

# Contents

Introduction	1
I The background to the gospel	
1. What is a gospel?	7
a. The meaning of the word 'gospel'	7
b. The oral period and the expectation of the Second Coming	8
c. Why the good news was written down	12
d. A gospel is not a biography	14
Questions for chapter 1	15
2. Who was Mark?	16
a. A Christian in Rome?	16
b. When was the gospel written?	19
Questions for chapter 2	20
3. Where did Mark find his material?	21
a. The oral tradition	21
b. Papias claimed Peter was Mark's source	21
c. Mark makes use of Paul's ideas	23
d. The Old Testament	24
Questions for chapter 3	26
4. The good news of Jesus as told by Mark	27
a. Mark the editor	27
b. What influenced Mark?	27
c. Mark's aims as editor	29
Questions for chapter 4	34
II The content of the gospel	
5. The beginning of the gospel	41
a. Mark links Jesus with past and future	41
b. Baptism	43
c. John the Baptist	45
d. Additional notes	46
Questions for chapter 5	46

6.	The disciples	48
	a. How Mark portrays the disciples	48
	b. The Twelve	49
	c. The church imitates the disciples	50
	d. The disciples' failures and temptations	52
	e. The Twelve 3:13–19	54
	f. References to the disciples	57
	Questions for chapter 6	57
7.	The conflict with authority	59
	a. The one enemy, Satan	59
	b. Christians and conflict	60
	c. How Mark charts the opposition to Jesus	61
	d. The Jewish authorities	65
	e. References to Jesus' conflict with authority	69
	Questions for chapter 7	69
8.	Jesus' purpose according to Mark	71
	a. A new idea of Messiahship	71
	b. The Transfiguration 9:2–8	74
	c. Mark's use of titles	75
	Questions for chapter 8	79
9.	The miracles of Jesus	80
	a. What is a miracle?	80
	b. Did Jesus perform miracles?	80
	c. Miracles and magic in the first century AD	81
	d. Mark and miracles	82
	e. Symbolism in the miracles	83
	f. Jesus and the fight against evil	83
	g. Mark's theme of secrecy and revelation	84
	Questions for chapter 9	85
10.	The miracles as told by Mark	86
	a. Types of miracles in Mark	86
	b. The exorcisms	86
	Questions on the exorcisms	90
	c. The healings	91
	Questions on the healings	96
	d. The nature miracles	98
	Questions on the nature miracles	102
	Additional essay questions on the miracles	103
11.	The teaching of Jesus	104
	a. Jesus the teacher	104

b.	Mark and ‘the teaching’	105
c.	The parables	105
d.	Additional note	107
	Questions for chapter 11	108
12.	Themes in Jesus’ teaching	109
a.	Theme 1: A new teaching	109
	Questions on Theme 1	111
b.	Theme 2: Old and new	112
	Questions on Theme 2	114
c.	Theme 3: Discipleship	115
	Questions on Theme 3	118
d.	Theme 4: The coming of the kingdom of God	118
	Questions on Theme 4	119
e.	Theme 5: Teaching about the future	120
	Questions on Theme 5	122
	Note on divorce	123
	Additional essay questions on the teaching	124
13.	The Passion narrative	128
a.	The confirmation of the good news	128
b.	The importance of Jerusalem	129
c.	The Last Supper 14:12–25	131
d.	Mark’s portrayal of the death of Jesus 15:21–39	132
e.	Resurrection and mystery 15:40–16:8a	135
f.	Mark’s ‘unsatisfactory’ ending 16:8b–20	137
	Themes in the Passion narrative	138
	Questions for chapter 13	139
14.	‘Who do men say I am?’	142
a.	The problem of history	142
b.	The Jesus of history	142
c.	‘Lives’ of Jesus	143
d.	The contemporary Jesus	143
e.	Your picture of Jesus	144
f.	Was there ever a real Jesus?	145
g.	Was Jesus God or man?	147
	Questions for chapter 14	149
	Books for reference or further study	150
	Index	151