

DATING MARK, THE FIRST GOSPEL

Gospel written too late to be dependable

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament's four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the only real sources of information about the alleged life of the historical Jesus. They are also the only accounts of this life that Christians consider divinely inspired. The other gospels that were excluded from the New Testament were written too late to be of any value. Considering the fanaticism that marks most forms of Christianity, it is remarkable that their precious gospels show no indication of having existed in their present form at least until more than a century after Jesus died.

The gospels could have been written a year after Jesus died and Jesus might still not have existed. Selective choice of the readership by the engineers of the Church could have ensured that Jesus would be believed in. But the longer the gospels can be proved to have existed after Jesus died the more likely it is that Christianity is a fake. Had the gospel writers not been ashamed of how late they wrote they would have given us dates for then as now people did not like late accounts or accounts that could be late.

The gospel of Mark is the most important gospel in the sense that it was the first and the gospels of Matthew and Luke were largely dependant on it. It is the one we must examine the deepest if we have concerns about the veracity of the New Testament writers.

DATING MARK

Paul was the first Christian writer.

The gospels came later. Mark is the oldest extant gospel though there might have been older ones.

The Roman Catholic book, *The Jesus Event and Our Response* confesses that the gospels could have got a bit of revision and that it is not clear that they were originally written as they are now. It says this happened because of the way Matthew and Luke revised Mark and revised whatever source they used to form their own material that is absent from Mark (page 78).

The tradition of Clement of Alexandria that Peter dictated the gospel to Mark is contradicted by Irenaeus who said that the Gospel was not written until after Peter and Paul had died (*Jesus and the Four Gospels*, page 151). Peter could have dictated the information to Mark who edited it into book form so both men could be right. But there is evidence that Peter never helped to produce the book at all. The author composed it with Peter out of the way. Those scholars who date the gospel within the lifetime of Peter have no right. Early tradition weak as it is, comes before their feebly supported guesses.

Christians like to give the gospels as early a date as possible because the closer they put them to Jesus the more likely they think they are to be true. So the question of when the gospels were composed might be inseparable from the question as to whether or not Jesus existed.

Mark tells so many lies that he must have been writing after 70 AD when he was confident that the Jews were too battered to find his work's weak points and use them against him. This was the case after 70 AD when a huge number of Jews emigrated from Palestine (page 343, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*) not to mention the number that died in the war.

Incredibly, Mark says that Jesus told people not to tell he cured them. What was the point of doing miraculous cures if people were not allowed to tell? Mark says that the more Jesus forbade them the keener they were to tell. And they did tell (Mark 7). They betrayed Jesus for they must have given the impression they would honour his request and not tell. So when they were so dodgy maybe they lied about being cured in the first place? Jesus must have wanted them to deny it after they had spoken. This looks like Jesus knew they were mad. He knew that he did not cure them and they embarrassed him. He wanted them to lie. And then in the next chapter, Jesus decides to do what some consider to be the miracle of multiplying food for thousands and when the Jews ask him for a sign he refuses and does not tell them that the food was a sign. Is he denying that his miracle really was a miracle? If it wasn't then it was a trick. These blots would have been paraded by the Jews but they were not suggesting that the gospel had a late date and took a long time to get commonplace.

Mark was the first to give us the parable of the mustard seed in which he says the tiny nucleus of followers of Christ will

become a large tree. This could only have been written after the persecutions of the Christians.

We know this because you don't say that your sect will become large when it is persecuted and there is a danger of it being got rid of. The Jews could not persecute to any important extent after 70 AD. Rome was tolerant enough of Christians in the first century.

Mark and the later Matthew (see Matthew 12:43) have too many demons in them which suggests that they were written for gullible people. The Gentiles did not like Jews and would have been willing to believe that affliction by evil spirits was epidemic among them. This would suggest a date long after 70 AD when Judaism had had a terrible fall for lies like that would only work if there were few Jews around and/or if Judaism had fallen into unbelievable disorder. The gospels were tailored to suit Gentile prejudices though they were made for Jewish Christians. The Gentiles had to become Jews and Christians at the one time for the Church claimed to be the New Judaism and the New Israel.

Mark's lies, however blatant, would not have damaged his scheme to delude people for the Jews were all forced out of Judaea and Jerusalem in 135 AD by command of Hadrian the Emperor (page 342, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*). His gospel did not become reasonably known until after that.

As *The Messianic Legacy* informs us, Mark and Matthew after him, are ashamed of the apostle of Jesus, Simon, being a zealot and try to cover it up. Therefore Mark must be no older than 70 AD and could easily be younger (page 467). The gospels twist the word for zealot, qannai, into Canaanite but Luke gives the correct meaning (page 71). Thus, Mark and Matthew were sure nobody knew that Simon was a zealot so external records and witnesses posed no threat. If there were a risk they would not have mentioned the man at all. It would have been some years before Mark could feel the time was right to mention Simon. Therefore these thoughts encourage us to pick a time long long after 70 AD. Zealots made heroes of their followers so the gospels could only engage in their deception and get away with it better in the second century.

The epistles of Paul must have been well circulated when Mark wrote because Mark is not very interested in theology. Mark would have felt the need to go into Jesus' theology had these letters which are almost entirely theological not been very well known and popularised by the Church. Mark wants to show that Jesus was a man with human feelings and to tell us what Jesus did. He did not even bother recounting the resurrection appearances. The endings to Mark about Jesus' appearances are forged. He left the theology to Paul. Paul's writings could only have been well known around 100 AD when the second letter of Peter was forged. This letter was written to stop people twisting Paul's letters. It speaks of these letters as distributed very well. Mark must have been written in that time or after.

The gospel mentions that the religion of Christ is esoteric or secretive (Mark 4). There is no hint of such an attitude in the New Testament so we can say that it may have started after the period covered in the New Testament which goes up to the sixties. Mark might have been the first to provide Jesus with a life-story.

The Gospel of Mark seeks to run down the Jews and favour the evil Romans so it was after Roman converts. This would have been done when Christians were being persecuted by the Romans in the hope that the Romans will see Christianity as harmless to them and worth joining. This is why Professor Brandon thinks that the gospel was written in the time of the triumphant return of General Titus to Rome in 70 AD after the victory in Jerusalem when he paraded the treasures looted from the Temple (page 41, *Jesus the Evidence*). But Mark could have remembered what the Romans did years after this and made them look angelic in case they would turn nasty again. The fear would never have left him.

Mark warns that God's people will be fought by persecutions by enemies who hate God. Are these the persecutions undertaken by Rome? Some say that a book that licked the Roman boots would not express disapproval of Rome killing Christians so the persecutions it had in mind might have been Jewish ones before 70 AD. But the Romans did not mind what people thought as long as they had no intention of standing in their way. They could not expect everybody to approve of their actions. St Paul wrote that the Jews rejected the gospel which is why it has to be taken to pagans so Jewish persecutions of Christians were insignificant. The persecutions were Roman ones.

All rational scholars hold that the gospels lied about Pilate being forced by the Jewish people to have Jesus crucified. The gospel of Mark had to have been written after Pilate's records were lost in the strife in Jerusalem in 70 AD for Roman historians could prevent the gospel being taken seriously if it lied about Pilate. Pilate died an unpopular man and they had no problem with crediting him with Jesus' death. And even if he were popular if it was true they would not have minded it being revealed. It would have taken some years to find out what was missing and what was in the archives in Rome.

The author did not want Jews reading his book when it was so obviously intended for Romans. Was he afraid of what they knew?

If the Mark gospel had been near the time of Jesus and regarded as worth paying attention to then why did nobody get the author or someone to fix his grammatical errors regarding the past, present and future tenses and poor Greek? (page 138,

Jesus and the Four Gospels). It must have been young and unpopular and seen through.

Had the gospel been written by Mark under Peter's supervision the chapter in it about the resurrection would not have been lost. It would have been too important to let that happen. The real Mark would have made it clear that the stranger in white at the tomb was an angel to prevent anybody thinking the body was stolen by strangers in white. This naivety suggests that the gospel was confidential which was why it was never made more convincing.

Clement of Rome would have had the hidden Gospel of Mark if it had been written. But he never cites it. The early Church had no problem in revealing the words of Jesus so Mark did not exist then when Clement had to use weak and inferior material to prove his points. Mark must have been written after his letter which dates from 96 AD.

THE FIRST GOSPEL

Mark is the oldest gospel we have got.

It preceded Luke and Matthew for they used it to create their own gospels. It simpler than they are and Matthew made some changes when he stole Mark's stories to make them more palatable to Romans and Christians and embellished some of them. Stories get improved and get some window dressing when retold so Mark must be the oldest gospel we have.

Mark said that God did not want some people near him as repentant friends (Mark 4:12). But in Matthew's version this is changed so that it is not God who pushes people away but people who push God away.

Also, Mark wrote that Jesus could not do mighty works which Matthew changed to did not do as many mighty works.

Jesus criticism in Mark to the young rich man, "Why do you call me good?" is changed to, Why do you ask me about what is good?" in Matthew (page 139, Jesus and the Four Gospels). Matthew read it as a denial by Jesus that Jesus was sinless and changed it.

The earliest tradition says that Matthew came first. But since this tradition was first preserved in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (New American Bible, Bible Dictionary, page 140). Eusebius was famously unreliable in anything to do with defending the Christian faith. He was into making the faith more persuasive at any cost even if it meant telling whoppers. We cannot be sure if the tradition existed at all. It is most likely that it did not, if it is our Matthew's gospel he is referring to. Yet the records Eusebius uses make it doubtful that it is our version of Matthew that is meant in these records.

The tradition was recorded by a bishop called Papias but Papias said Matthew wrote the words of the Lord which suggests that it is probably not our Matthew. So, the idea that Mark is the first gospel or story of Jesus we have is sound enough.

Mark says that the Mark gospel is the beginning of the gospel (1:1). Is Mark saying that his gospel writing is starting or is he claiming to be writing the first gospel? If Mark wrote before anybody else had, the chance is that his gospel would be very early indeed. But this does not square with the negligent attitude to history in the apostle's time as exemplified by Paul and the other apostles, who endorsed Paul, by implication. If Mark means that he is the first gospel writer he is lying and trying to make the gospel of older than it was. That would mean that Mark was a clever liar and a shady character who could have made the whole story up.

It could be that everybody just believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus before the gospel and Mark was the first to give Jesus a life story.

If Mark means that he is only starting his own gospel then it appears to make no sense for him to begin with a story about Jesus getting baptised by John in the river Jordan. The birth of Christ would be the start of the good news. But perhaps Mark thought that the baptism in the Jordan changed Jesus from an ordinary individual to a world saviour and teacher. There is no hint of that at all. Mark was saying his gospel was "the first stage in the development of the message" (page 130, Jesus and the Four Gospels). This implies that Mark might have got his information from revelation and not the witnesses. To us, revelation is imagination. He wanted people to add to his story though not necessarily create other gospels. That could be why he says that the secret doctrines of the kingdom of God are hidden from outsiders though the parables are easy to interpret. He could mean that God was going to wipe memories of Jesus in the first century. The idea that Jesus was so popular with the people and still ended up on a cross suggests that the wiping process was under way.

The longer after the alleged wiping the easier it would be to get people to think that Jesus who nobody heard of as a historical first century personage really existed.

What we have of Mark's work ends at Mark 16:8.

The Gospel stops without even speaking of the resurrection appearances and ascension which were of supreme importance in Christian dogma. It halts with the word "for" (page 144, The Unauthorized Version). This shows that the rest must have been lost. It was not cut out for then it would not be left up in the air but replaced by something that would have been taken for the original. A chunk called the Longer Ending was added on by another writer to continue and finish the story which does not match Mark's style and promises amazing miracles that do not fit the relative sobriety of the rest of the gospel. The Shorter Ending is just a few lines and speaks of Jesus appearing and sending his disciples out to spread the word. We know that the Longer Ending which completes the story has different style and use of words from Mark and seems to have been concocted from material in John and Matthew all of which points to it being a later forgery (Biblical Dictionary, NAB, Mark, Gospel of). The two most though not totally dependable manuscripts, the Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, do not have the section. There are lots of differences between the two but nothing as serious as a whole chunk that had nothing controversial missing. The Christians were sure it was a fake when they did not use it despite being keen on accumulating evidence for the resurrection. This proves that the gospel was written after the apostles were all dead including John for there was no way the Church could get somebody to use the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to restore the missing portion. John died in the final years of the first century.

The gospel must have been hidden for nobody circulates a half-book. The gospels were highly confidential until well into the second century when nobody could remember if they were history or not. Nobody could even remember the original ending of Mark so as to attempt to restore it from memory. The older Mark was the more easy it would have been to put in a resurrection account that could not be traced back to forgery that would be carried into all copies because the further back to forgery we go the less Christians there are. This was not done so it indicates that Mark must not have come from the first century.

We conclude that the Gospel of Mark was written at least forty years after the time of Jesus. Forty years during those turbulent times would be the psychological equivalent of a hundred years of modern times. People had more important things to worry about than Jesus or gospels or if the Christians were truthful. In any case, the gospel was kept confidential until the second century - it was the perfect environment to produce a gospel of complete lies.