

BULLETIN

UNION UNIVERSITY

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BULLETIN

UNION UNIVERSITY

The Union University *Bulletin* is a bi-monthly publication designed to equip church leaders.

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ENGAGING



The Gospel of "John Mark": The Rest of the Story

J. Daryl Charles, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Christian Studies

The gospel narratives are Christianity's unique contribution to world literature. Before the Christian advent, there was nothing quite like the gospel as a literary work. Neither biography nor memoir in the strictest sense, since they omit much detail about Jesus' personal life and are technically anonymous, the gospels are the primary sources for the life and teaching of our Lord.

While extrabiblical sources like Tacitus and Suetonius or the Jewish historian Josephus confirm Jesus' place in history, the gospel accounts are quite literally the most important books in the world. The gospels do convey history, but they do more. In setting forth a witness of Jesus Christ, they tell us how God has revealed himself to us in the fullest. And while they offer a window into a particular time in history and a particular people, they compel faith *for all times* and *for all peoples* everywhere. The gospels, quite simply, are living witnesses of God's having visited this world.

The gospel bearing the name of Mark refers to "John Mark" (Acts 12:12,25 and 15:37,39). In Palestine a man typically had two names – a Hebrew name by which he was known to family and friends (John) and a Greek name that was his identity in public life (Mark). John Mark, it is thought, had a close relationship to Simon Peter (1 Pet. 5:13), and it is widely accepted by the early church fathers that Mark gathered and recorded Peter's recollections about Jesus into what we call the Gospel of Mark.

Mark stands out among the four gospel narratives due to its conciseness. Less attention is given in Mark to detail, compared with Matthew, Luke or John. Rather, Mark's gospel is the gospel of *action*. Virtually from the outset, Jesus is depicted as continually healing, doing miracles, casting out demons, and demonstrating his lordship over all of creation – whether human creation or the forces of nature. Not surprisingly, miraculous power is the note on which the Gospel of Mark ends. Unlike, Matthew and Luke, Mark finishes with the signature observation that "the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them, confirming his word by signs accompanying." Mark, like the gospel account that bears his name, was clearly a man of action.

see **ENGAGING** on page 5



See No Evil: The Existence of Sin in an Age of Relativism

By Harry Lee Poe, Ph.D.,
Charles Colson Professor
of Faith and Culture
Kregel Publications, 2004

We live in a culture confused about sin. In the prevailing spirit of tolerance and religious pluralism, all beliefs must receive equal weight – that is, unless such beliefs result in “obvious” evil like terrorist attacks on innocent people, inhumane treatment of prisoners, or defrauding stockholders of their rightful earnings.

In a culture that scorns absolutes, yet apparently reserves the right to have them, how do we effectively communicate the reality of sin and the good news of the gospel?

Harry Lee Poe suggests that we must understand sin as more than a violation of God’s laws. It is also a breaking of the relationship between God and people that results in an ever widening gulf between the two. Salvation through Jesus restores a relationship with God, closes the distance, and enables people to understand God as goodness itself – and reflect His goodness in the world.

“Harry Poe is one of the preeminent worldview thinkers in America today. A first-rate scholar, he has tackled one of the most difficult subjects – how to deal with evil that we can see before our eyes in a relativistic age which denies such a thing exists.”

– Charles W. Colson.



Why Jesus Died

Romans 5:1-11/Mark 14:32-42

Paul N. Jackson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Christian Studies and
Staff Pastor, Northbrook Church

During the Revolutionary War there was a faithful preacher of the gospel by the name of Peter Miller. He lived near a fellow who hated him intensely for his Christian life and testimony. In fact, this man violently opposed him and ridiculed his followers. One day the unbeliever was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. Hearing about this, Peter Miller set out on foot to intercede for the man’s life before George Washington. The General listened to the minister’s plea, but told him he didn’t feel he should pardon his friend. “My friend! He is not my friend,” answered Miller. “In fact, he’s my worst living enemy.” “What!” said Washington. “You have walked 60 miles to save the life of your enemy? That, in my judgment, puts the matter in a different light. I will grant your request.” With pardon in hand, Miller hastened to the place where his neighbor was to be executed, and arrived just as the prisoner was walking to the scaffold. When the traitor saw Miller, he exclaimed, “Old Peter Miller has come to have his revenge by watching me hang!” But he was astonished as he watched the minister step out of the crowd and produce the pardon which spared his life.

Peter Miller did a noble thing, but it is only a shadow of what Jesus did when he died; not only did he obtain his enemies’ pardons, but he died in their place—he was a totally righteous substitute for a totally unrighteous world. As you know, “The Passion of the Christ” movie opened in February earlier this year. If you saw it, you were reminded in an extremely graphic, forceful, and yet loving way, **that** and **how** Jesus died. I believe an important key to understanding the dramatic final 12 hours of The Son of Man’s life is that although it looked like a brutal execution, it was actually a love-driven sacrifice. Remember Pilate advising Jesus that he, the Roman governor, had the power to release him or to crucify him; but Jesus quickly told Pilate that any power he held over him had been granted only by the heavenly Father. Jesus’ death did not surprise him, it was not a mistake, and it was not poor timing—Jesus’ expected his death, it was in keeping with the full will and counsel of God, and it occurred in the nick of time. So why did Jesus die? Another way of asking it is, “What does his death do for us?” The apostle Paul gives us some answers in a definitive passage of scripture in Romans—chapter 5, verses 1-11. And I want you to see how Paul’s theology was fed by what Mark unpacked for us in chapter 14, verses 32-42. Mark described the agony; Paul captured the benefit. As we think about the death of Jesus both are tied together and are underscored by the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53.

1. Jesus died so we can have the peace of God (1-2).

Whenever something particularly joyous occurs (say a promotion or an incredible gift), one of the first things we do is think of the difference it will make in our lives. This is exactly what Paul does in this passage. The initial phrase,



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When I began to look at Christian colleges, my first priority was to find a school that would give me a strong Biblical education. There are hundreds of “Christian” colleges in the United States, but I soon found that many of them are Christian in confession but very weak on academics. I wanted a place that would push my mind to the limit as I sought to learn about God’s Word.

I chose Union because the Bible is taught here. We are challenged to love the Lord with our entire mind, and to take the Bible seriously as the Word of God. If I am going to stand before God’s people and say, “This is what God says” I want to make sure that I am skilled in handling the Word of Truth. This is what Union teaches us to do.

I came here with a love for God’s Word, and my professors and classes have served as God’s instruments to deepen that love in my life. The world needs redemption, and God has revealed that redemption to us in His Word. Union is a great Christian school because it challenges its students to take that Word into the hurting world and be used by God to do His work.



Resources for the Gospel of Mark

Ray Van Neste, Ph.D.


Director, R. C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies

In preparing for a January Bible Study on the gospel of Mark, there are a variety of resources which can be useful. Which resources are most useful will depend on a number of factors, including whether you have the opportunity to preach straight through the gospel or whether you simply have a few sessions so that you need to summarize or select key texts.

Among the commentaries William Lane’s (New International Commentary) and James Brooks’ (New American Commentary) have served well as standard works elucidating the text and not requiring a knowledge of Greek. If one can work with Greek, R. T. France’s recent commentary (New International Greek Text Commentary) will be very helpful as it is the latest and most comprehensive exposition of the gospel. France also brings to the task pastoral experience and theological grounding. Perhaps one of the most helpful commentaries will be David Garland’s volume in the NIV Application Commentary. Garland writes clearly, is well aware of the issues and in line with this series makes clear application from each passage. Kent Hughes’s two volume work on Mark in his Preaching the Word Series provides an example of expository sermons passage by passage straight through the book.

When you have fewer sessions to deal with an entire gospel, one often

needs good resources to help in summarizing key themes and capturing the essence of the whole. In this regard I will mention one book which may be difficult to find. William J. Dumbrell’s *The New Covenant: The Synoptics in Context: Matthew, Mark and Luke* devotes a chapter to each gospel and seeks to explain how the gospel as a whole teaches us about Christ. The chapter on Mark walks through the entire gospel section by section in less than 60 pages. This summary should be very useful in actually getting to the point that the Mark is trying to get across. Daniel Wallace, Professor of New Testament at Dallas Seminary, has a helpful overview and outline of Mark which can be accessed on the web at http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=1093. His summary of the contents of the gospel can be helpful in planning your approach to the gospel.

Lastly, good expositions can be very helpful as models. A year and a half ago, Dr. Sandy Willson, pastor of Second Presbyterian in Memphis, delivered a brilliant sermon on Mark 1 as part of a conference hosted by the Ryan Center. The audio of this sermon will soon be available at the Ryan Center website (www.uu.edu/centers/biblical). This sermon on the teaching ministry of Jesus might even serve as a good inspiration for each of us as we prepare to teach this gospel. 



Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles

By Ray Van Neste, Ph.D.,
T&T Clark International, 2004

Ray Van Neste seeks to further the scholarly discussion of the coherence of the Pastoral Epistles by providing the most thorough analysis to date of the cohesion of each letter. The need for such a study arises from two sources. First, the previous works on coherence of the Pastorals, which have turned the tide of scholarship, focused on thematic coherence of the corpus. Second, a renewed and even more extreme argument for incoherence has recently been published (James D. Miller, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents*) which begs response along the lines just suggested since it analyzes connections and lack thereof within and between the discourse units.

Van Neste examines 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus to determine the boundaries of each discourse unit using cohesion shift analysis. The cohesion of each unit is then analyzed, noting common devices from the ancient epistolary genre, rhetorical devices, lexical and semantic repetition and symmetrical patterns. He also focuses on connections between the units in the letter - connections between contiguous units, semantic chains, and the grouping of units into larger sections. Thus the variety of connections across and throughout the letter are highlighted.

Van Neste concludes that there is a high degree of cohesion in each of the Pastoral Epistles at both the micro and macro levels.

This is volume 280 in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement* series.

Steps of Paul, May 28 – June 7, 2005



David S. Dockery,
President



Charles A. Fowler,
Senior Vice President for
University Relations



Gary Williams,
Associate Vice President and
Executive Director of Alumni Service

Greetings from Union University! I trust all is well with you. We are certainly enjoying the blessings of God this semester at Union. We have a record enrollment, a successful completion of our \$60 million Building a Future capital campaign, exciting new program offerings and a spirit of hopefulness and expectancy that permeates our campus. We indeed feel that God is blessing the work of our hands in amazing ways. As we look forward to Christmas break, we do so with thankful hearts.

Several months ago, we began planning to co-sponsor a “Steps of Paul” tour. Many of you may have already learned of that trip. However, due to several changes in circumstances, we are no longer offering the trip as originally planned. However, we are pleased to be able to announce to you with this letter that Union will sponsor a similar trip for our alumni and friends. Charles A. Fowler, Senior Vice President for University Relations and Gary Williams, Associate Vice President and Executive Director of Alumni Services will join me on this trip. We think it will be a tremendous experience for all who participate. We will visit Greece and Turkey and see sites such as Philippi, Thessaloniki, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Patmos, and other exciting destinations. The dates will be May 28-June 7, 2005. The cost of the trip is \$3,225, which includes meals (two per day on land and all meals on the ship), gratuities, and taxes. We hope you will be able to join us as we walk where Paul walked and gain some incredible insights into his New Testament letters. The following itinerary details an 11-day adventure that includes both land and cruise:

- May 28: Depart USA (Memphis is the departure city.)
- May 29: Arrival Thessaloniki
- May 30: Tour Philippi, Karvala
- May 31: Thessaloniki City Tour
- June 1: Berea, Verginia, and travel to Athens for overnight
- June 2: Tour Athens
- June 3: Mykonos (3 night cruise)
- June 4: Rhodes
- June 5: Patmos and Ephesus
- June 6: Disembark ship, Tour Corinth and fly to London for overnight
- June 7: Return Home

A \$300 deposit will be required at the time of registration with the balance due 60 days prior to departure. Registration deadline is February 15, 2005. Check out www.mtsrtravel.com/unionuniversity for an online brochure and registration form or call Cindi Brodhecker at MTS Travel at 1-800-418-2929 ext. 81383. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to give us a call. Please direct your questions to the Office of University Relations at 731-661-5050.


Cordially,

David S. Dockery
President

ENGAGING . . . continued from page 1

But what is striking about “John Mark” almost misses the eye. In Acts, Luke mentions ever so briefly in passing that not everyone viewed John Mark as useful in ministry. Most significantly, the apostle Paul. A “sharp disagreement” arose over John Mark’s utility (Acts 15:39), followed by a split. Whether this controversy amounted to a split in fellowship and rejection of Mark as a person, we can only guess. Paul did *not* want Mark around “because he had deserted them” previously in southern Asia Minor. Barnabas, however, saw things differently. And so, Paul took Silas, while Barnabas took on John Mark.

Bits and pieces from church history, plus our own imaginations, are left to fill in “the rest of the story.”

Doubtless, Mark is prototypical of many in the church through the ages. He tends to be a person of “action,” he has his weaknesses, and he even on one occasion considered “throwing in the towel,” perhaps wishing to desert the Christian cause altogether. But thank God for people like Barnabas, who despite our failings, are able to see in us great potential. True to his name (“Son of Encouragement,” Acts 4:36), Barnabas saw in John Mark what John Mark, in his experience, was *yet to become*. And it goes without saying that the Christian church is the better for it. 

PREACHING . . . continued from page 2

“Since we have been justified by faith,” serves as a summary of the message in 1:18—4:25. So, if you were to track back through that section you would see the heart of the gospel message: we who once were sinners destined for final judgment have been bought back through Christ’s blood and justified or declared right with God on the basis of our faith. Anytime you see the word “blood” in Paul’s writings, it is shorthand for “the death of Jesus on the cross.” That is what we should remember when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

“Peace with God” refers to a “sense of general well-being, that can only come from God,” and can only be experienced after one is made right with God. Verse 2 reveals another blessing that is connected to having the peace of God—that is, we have gained access to God’s throne. This word was used in the ancient world to refer to a person being ushered into the presence of royalty. This image would have struck a chord with the believers in Rome, aware of court protocol that “restricted” access to the emperor to certain highly placed individuals. The beauty of what Paul is saying is, through Jesus Christ, every believer has this kind of access to the King of heaven. In Gethsemane, Jesus gave us a peek into the throne room as he battled the demons of doubt and surrender. Mark captures this struggle in 14:33b-34—“And he began to be filled with horror and deep distress. He told them, ‘My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.’” Our peace came as a result of Jesus’ costly sacrifice.

2. Jesus died so we can rejoice in present sufferings (3-4).

I have never seen suffering as quite as profane as the suffering Jesus went through in that movie. What Paul is saying in these 2 verses is basically that Jesus endured the pain of scourging (which was normally fatal) and the cross, so we could understand evil and suffering, and be able to engage it successfully. Basically, Jesus took the bad stuff, so *we* could deal with the bad stuff. “Christ has brought us

into this place of highest privilege” means that the Son of Man was the delivery system granting us the ability to deal with temporal evil in this world, and salvation to deliver us eventually from this world. Rejoice in suffering? How can that be? Just as Jesus understood it; as difficult as it may seem at times, there is a point to it. When Jesus verbalized his feelings of being forsaken while dying, he was tapping into the twenty-second psalm, the fountainhead of this idea of purposeful suffering. Check out how the whole tone of the psalm drastically changes in verse twenty-two! Paul saw it also. Suffering gives way to endurance; endurance to character; and finally character to hope.

3. Jesus died so we can experience hope in the matchless love of God (5-8).

I am so blessed in my life to have experienced love from many sources. I was love struck at the births of all my children; Garrett, Lindsey, Meghan, and most recently our adopted baby, Hailey. My love for each and every one of them still floods my heart. Wayne Watson’s song, “Water-Colored Ponies” has always made me get weepy. Well, all my ponies but one are in different stages of riding away: One is still in the barn; one rode away with a saddle on another horse; one is riding me around like a horse, and the other is roaming the range refusing to wear a saddle. You know, I have never wanted my children to get hurt also. It is one thing to have them leave, but it is quite another when they are in peril. One wintry day about six years ago I received a call at Union from a friend that Garrett, my only son, was being rushed to the hospital, so I had better hurry and get there; the thought crossed my mind that my only son could be dead by the time I arrived at Humboldt General Hospital. While I had made that drive going home hundreds of times, that particular eleven-mile drive was the longest yet! As it turned out, he had SVT, supra ventricular

tachycardia, a condition that causes a heart to race—our hearts were racing together that day. While this episode turned out okay, this father thought he was losing his only son.

Even though we, as fathers and mothers, can love our sons and daughters with such heartfelt devotion, it doesn't even come close to how much the heavenly Father loves us. It doesn't come close to how much Jesus loved us by paying the ultimate price for our sins. Our love, while it can be true and genuine, is never totally pure like divine love.

Consider something with me for a moment to illustrate this idea. It would not be hard to imagine my son Garrett riding his bike one day minding his own business but not seeing a car about to crush him.....and then I, the parent, charge into the scene by running into the street to push him out of the way, to take the hit myself. But let's put someone different on the bike; the neighborhood bully, the one who bloodied Garrett's nose, or struck him with a garden hose, or shot a Roman candle at Lucy, his dog, catching him on fire, or sneaked into our garage and stole my table saw—what is the likelihood that I would take the hit for him?

This is precisely Paul's point in verses 6-8. Godless, sinners, and enemies are the terms Paul uses to describe our condition or state of affairs when Jesus died for us. We were totally in a state of disarray unable to exit our own mess on our own.

There is some good theology going on in these verses; and here it is.When Jesus came to earth, he gave us a glimpse of the Father, heaven, and that he was in the process of making all things new. At the same time, I think that in just as mysterious a way, Jesus gave his Father an eyeful of human suffering, so much so that he felt it. At the end of the movie, when the scene shifted from the horizontal to the vertical or heavenly view, remember the singular divine tear that fell to earth—God loved, God sent, God cried, and then God judged?

4. Jesus died so we can escape the wrath of God through reconciliation (9-11).

How can you ignore such a great sacrifice and salvation? Make no mistake about it—as Jesus paid an extremely heavy price by accepting the horrific pain of his suffering and crucifixion, each person will pay an equally heavy price for rejecting the grace gift of God. In short, turn your back on such a costly, undeserved, loving, sacrificial death, and the blood of Jesus does not cover you. So, in short, you need to get bloody, too. But fear not for your salvation; Jesus achieved the violent part. Simply allow his blood, or his death on the cross, to cover you.

I remember a line from "Lethal Weapon" that I wonder if Mel Gibson remembers saying. Roger Murtaugh, (played by Danny Glover), and Martin Riggs (played by Gibson) are standing by the Christmas tree in Roger's living room. Upon reading a note that Roger's daughter had been kidnapped, and knowing that they had to rescue her, Riggs looked at Murtaugh and said, "Rog, we're going to get bloody on this one." I can imagine the heavenly Father telling his son about his redemption trip—this one's going to get messy. Why? So we could be reconciled to the Father; so we could be made one with him.

As I thought about how to wrap up this message, I kept thinking about the blame game that many have been playing in response to seeing the Passion of the Christ. Who is to blame? I have landed on the fact that, God was judge, jury, and executioner; Pilate, the Roman governor, was judge, jury, and executioner; Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, was judge, jury, and executioner; and each one of us is judge, jury, and executioner. And Isaiah, Mark, and Paul share a curious triangular connection of prophecy, fulfillment, and application.



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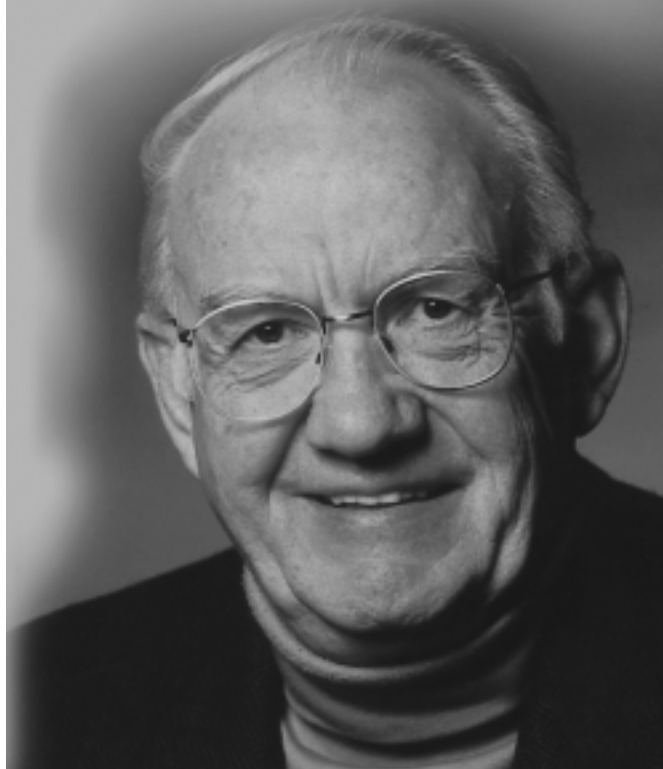
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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Greetings from Union University! The fall semester at Union has been one of most rewarding and encouraging semesters we have had. The Lord blessed us with record enrollment, many wonderful new faculty and staff who are committed to our distinctive Christian mission, some exciting new programs, and an expectant spirit that permeates our campus. God is so good to us. Our prayer is that your ministry is prospering in our Lord's service and for His glory.

This issue of the *Bulletin* provides a look at *The Gospel of Mark*. As you know, Mark is the focus book for this year's Winter Bible Study. Hopefully you will reap meaningful insight and helpful resources to make your study and presentation of Mark more effective.

Please know that we are abundantly thankful that God has given Union University an opportunity to influence the lives of thousands of students. Each of those students, regardless of their discipline, will be encouraged and equipped to view life through

the lens of a biblical worldview and serve their family, church, community, and profession with Christ-centered excellence. Colossians 1:18 says, "He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

God is so gracious to allow you and me to serve as His instruments to lead and equip His Church.

For His Glory,

Charles A. Fowler, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President for University Relations