

## **The African Memory of the Gospel of Mark**

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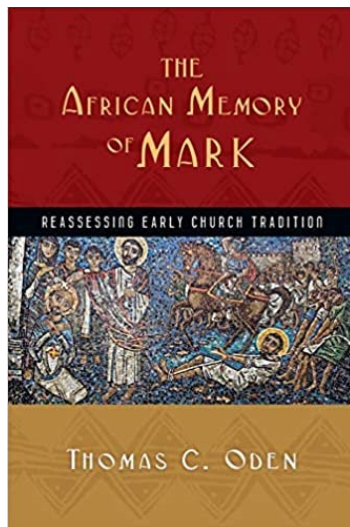
Saint Matthew ECC Church

January 25<sup>th</sup> – May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

This Bible Study will focus on the New Testament Gospel of Mark, which is thought to be the earliest gospel. There is a substantial amount of evidence from tradition, much of it not known outside of Africa, that Mark himself was from North Africa, that he founded the church in Alexandria, that he was an eyewitness to the Last Supper and Pentecost, that he was related not only to Barnabas but to Peter as well and accompanied him on many of his travels. Africa has played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture from its infancy. Some of the most decisive intellectual achievements of Christianity were explored and understood in Africa before they were in Europe. The pattern of influence was not from north to south from Europe to Africa, but the other way around. We will study this gospel along with these new sources of information. Additionally, we will consider the early Jewish religious and cultural influences that impacted the writing of Mark. Our goal is to come closer to understanding this gospel and its account of Jesus in its first and early second century milieu.

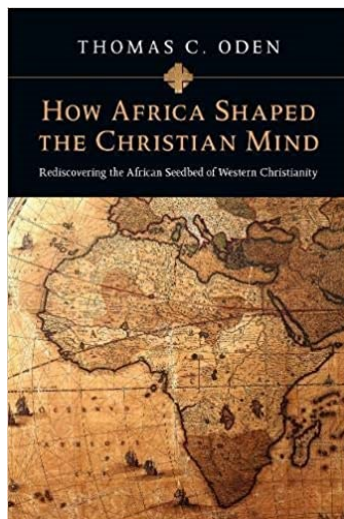
In Year B in the Catholic Liturgical Calendar, Mark is the Gospel for the year, beginning with Advent in 2020 and through 2021. We will meet weekly on Monday evenings at 7 PM, and each session will be streamed, lasting 45 minutes to an hour, from the Facebook group entitled 'Saint Matthew Bible Study.' Go to the group and sign up. The class will also be zoomed. We will start on 1/25/21 and end on 5/24/21, for a total of 18 sessions. There is a set of introductory handouts that will be posted, followed by weekly handouts including individual chapters from the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV].

**Annotated Bibliography:** The following descriptions were lifted from the Amazon Books site. We will be using material from these four books but you will not need to purchase them in order to follow the study. But if you do choose to purchase one or more, here are my recommendations. If you are an ongoing student of the NT, the volume by Amy-Jill Levine – The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition will be invaluable across studies, not just the current class. The most important of the three volumes on African studies is Oden's (2011) The African Memory of Mark.



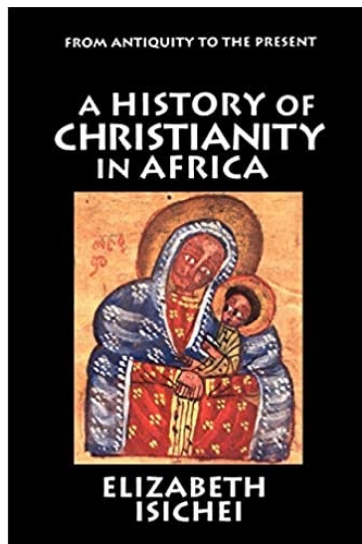
**Thomas C. Oden (2011). The African Memory of Mark**

We often regard the author of the Gospel of Mark as an obscure figure about whom we know little. Many would be surprised to learn how much fuller a picture of Mark exists within widespread African tradition, tradition that holds that Mark himself was from North Africa, that he founded the church in Alexandria, that he was an eyewitness to the Last Supper and Pentecost, that he was related not only to Barnabas but to Peter as well and accompanied him on many of his travels. In this provocative reassessment of early church tradition, Thomas C. Oden begins with the palette of New Testament evidence and adds to it the range of colors from traditional African sources, including synaxaries (compilations of short biographies of saints to be read on feast days), archaeological sites, non-Western historical documents and ancient churches. The result is a fresh and illuminating portrait of Mark, one that is deeply rooted in African memory and seldom viewed appreciatively in the West.



**Thomas C. Oden (2010). How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity**

Africa has played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture from its infancy. Some of the most decisive intellectual achievements of Christianity were explored and understood in Africa before they were in Europe. If this is so, why is Christianity so often perceived in Africa as a Western colonial import? How can Christians in Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, indeed how can Christians throughout the world, rediscover and learn from this ancient heritage? Theologian Thomas C. Oden offers a portrait that challenges prevailing notions of the intellectual development of Christianity from its early roots to its modern expressions. The pattern, he suggests, is not from north to south from Europe to Africa, but the other way around. He then makes an impassioned plea to uncover the hard data and study in depth the vital role that early African Christians played in developing the modern university, maturing Christian exegesis of Scripture, shaping early Christian dogma, modeling conciliar patterns of ecumenical decision-making, stimulating early monasticism, developing Neoplatonism, and refining rhetorical and dialectical skills. He calls for a wide-ranging research project to fill out the picture he sketches. It will require, he says, a generation of disciplined investigation, combining intensive language study with a risk-taking commitment to uncover the truth in potentially unreceptive environments. Oden envisions a dedicated consortium of scholars linked by computer technology and a common commitment that will seek to shape not only the scholar's understanding but the ordinary African Christian's self-perception.

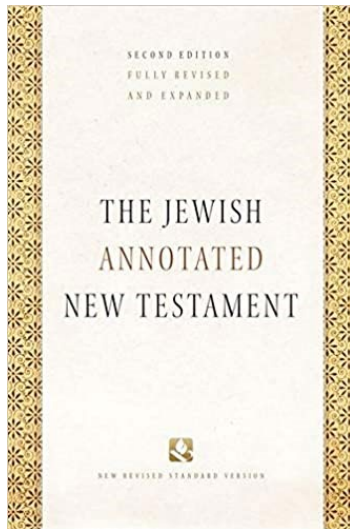


**Elizabeth Allo Isichei (1995). A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present**

This unprecedented work is the first one-volume study of the history of Christianity in Africa. Written by Elizabeth Isichei, a leading scholar in this field, *A History of Christianity in Africa* examines the origins and development of Christianity in Africa from the early story of Egyptian Christianity to the spectacular growth, vitality, and diversity of the churches in Africa today.

Isichei opens with the brilliance of Christianity in Africa in antiquity and shows how Christian Egypt and North Africa produced some of the most influential intellects of the time. She then discusses the churches founded in the wake of early contacts with Europe, from the late fifteenth century on, and the unbroken Christian witness of Coptic Egypt and of Ethiopia. Isichei also examines the different types of Christianity in modern Africa and shows how social factors have influenced its development and expression.

With the explosive growth of Christianity now taking place in Africa and the increasingly recognized significance of African Christianity, this much-needed book fills the void in scholarly works on that continent's Christian past, also foreshadowing Christian Africa's influential future.



**Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler [Editors] (2017). *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**

First published in 2011, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* was a groundbreaking work, bringing the New Testament's Jewish background to the attention of students, clergy, and general readers. In this new edition, eighty Jewish scholars bring together unparalleled scholarship to shed new light on the text. This thoroughly revised and greatly expanded second edition brings even more helpful information and new insights to the study of the New Testament.

Introductions to each New Testament book, containing guidance for reading and specific information about how the book relates to the Judaism of the period, have been revised and augmented, and in some cases newly written.

Annotations on the text--some revised, some new to this edition--provide verse-by-verse commentary. The thirty essays from the first edition are thoroughly updated, and there are twenty-four new essays, on topics such as "Mary in Jewish Tradition," "Christology," and "Messianic Judaism."

For Christian readers *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* offers a window into the first-century world of Judaism from which the New Testament springs. There are explanations of Jewish concepts such as food laws and rabbinic argumentation. It also provides a much-needed corrective to many centuries of Christian misunderstandings of the Jewish religion.

For Jewish readers, this volume provides the chance to encounter the New Testament--a text of vast importance in Western European and American culture--with no religious agenda and with guidance from Jewish experts in theology, history, and Jewish and Christian thought. It also explains Christian practices, such as the Eucharist.

*The Jewish Annotated New Testament, Second Edition* is an essential volume that places the New Testament writings in a context that will enlighten readers of any faith or none.