

Gospel Authority: for Christians today

Although Mark wrote his Gospel for a people and a time, the themes of discipleship, suffering, and so on, continue to be relevant for all Christians today. In his Gospel, Mark presents Christians today with a very human Christ -a suffering servant -to whom we can relate as God's 'own dear son', who overcomes death so that we could have life in his name.

Because of the way Mark's gospel came to be written, with its probable reliance on Peter and other eyewitnesses, with its being selected as one of the four reliable gospel texts, Christians today consider the gospel trustworthy because it speaks authentically of the Jesus of history (the man as a historical figure) as being one and the same as the Christ of faith (the person on whom Christians base their faith).



What do Christians mean when they say Mark's Gospel is the Word of God?

- They might mean the gospel has power to influence lives, even to change lives completely. On bearing the message of Mark's gospel and 'receiving it in Good soil', a person today may perceive Christ speaking with authority, 'Follow me.'
- Christians believe that they can base their lives on the gospel; they can be confident that it contains the message of salvation for them in their own time.
- Some Christians, for example, Catholics, believe that the Holy Spirit is the true author of all scripture, inspiring the human authors to write what they did for the salvation of all. This does not mean a 'dictation from above', rather a genuine co-operation with humanity.
- Some Christians believe that the scripture is the only guide to Christian living; others look to the teaching of the Church and its interpretation of scripture for their guide.

Some Points for Evaluation. Use them to construct a well-rounded argument.

'Mark's gospel is a reliable account of the public life of Jesus.'

For the statement

the oral tradition was quite dependable Mark would have had access to eyewitness accounts

Mark was concerned with the truth; he could have left certain aspects of Jesus' ministry out so as to make the overall account more appealing, but this he refused to do

Mark shows the apostles in a bad light at certain times; these same apostles were leaders of the early Church

Christians believe that the Gospel is the inspired Word of God that the Spirit of God encouraged Mark other gospel writers borrowed much from Mark

Against the statement

Mark was a believer; his intention was to make others believe too

Mark deliberately highlighted certain aspects of Jesus' ministry so as to strike a chord with the early Christians

Mark missed out the first thirty years of Jesus' life; he devotes a third of Gospel to one week (the week leading up to Jesus' death)

Mark's gospel is in disagreement with other gospel accounts at certain points: for example, Mark has it that the two crucified with Jesus insulted him; Luke has it that one of the crucified criminals was repentant