

The Gospel of Mark

Kip and Friends

The big question!

‘Should I become a follower, a disciple of Jesus, or not?

What was happening?

After the death and resurrection of Jesus the message of his life spread around the world. Through both Paul and Peter it found its way to Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. In the first century Rome was a major city with a population of about 1,000,000. It was a hub for trade around the Empire; the River Tiber allowed barges right into the city where slaves could be used to unload the goods.

Roman rule demanded worship of the many Roman gods; Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, all had Temples in Rome. In addition, the Emperor was considered a god. Christians living in the city refused to worship any other god but the God of Jesus. This made them very unpopular. In the year 64 CE a terrible fire swept through Rome, destroying many of the buildings. The Emperor Nero blamed the Christians living in the city for starting the fire, and in response, he began persecuting them: torturing and killing them at will.

Mark’s community, living in Rome at the time of the great fire, face an awful decision: Mark speaks of Jesus as a man like them: in Jesus they could know God. Should they become disciples of Jesus knowing it could lead to a horrible death?

Who is this Gospel written for?

Marks Gospel was written for mostly gentiles (non-Jews), living in Rome. Mark had a really tough task: he had to convince his community that being a disciple of Jesus was a great thing…even worth dying for.

Who was Mark?

We call this Gospel the Gospel of Mark but in fact we really don’t know who wrote it. The early Church thought that it could have been written by a companion of Peter, so named it ‘Mark’.

What might I see in the Gospel of Mark?

Writers make their point in particular ways. Mark tells his Gospel very quickly; he uses phrases like ‘and then’ and ‘immediately’. He tells us of a Jesus who feels everything that happens to him a lot; Mark’s Jesus knows what it is like to feel afraid and alone. Mark’s favourite theme is what it means to be a disciple; it begins with ‘following’.