

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.*