read."

There is really no reason to doubt that the Mark who appears in Acts as an assistant to Barnabas and Paul was the author this Gospel. It was probably written in Rome in the latter half of the 60s of the first century – after the Neronian persecution that followed

the great fire in Rome in AD 64 and after the death of Peter, but before the other Synoptic Gospels¹ and before the Jewish war of 70 AD.

Structure

France characterises Mark's Gospel as a 'drama in three acts.' His analysis of the structure is as follows:

1:1	The Heading
1:2-13	The Prologue: Setting the Scene – The Dramatis Personae
1:14-8:21	Act One: Galilee
8:22-10:52	Act Two: On the Way to Jerusalem (Learning about the Cross)
11:1-16:8	Act Three: Jerusalem

France adds that, "The two discourses of chapters 4 and 13 thus allow the reader a pause in the otherwise rapid pace of the narrative to think through the implications of the story so far, and provide a theological framework for understanding the new thing that is happening with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that each occurs roughly halfway through what I have termed Acts One and Three of the drama suggests that there may be a literary as well as a theological purpose in the discourses, to provide a narrative pause which gives the reader time to reflect on the events as they unfold."

Mark's Style

Cranfield highlights the following elements of Mark's Greek style, many of which are integral to the fast moving narrative style of Mark:

- i) The use of periphrastic tenses (e.g. 2:6,18; 4:38).
- ii) The use of the historic present (J.C.Hawkins lists 151 instances, of which nearly half are λεγει or λεγουσι).
- iii) The use of the indefinite plural (e.g. 1:22,30,32,45).
- iv) The use of the aorist of αρχομαι as a redundant auxiliary verb (e.g. 1:45; 2:23; 6:7).
- v) The use of parataxis in preference to subordinate clauses.
- vi) The use of asyndeton, i.e. the placing of one sentence after another without any connecting particle or conjunction (e.g. 3:35; 4:28; 5:39b; 14:3b, 6c, 8).
- vii) The use of Latin loanwords – more numerous than any other gospel.
- viii) The frequent use of εὐθως (41 times).
- ix) The use of diminutives (e.g. θυγατριον in 5:23; 7:25, πλοιαριον in 3:9, ὠταριον in 14:47).

¹ The relationship between the Synoptic Gospels is beyond the scope of this introduction. France, while accepting the priority of Mark, follows JAT Robinson in resisting a 'linear' solution to the relationship between the Synoptics. France writes, "This concept of 'cross-fertilisation' rather than a purely 'linear dependence' seems to me to take more realistic account of the likely growth of gospel traditions in the first century churches, which were not sealed units but remained in contact with one another as Christians travelled around the eastern part of the empire – the sort of free movement of Christian leaders and teachers which is so graphically illustrated at a slightly later period in *Did.* 11-12. In such a situation it would be natural for traditions about Jesus to be shared and compared, and for collections of what later came to be known as 'gospel' material to grow up in different locations, each with its own distinctive form but with constant opportunity for influence and expansion from traditions preserved in other church centres... In the light of that situation, I do not need a solution to the Synoptic problem."

x) A certain diffuseness of expression.

Cranfield adds, "The Semitic flavour of the Greek of the gospel is unmistakable. Of the characteristics mentioned above (i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), and in some cases (x) are probably due to the influence of Aramaic. In addition to these, there are a considerable number of other features which reflect Aramaic influence."

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Mark

Cranfield, CEB	<i>The Gospel According to Mark</i> (Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary), CUP, Cambridge, 4 th ed. 1972
France, RT	<i>The Gospel of Mark</i> (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2002
Guelich, Robert A	<i>Mark 1-8:26</i> (The Word Biblical Commentary, vol 34A), Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1989
Lane, William L	<i>The Gospel of Mark</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974
Taylor, Vincent	<i>The Gospel According to St Mark</i> , Macmillan NT Commentaries, London, 1952

Verses 1-8

Cf. Mt 3:1-12; Lk 3:1-18.

Verse 1

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ.

ἀρχη, ης f beginning, origin

"Anarthrous Greek construction may signal the function as a heading (e.g. Hos 1:2; Prov 1:1; Eccl 1:1; Cant 1:1; Matt 1:1; Rev 1:1)." Guelich.

Cranfield lists ten possible meanings for this phrase, including:

- i) ἀρχη means origin. Mark is going to relate the historic basis for the church's message;
- ii) ἀρχη means summary;
- iii) The phrase is intended not as a title for the whole work but for the first section (vv 2-13 or 2-8).

Cranfield prefers the last of these, citing as a parallel the LXX of Hos 1:2. The sense is, 'Here's where it all began. It began with the preaching of John.'

While agreeing that v1 leads into the prologue, France says, "In its contents, however, v. 1 points far beyond the first part of chapter 1. It sets forth themes which the whole book will explore."

εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel

Cranfield says that the NT use of εὐαγγελιον reflects that of the Hebrew root *bsr* in the OT. The verb in the Piel is nearly always represented in the LXX by the middle of εὐαγγελίζω and means 'to announce good news' (e.g. 1 Kings 1:42; Jer 20:15), especially of victory (e.g. 1 Sam 31:9). Here the content of the good news is the breaking in of God's kingly rule, the advent of his salvation, vengeance, vindication (e.g. Is 52:7 "Your God reigns"). Jesus is both the herald of the good news and the content of the message.

Of Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου France writes, "When Mark wrote these words he was not using εὐαγγέλιον to designate a literary genre, but simply to indicate the nature of the subject matter of his work: it is a presentation in written form of the 'good news' about Jesus which was and is the subject of the church's teaching and mission... Mark did not say to himself, 'I am going to write a εὐαγγέλιον'; it was only as it became necessary for the church to find a suitable label for this category of literature, church books about Jesus, that Mark's heading provided them with one. Once the term had become established as a designation for the four canonical versions of the one εὐαγγέλιον (so that τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον is properly translated not 'the gospel [-book] by Mark' but 'the [one] gospel in Mark's version') it became available as a literary label for other works about Jesus that came to be written from the second century onwards, however different in character they may have been from the narrative 'gospels' of the first century. Hence the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Peter*, *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of Truth*, *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, and the like. The term which for Mark had designated the (hitherto oral) message of the first-century churches had thus come to mean something like 'a church book about Jesus'."

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ "The Pauline corpus demonstrates the common use of 'Jesus Christ' as a proper name in the Church prior to the writing of the Gospels. And Mark 9:41 implies that 'Christ' served as a name in Mark's community, while 8:29; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61 and 15:32 show it maintained its function as a title... One may at least say that Χριστός has not lost its messianic significance in the double name so that both Matthew and Mark deliberately choose to use the double name to introduce their Gospels about 'Jesus Messiah' (cf. Acts 10:36; Rom 1:2-4). Furthermore, the title 'Messiah' plays a pivotal role in 8:29 where Peter's confession leads to the fourth major section (1:16-3:12; 3:13-6:6; 6:7-8:26; 8:27-10:52; 11:1-16:8) of Mark's Gospel. Therefore, 'Jesus Messiah' more adequately renders Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ." Guelich.

υἱοῦ θεοῦ is omitted from many MSS (κ* Θ 28 etc) and from many Patristic references. Nestle, Metzger and Cranfield argue for the originality of these words. Cf. 15:39.

Verse 2

Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ· Ἴδου ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου·

καθως links verse 2 to verse 1. "It is through the fulfilment of these scriptural passages that the good news finds its beginning." France.

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω
write

"The perfect, denoting a past action the results of which remain, is regularly used to introduce quotations from Scripture." Cranfield. The quotation appears to be a combination of Mal 3:1a and Ex 23:20.

προφητης, ου m prophet

In place of the phrase ἐν (τῷ) Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ, which is in all the earlier uncials except A and W and in virtually all the primary versional evidence, Byzantine MSS follow A W in reading ἐν τοῖς προφήταις an obvious 'correction' in view of the fact that the following composite quotation begins with words from Malachi.

ἀποστέλλω send, send out

προσωπον, ου n face, appearance,
presence

κατασκευάζω prepare, build, construct,
furnish

ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey

"John's function is to prepare the way, but for whom? Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3 speak of preparing for the coming of ὁ κυριος (which in the OT context can only mean God), and John predicts the arrival of one who is ἰσχυροτερος and who will dispense the Spirit as the prophets had said that Yahweh would do in the last days. Thus vv. 2-8 appear to leave no room for a human figure in the eschatological drama other than John himself, the forerunner sent to prepare for the eschatological coming of God... When in v. 9 an obscure northerner (Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ τῆς Γαλιλαίας) appears on the scene, it is not immediately obvious what connection he has with the role either of John the forerunner or of the expected ἰσχυροτερος, and it will be the function of vv. 10-13 to begin to spell this out. The rest of the book will continue to guide the reader to an answer to this question." France.

Verse 3

φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ,

βοαω call, cry out, shout

ἐρημος, ου f uninhabited region, desert

ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ is connected in the LXX with the preceding phrase, although the Hebrew text connects it to the following verb 'prepare.'

France comments that the 'wilderness' was seen as a place of hope, of new beginnings. "It was in the wilderness that Yahweh had met with Israel and made them into his people when they came out of Egypt. That had been the honeymoon period, before the relationship became strained... Where else but ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ would you expect to see the drama of God's eschatological salvation begin?"

ἐτοιμαζῶ prepare, make ready
ὁδός, οὐ f way, path, road
εὐθύς, εἰα, ὕ straight; right, upright
τριβός, οὐ f path, pathway

"The second quotation (from Is 40:3) agrees with the LXX apart from one significant variation – the substitution of αὐτοῦ for τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, which has the effect of making possible, though not necessitating, the identification of the Κυριος with Jesus." Cranfield.

The comparison of the original with its use here may also be taken as a pointer to the Deity of Christ.

Verse 4

ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

This verse is closely connected with vv. 2,3

ἐγένετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s γινομα
βαπτίζω baptise, wash

"John's choice of the wilderness as the scene of his preaching was probably due to the associations it had come to have in the minds of the people. Israel's sojourn in the wilderness was remembered as a time of Israel's disobedience and a time of grace, of God's mighty acts... In Hosea 2:14 there is the idea of a second wilderness period. The idea grew up that the final eschatological salvation would have its beginning in the wilderness – the Messiah would appear there. Hence, revolutionary messianic movements were attracted to the wilderness (e.g. Acts 21:38)." Cranfield.

κηρύσσω preach, proclaim

Derived from κηρυξ, 'a herald'. The verb means to proclaim in a loud voice.

βάπτισμα μετανοίας. The background for such baptism is in the many ritual washings laid down in the OT law (e.g. Lev 15:5, 8, 13, 16), and the frequent OT use of the imagery of washing in connection with repentance (e.g. Is 1:16) and above all the practice of Jewish proselyte baptism.

"That proselyte-baptism was established by this time is now generally agreed. It is inconceivable that the Jews should have taken on the custom *after* the rise of the Christian Church, of which baptism was characteristic. If this view that John's baptism was derived from proselyte-baptism is granted, then it follows that the implication of his baptism was that Jews did not have a right to membership of the people of God by mere fact that they were Jews (cf. Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8): by their sins they had become as Gentiles and now they needed as radical a repentance as did Gentiles if they were to have any part in God's salvation." Cranfield.

μετανοία, ἀς f repentance, change of heart, change of way

Repentance involves a turning from self and from evil to God: it implies obedient submission to God. France says that it speaks of "a reorientation to the paradoxical values of the kingdom of God... It is to such a revolution of attitudes and values that Jesus will call people when he announces the coming of the kingdom of God, and μετανοία appropriately expresses this idea. The continuity in this respect between the ministries of John and Jesus (and his disciples) is therefore noteworthy."

ἄφεσις, εὐς f forgiveness, cancellation
ἁμαρτία, ἀς f sin

"Exactly how John regarded the connection between his baptism and the forgiveness of sin it is difficult to be sure. That he did not think of baptism as effecting automatically a man's acceptance before God, but held that it needed to be accompanied by obedience, is indicated by Mt 3:8 = Lk 3:8a. But it is probable that he thought of it as having some real effectiveness towards forgiveness, and as in some measure at any rate a pledge of it." Cranfield.

Baptism, as a rite, undergoes transformation from Jewish proselyte baptism to John's baptism and again from John's baptism to Christian baptism where it finds its focus in Christ's atoning work.

Verse 5

καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία
χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες, καὶ
ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ
ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν.

ἐκπορευομαι go or come out

χώρα, ας f country, region, territory

Ἱεροσολυμιτης, ου m an inhabitant of
Jerusalem

"The failure to mention Galilee (or indeed Perea) may reflect Mark's understanding that John was baptising toward the southern end of the Jordan valley. It has the effect of making the appearance of Jesus ἀπὸ Ναζαρετ τῆς Γαλιλαίας in v.9 the more striking; he is not part of the Judean crowd, but a stranger from the far north." France.

Ἰορδανης, ου m Jordan River

ποταμος, ου m river, stream

ἐξομολογεω midd confess, acknowledge

"Their submission to baptism was itself a confession of sinfulness... It is possible that a spoken confession of sin preceded the actual baptism." Cranfield.

Verse 6

καὶ ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου
καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περι τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ,
καὶ ἐσθων ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι ἄγριον.

ἐνδεδυμένος Verb, perf midd ptc, m nom s
ἐνδύω dress; midd put on, wear

"ἦν with the perfect participle ἐνδεδυμενος and the present participle ἐσθων (ἐσθω is an older form of ἐσθιω) is a double example of the use of periphrastic tenses which is specially common in Mk." Cranfield.

τρίχας Noun, acc pl θριξ, τριχος f hair

καμηλος, ου m & f camel

ζωνη, ης f belt

δερματινος, η, ου of leather

ὀσφυς, υος f waist

Cf. 2 Kings 1:8 for a similar description of Elijah.

ἐσθιω and ἐσθω eat, consume

ἀκρις, ιδος f locust, grasshopper

μέλι, ιτος n honey

ἄγριος, α, ου wild

"Either the honey found in rocks or possibly the sap of certain trees." Taylor.

Verse 7

καὶ ἐκήρυσσεν λέγων· Ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός
μου ὀπίσω μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς κύψας
λύσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ·

ἰσχυροτερος, α, ου stronger

ὀπισω prep with gen after, behind

John is apparently conscious "of standing at the beginning of the unfolding of the eschatological drama." Taylor.

ικανος, η, ου worthy, sufficient, fit, able

κύψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s κύπτω

bend or stoop down

λυω loose, untie, release

ἵμας, αντος n strap

ὑποδημα, τος n sandal

"To carry someone's shoes after them or to take them off his feet was the work of a slave. A Hebrew slave was not obliged to do it (*Mekilla* on Exodus 21:2). Rabbi Joshua b. Levi is quoted as saying: 'All services which a slave does for his master a pupil should do for his teacher, with the exception of undoing his shoes' (b Ket.96a)." Cranfield.

John is saying that, compared with Christ, he is not worthy to be considered even the most menial of slaves.

"The Christian reader has no difficulty in recognising in this ἰσχυροτερος a pointer to Jesus... But the point is worth repeating that neither the OT passages produced in vv. 2-3 as models of John's role as forerunner nor the specific role which he assigns to the ἰσχυροτερος in v.8 could be expected in themselves to suggest a *human* figure. It is Yahweh who will follow the forerunner in both Mal 3:1 and Is 40:3, and in OT thought it is Yahweh himself who will pour out his Spirit in the last days (Is 32:15; 44:3; Ezk 36:26-27; 39:29; Joel 3:1-2 [EVV 2:28-29], etc.). It says a lot for the underlying christology of Mark's gospel that he can allow the Baptist's words, which in themselves point directly to the coming of God, to be read as referring to the human Jesus. For him, apparently, the coming of Jesus *is* the eschatological coming of God." France.

Verse 8

ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει

ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n water

Many MSS read ἐν ὕδατι, "probably due to a scribal desire to produce a parallel syntax for the two clauses." France.

ἅγιος, α, ου holy, consecrated

"The contrast is primarily between the persons of John and Jesus, not between John's baptism and Christian baptism. Theologically, it is important here not to make the mistake of turning this into a simple contrast between John's and Christian baptism, as though the meaning was that the former is merely a matter of water, while the latter is both water-baptism and also a baptism with the Spirit; for, on the one hand, the Christian minister needs to make precisely the same confession with regard to the baptism he administers (all that *he* does is to baptize with water; the gift of the Spirit is the gift ... of Christ), and, on the other hand, there is a real continuity between John's baptism and Christian baptism, to overlook which is to rob the Baptism of our Lord of a great part of its significance." Cranfield.

France argues that verses 1-13 form an introduction to Mark's gospel and include terms which occur rarely elsewhere in the gospel. In particular, concerning πνευμα he writes, "In the whole of the gospel after 1:13 there are only three references to the (Holy) Spirit (3:29; 12:36; 13:11), only one of which (3:29) relates (indirectly) to the role of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus. Yet in these opening verses the Spirit is mentioned three times (1:8, 10, 12) and appears as a central figure in the launching of Jesus' ministry. The remarkable difference in focus suggests that Mark has something of importance to which he wishes to draw his readers' attention at the outset.

"The eschatological outpouring of God's Spirit was a significant feature in OT expectation, as seen in Is 32:15; Ezk 36:26-27; 39:29; Jo 3:1-5 (Evv 2:29-32), and the quotation of the latter in Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:17-21) shows the importance of this expectation for early Christian understanding of the significance of Jesus' ministry...

"By this emphasis on the role of the Spirit in 1:2-13, therefore, Mark alerts the reader at the outset of the gospel, in a way which will not be open to him in the narrative situation after 1:14, to the messianic significance of Jesus, both as the one who is himself empowered and directed by the Spirit in the fulfilment of his eschatological role, and also, remarkably, as the one who 'dispenses' the Spirit, a role which in the OT passages mentioned above was exclusively that of Yahweh himself... In the subsequent narrative we shall hear little of the Spirit, but the reader who has listened well to the prologue will be able to interpret the scenes in Galilee and Jerusalem in the light of this more ultimate wilderness perspective."

Verses 9-11

Cf Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21f.

Verse 9

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρετ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου.

ἐγένετο see v.4

"Καὶ ἐγένετο followed by a main verb (ἦλθεν) is a Semitic construction, unknown outside biblical Greek, derived from the Hebrew *way^hi*. (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις) has an equally formal, 'biblical' ring. Mark stands in the tradition of the great chroniclers of the acts of God in the OT." France.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, those
ἐβαπτίσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s βαπτίζω

To the question 'Why was Jesus baptized?' Cranfield offers the following: "The true answer ... is suggested by the fact that verse 11 contains an echo of Isaiah 42:1, which speaks of the Servant of the Lord whose mission is further described in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Jesus' submission to John's baptism of repentance was his mature self-dedication to his mission of self-identification with sinners which in due course would involve the Cross. In his baptism he became for men's sake and in their place 'the one great Sinner who repents' – to use Barth's daring phrase. That Jesus later in his ministry associated baptism with death seems to be indicated by Mk 10:38, Lk 12:50, and it is by no means unlikely that already at the Jordan he was aware that his baptism by John foreshadowed another baptism, more bitter, without which his Mission could not be completed."

Verse 10

καὶ εὐθὺς ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν·

εὐθὺς adv. straightway, immediately

A favourite adverb of Mark. It occurs 11 times in the first chapter alone and 37 times in the narrative of the gospel as a whole.

ἀναβαίνω go up, come up, ascend

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n see v.8

εἶδεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὄραω see

σχιζῶ split, tear, separate

Cf. Is 64:1; Ezek 1:1. "This imagery, though it also occurs in pagan sources, is thoroughly Jewish. Here the opening of the heavens is the natural prelude ... to a divine communication." Cranfield. France comments, "Ezekiel's vision, also beside a river (and, according to one interpretation of the book's opening sentence, at the age of thirty; cf. Lk 3:23), provides a suggestive OT parallel, where a vision of God and a divine voice commissioned him for his prophetic role."

περιστερα, ας f dove, pigeon
καταβαῖνον Verb, pres act ptc, n nom/acc s
καταβαινω come or go down, descend

"The combination of this gift of the Spirit with the concept of anointing in Is 61:1 (as in 1 Sa 16:13) makes it a particularly appropriate mark of the mission of Jesus as Χριστος (v 1)."

France.

"The comparison of the Spirit to a dove seems to go back to Gen 1:2, where the Hebrew *m'rahepet* suggests the brooding of a bird." Cranfield. The picture is that of the beginnings of the work of new creation.

The use of εἰς rather than ἐπι suggests permanent residence.

Verse 11

καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν· Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα.

Cranfield argues that, in accordance with κ* D Θ and a few Old Latin MSS, the ἐγενετο should be omitted – though Metzger includes it with a {C} rating. Its absence may be an assimilation to Mt 3:17.

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved
εὐδοκεω be pleased, take delight in

Cf. Ps 2:7; Is 42:1. "The servant of Yahweh portrayed in Is 42:1-4 is a nonviolent figure who achieves justice (*mispat*) for the nations by patient faithfulness, under the direction of the Spirit of Yahweh. Cf Mt 12:17-21 for the quotation of this passage at length to justify Jesus' non-confrontational style of ministry. The combination of this text with Ps 2:7 thus offers a suggestive basis for Mark's presentation of the paradox of a suffering, unrecognised Messiah." France.

"In response to his self-dedication to the mission of the Servant, made in his submission to baptism, he is given a confirmation of his own consciousness of being the Son of God, that is at the same time a confirmation of his Servant vocation." Cranfield.

εὐδοκησα Cranfield says is best considered a timeless aorist.

France comments, "Within the scope of Mark's prologue, it is these disclosures which are of primary importance, and they form the high point of the prologue's presentation of the true identity of Jesus the Messiah. The only passage in the rest of the gospel which will offer a similarly exalted view of Jesus is the transfiguration story, where the voice of God will again be heard declaring the identity of Jesus in words almost the same as in 1:11, with the significant difference that then they will be addressed to three of Jesus' disciples, not, as here, to Jesus himself alone... In the narrative that follows there will be secrecy and paradox, but here in the prologue there is open declaration. The reader need be in no doubt, whatever the reactions of the actors in the story."

Verses 12,13

Cf Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13

"On the whole, it seems more likely that we have two independent accounts – that represented by Mt and Lk and that given by Mk – than that Mark is here giving an abbreviated version of the account given more fully by the other two." Cranfield.

"Just as the revelation by the Jordan enabled us to see beyond the everyday scene and to gain an impression of the supernatural dimension of Jesus' mission, so the scene in the wilderness (away from ordinary human contact) displays the dramatis personae of the coming conflict, not in terms of Jesus' human supporters and opponents, but in the superhuman dimension." France.

Verse 12

Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον.

ἐκβαλλω throw out, expel

"In view of Mark's usage ἐκβάλλει probably does have the sense of strong compulsion, though often in Hellenistic Greek it has quite a weak sense." Cranfield.

ἐρημος, ου f see v.3

Verse 13

καὶ ἦν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ.

τεσσαρακοντα forty

"It is quite likely that Mark would be conscious of the parallel with the forty days' and forty nights' fasts of Moses, the type of the Messiah (Ex. 34:28; Deut 9:18), and Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah (1 Kings 19:8)." Cranfield. France, on the other hand, writes, "The other most prominent biblical use of forty is also in connection with the wilderness, the forty years of wandering experienced by the Israelites after the Exodus. In the Q narrative, with its clear echoes of Dt 6-8, the number 40 strongly suggests the latter symbolism. In Mark this is less obvious, but the close collocation with *πειραζομενος* and the specific mention of the animals ... together with the strong focus on the *ε̅ρημος* throughout the prologue, indicate that he, too, saw the *τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέραι* as an echo of the period of Israel's wilderness experience. Echoes of Moses and Elijah, whose experiences were specifically of forty *days*, are not so clearly relevant to Mark's context here."

πειραζω test, put to the test, tempt

Being tempted to turn away from his appointed path.

Σατανας, α the Adversary, Satan
θηριον, ου n animal, beast, wild animal
διακονεω serve, wait on, care for

Cranfield thinks this is best understood as "a special assurance of the divine presence granted to Jesus after the temptation had been overcome." France, however, writes, "It is through the protection of angels (as in Ps 91:11-13) that Jesus is able to survive *μετὰ τῶν θηρίων*."

Verses 14,15

Cf Mt 4:12-17; Lk 4:14f.

Verse 14

Καὶ μετὰ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ

παραδοθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin
παραδιδωμι hand over, deliver up

The verb may anticipate the fate of Jesus, cf. 9:31; 10:33; 14:41.

κηρυσσω see v.4

"There is an important element of continuity between John and Jesus. The same participle *κηρυσσων* which described John's ministry (v 4) now describes that of his successor, and at least one of the elements in that proclamation is the same (see below on *μετανοεῖτε*; Mt 3:2; 4:17 go further in assimilating their message)." France.

εὐαγγελιον, ου n see v.1

"The bulk of the Western and Byzantine witnesses include *της βασιλειας* after *εὐαγγελιον*. The considerable weight of MSS and versions in favour of this reading is, however, outweighed by its obvious character as an 'improvement' by avoiding the unusual phrase *το εὐαγγελιον του θεου*, and substituting a phrase which not only picks up *ἡ βασιλεια του θεου* from the next verse but also echoes the familiar Matthean idiom, *το εὐαγγελιον της βασιλειας* (Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14)." France.

The phrase *το εὐαγγελιον του θεου* appears occasionally in Paul (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; cf. 1 Peter 4:17), but is unique here in the gospels.

του θεου is either a subjective or objective genitive (i.e. 'from God' or 'about God'). "The former is probably to be preferred." Cranfield. France says, "there seems no more reason here than in v 1 to insist that either sense is exclusively intended."

Verse 15

καὶ λέγων ὅτι Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

πληρωω fill, make full, fulfill
καιρος, ου m time

"It is God's decision that makes a particular moment or period of time into a *καιρος*, a time filled with significance. So here the meaning of the sentence is that the time appointed by God for the fulfilment of his promise, the time to which the OT was pointing, the eschatological time, has come." Cranfield. "The decisive moment ... has now come." France.

ἤγγικεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s *ἐγγιζω*
approach, draw near

In the OT the **Kingdom of God** is both:

- i) A present reality – God *is* King of his people and over all the earth (Ps 96:10-13);
- ii) A future hope – the full manifestation of his Kingship is yet to be realised (Is 24:21-23; Habakkuk 2:14).

Cranfield says that Jesus affirms the present Kingly reign of God (Mt 5:35; 11:25; 10:29), but when he speaks of the Kingdom of God it is to the eschatological reign of God that he refers. He makes the following points concerning the Kingdom in Jesus' teaching:

- i) It has come near. That which for the OT was in the future is now present;
- ii) Yet it is still future (Mt 6:10; Lk 22:18);

iii) It is intimately connected with his own person – it is in him and his activity that it has come; he *is* the Kingdom. "He is himself the fulfilment of God's promises, God's royal intervention in judgement and mercy." This is how (i) and (ii) can be reconciled – He has come, but is yet to come in the glory of his Kingdom.

France comments, "God's kingship is both eternal and eschatological, both fulfilled and awaited, both present and imminent (as indeed NT scholarship now almost universally recognises, after long and futile attempts to confine the breadth of NT language within a single time reference). The purely eschatological understanding of the phrase has led to unnecessary polarisation in the exegesis of this verse. To declare that God's kingship has come near is to say that God is now fulfilling his agelong purpose, rather than to point to a specific time or event which can be defined as either already present or still future, but not both."

μετανοεω repent, turn from one's sins
πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)

"The only clear example of πιστευεν ἐν in the NT ... Probably a Semitism." Cranfield.

Verses 16-20

Cf Mt 4:18-20; Lk 5:1-11.

"After the ringing announcement of vv 14-15 we are prepared for stirring events of at least national, if not cosmic, importance. What we find is very different: '... Jesus wandering by the sea, bidding some common labourers to accompany him on a mission. The world seems very much intact!' (Myers...)... Just as Jesus' followers will have to learn a value scale different from that of 'those who are reckoned as rulers of the nations' (10:42-45), so the Messiah himself refuses to assert his authority by an impressive show of the divine (still less of worldly) pomp and pageantry. The kingdom of God comes not with fanfare but through the gradual gathering of a group of socially insignificant people in an unnoticed corner of provincial Galilee. The parable of the mustard seed (4:30-32) will merely put into words what has been happening in practice from the first days of Jesus' ministry, the launching of a movement of ultimately huge dimensions which yet in its beginnings is so unimpressive as to be barely noticed on the world stage."

France.

The details in the stories here suggest Petrine origin.

Verse 16

Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος ἀμφιβάλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς·

παράγω pass by, pass on
παρὰ preposition with acc beside, by
θάλασσα, ἡς f sea

The use of θάλασσα in the sense of λιμνη (lake – used by Luke) is thoroughly Semitic.

εἶδεν see v.10

ἀμφιβάλλω cast a fishnet

Occurs here only in the NT.

ἀλιεὺς, εὼς m fisherman

Verse 17

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.

δεῦτε adv. come (of command or exhortation)

ὀπίσω prep with gen after, behind, follow

"It is interesting to compare the narrative in 1 Kings 19:19-21." Cranfield. France likewise says that the model here is not that of the rabbi and his pupils but of a 'charismatic leader' after the model of Elijah's call of Elisha. "Jesus' peremptory summons, with its expectation of radical renunciation even of family ties, goes far beyond anything that would be familiar within normal society. It marks him as a prophet rather than a rabbi."

Verse 18

καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.

ἀφίημι leave, forsake, let go

"... symbolises the renunciation involved in following Jesus." France.

δίκτυον, οὐ n fishing net

ἀκολουθεω follow, accompany, be a disciple

Verse 19

καὶ προβάς ὀλίγον εἶδεν Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καταρτίζοντας τὰ δίκτυα,

προβάς Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s προβαίνω go on

ὀλίγον adv. a little, only a little

"From Lk 5:10 we learn that James and John were 'partners to Simon'." Cranfield.

πλοῖον, οὐ n boat, ship

καταρτίζω mend, restore

"The verb means 'put in order', 'render ἄρτιος'. Used with reference to nets it would include not only mending, but also cleaning and folding – making ready for another night's fishing." Cranfield.

Verse 20

καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς, καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ.

"Discipleship comes into being through the call of Jesus." Cranfield.

πατήρ, πατρός m father
μισθωτός, ου m hired man, labourer
ἀπῆλθον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl
ἀπερχομαι

Verses 21-28

Cf Lk 4:31-7; Mt 7:28f. "This 'day in Capernaum' combines within it all the main features of Jesus' Galilean ministry, teaching (vv 21-22,27), exorcism (vv 23-26, 32, 34, 39), healing (vv 30-31, 32-34), and proclamation (vv 38-39). It thus forms a graphic overview of the general character of that ministry." France.

Verse 21

Καὶ εἰσπορεύονται εἰς Καφαρναούμ. καὶ εὐθὺς τοῖς σάββασις ἐδίδασκεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν.

σαββατον, ου n (often in pl) the seventh day, Sabbath

"σαββατον regularly has this third declension form in the dative plural in the N.T. The plural is used with a singular meaning, as is the case with festivals (e.g. τα ἄζυμα, τα ἑγκαίνια), though occasionally σαββατα is a true plural, as in Acts 17:2." Cranfield.

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in

Cranfield thinks that εἰσελθων should be omitted and ἐδίδασκεν placed before εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν as in 8, C, L, f¹³ etc. France similarly writes, "In view of Mark's use of εἰς for ἐν elsewhere ... ἐδίδασκεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν may well be original (Origen twice quotes it in this form). The awkward idiom would naturally lead to correction by the addition of εἰσελθων, leaving ἐδίδασκεν to move to the end of the clause, where it was felt by some to need an object. This seems a marginally more likely explanation of the variants than the accidental omission of εἰσελθων before εἰς, creating an awkward idiom which then remained uncorrected in a wide range of MSS and versions."

συναγωγή, ης f synagogue, meeting

On Capernaum, France writes, "It was a significant lakeside settlement, sufficiently important to have a detachment of Roman troops (Mt 8:5-13), a custom post (2:14), and a resident official described as βασιλικός (Jn 4:46). Its population at the time may have been as high as 10,000; its συναγωγὴ, a predecessor of the imposing fourth century building now visible, would therefore have held a considerable sabbath congregation."

διδασκω teach

"The right to teach in the synagogue was controlled by its leaders (Acts 13:15), and the fact that Jesus was invited or allowed to do so suggests that, despite the role of this pericope in Mark's narrative as Jesus' first public appearance, he had already been active in the area long enough to be known and respected." France.

Cranfield says that the imperfect here is *inceptive*: 'He began to teach'.

Mark lays great stress on Jesus' teaching ministry, though he does not include a record of much of the content. Jesus' teaching was Rabbinic in style but was marked by *personal* authority. Cranfield remarks that his ability as a teacher was recognised by the common people and even by those Jewish teachers who were his opponents: "His unquestionable competence compelled their serious consideration, in spite of the fact that he did not possess the conventional qualifications."

Verse 22

καὶ ἐξεπλήσσαντο ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ, ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτούς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς.

ἐκπλησσομαι be amazed

"The amazement or wonder which these words denote is something which may prove to be the first step towards faith, or may turn into a σκανδαλιζέσθαι – a 'being offended'." Cranfield.

διδάχη, ης f teaching, what is taught

Includes both content and manner.

ἐξουσία, ας f authority, power
γραμματεὺς, εως m scribe, expert in Jewish law

"... authority as the prophets had had, the authority of a direct commission from God... The people sensed in the way Jesus taught the implicit claim to an authority superior to that of Rabbinic ordination." Cranfield.

"They represent the old regime, challenged by the fresh new teaching of Jesus." France.

Verse 23

καὶ εὐθὺς ἦν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν ἄνθρωπος
ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ καὶ ἀνέκραζεν

ἐν πνεύματι is a Semitism. "The use of ἐν to denote 'being under the special influence of the spirit' (BAGD...) offers a macabre counterpart to the idiom ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ (12:36; cf. Lk 2:27; 1 Cor 12:3; Rev 1:10)." France.

ἀκαθαρτος, ον unclean
ἀνακραζῶ cry out, shout

Indicates strong emotion.

Verse 24

λέγων· Τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ;
ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς; οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος
τοῦ θεοῦ.

τι ἡμιν και σοι "Similar expressions occur in the O.T. (e.g. Josh 22:24; Jud 11:12; 2 Sam 16:10; 1 Kings 17:18) and also in classical Greek... The meaning is: 'What have we and you in common?', so 'Why do you interfere with us?'" Cranfield. France says, "When addressed to an actual or potential aggressor it has the force of 'Go away and leave me alone' (Jdg 11:12; 1 Ki 17:18)."

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill
οἶδα know, understand

οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ. "Note the hyperbaton. The pronoun which should be the subject of the subordinate clause is brought forward into the main clause, where it becomes the object. This is much more common in Aramaic than in Greek." Cranfield.

σε Pronoun, acc s συ
ἅγιος, α, ον holy, consecrated

"These 'confessions' (here and in 3:11; 5:7) can hardly be explained as testimonies wrested from the demons against their will. More probably they are to be understood as desperate attempts to get control of Jesus and to make him harmless, in accordance with the common idea of the time that by using the exactly correct name of a spirit one can gain mastery of him." Cranfield. "The title used in 3:11 and 5:7 will be that already declared in 1:1, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; the use of ἅγιος here is therefore surprising. It has an obvious appropriateness as contrasting Jesus' holy character with that of his opponent (ἀκαθαρτον), and it links Jesus with the πνεῦμα ἅγιον whose presence is to mark his messianic ministry (1:8), and is the basis of his power over demons (3:22-30)." France.

Verse 25

καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων·
Φιμώθητι καὶ ἐξέλθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

ἐπιτιμαῶ command, order

Carries "an overtone of divine authority"
Cranfield.

φιμώθητι Aor pass imperat, 2 s φιμοῶ
silence; pass. be silent

"There is a notable lack of 'technique' about this as about all the exorcism stories in the gospels when compared with the few extrabiblical exorcism accounts. Only in 5:9 does Jesus ask the demon's name, and even there he is not recorded as using it. There is no incantation, no ritual, no 'props' of any kind, simply an authoritative word of command. That seems to settle the matter." France.

Verse 26

καὶ σπαράξαν αὐτὸν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον
καὶ φωνήσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ἐξῆλθεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

σπαράξαν Verb, aor act ptc, m acc & n
nom/acc s σπαρασσῶ throw into
convulsions

φωνεῶ call, call out

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great

"For Jesus himself and for the early Church these exorcisms were signs of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God (Mt 12:28 = Lk 11:20): the strong one had been bound and those who had been held in bondage were being set free. The exorcisms were an integral and important part of the works of him, the purpose of whose coming was 'that he might destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8)." Cranfield.

Verse 27

καὶ ἐθαμβήθησαν ἅπαντες, ὥστε συζητεῖν πρὸς
ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντας· Τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο; διδαχὴ
καινὴ· κατ' ἐξουσίαν καὶ τοῖς πνεύμασι τοῖς
ἀκαθάρτοις ἐπιτάσσει, καὶ ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ.

ἐθαμβήθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl
θαμβεομαι be amazed or shocked

"It indicates perhaps that exorcisms as such were not as commonplace as is often suggested, but also that Jesus' style of exorcism was strikingly different from any they were familiar with." France.

ἅπας, ασα, αν (alternative form of πας) all; pl
everyone

ὥστε so that, with the result that
συζητεῶ argue, discuss, question

ἑαυτος, εαυτη, εαυτον reflexive pronoun,
himself, herself, itself

"The rich variety of readings for the direct speech beginning τι ἐστὶν probably represents attempts to give a smoother flow to Mark's vivid but unconventional syntax." France.

διδάχη, ης f see v.22

καινος, η, ον new

"'New' in respect of quality, as distinct from νεος, 'new' as regards time." Taylor.

"Thus the issue, 'Who is Jesus?' which will increasingly dominate Mark's narrative, is already raised acutely in his first public appearance." France.

ἐξουσια, ας f see v.22

ἐπιτασσω command, order

ὑπακουω obey, be subject to

ὑπακουουσιν "Attic Greek strictly adheres to the rule of singular verb with neuter plural subject. In the N.T., as also in the LXX, there is much wavering on the matter." Cranfield.

Oliver O'Donovan comments, "The paradox consists in the *non sequitur* between the display of miraculous power and the authority of teaching... What Jesus had to say about the reign of God was authoritative because it was confirmed by an exercise of power that demonstrated it... Jesus' teaching ministry, then, is taken by the evangelists to be something more than instruction. It is a disclosure of the reign of God, through which the authority of God asserts itself. Jesus' authority consists in his capacity to bring us directly into contact with God's authority." *The Desire of the Nations*, pp 88,89.

Verse 28

καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἡ ἀκοὴ αὐτοῦ εὐθὺς πανταχοῦ εἰς ὅλην τὴν περίχωρον τῆς Γαλιλαίας.

Cf. 1:33, 37, 45; 2:1-2; 3:7-9.

ἀκοη, ης f report, news

Here means 'report', 'rumour' while in 7:35 it means 'ear'.

πανταχου everywhere

ὁλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire

περιχωρος, ου f surrounding region,
neighbourhood

Taylor understands this phrase to mean 'all that part of Galilee which is around (Capernaum)'.