

THE NAKED YOUNG MAN
(A Study of the Evangelist and Missionary
called John Mark, author of the gospel of Mark)

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Mark 14:51-52 – “Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.”

Church history has it that these two verses from the gospel of Mark is the author’s humble way of identifying himself as one of the eyewitnesses of Jesus’s death on the cross.

Who is Mark?

Mark’s first name was John, his mother was called Mary. (Acts 12:12, 25; Acts 15:37) Four important women are named Mary in the gospels – Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary, the mother of James and John (Jesus’s apostles); Mary, the mother of John Mark; and Mary Magdalene. It is probable that the early events of the Church in Acts 1 and 2 regarding the gathering of believers in an upper room in Jerusalem either took place in the house of Mary, the mother of James and John, or Mary, the mother of John Mark. This shows that she was one of the influential women following Jesus as recorded in Luke 8:1-2. Mark’s mother was, therefore, one of the pillars of the early Church. This can also be seen in the fact that when Peter was thrown into prison, many believers gathered frequently in Mary’s house to pray for Peter. When Peter was released from prison by an angel of the Lord, he went straight to Mary’s house to inform the Church of his miraculous release. (Acts 12:1-17)

Another important connection to the early Church for Mark was his relationship to Barnabas, the Apostle who was highly esteemed by the Church. Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). Mark is also the adopted son of Peter, the foremost Apostle of our Lord (1Peter 5:13). In this way, he occupies the same position that Timothy, and probably, Titus occupied in relation to Paul, the Apostle (1Corinthians 4:17; 1Corinthians 16:10; 1Timothy 1:2, 18; 2Timothy 2:1). These young people were undergoing direct pastoral training under these Apostles. Their training included travelling with Peter and Paul, going on errands for them, representing them and their teachings in various congregations, and looking after their domestic affairs such as shopping, cooking, washing, cleaning, letter writing, etc. (Philippians 2:19; 1Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6; 2Corinthians 12:18; Galatians 2:1) This kind of training called for humility and complete devotion to their spiritual fathers.

Above all, Mark worked closely with Paul, Peter and Barnabas (Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1-5, 13; Acts 15:36-39; 2Timothy 4:11; Philemon, vs. 24; 1Peter 5:13). It is believed that Mark wrote the Gospel according to Mark from oral and written records obtained chiefly from the Apostle Peter. Actually, the gospel of Mark was the earliest gospel of the Church. It became known in the Church around A.D. 55-65.

From this brief biography, we may well ask, “Where is the natural father of Mark in this story of faith and service?” Women are often far more trusting of God than men, look around you in the Church and you will find that women, more often than men, are willing to serve God devotedly.

If gender was revealed in heaven, there will probably be very few men, compared with the number of women, before the throne of the Lamb! Think about it...

THE INTERESTS OF MARK

Apart from the biographical details above, nothing much is known directly of Mark. However, we can make certain deductions from the way he wrote his gospel, his association with the leading apostles of the Lord and his missionary journeys.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark emphasised service and sacrifice in his portrayal of Jesus Christ. Jesus was presented as God's obedient servant, hardworking, loyal and trustworthy. Mark shows that true service always has a personal cost. Jesus Christ sacrificed His glory, His time and His life in order to complete the mission that the Father gave Him. Such was the urgency of the Father's business that Mark recorded the events in Jesus's ministry with words like "immediately" and "straightaway".

Mark's Association with the Leading Apostles of the Time

These apostles must have noticed the following things in Mark:

- (1) Vibrant personal faith in the Lord Jesus
- (2) The humility of a willing learner
- (3) The consistency of a true believer
- (4) The passion of a soul winner
- (5) The devotion of a servant of Christ