

The Gospel of Mark – A trip back in time! – notes on the Introduction

First to Galilee

The population of Galilee in Jesus' day (according to Josephus) was 200–300,000. Galilee's neighbouring communities were mostly Gentiles. In Galilee the languages spoken were Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic, with an ethnic make-up including Syrians, Jews and Romans.

The most important trade route was the International Highway connecting Babylon in the East to the Western part of the Roman Empire.

To look at the cities around the lake

On the western shore

1. *Tiberias*

2. *Magdala*

3. *Kinnereth*

Anything special about any of these?

On the Northern shore

1. *Capernaum*

2. *Bethsaida*

Anything special about any of these?

Other cities mentioned Hammath Korazin

What we know about the lake

It is 200 metres (or 700 feet) below sea level and is fed fresh water by the river Jordan which rises on Mount Hermon. The lake had a plentiful supply of fish and was the major industry of the region!

There were 3 fertile plains with volcanic soil producing a variety of crops and produce including: walnuts, palm trees, figs, olives, grapes, wheat and barley. Black basalt rocks and boulders were used to make millstones, olive presses, household grinders.

To understand the Political and Social situation

3 Areas:– Galilee in the North – central Samaria – Judah in the South

2 Kings 17. (You might like to look this up later). After the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the area became known as Galilee of the Gentiles. After the Babylonian exile, however *Judean* Jews settled there and eventually the area was predominantly Jewish, but not without much suffering and coercion by a succession of kings!

The reputation of the Galileans? Inclined to revolt. Fearlessness and volatility.

King Herod Antipas ruled the region of Galilee in the North and also Perea further south, and he aspired to be the ruler or Tetrarch of Judea, a position currently held by Pilate. His half - brother Philip ruled the area to the North East of the Lake. Herod Antipas had already had John the Baptist killed. His northern headquarters were at Tiberias on the Lake.

Now a side trip to Jerusalem

The temple had been restored by Herod the Great who was the father of Herod and Philip. The estimated population of Jerusalem at Passover time was over 20,000. The *first* exodus for the Israelites was from Egypt *Then* Isaiah prophesied they would return to Jerusalem from Babylon after 70 years of exile. *Now* Jesus leads *us* into the presence of his Father to have eternal life now, and then to be forever in his presence.

Who, what, when and where and also why?

None of the four gospels were written by Jesus.

The first three Gospels are called the synoptic or common view gospels.

Jesus would have spoken Aramaic but later as the church spread the most common language would have been Greek.

Mark's gospel was most likely written, in Rome, and around AD 64–65.

This church had previously received a letter from the apostle Paul and met him when he was brought as a prisoner to Rome. Mark had been a companion of Peter who had also spent time in Rome.

The turning point in Nero's attitude to the Christian community was the devastating fire that broke out in Rome on 19th July AD 65. Nero blamed the Christians and bitter persecution followed.

Mark's sources included both written and oral accounts of Jesus' sayings and actions, plus notes he may have taken from listening to his mentor Peter on their travels.

Mark's main purposes in writing were to ensure that:

1. They knew exactly who Jesus was, and what he had come to do, and what their response to him should be.
2. That the harassed, and soon to be persecuted believers had tools to encourage them to stand firm and know that, as Jesus had suffered and died for them so *their* future may hold similar suffering. As the Master, so the Servant.

Mark introduced his readers to Jesus as the Messiah the Son of God. (Mark1:1)

The concept of kingdom of God, and the power of Jesus in preaching, healing, casting out demons and his power over nature and even death itself amazed the crowds and also the disciples. But, the religious authorities, very early in the story were plotting his death

A Pivotal Point in Mark's account is Chapter 8:27–30 where Peter declares that they believe Jesus is the Messiah.

A Pivotal verse in Mark's account is Chapter 10:45 where Jesus tells them that *his* kingship is that of a Servant King and that he has come to "...to give his life as a ransom for many".

The disciples kept missing the clear statements of Jesus that after his death, he would rise again on the third day. Would we have done any better than them?

*Meet Messiah, Son of God, and respond to him,
with gratitude and joy, accepting his offers of grace
and love, as he came to give his life a ransom for many, for you.*