

Mark's Gospel

Who is Jesus?

Why did he come?

How should I respond?



Meet The King

(A 8-week study guide)

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Introduction

Reading the Bible can be quite a daunting experience; especially if you have not done it before or are not use to doing it. This eight week course has been designed simply to help you work your way through some of the main sections of Mark's gospel with a friend.

For each study the Bible passage is printed on the left. As you study it feel free to highlight or mark the text in whatever ways you find helpful. Opposite each Bible passage there will be several questions. These questions are designed to help you get to the heart of each Bible passage and what it has to say to you about God, Jesus, yourself and others.

As you read through Mark's Gospel it is worth keeping the three very important questions below, in the back of your mind as you do so:

Who is Jesus?

Why did he come?

How should I respond to him?

Finally, it is worth saying that the Bible is not a magical book. It is a book that uses language and grammar just like any other book. The same rules that you or I might apply to reading a newspaper or a novel also apply to reading the Bible. As you read Mark's Gospel try to keep this in mind.

Try also to have fun reading Mark's Gospel! Hopefully by the end of it you will have a much better understanding of what it means that Jesus is the Christ; the Son of God.

1 *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* 2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—3 "a voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."

4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." 12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13 and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. 14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

1. How does Mark show us that Jesus is worthy of attention?
2. What '*witnesses*' does Mark call upon to introduce Jesus and why?
3. What is the message of Jesus, and how does it draw your attention to him?
4. What is your own reaction to Jesus after reading this passage?

Study 2

The King's authority to forgive sins

Mark 2:1-12

1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Study 2

The *King's* authority to forgive sins

Mark 2:1-12

1. What do you think is the most surprising thing about this encounter?
2. If someone in a crowd of people said to you, “your sins are forgiven”, what would you and everyone else think of them?
3. How does Jesus go onto show that he can actually forgive sins?
4. What difference do you think his authority should have in your life?

Study 3

Joining the *King's* family

Mark 3:7-35

7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. 8 When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. 9 Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. 10 For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. 11 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons. 16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." 22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." 23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.

28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." 30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. 34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Study 3

Joining the *King's* family

Mark 3:7-35

1. How do people react to Jesus today?
2. What responses to Jesus do you see in this passage?
3. Why was Jesus' authoritative teaching a threat to the teachers of the law?
4. Jesus says, "He first binds the strong man". Then indeed he may plunder his house" (verse.27). What is the point of this statement?
5. What house is Jesus claiming to be overthrowing, and what could this mean for you?
6. According to this passage, how do you become a part of Jesus' family?

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" 24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." 25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village." 27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" 28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Study 4

Seeing Jesus the *King* clearly

Mark 8:22-38

1. What event takes place just before Peter's confession?
2. Why do you think Mark puts these two stories next to each other?
3. Describe the healing of the blind man?
4. How good is a partial understanding of Jesus?
5. According to Jesus, why does a follower of Christ have to "deny himself" and "lose his life"?

Study 5

Why the King needed to die?

Mark 10:17-45

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." 38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." 41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Study 5

Why the *King* needed to die?

Mark 10:17-45

1. Looking at verses 17-22, what would Jesus say is the basic character of people in the world?
2. Based upon this passage, do you think you can earn your salvation by being a good person?
3. In verses 32-34, Jesus says that he is going to die. According to verse 45, what is the purpose of his death?
4. Read Isaiah 53:5, 10-12. How do these verses help in our understanding of what a ransom is?
5. What would Jesus tell you to do if you desired to enter into a relationship with God?

Study 6

The innocent *King* condemned

Mark 14:53-15:15

53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. 54 Peter followed him at distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. 55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. 56 Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. 57 Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him:

58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" 59 Yet even then their testimony did not agree. 60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?"

61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." 63 The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64 "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. 65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy!" And the guards took him and beat him. 66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. 68 But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. 69 When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." 70 Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

71 He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." 72 Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Mark 15:1 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. 2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate. "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. 3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of." 5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. 6 Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. 9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. 12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. 13 "Crucify him!" they shouted. 14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" 15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Study 6

The innocent *King* condemned

Mark 14:53-15:15

1. When we read of great tragedies in history, we tend to think that we would have acted differently if we had been there. Can you see yourself in this passage and if so what would you be doing?
2. How are some of the characters in this passage similar to each other? How are they different?
3. What evidence is Mark presenting in his attempt to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?
4. How does Jesus' silence actually communicate his identity? See also Isaiah 53:7-9.
5. How does this passage affect your view of Jesus?

Study 7

The crucified *king!*

Mark 15:16-39

16 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17 They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18 And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19 Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. 21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).

23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. 25 It was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left, 28 [and the scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was counted with the lawless ones."] 29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!" 31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

33 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." 36 One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. 37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. 38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Study 7

The crucified *king!*

Mark 15:16-39

1. How many times does the phrase “king of the Jews” appear in chapter 15 (including verses 1-15)?
2. What is ironic about this and what is Mark trying to say about the events at the cross?
3. Read Psalm 22. How does this help you understand the words of Jesus while hanging on the cross in verse 34?
4. How does Psalm 22 end and what is Jesus ultimately claiming for himself?
5. Why do you think the events at the cross were necessary?
6. What final description of Jesus’ identity does Mark provide? Where have we seen this before?
7. What do the events at the cross teach us about what it means to follow Jesus?

Study 8**The resurrected *king!*****Mark 15:42-16:8**

42 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45 When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. 46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" 8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Study 8

The resurrected *king!*

Mark 15:42-16:8

1. What fact does Mark want his readers to be sure of in verses 42-47?
2. What does Mark say happened to Jesus' body?
3. What is surprising about these accounts of the resurrection?
4. Why is it significant that Jesus rose from the dead?
5. What questions do you still have? Are you ready to follow Jesus?

Glossary

Apostle: Unique individuals who witnessed the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ, some of whom later wrote books of the New Testament.

Baptising: The act of dipping, immersing or sprinkling someone symbolising them having been cleanse of and forgiven for their sins through believing in Jesus.

Blaspheming: Misrepresenting God, treating his name or character carelessly.

Believe: To actively trust, reply or depend upon something or someone.

Disciples: Those called to follow Jesus and to learn from him.

Eternal life: Life in all its fullness, with God for ever in his kingdom.

Gentiles: Non-Jews, anyone not Jewish by birth.

Glory: A highly exalted state or position.

Kingdom of God: Where God's king (Jesus) rules over God's people. Not of this world and so not yet a geographical kingdom.

Parable: A story often from everyday life but with a spiritual meaning.

Pharisees: Jewish religious leaders.

Pilate: The Roman governor in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death.

Prophet: A messenger of God or someone who declares the word of God to others.

Repent: A change of mind and heart that leads to a change of life.

Righteous: Being right with God, or living in a right way before God.

Ransom: A price paid so that a slave could be set free.

Sanhedrin: A council of religious Jewish leaders.

Sabbath: The Jewish day set aside for rest and enjoyment of God.

Satan: A spiritual being who opposes God, his people and all that is good. His name means '*adversary*' and he is also referred to as Beelzebub or the Devil.

Sin: Attitude of thinking independently and therefore acting independently of God.

Sins: Rebellion against God in terms of what we actually think, say and do.

Sinners: Those who sin (i.e. all except Jesus). See above.

Son of Man: Old Testament way of referring to a human being, but also is a male human figure who is given great power and eternal rule over the whole world; Jesus often used this title to refer to himself.

Soul: That part of a person that lives on even after physical death has occurred.

Appendix: Can you rely on Mark's Gospel? Who? When? Why?

Mark was a close friend and companion of Peter, who was an apostle. This means he was specially chosen to witness the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In one of the two letters Peter wrote to first century Christian churches, we read the following: *"I will make every effort to see that after my departure (i.e. his death) you will always be able to remember these things"* (2 Peter 1:15). Peter was referring to the things he saw, heard and learned about Jesus. He passed them on to others like Mark. Peter died in the mid 60s of the first century. We have reason to believe that Mark's Gospel was written around about this time.

Mark it would seem shared the same desire as Peter, so he wrote these things down in a book for future generations to read. The opening sentence of his Gospel reveals the subject of his book: *"The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* (Mark 1:1).

Jesus died, rose again and returned to heaven around AD30. Mark wrote his book about 30 years later. This is well within the lifetime of those who lived through the events he recorded. Mark therefore had to get his facts right because any inaccuracies would have discredited both him and his account of the events.

Has Mark's book changed over time?

How different is Mark's original book from the book that we have today? We don't have Mark's original to compare with the book we call Mark's Gospel. This is normal because ancient documents like Mark's Gospel would have been written on papyrus or parchment, which would

eventually rot away. For this reason historians assess the reliability of copies of an original by asking the following questions:

- *How old are the copies?*
- *How much time has elapsed between the writing of the original documents and the production of the copies that now exist?*
- *How many copies have been found?*

The table below answers these questions for three widely-trusted historical documents, and then compares them with the New Testament (including Mark’s Gospel).

	Date of original document	Date of oldest surviving copy	Approximate time between original and oldest surviving copy	Number of ancient copies in existence today
THUCYDIDES’ HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR	C. 431-400 BC	AD 900 plus a few late century fragments	1,300 years	73
CAESAR’S GALLIC WAR	C. 58-50 BC	AD 825	875 years	10
TACITUS’ HISTORIES AND ANNALS	C. AD 98-108	c. AD 850	750 years	2
THE WHOLE NEW TESTAMENT	AD 40-100	AD 350	310 years	14,000 (approx. 5,000 Greek, 8,000 Latin, 1000 in other languages)
(MARK’S GOSPEL)	AD 60-65	(3 RD century)	(240 years)	

As the table shows, the oldest surviving copies of Mark’s Gospel were produced 240 years after his original (*a small time frame when compared with other ancient documents*) and an astonishing 14,000 copies exist today (*many more than for other ancient documents*). So we have good reason to be confidence that what we read today is actually what Mark originally wrote.

