

# Notes on some Biblical people\*

John R Hudson

## 1 John Mark, the author of Mark's gospel

John is his Jewish name and Mark his Roman name (just as Simon is Peter's Jewish name and Peter is the Greek name given to him by Jesus while Saul is Paul's Jewish name and Paul is his Roman name).

Mark could have got his Roman name like Paul, because his Jewish father was a magistrate, or like Timothy, because his mother married a non-Jew.

Mk 14:51 Most people think that Mark is the young man who fled when Jesus was arrested.

Ac 12:12 His mother was called Mary and their home in Jerusalem was a Christian meeting place; Peter chose to go to their house when he was freed from prison by the angel.

Col 4:10 His cousin was Barnabas who had introduced Paul to the church in Jerusalem after his conversion (Ga 2:1).

Ac 12:25 Barnabas and Saul took Mark with them to Antioch in Syria and then on Paul's first missionary journey to Cyprus and Southern Turkey.

Ac 13:13 John Mark went back to Jerusalem from Perga in Southern Turkey.

Ac 15:37 Paul did not want to take Mark on his second missionary journey because he had become homesick and returned from Perga on the first missionary journey. Barnabas fell out with Paul over this and took Mark with him to Cyprus.

2 Tm 4:11 Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark to Rome to help him.

Col 4:10 Mark is with Paul and Luke in Rome; he may well have largely completed his gospel by this time as Luke includes incidents described by Mark in his gospel but Mark does not include any of the incidents which Luke appears to have picked up in Palestine while Paul was in prison in Caesarea in his gospel.

1 Pet 4:3 Mark is with Peter, probably in Rome and probably after the death of Paul.

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## 1.1 Themes in Mark's gospel: an overview

- 1:1–13 John the Baptist and Jesus — His baptism and temptation
- 1:14–2:12 The start of Jesus' ministry in and around Capernaum — healing miracles
- 2:13–3:35 First conflicts with the scribes and Pharisees — choosing the Twelve
- 4:1–34 Teaching by parables
- 4:35–5:20 Jesus' power over the natural world
- 5:21–6:6 Three examples of faith and lack of faith
- 6:6–29 Commissioning the disciples — death of John the Baptist
- 6:30–56 Miracles of caring
- 7:1–23 Interpreting the Jewish law
- 7:24–37 Miracles among non-Jews
- 8:1–10 Another miracle of caring
- 8:11–30 Discussions, and a miracle, about seeing
- 8:31–9:13 Jesus begins to prepare his disciples for what is to come
- 9:14–29 A practical example of difficulties in a healing ministry
- 9:30–50 Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for what is to come
- 10:1–31 Jesus comments on Jewish law
- 10:32–45 Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for what is to come
- 10:46–52 Healing of Bartimaeus
- 11:1–19 The entry into Jerusalem
- 11:20–13:37 Final conversations
- 14:1–15:47 The plot, final hours, arrest, trial and crucifixion
- 16:1–20 The resurrection

## 2 Luke the Gospel writer

Luke is the first European Christian to be named in the bible.

- Ac 16:10 Luke meets Paul, Silas and Timothy in Troas, a town near the Greek/Turkish border on Paul's second missionary journey.
- Ac 16:12 Luke accompanies them to Philippi, a town in northern Greece.
- Ac 17:1 Luke stays in Philippi while Paul, Silas and Timothy travel on to Thessalonica.
- Ac 20:6 Luke joins up with Paul in Philippi late in Paul's third missionary journey and they sail together to Troas and then on to Jerusalem visiting churches on the way.
- Ac 21:7 Paul and Luke arrive in Jerusalem

- Ac 24:27 Paul spends two years in prison in Caesarea; it is generally assumed that Luke spent the two years collecting material for his gospel since he includes a lot of material, particularly about Mary and the women in Jesus' circle, which no one else includes.
- Ac 27:1 Luke accompanies Paul to Rome.
- Col 4:10 Luke is with Mark and Paul in Rome; Mark may have largely completed his gospel by this time as he does not include anything which Luke appears to have picked up in Palestine while Paul was in prison in Caesarea.
- Col 4:14 Paul mentions Luke 'our dear doctor.' Even if we did not know he was a doctor, we would have known he was educated from the quality of the Greek he writes.
- 2 Tm 4:11 Paul mentions Luke is with him.

### 3 Simon Peter

- Jn 1:44 Simon, son of John, and his brother Andrew lived in Bethsaida, a village on the northern shores of Lake Galilee, also the home of Philip.
- Jn 1:35–42 Simon was first told about Jesus and introduced to him by his brother, Andrew, who had been a follower of John the Baptist. Jesus gave Simon the name 'Cephas', or 'Rock', at this first meeting.
- Jn 2:1–12 Simon, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael went with Jesus to the wedding at Cana in Galilee, the home of Nathanael (Jn 21:2), and then to Capernaum with Mary and Jesus' brothers and sisters.
- Jn 4:2 According to John, Jesus next travelled south to Judaea and began preaching near the Jordan not far from where John the Baptist was preaching and baptising while Jesus 'disciples' baptised those who came to him.
- Jn 4:4 But Jesus then returned north via Samaria to Cana and then on to Capernaum.
- Lk 4:38–39 Jesus had already healed Simon's mother-in-law before the throngs of people following him gave him the idea of preaching from Simon's boat in Capernaum (Lk 5:1–3). However, Matthew and Mark place the healing of Simon's mother-in-law well after the formal calling (Mt 8:14–15; Mk 1:30–31)

Since Simon's mother-in-law lived in Capernaum, it would appear that Simon had married a girl from Capernaum and, since she is never mentioned, she may have died recently, Peter may have abandoned her to follow Jesus or she may have been one of the many unnamed female followers of Jesus. There may be an allusion to Peter leaving his wife in the comment Peter makes, 'We have left everything and followed you' (Mt 19:27; Mk 10:28; Lk 18:28).

Whatever the case, Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that the first 'formal' calling of the disciples, Simon, Andrew, James and John, took place in or near Capernaum.

- Mk 5:37; Lk 8:51 Mark and Luke record that only Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus into the house of Jairus while Luke gives Peter the line 'Everyone is crowding in on you' (Lk 8:45) when Jesus asks who touched him in the crowd.

Mt 14:28–32 Matthew, Mark and John all record that, after the feeding of the five thousand on the east side of Lake Galilee, the disciples tried to sail back to Capernaum. Only Matthew records that, when Jesus came walking to them on the water, Peter also tried his hand at walking on the water.

Mt 16:16 Some time into his ministry, Jesus took his disciples on what today would be called an ‘awayday’ or ‘retreat’ to the north east of Lake Galilee (an area largely inhabited by non-Jews) where he asked them what people were saying about him. Then he asked the disciples what they thought and Peter said, ‘You are the Messiah/Christ.’ At this point (Mt 16:18), Jesus cracked a joke based on the name ‘Cephas,’ or ‘Rock,’ which he had given Peter at their first meeting (Jn 1:42).

The Greeks had two versions of the word for a stone, rock or boulder. *Petros* (which we also translate as Peter) means a stone; *petra* means a rock or boulder. Jesus says, ‘You are *petros* (a stone) and on this *petra* (rock/boulder) I will build my church.’ The joke is completely lost in translation, not least because the gospel writers refer to him as (Simon) Peter in their gospels long before Peter became his ‘regular’ name because it helps to distinguish him from other people called Simon and because, by the time they were writing, most people would have known him as Peter. For example, in Matthew 17:25, Matthew calls him ‘Peter’ but records that Jesus addressed him as ‘Simon.’ Ditto John 21:15–17 after Jesus’ resurrection. Only in 22:34 does Luke record Jesus using ‘Peter’ but in 22:31 He had used ‘Simon.’

Mt 16:22–23; Mk 8:32–33 Within minutes an emboldened Peter is telling Jesus off for predicting his suffering and death and getting a massive putdown from Jesus.

1 Pet 1:17–18 About a week after these incidents, Jesus took Peter, James and John up a hill to pray and Peter was present at Jesus’ transfiguration, something he mentions years later in his first letter.

Mt 26:37; Mk 14:23 At the Last Supper Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him but shortly afterwards, he again took Peter, James and John to be with him at a time of prayer, this time in the Garden of Gethsemane.

All the gospel writers tell of Jesus’ prediction and Peter’s denial, one of the few events along with the feeding of the five thousand, the crucifixion and the resurrection which appear in all four gospels.

Lk 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5 Luke and Paul record that Jesus appeared separately to Peter after his resurrection and John (21:7–19) tells of Peter jumping into the lake and of the heart to heart which Jesus had with Peter after the meal.

Ac 2:14ff Peter’s address on the day of Pentecost is almost certainly edited highlights as Luke probably didn’t hear about it at all, let alone in detail, until 20–25 years later. (This is probably true of all the speeches in Acts (a) because they are so short and (b) because, as an educated Greek, Luke was probably following a long tradition of using speeches in a ‘drama documentary’ style to tell a historical story.)

Ac 1-5 Peter and John dominate the early chapters of Acts. Peter proposes replacing Judas (1:15–22), delivers the great speech (2:14ff), heals the lame man (3:6), preaches in the Temple (3:12ff), speaks before the Sanhedrin (4:8ff), deals with Ananias and Sapphira (5:3–9) and addresses the Sanhedrin again (5:29).

Ac 8:14–17 At this stage the gospel was only being preached to Jews and non-Jewish converts to Judaism. After one such convert, Stephen, was stoned to death, many Christians decided to leave Jerusalem and Philip went to Samaria where his work was blessed by the Holy Spirit through Peter and John.

Between the conversion of Saul (Ac 9) and Saul's first missionary journey (Ac 13), there is a period of 14 years which Luke fills with an account of how Christianity spread beyond Jews, non-Jewish converts and Samaritans. He describes

- Ac 10:9–16 how God prepared Peter for this development through the vision at Joppa and
- Ac 11:2–3 how Peter's actions were initially criticised by 'traditionalists' in the church. Though Peter won the day, this split between 'traditionalists' who thought the good news was for Jews only and those who took a broader view persisted (Ac 11:19–20).
- Ac 12:2 After the death of James, the brother of John, James, the half-brother of Jesus, assumed leadership of the church in Jerusalem (Ac 15:13ff). Paul talks of 'James, Peter and John' (in that order) as leading the church soon after this (Ga 2:9).
- Ac 12 Peter is imprisoned and released shortly before the death of Herod Antipas (some time after 39AD) and Paul's first missionary journey (Ac 13–14).
- Ac 15:2 On his return to Antioch, Paul found that the 'traditionalists' had arrived and were telling Christians that they had also to become Jews. Paul and Barnabas, as leading lights of the 'liberal wing' of the church, were sent to Jerusalem to argue their case. They won the day though a couple of Jewish food preparation practices were still kept in the letter drafted by James (Ac 15:23–29).
- Ga 2:11–14 When Peter visited Antioch shortly after this he was involved in a blazing row with Paul (which Luke tactfully leaves out) because, after some more 'traditionalists' had arrived in Antioch, Peter stopped associating with the non-Jewish Christians and even encouraged Barnabas to do the same. It seems that the Peter who had denied Christ was still tempted to deny the fullness of Christ's message.
- 1 Pet Peter's first letter is to Christians living in northern Turkey but we have no idea why he should be writing to them.
- 2 Pet His second is more general. Both indicate that he was aware of Paul's work through Mark (1 Pet 5:13) and through his reference to people who distorted the contents of Paul's letters (2 Pet 3:16). But we have no direct information on what Peter did after that trip to Antioch though legend has it that he ended up in Rome probably after the death of Paul.