



The Gospels and the Evangelist

The Gospels ~ *Evangelion*~ describe the earthly life and teachings of our Lord, and show us what we should do to follow God's will. The Gospel is an important part of the Divine Liturgy and many of the Orthodox services. The word *Evangelion* means "good news" the *Evangelion* is the good news of our salvation.

The Evangelists are the people who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, preached this message to the whole world. Although all the Apostles had a life mission of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the title of Evangelist is only reserved for the four Gospel authors. Matthew and John were among the chosen Twelve Apostles; Mark and Luke were part of the Seventy Apostles, a larger group of followers and teachers of Christ. They traveled and taught with Apostles Peter and Paul.

Each of the four Gospels tells the same story a little differently. Some of the Gospels tell more or less about certain events.

The same story:

Matthew 21:9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"

Mark 11: ⁹Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"¹⁰ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David. That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Luke 19: ³⁷ And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; ³⁸ Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

John 12:¹² The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ Took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

The Evangelists are considered the pillars or support of our faith. We are reminded of this in our church when we look up at the dome and see the four Evangelists as though they were supporting our actual building.



Evangelist Mark



This week we Commemorate Evangelist Mark. His Gospel, telling the Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, was the first of the four to be written. It is also the shortest Gospel and perhaps is the easiest to understand.

We know very little about St. Mark (also called John Mark) as he says nothing at all about himself, but there is one episode in his Gospel... When Jesus was captured, *all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold of him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked* (14:50-52). None of the other Evangelists tell this story, which seems somehow not necessary at such a sad moment. It was worth including only if it was of special importance for the author: in all likelihood, St. Mark is talking about himself here.

He was not one of the Twelve Apostles, but he did follow Jesus, perhaps at first out of simply curiosity. He was not present at the Mystical Supper, but was somewhere nearby, probably already asleep. He heard something unusual going on, jumped up, quickly gathered whatever bed linen was within reach, and ran out to look. This entirely unheroic episode emphasizes that the future great Apostles were originally anything but great. This curious but timid young man did not immediately become the brave and confident preacher of Christ.

In Acts (12:12). When Peter was freed from the prison in Jerusalem, *he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.* This is believed to have been his mother's house. She was wealthy and having a large house, welcomed Christians allowing them a place to meet.

The Bible does not mention him again, but tradition tells us that St. Mark's main place of preaching was Africa. He became a bishop in Alexandria, which was then the principle city of Egypt, although he did not stay in this city only, but travelled throughout the surrounding regions. St. Mark also went to Rome, where he not only met the Apostle Peter, but became his main helper (for which reason Peter writes of him as his son).

However, with the passage of time, the number of communities grew rapidly, while those who had been alive and witnesses of Christ, gradually died. There were fewer people who knew and could tell the story of Jesus Christ. There was a need to put into writing the tradition about the life, ministry, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. St. Mark who was with Apostle Peter became the first to record this as a written text. He may not have been with Jesus Christ when he was teaching, but he recorded the story according to Apostle Peter and the oral traditions that had been handed down to him.

In his Gospel St. Mark speaks to the simple people who may not have received teachings of faith or were simple readers. In his Gospel the events follow one another rapidly.

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The day on which the Apostle Mark is commemorated, April 25/May 8, is likely the date of his death, which took place in the 60s of the first century. Tradition tells that he was torn to pieces by a mob of enraged pagans that wanted to stop the preaching of the new faith.

Each of the Evangelists has his own symbol, which is based on the vision of the four angelic beings described by the Prophet Ezekiel in the very beginning of his book. There they accompanied the Lord in His triumphal procession, which is why they were likened to the four Apostles who compiled the written testimony about Christ's earthly life.

The symbol for St. Mark is a lion with wings. That is because his Gospel begins with the story of John the Baptist, "a voice crying in the wilderness", like the roaring of a lion.

The pillar near the iconostasis with the symbol of the Evangelist Mark.

Close up of pillar

