

PEOPLE

Mark

John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. He was a cousin/nephew of Barnabas and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. His mother was a Jewish Christian (Mary) and his father a Roman Gentile. It was common for Jews of that period to bear both a Semitic name such as John and a Greco-Roman name such as Mark.

He was the son of a well-to-do Christian woman in Jerusalem. (His father may have been dead.) Mary was a woman of sterling qualities and was loyal to Christian ideals. At that time Christians were a persecuted sect. She faced the consequences of having her home as a center of spiritual power and influence. Mary was self-sacrificing in time, effort and money to serve the Lord. The fact that they had a maid (Rhoda – Acts 12:13) indicates that the household was considerably large. Their house appears to have been the resort of the early followers of Christ. It was the house to which Peter went to when he miraculously escaped from prison. (Acts 12:1-19)

Barnabas and Paul were set apart for mission by the church at Antioch. (Acts 13:1-3). When they arrived at Cyprus they found Mark there. (Acts 13:5) John Mark was probably staying with family members or friends on Cyprus at this time. Barnabas owned real estate and had other economic and family associations on Cyprus. Therefore it would be convenient for Barnabas to suggest young John Mark might be helped in his maturing process by assisting Paul and Barnabas in their missionary journeys.

Mark accompanied Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary journey. Right after that he left them and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13-14) Later when Paul and Barnabas wanted to go on their second journey, Barnabas again wanted Mark to go along. Paul thought it best not taking Mark with them because he had deserted them earlier. This caused a sharp argument and they separated from each other. (Acts 15:37-40)

The reasons for John Mark's departure to Jerusalem have been subject to much speculation, but there is simply too little data to regard any explanation with confidence. Returning home to his mother and messianic believing friends in Jerusalem, Mark would no doubt continue to mature in his faith. He would over time no doubt continue to appreciate the new work God was doing through Paul to the Gentiles.

While in Jerusalem Mark learned at feet of Peter. Peter called Mark "his son" (1 Peter 5:13); a spiritual son. They became close associates and Mark received from Peter the information about Jesus' ministry that he used to write his Gospel.

His relationship with Paul was repaired. Paul says that in Rome Mark was one of the four born Jews who had been a cordial and comfort to him in his imprisonment. He commends him, in the view of a probable journey, to the loving reception of the church at Colosse. Colossians 4:10: "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his

greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)” Paul says to Timothy about the value of Mark: “⁹ Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:9-11)

After the deaths of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, John Mark went to Alexandria, a Greco-Roman city in Egypt. It was a city with a large Jewish population. It’s believed that he was the pastor of the church at Alexandria. At some point Mark was martyred there.

Sources:

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