

# The Petrine *Kērygma* and the Gospel according to Mark

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## The Tradition of Peter's Preaching

- “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly” (Acts 10:38–40).
  - The Lucan versions of speeches put in the mouth of Peter witness **the strong tradition of Peter's preaching in the early church**
  - This preaching that affected not only the early chapters of Acts but also **may have been an important source for Mark**, the earliest of the New Testament Gospels

## Why Petrine?

- Besides 1 and 2 Peter, no other canonical documents have been attributed to the apostle Peter
  - *even in the case of the Petrine epistles there has been some question about their composition and authorship*
- Unclear how much the Lucan speeches in Acts represent Peter's actual words, Luke's version of them, or something in between
- As used here, the adjective "Petrine" refers to a range of possibilities:
  - **material that originated with Peter himself**, either directly or via his students and followers
  - that **bore Peter's authority and approval**; that was generally apostolic, for whom Peter was a representative figure
  - or that was simply **believed to have been from Peter**

## *Kērygma*: The Apostolic Proclamation of Christ

- *kērygma*, a Greek term related to the word for "herald," which has the general meaning of "proclamation."
  - it can indicate both the **act** of preaching and the **content** of such preaching
  - however, the major thrust of the term consists of **what** was preached, particularly about **who Jesus was** and **what he did**
- *kērygma* (proclamation) versus *didachē* (teaching)
  - *kērygma* represents **the early preaching of the saving message of Jesus**
  - *didachē* consisted of **the body of Christian moral instruction and ethical admonition**

## Petrine Authority and the Importance of Mark

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- Early Christian discussions about the authorship of the Gospel according to Mark **connected it to the authority and figure of the chief apostle**, a connection that is further suggested by the prominence of Peter in that gospel
- To the extent that Peter's preaching—or at least the tradition of Petrine *kērygma*—can be shown to have influenced the composition, shape, and content of the Gospel according to Mark, **Petrine authority may explain not only how Mark attained canonical status but also why it so strongly influenced the other synoptic gospels**

## The Tradition of Peter's Connection with Mark

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## Marcan Authorship

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- like all gospels, the second gospel is formally anonymous
- written in passable, but not always good, Greek
- the evangelist appears have known Aramaic, was knowledgeable about Jewish customs, and frequently used quotations and ideas from the Hebrew Bible
  - his portrayal of certain Jewish practices was broad, perhaps even a bit inaccurate
  - Latinisms and explanations of Jewish terms may suggest an Italian, perhaps Roman, audience
- does not appear to have been familiar with or always accurate about the geography of the Holy Land, at least not outside of Jerusalem
- probably an author who was **a Jew, perhaps from Jerusalem**, where many of the upper classes in the first century were Hellenized to some degree and could have some facility in Greek
  - *Does not seem to have been an eyewitness to Jesus ministry*

## Why Mark?

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- When titles began to appear in the late second century, this gospel was consistently known as *euangelion kata Markon*
- This consensus is first evidenced by Papias of Hierapolis (first third of the second century A.D.), who also connected Mark with Peter
- Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150–216)
  - “When Peter had publicly *preached the word* [*keryxantos to logon*] at Rome . . . many exhorted Mark, as one who had followed him for a long time and remembered what had been spoken, *to make a record of what was said*” (Clement of Alexandria *ap.* Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.5–7)

## Papias on Mark

- Mark became Peter's interpreter [*hermēneutes*] and **wrote accurately** all that he remembered, **not, indeed, in order**, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, *followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement to the Lord's oracles* [*logiōn* or "sayings"], so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them (Papias *ap.* Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15; emphasis added)

## John Mark of Acts?

- His close association with Peter made **the companion of Peter mentioned in 1 Peter 5:13**, where Peter refers to him as if he were his son, a likely candidate
  - This *seems* to be the same figure as the **John Mark** whose mother, Mary, gave Peter refuge after he escaped from prison in Jerusalem (see Acts 12:12)
  - *Yōhānan* was a Jewish name, and his surname, *Marcus*, was a very common Roman name
  - Could make him a member of the Jerusalem upper class who may have known some Greek
- A missionary companion to Barnabas and Paul (Acts 12:25), who later left the mission (Acts 13:13) but was later reconciled to Paul (see Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24)

## Peter in Mark

- **Mark mentions Peter twenty-five times**, so given the length of the gospel, it mentions the chief apostle more frequently than the other three texts
- The only disciple **with whom Jesus speaks one-on-one and addresses by name**
- Prominent at the beginning (Mark 1:16–20) and the conclusion of the body of Mark (Mark 16:7) means **references to the chief apostle frame the body of the gospel**
- Regular shift from a plural verb to a singular whenever Jesus and his disciples travel around Galilee or arrive at a specific (see Mark 5:1–2; 8:22; 11:12; 14:32), **suggesting that the source was traveling with Jesus**

## Missing and Critical References

- **Significant traditions about Peter in Matthew that are missing** in the second Gospel
  - These Matthean additions may well be explained by that gospel's christology, ecclesiology, structure, and even perhaps its author's own deference to Peter
- The disciples, including Peter, **repeatedly fail to understand Jesus** (e.g., Mark 8:14–18)
- Jesus' **personal rebuke of Peter after the first passion prediction**, when he actually says to Peter, "get thee behind me Satan" (Mark 8:33)
- The entire **denial sequence**, coming as it does after Peter's steadfast boast that he will never be offended in Jesus (see Mark 14:29)
  - Perhaps these represent the candid admissions of the Apostle himself, who, until the cross and the empty tomb, could not understand Jesus, adequately follow him, or find forgiveness?

## The Petrine *Kērygma* in Acts

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## The Pauline Pattern

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Moreover, brethren, **I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you**, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that ***Christ died for our sins*** according to the scriptures;

And that ***he was buried, and that he rose again the third day*** according to the scriptures:

And that ***he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve***. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all ***he was seen of me also***, as of one born out of due time. . . .

Therefore whether it were I or they, **so we preach [*kēryssomen*]**, and so ye believed. (1 Corinthians 15:1–8, 11; emphases added)

## Five Kerygmatic Speeches of Peter

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- Acts 2:14–36, 38–39 (speech at Pentecost)
- Acts 3:12–26 (speech in Solomon's porch)
- Acts 4:8–12 (first speech to the Sanhedrin)
- Acts 5:29–32 (second speech to the Sanhedrin)
- Acts 10:34–43 (speech to Cornelius and his household)

## Speech to Cornelius and His Household

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The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, **after the baptism which John preached;**

*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

And we are witnesses of *all things which he did* both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; *whom they slew and hanged on a tree:*

*Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;*

Not to all the people, but *unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us*, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And *he commanded us to preach [kēryxai] unto the people*, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. (Acts 10:36–42; emphases added)

## Main Points of Petrine *Kērygma*

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- Jesus was prophesied
- Ministry began with the baptism of John
- God proclaimed him his Son/anointed him with power
- “Went about doing good,” which was primarily witnessed by miracles
- Crucified and died
- God raised him from the dead
- *Peter and the apostles are witnesses!*

## Marcan Structure and Content

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## One Approach to Mark

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- **prophecies of Jesus** (see Mark 1:1–2)
- **the baptizing activity of John the Baptist** (1:3–8)
- **God’s proclaiming Jesus his Son** (1:9–11)
- narratives that are dominated by **Jesus’ mighty deeds** (1:16–10:52)
  - *Peter’s declaration at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was the Christ* (see Mark 8:27–30)
- accounts of Jesus’ Jerusalem ministry (11–14), which focuses on
  - **his death on the cross** (15)
  - **his Resurrection** (16:1–8)

## Another Approach to Mark: A Drama in Three Acts

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- Heading (1:1)
- Prologue (1:2–13)
- Act I: **Authoritative Mission in Galilee** (1:14–8:30)
  - Starts with the *baptism* that preceded the opening of the formal ministry
- Act II: On the Road to Jerusalem (8:31–10:52)
  - *The passion predictions begin: “the shadow of the cross falls across the narrative”*
- Act III: **Climax in Jerusalem** (11:1–16:8)
  - *Note the geographic and thematic, not chronological, progression*

## Sayings of Jesus in Mark

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- With the exception of Mark 13, the Olivet Discourse, Jesus' teaching in the second Gospel is rarely lengthy, never occurring in long sermons as in Luke or especially in Matthew
- It consists mostly of **short parables and chreiai**, which are short anecdotes comprised of the words or deeds of a subject chosen to reveal his character or significance
  - This rhetorical form, in fact, leads Witherington to interpret Papias' statement about Peter's preaching differently: "*Peter who composed his teachings according to the chreiai [revealing anecdotes] and not as a rhetorical arrangement of the Lord's sayings.*"

## The Vivid Style of Mark

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- Often attributed to the possibility that it was composed for oral recitation in Christian meetings
- But **Peter necessarily only told anecdotes or short stories about Jesus when he preached**
  - R.T. France notes, "If Papias' information is correct, Peter . . . 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 Case of Marcan Miracles

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- While Mark generally preserves only short sayings of Jesus, but it is nonetheless **very descriptive of the actions of Jesus, particularly of his miracles.**
- In Mark the account of a miracle is often twice or even three times as long as the story of the same miracle in Matthew or even Luke (e.g., Gadarene Demonic, 20 verses in Mark, 6 in Matt).
- More so than Matthew or Luke, **Mark is willing to describe Jesus' words or actions when performing a miracle**, despite the possibility that some actions, such as using saliva or pronouncing certain words, could have been confused with contemporary magical practices.
- **Marcan christology portrays Jesus as the strong, though still rather human, representative of the kingdom of God who has come to overthrow the kingdom of Satan.**

## The Canonical Position of Mark, the Memory of Peter, and the Power of *Kērygma*

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## Apostolic Authority and Canonicity

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- Among the criteria that Raymond Brown deduced helped to determine whether early Christians preserved and eventually accepted texts as canonical included **the idea that “scripture” should have apostolic origin, whether “real or putative”**
- The authors of Matthew and John were early identified with the apostles of those names
- The Gospels of Mark and Luke did not carry as much inherent authority
  - **Luke was associated with Paul**
  - *Did Peter's connection with Mark's Gospel, whether real or assumed, secure for Mark a permanent place in the canon?*

## Matthew's Seeming Deference to Mark

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- Why did Matthew, either written by or held to be so closely associated with one of the Twelve, follow Mark so closely even when his chronology is not accurate?
  - A testament to the literary genius of the Marcan evangelist, who in setting the Petrine *kerygma* into a narrative form **succeeded in telling the story of Jesus in such a powerful and effective way**
  - *Was Matthew deferring to the authority of Peter?*

## Peter's Testimony of Jesus

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- Hengel not only sees Peter as “a theologically powerful thinker, an impressive proclaimer, and a competent organizer” but also sees **Peter's preaching as the base of the *kērygma* and the Christian ethos that developed so quickly after Jesus' Resurrection**
- Regardless of how Petrine either the second Gospel or the Lucan speeches of Peter in Acts ultimately turn out to be, *the proclamation of the divinity of Jesus and the power of his salvific acts is something that Peter himself, the Marcan evangelist, the author of Acts, the early Christians, and we, as modern believers, can all accept as truthful, vital, and saving.*