

Mark 1:1-28
May 21, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Today we begin our study of the Gospel of Mark, which is considered the shortest and simplest gospel among the four that we have. Mark lets the narrative speak for itself as it tells the story of the Servant who is constantly on the move preaching, healing, teaching, and ultimately dying for the sins of humankind. A key message of Mark's gospel is that "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (10:45).

Since Jesus modeled being a Servant, we'll find that Mark's Gospel presents Jesus's universal call to discipleship. He supports this call to discipleship by narrating the identity, authority and teaching of Jesus. For Mark, discipleship is essentially a relationship with Jesus, not merely following a certain code of conduct. Fellowship with Jesus marks the heart of the disciple's life, and this fellowship includes trusting Jesus, confessing him, observing his conduct, following his teaching, and being shaped by a relationship with him. Discipleship also means being prepared to face the kind of rejection that Jesus faced.

Transition: Let's see what Mark has to say. Would someone read Mark 1:1-128?

BOOK:

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² It is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way" (Mal 3:1)—

³ "a voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'" (Isa 40:3)

⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with (or in) water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit

descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

The Calling of the First Disciples

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil (Greek unclean) spirit cried out, ²⁴ “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

²⁵ “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Discipleship is prominent in Mark’s Gospel. Jesus’ call would pose two questions in the minds of Mark’s readers: “Who is this One who calls?” and “What does it mean to follow Him?” Mark provided them an answer in his Gospel. He assumed there were basic similarities between the Twelve (cf. comments on 3:13; 13:37) and his Christian readers, so that whatever he would

reveal about the former would be instructive for discipling the latter. Discipleship is the expected norm for all who believe the gospel (cf. 1:15).

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 110-113). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate,” said Dr. Paul S. Rees. “It is an announcement!”

Mark wasted no time giving that announcement, for it is found in the opening words of his book. Matthew, who wrote primarily for the Jews, opened his book with a genealogy. After all, he had to prove to his readers that Jesus Christ is indeed the rightful Heir to David’s throne. Since Luke focused mainly on the sympathetic ministry of the Son of man, he devoted the early chapters of his book to a record of the Saviour’s birth. Luke emphasized Christ’s humanity, for he knew that his Greek readers would identify with the perfect Babe who grew up to be the perfect Man.

John’s Gospel begins with a statement about eternity! Why? Because John wrote to prove to the whole world that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Son of God (John 20:31). The *subject* of John’s Gospel is the deity of Christ, but the *object* of his Gospel is to encourage his readers to believe on this Saviour and receive the gift of eternal life.

Where does Mark’s Gospel fit in? Mark wrote for the Romans, and his theme is *Jesus Christ the Servant*. If we had to pick a “key verse” in this Gospel, it would be Mark 10:45—“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

The fact that Mark wrote with the Romans in mind helps us understand his style and approach. The emphasis in this Gospel is on *activity*. Mark describes Jesus as He busily moves from place to place and meets the physical and spiritual needs of all kinds of people. One of Mark’s favorite words is “straightway,” meaning “immediately.” He uses it forty-one times. Mark does not record many of our Lord’s sermons because his emphasis is on what Jesus did rather than what Jesus said. He reveals Jesus as God’s Servant, sent to minister to suffering people and to die for the sins of the world. Mark gives us no account of our Lord’s birth, nor does he record a genealogy, unnecessary in regard to a servant.

In this opening chapter, Mark shares three important facts about God’s Servant.

The Servant's Identity (Mark 1:1–11)

How does Mark identify this Servant? He records the testimonies of several dependable witnesses to assure us that Jesus is all that He claims to be.

John Mark, the author of the book, is the first witness (v. 1). He states boldly that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is likely that Mark was an eyewitness of some of the events that he wrote about. He lived in Jerusalem with his mother, Mary; and their home was a meeting place for believers in the city (Acts 12:1–19). Several scholars believe that Mark was the young man described in Mark 14:51–52. Since Peter called Mark “my son” (1 Peter 5:13), it is probable that it was Peter who led Mark to faith in Jesus Christ. Church tradition states that Mark was “Peter’s interpreter,” so that the Gospel of Mark reflects the personal experiences and witness of Simon Peter.

The word *gospel* simply means “the good news.” To the Romans, Mark’s special target audience, *gospel* meant “joyful news about the emperor.” The “Gospel of Jesus Christ” is the Good News that God’s Son has come into the world and died for our sins. It is the Good News that our sins can be forgiven, that we can belong to the family of God and one day go to live with God in heaven. It is the announcement of victory over sin, death, and hell (1 Cor. 15:1–8, 51–52; Gal. 1:1–9).

The second witness is that of the prophets (vv. 2–3). Mark cites two quotations from the Old Testament prophets, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 (note also Ex. 23:20). The words *messenger* and *voice* refer to John the Baptist, the prophet God sent to prepare the way for His Son (Matt. 3; Luke 3:1–18; John 1:19–34). In ancient times, before a king visited any part of his realm, a messenger was sent before him to prepare the way. This included both repairing the roads and preparing the people. By calling the nation to repentance, John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah and Malachi join voices in declaring that Jesus Christ is the Lord, Jehovah God.

John the Baptist is the next witness (vv. 4–8). Jesus called him the greatest of the prophets (Matt. 11:1–15). In his dress, manner of life, and message of repentance, John identified with Elijah (2 Kings 1:8; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 17:10–13; and note Luke 1:13–17). The “wilderness” where John ministered is the rugged wasteland along the western shore of the Dead Sea. John was telling the people symbolically that they were in a “spiritual wilderness” far worse than the physical wilderness which their ancestors had endured for forty years. John called the people to leave their spiritual wilderness, trust their “Joshua” (Jesus), and enter into their inheritance.

John was careful to magnify Jesus and not himself (see John 3:25–30). John would baptize repentant sinners in water, but “the coming One” would baptize them with the Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). This did not mean that John’s baptism was unauthorized (see Matt. 21:23–27), or that water baptism would one day be replaced by Spirit baptism (see Matt. 28:19–20). Rather, John’s message and baptism were *preparation* so that the people would be ready to meet and trust the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Our Lord’s Apostles were no doubt baptized by John (see John 4:1–2 and Acts 1:21–26).

The Father and the Holy Spirit are Mark’s final witnesses to the identity of God’s Servant (vv. 9–11). When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit came on Him as a dove, and the Father spoke from heaven and identified His beloved Son. The people who were there did not hear the voice or see the dove, but Jesus and John did (see John 1:29–34). The word *beloved* not only declares affection, but it also carries the meaning of “the only one.” The Father’s announcement from heaven reminds us of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.

You will want to note these references in Mark's Gospel to Jesus Christ as the Son of God—Mark 1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:1–11; 13:32; 14:61–62; and 15:39. Mark did not write his book about just any Jewish servant. He wrote his book about the very Son of God who came from heaven to die for the sins of the world.

Yes, Jesus is the Servant—but He is a most unusual Servant. After all, it is the servant who prepares the way for others and announces their arrival. But *others* prepared the way for Jesus and announced that He had come! Even heaven itself took note of Him! This Servant is God the Son.

The Servant's Authority (Mark 1:12–28)

We expect a servant to be *under authority* and to *take* orders, but God's Servant *exercises* authority and *gives* orders—even to demons—and His orders are obeyed. In this section, Mark describes three scenes that reveal our Lord's authority as the Servant of God.

Scene one—His temptation (vv. 12–13). Mark does not give as full an account of the Temptation as do Matthew (4:1–11) and Luke (4:1–13); but Mark adds some vivid details that the others omit. The Spirit “driveth Him” into the wilderness. This is a strong word that Mark used eleven times to describe the casting out of demons. It is *impelled* in the *New American* and *sent* in the *New International*. It does not suggest that our Lord was either unwilling or afraid to face Satan. Rather, it is Mark's way of showing the intensity of the experience. No time was spent basking in the glory of the heavenly voice or the presence of the heavenly dove. The Servant had a task to perform and He immediately went to do it.

In concise form, Mark presents us with two symbolic pictures. Our Lord's forty *days* in the wilderness remind us of Israel's forty *years* in the wilderness. Israel failed when they were tested, but our Lord succeeded victoriously. Having triumphed over the enemy, Jesus could now go forth and call a new people who would enter into their spiritual inheritance. Since the name *Jesus* is the Greek form of “Joshua,” we can see the parallel.

The second picture is that of the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). The first Adam was tested in a beautiful Garden and failed; but Jesus was tempted in a dangerous wilderness and won the victory. Adam lost his “dominion” over Creation because of his sin (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8), but in Christ, that dominion has been restored for all who trust Him (Heb. 2:6–8). Jesus was with the wild beasts and they did not harm Him. He gave a demonstration of that future time of peace and righteousness, when the Lord shall return and establish His kingdom (Isa. 11:9; 35:9). Indeed, He is a Servant with authority!

Scene two—His preaching (vv. 14–22). If ever a man spoke God's truth with authority, it was Jesus Christ (see Matt. 7:28–29). It has been said that the scribes spoke *from* authorities but that Jesus spoke *with authority*. Mark was not recording here the beginning of our Lord's ministry, since He had already ministered in other places (John 1:35–4:4). He is telling us why Jesus left Judea and came to Galilee: Herod had arrested John the Baptist, and wisdom dictated that Jesus relocate. By the way, it was during this journey that Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–45).

Our Lord's message was the Gospel of the kingdom of God, or “the Gospel of God” as some texts read. No doubt most of the Jews read “political revolution” into the phrase “kingdom of God,” but that was not what Jesus had in mind at all. His kingdom has to do with His reign in the lives of His people; it is a spiritual realm and not a political organization. The only way to enter God's kingdom is by believing the Good News and being born again (John 3:1–7).

The Gospel is called “the Gospel of God” because it comes from God and brings us to God. It is “the Gospel of the kingdom” because faith in the Saviour brings you into His kingdom. It is the “Gospel of Jesus Christ” because He is the heart of it; without His life, death, and resurrection, there would be no Good News. Paul called it “the Gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) because there can be no salvation apart from grace (Eph. 2:8–9). There is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:1–9), and it centers in what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross (1 Cor. 15:1–11).

Jesus preached that people should repent (change their minds) and believe (see Acts 20:21). Repentance alone is not enough to save us, even though God expects believers to turn from their sins. We must also put positive faith in Jesus Christ and believe His promise of salvation. Repentance without faith could become remorse, and remorse can destroy people who carry a burden of guilt (see Matt. 27:3–5; 2 Cor. 7:8–10).

Because Jesus preached with authority, He was able to call men from their regular occupations and make them His disciples. Who else could interrupt four fishermen at their work and challenge them to leave their nets and follow Him? Several months before, Jesus had already met Peter, Andrew, James, and John; and they had come to trust Him (see John 1:35–49). This was not their initial call to faith and salvation; it was an initial call to discipleship. The fact that Zebedee had hired servants suggests that his fishing business was successful and that he was a man of means. It also assures us that James and John did not mistreat their father when they heeded Christ’s call. With the help of his servants, Zebedee could still manage the business.

Jesus did not invent the term “fishers of men.” In that day, it was a common description of philosophers and other teachers who “captured men’s minds” through teaching and persuasion. They would “bait the hook” with their teachings and “catch” disciples. It is likely that as many as seven of our Lord’s disciples were fishermen (John 21:1–3). Surely the good qualities of successful fishermen would make for success in the difficult ministry of winning lost souls: courage, the ability to work together, patience, energy, stamina, faith, and tenacity. Professional fishermen simply could not afford to be quitters or complainers!

Jesus ministered not only in the open air but also in the synagogues. The Jewish synagogues developed during the nation’s exile when the people were in Babylon after the temple had been destroyed. Wherever there were ten Jewish men above the age of twelve, a synagogue could be organized. The synagogue was not a place of sacrifice—that was done at the temple—but of reading the Scriptures, praying and worshiping God. The services were led, not by priests, but by laymen; and the ministry was supervised by a board of elders which was presided over by a “ruler” (Mark 5:22). It was customary to ask visiting rabbis to read the Scriptures and teach, which explains why Jesus had such freedom to minister in the synagogues. The Apostle Paul also took advantage of this privilege (Acts 13:14–16; 14:1; 17:1–4).

Our Lord had set up His headquarters in Capernaum, possibly in or near the home of Peter and Andrew (Mark 1:29). You may see the remains of a Capernaum synagogue when you visit the Holy Land today, but it is not the one in which Jesus worshiped. The people assembled for services on the Sabbath as well as on Mondays and Thursdays. Being a faithful Jew, Jesus honored the Sabbath by going to the synagogue; and when He taught the Word, the people were astonished at His authority.

You will discover as you read Mark’s Gospel that he delights in recording the emotional responses of people. The congregation in the synagogue was “astonished” at His teaching and “amazed” at His healing powers (Mark 1:27; also note 2:12; 5:20, 42; 6:2, 51; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18). You even find Mark recording our Lord’s amazement at the unbelief of the people in Nazareth (Mark 6:6). There is certainly nothing monotonous about this narrative!

Scene three—His command (vv. 23–28). We wonder how many synagogue services that man had attended without revealing that he was demonized. It took the presence of the Son of God to expose the demon; and Jesus not only exposed him, but He also commanded him to keep quiet about His identity and to depart from the man. The Saviour did not want, nor did He need, the assistance of Satan and his army to tell people who He is (see Acts 16:16–24).

The demon certainly knew exactly who Jesus is (see Acts 19:13–17) and that he had nothing in common with Him. The demon’s use of plural pronouns shows how closely he was identified with the man through whom he was speaking. The demon clearly identified Christ’s humanity (“Jesus of Nazareth”) as well as His deity (“the Holy One of God”). He also confessed great fear that Jesus might judge him and send him to the pit. There are people today just like this demonized man: in a religious meeting, able to tell who Jesus is, and even trembling with fear of judgment—yet lost! (see James 2:19)

“Hold thy peace!” literally means “Be muzzled!” Jesus would use the same words when stilling the storm (Mark 4:39). The demon tried one last convulsive attack, but then had to submit to the authority of God’s Servant and come out of the man. The people in the synagogue were amazed and afraid. They realized that something new had appeared on the scene—a new doctrine and a new power. Our Lord’s *words* and *works* must always go together (John 3:2). The people kept on talking about both, and the fame of Jesus began to spread. Our Lord did not encourage this kind of public excitement lest it create problems with both the Jews and the Romans. The Jews would want to follow Him only because of His power to heal them, and the Romans would think He was a Jewish insurrectionist trying to overthrow the government. This explains why Jesus so often told people to keep quiet (Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36–37; 8:26, 30; 9:9). The fact that they did not obey created problems for Him.

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 102-109) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

I. The Title (1:1)

1:1. The opening verse (a verbless phrase) stands as the book’s title and theme. The word **gospel** (*euangeliou*, “good news”) does not refer to Mark’s book, known as “the Gospel of Mark.” Instead it refers to the good news **about Jesus Christ**.

Those acquainted with the Old Testament knew the importance of the word “gospel” (cf. Isa. 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 61:1–3). “News” meant that something significant had happened. When Mark used the word, it had become a technical term signifying Christian preaching about Jesus Christ. “The gospel” is the proclamation of God’s power through Jesus Christ to save all who believe (Rom. 1:16). It was an important term in the theological shaping of Mark’s narrative (Mark 1:14–15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:9–10; 14:9).

For Mark, **the beginning of the gospel** was the historical facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Later the apostles proclaimed it, beginning (e.g., Acts 2:36) where Mark ended.

The gospel is “about Jesus Christ,” **the Son of God**. “Jesus,” His divinely given personal name (cf. Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31; 2:21), is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *yehōšūa* ‘ (“Joshua”), “Yahweh is salvation.”

“Christ” is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew title *Māšīaḥ* (“Messiah, Anointed One”). It was used specifically of the Deliverer anticipated in the Jewish world who would be God’s

Agent in fulfilling Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Gen. 49:10; Pss. 2; 110; Isa. 9:1–7; 11:1–9; Zech. 9:9–10). The anticipated Messiah is Jesus. Though the title “Christ” became part of Jesus’ personal name in early Christian usage, Mark intended its full titular force as shown by his usage (cf. Mark 8:29; 12:35; 14:61; 15:32).

The title “Son of God” points to Jesus’ unique relationship to God. He is a Man (Jesus)—and God’s “Special Agent” (Messiah)—but He is also fully divine. As the Son He depends on and obeys God the Father (cf. Heb. 5:8).

II. Introduction: The Preparation for Jesus’ Public Ministry (1:2–13)

Mark’s brief introduction presents three preparatory events that are necessary for a proper understanding of Jesus’ life-mission: the ministry of John the Baptist (vv. 2–8), Jesus’ baptism (vv. 9–11), and Jesus’ temptation (vv. 12–13). Two recurring words bind this section together: “the desert” (*erēmos*; vv. 3–4, 12–13) and “the Spirit” (vv. 8, 10, 12).

A. Jesus’ forerunner, John the Baptist (1:2–8) (Matt. 3:1–12; Luke 3:1–20; John 1:19–37)

1. JOHN’S FULFILLMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY (1:2–3)

1:2–3. Mark began by putting his account in its proper scriptural context. Aside from Old Testament quotations by Jesus this is the only place Mark referred to the Old Testament in his Gospel.

Verse 2 blends Exodus 23:20 (Septuagint) and Malachi 3:1 (Heb.), and Mark 1:3 is from Isaiah 40:3 (Septuagint). Mark adopted a traditional understanding of these verses so he could use them without explanation. In addition, he emphasized the word “way” (*hodos*, lit., “road, highway”) an important theme in Mark’s explanation of discipleship (Mark 8:27; 9:33; 10:17, 32, 52; 12:14).

Mark prefaced this composite quotation from three Old Testament books with the words: **It is written in Isaiah the prophet**. This illustrates a common practice by New Testament authors in quoting several passages with a unifying theme. The common theme here is the “wilderness” (desert) tradition in Israel’s history. Since Mark was introducing the ministry of John the Baptist in the desert, he cited Isaiah as the source because the Isaiah passage refers to “a voice ... calling” **in the desert**.

Under the Holy Spirit’s guidance Mark gave those Old Testament texts a messianic interpretation by altering “the way before Me” (Mal. 3:1) to **Your way**, and “the paths of our God” (Isa. 40:3, Septuagint) to **paths for Him**. Thus the speaker, **I**, was God who **will send His messenger (John) ahead of You (Jesus) who will prepare Your (Jesus’) way**. John was **a voice** urging the nation of Israel to **prepare** (Plural verb) **the way for the Lord (Jesus)** and to **make straight** “paths for Him” (Jesus). The meaning of these metaphors is given in John’s ministry (Mark 1:4–5).

2. JOHN’S ACTIVITY AS A PROPHET (1:4–5)

1:4. In fulfillment of the preceding prophecy, **John came** (*egeneto*, “appeared”) on the stage of history as the last Old Testament prophet (cf. Luke 7:24–28; 16:16), signaling a turning point in God’s dealings with mankind. John was **baptizing in the desert region** (*erēmō*, dry,

uninhabited country) **and preaching a baptism of repentance**. The word “preaching” (*kēryssōn*) could be rendered “proclaiming as a herald,” appropriate in light of the prediction in Mark 1:2–3.

John’s baptism was no innovation since Jews required Gentiles wanting to be admitted into Judaism to be baptized by self-immersion. The startling new element was that John’s baptism was designed for God’s covenant people, *the Jews*, and it required their repentance in view of the coming Messiah (cf. Matt. 3:2).

This baptism is described as one relating to or expressive of repentance **for (eis) the forgiveness of sins**. The Greek preposition *eis* could be referential (“with reference to”) or purpose (“leading to”) but probably not cause (“on account of”). “Repentance” (*metanoia*) occurs in Mark only here. It means “a turn about, a deliberate change of mind resulting in a change of direction in thought and behavior” (cf. Matt. 3:8; 1 Thess. 1:9).

“Forgiveness” (*aphesin*) means “the removal or cancellation of an obligation or barrier of guilt.” It refers to God’s gracious act whereby “sins” as a debt are canceled, based on Christ’s sacrificial death (cf. Matt. 26:28). Forgiveness was not conveyed by the outward rite of baptism, but baptism was a visible witness that one had repented and as a result had received God’s gracious forgiveness of sins (cf. Luke 3:3).

1:5. Using hyperbole (cf. also vv. 32–33, 37), Mark showed the great impact John made on all areas of Judea and **Jerusalem**. The people **went out and were baptized by John in the Jordan River** (cf. v. 9) as they confessed **their sins** to God. The imperfect tense of the Greek verbs portrays in motion-picture fashion the continual procession of people who kept going out to hear John’s preaching and to be baptized by **him**.

The verb “baptize” (*baptizō*, intensive form of *baptō*, “to dip”) means “to immerse, submerge.” Being baptized by John in the Jordan marked the “turn” of a Jew to God. It identified him with the repentant people who were preparing for the coming Messiah.

Included in the performance of the baptismal rite was the people’s open confession of sins. The verb “confessing” (*exomologoumenoi*, “agree with, acknowledging, admitting”; cf. Acts 19:18; Phil. 2:11), is intensive. They openly agreed with God’s verdict on their sins (*hamartias*, “failure to hit the mark,” i.e., God’s standard). Every Jew familiar with the nation’s history knew they had fallen short of God’s demands. Their willingness to be baptized by John in the desert was an admission of their disobedience and an expression of their turning to God.

3. JOHN’S LIFESTYLE AS A PROPHET (1:6)

1:6. John’s attire and diet marked him as a man of the desert and also depicted his role as God’s prophet (cf. Zech. 13:4). In this way he resembled the Prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), who was equated in Malachi 4:5 with the messenger (Mal. 3:1) cited earlier (cf. Mark 1:2; 9:13; Luke 1:17). **Locusts** (dried insects) **and wild honey** were the common diet in desert regions. Locusts are listed in Leviticus 11:22 among the “clean” foods.

4. JOHN’S MESSAGE AS A PROPHET (1:7–8)

1:7. The opening words are literally, “And he was proclaiming as a herald, saying ...” (cf. v. 4). Mark summarized John’s **message** in order to focus on its main theme, the announcement of a greater Person still to come who would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (v. 8).

The words, **After me** (in time) **will come One** echo Malachi 3:1 and 4:5, but the precise identity of the Coming One remained hidden even to John till after Jesus’ baptism (cf. John

1:29–34). No doubt Mark avoided the term “Messiah” because of popular misconceptions associated with it. Mark 1:8 suggests why the Coming One is **more powerful than** John.

John emphasized the importance of the Coming One and showed his own humility (cf. John 3:27–30) by declaring that he was **not worthy to stoop down** (words recorded only by Mark) **and untie the thongs** (leather straps) used to fasten His **sandals**. Even a Hebrew slave was not required to do this menial task for his master!

1:8. This verse contrasts **I** with **He**. John administered the outward sign, **water** baptism; but the Coming One would actually bestow the life-giving Spirit.

When used in connection with water, the word “baptize” normally indicated a literal immersion (cf. vv. 9–10). When used with the words **Holy Spirit** it metaphorically means coming under the Spirit’s life-giving power.

I baptize is literally “I baptized,” probably indicating that John was addressing those he had already baptized. His baptism **with** (or “in”) “water” was limited and preparatory. But those who received it pledged to welcome the Coming One who would **baptize** them **with the Holy Spirit** (cf. Acts 1:5; 11:15–16). The bestowal of the Spirit was an expected feature of the Messiah’s coming (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:26–27; Joel 2:28–29).

B. Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (1:9–11) (Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22)

1. JESUS’ BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN (1:9)

1:9. Mark abruptly introduced the Coming One (v. 7) as **Jesus**. In contrast with “all the people” from Judea and Jerusalem (v. 5), He **came** to **John** in the desert region **from Nazareth in Galilee**. Nazareth was an obscure village never mentioned in the Old Testament, the Talmud, or the writings of Josephus, the well-known first-century Jewish historian. Galilee, about 30 miles wide and 60 miles long, was the populous northernmost region of the three divisions of Palestine: Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.

John **baptized** Jesus **in** (*eis*) **the Jordan** River (cf. v. 5). The Greek prepositions *eis* (“into,” v. 9) and *ek* (“out of,” v. 10) suggest baptism by immersion. Jesus’ baptism probably occurred near Jericho. He was about 30 years old at this time (Luke 3:23).

In contrast with all others, Jesus made no confession of sins (cf. Mark 1:5) since He is without sin (cf. John 8:45–46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 John 3:5). Mark did not state why Jesus submitted to John’s baptism; however, three reasons may be suggested: (1) It was an act of obedience, showing that Jesus was in full agreement with God’s overall plan and the role of John’s baptism in it (cf. Matt. 3:15). (2) It was an act of self-identification with the nation of Israel whose heritage and sinful predicament He shared (cf. Isa. 53:12). (3) It was an act of self-dedication to His messianic mission, signifying His official acceptance and entrance into it.

2. THE DIVINE RESPONSE FROM HEAVEN (1:10–11)

1:10. Mark used the Greek adverb *euthys* (“immediately, at once”) here for the first of 42 occurrences in his Gospel (the NIV omits it here). Its meaning varies from the sense of immediacy (as here) to that of logical order (“in due course, then”; cf. 1:21 [“when”]; 11:3 [“shortly”]).

Three things set **Jesus** apart from all others who had been baptized. First, **He saw heaven being torn open**. The forceful verb, “being torn open” (*schizomenous*, “split”) reflects a

metaphor for God's breaking into human experience to deliver His people (cf. Pss. 18:9, 16–19; 144:5–8; Isa. 64:1–5).

Second, He saw **the Spirit descending on Him like a dove**, in a visible dovelike form, not in a dovelike way (cf. Luke 3:22). The dove imagery probably symbolized the Spirit's creative activity (cf. Gen. 1:2). In Old Testament times the Spirit came on certain people to empower them for service (e.g., Ex. 31:3; Jud. 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23). The coming of the Spirit on Jesus empowered Him for His messianic mission (cf. Acts 10:38) and the task of baptizing others with the Spirit, as John predicted (Mark 1:8).

1:11. Third, Jesus heard **a voice ... from heaven** (cf. 9:7). The Father's words, expressing His unqualified approval of Jesus and His mission, echoed three verses: Genesis 22:2; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1.

In the first declaration, **You are My Son**, the words "You are" affirm Jesus' unique sonship with the Father. The significance of these words is found in Psalm 2:7 where God addressed the anointed King as His Son. At His baptism Jesus began His official role as God's Anointed One (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 89:26; Heb. 1:5).

The second clause, **whom I love**, is literally, "the Beloved One" (*ho agapētos*). This is either a title ("the Beloved") or a descriptive adjective ("beloved" Son). As a title it stresses the intensity of love between God the Father and the Son without losing its descriptive force. As an adjective, it can be understood in the Old Testament sense of an "only" Son (cf. Gen. 22:2, 12, 16; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech. 12:10), equivalent to the Greek adjective *monogenēs* ("only, unique"; cf. John 1:14, 18; Heb. 11:17). This more interpretive rendering points to Jesus' preexistent sonship.

The words **with You I am well pleased** point to the kind of kingly Son Jesus was to be in His earthly mission. The verb *eudokēsa* is in the past tense ("I *was* well pleased"). Timeless in force, it is rendered in English in the present tense to indicate that God is pleased with His Son at all times. God's delight never had a beginning and will never end.

These words come from Isaiah 42:1 in which God addressed His Servant whom He had chosen, the One in whom He delights, and on whom He had put His Spirit. Isaiah 42:1 begins the first of a series of four prophecies about the true Servant-Messiah in contrast with the disobedient servant-nation of Israel (cf. Isa. 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). The true Servant would suffer greatly in fulfilling God's will. He would die as a "guilt offering" (Isa. 53:10), and He Himself would serve as the sacrificial Lamb (cf. Isa. 53:7–8; John 1:29–30). At His baptism Jesus began His role as the Lord's suffering Servant. Mark gives prominence to this feature of Jesus' messianic mission (Mark 8:31; 9:30–31; 10:32–34, 45; 15:33–39).

Jesus' baptism did not change His divine status. He did not *become* the Son of God at His baptism (or at the transfiguration, 9:7). Rather, His baptism showed the far-reaching significance of His acceptance of His messianic vocation as the suffering Servant of the Lord as well as the Davidic Messiah. Because He is the Son of God, the One approved by the Father and empowered by the Spirit, He is the Messiah (not vice versa). All three Persons of the Trinity are involved.

C. Jesus' temptation by Satan (1:12–13) (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13)

1:12. After His baptism Jesus went forward in the power of the Spirit and **at once** (*euthys*, "immediately") **the Spirit sent Him farther out into the desert** region. The word "sent" is from a strong verb (*ekballō*) meaning "drive out, expel, send away." Mark used it to denote the expulsion of demons (vv. 34, 39; 3:15, 22–23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 28, 38). Here it reflects Mark's forceful style (cf. "led," Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1). The thought is that of strong moral compulsion by

which the Spirit led Jesus to take the offensive against temptation and evil instead of avoiding them. The desert (*erēmos*; cf. Mark 1:4) region, dry uninhabited places, was viewed traditionally as the haunt of evil powers (cf. Matt. 12:43; Luke 8:29; 9:24). The traditional temptation site is northwest of the Dead Sea immediately west of Jericho.

1:13. Jesus **was in the desert** for **40 days**. Despite possible appeal to various Old Testament verses (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 18; 1 Kings 19:8), the closest parallel is that of the victory of David over Goliath who had opposed Israel 40 days (1 Sam 17:16).

Jesus was **being tempted by Satan**. “Tempted” is a form of *peirazō*, which means “put to the test, make trial of” in order to discover the kind of person someone is. It is used either in a good sense (God’s testing, e.g., 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 11:17) or in a bad sense of enticement to sin by Satan and his cohorts. Both senses are involved here. God put Jesus to the test (the Spirit led Him to it) to show He was qualified for His messianic mission. But also Satan tried to draw Jesus away from His divinely appointed mission (cf. Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). Jesus’ sinlessness does not rule out the fact that He was actually tempted; in fact, it bears witness to His true humanity (cf. Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:18).

The tempter was Satan, the adversary, the one who opposes. Mark did not use the term “the devil” (slanderer; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:2). Satan and his forces are in constant, intense opposition against God and His purposes, especially Jesus’ mission. Satan tempts people to turn aside from God’s will, accuses them before God when they fall, and seeks their ruin. Jesus encountered the prince of evil personally before confronting his forces. He entered on His ministry to defeat him and set his captives free (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). As the Son of God, He battled Satan in the desert, and the demons confessed Him as such (cf. Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7).

The reference to **wild animals** is recorded only by Mark. In Old Testament imagery, “the wilderness” was the place of God’s curse—a place of desolation, loneliness, and danger where frightening, ravenous animals lived (cf. Isa. 13:20–22; 34:8–15; Pss. 22:11–21; 91:11–13). The presence of wild animals stresses the hostile character of the desert region as Satan’s domain.

In contrast with the dangerous wild animals is God’s protecting care through the **angels** who **attended** (lit., “were serving,” *diēkonoun*) Jesus throughout the temptation period (though the verb could be rendered “began to serve Him,” i.e., after the temptation). They supplied general aid and the assurance of God’s presence. Mark did not mention fasting (cf. Matt. 4:2; Luke 4:2), probably because Jesus’ stay in the desert region clearly implied it.

Mark’s temptation account is brief (in contrast with Matt. and Luke). He said nothing about the temptation’s content, its climactic end, or Jesus’ victory over Satan. His concern was that this began an ongoing conflict with Satan who kept attempting through devious means to get Jesus to turn aside from God’s will (cf. Mark 8:11, 32–33; 10:2; 12:15). Because of the vocation Jesus accepted in His baptism, He faced a confrontation with Satan and his forces. Mark’s Gospel is the record of this great encounter which climaxed at the Cross. At the outset Jesus established His personal authority over Satan. His later exorcisms of demons were based on His victory in this encounter (cf. 3:22–30).

III. Jesus’ Early Galilean Ministry (1:14–3:6)

The first major section of Mark’s Gospel includes a summary statement of Jesus’ message (1:14–15); the calling of the first disciples (1:16–20; 2:14); Jesus’ exorcising and healing ministry in and around Capernaum (1:21–45); and a series of controversies with Jewish religious leaders (2:1–3:5). The section closes with a plot by the Pharisees and Herodians to kill Jesus

(3:6). Throughout the section Jesus demonstrated His authority over all things both by His words and deeds.

A. *Introductory summary: Jesus' message (1:14–15) (Matt. 4:12–17; Luke 4:14–21)*

Jesus began His ministry in Galilee (cf. Mark 1:9) after John the Baptist was arrested by Herod Antipas I (see chart on the Herods at Luke 1:5) for the reason stated in Mark 6:17–18. Before entering Galilee, Jesus ministered in Judea for about a year (cf. John 1:19–4:45), which Mark did not mention. This shows that Mark's purpose was not to give a complete chronological account of the life of Jesus.

1:14. The words **was put in prison** translate *to paradothēnai*, from *paradidomi*, “deliver up or hand over.” The verb is used of Jesus' betrayal by Judas (3:19), suggesting that Mark set up a parallel between John's and Jesus' experiences (cf. 1:4, 14a). The passive voice without a stated agent implies that *God's* purpose was being fulfilled in John's arrest (cf. parallel to Jesus, 9:31; 14:18) and that the time for Jesus' ministry in Galilee had now come (cf. comments on 9:11–13).

Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming (*kēryssōn*; cf. 1:4) **the good news** (*euangelion*; cf. v. 1) **of (from) God**. Possibly the words “of the kingdom” (KJV) should be included before “of God” because of their presence in many Greek manuscripts.

1:15. Jesus' two declarations and two commands summarize His message. The first declaration, **The time has come**, emphasizes the distinctive note of fulfillment in Jesus' proclamation (cf. Luke 4:16–21). God's appointed time of preparation and expectation, the Old Testament era, now stood fulfilled in accord with God's plan (cf. Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:2; 9:6–15).

The second declaration, **The kingdom of God is near**, presents a key feature of Jesus' message. “Kingdom” (*basileia*) means “kingship” or “royal rule.” Involved in the term is the sovereign authority of a ruler, the activity of ruling, and the realm of rule including its benefits (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [hereafter TDNT]. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., sub verbo “under the word” “*basileia*,” 1:579–80; and comments on Mark 3:23–27). Thus “the kingdom of God” is a dynamic (not static) concept that refers to *God's* sovereign activity or ruling over His Creation.

This concept was familiar to the Jews of Jesus' day. In light of Old Testament prophecy (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8–17; Isa. 11:1–9; 24:23; Jer. 23:4–6; Micah 4:6–7; Zech. 9:9–10; 14:9) they were expecting a future messianic (Davidic) kingdom to be established on earth (cf. Matt. 20:21; Mark 10:37; 11:10; 12:35–37; 15:43; Luke 1:31–33; 2:25, 38; Acts 1:6). So Jesus did not have to arouse interest in His message. His hearers naturally understood His reference to the kingdom of God to be the long-awaited messianic kingdom predicted in the Old Testament.

The time of decision had come; thus the required response to which Jesus summoned His hearers was a double command: **Repent and believe the good news!** Repentance and faith (belief) are bound together in one piece (not temporally successive acts). To “repent” (*metanoēō*; cf. Mark 1:4) is to turn away from an existing object of trust (e.g., oneself). To “believe” (*pisteuō*, here *pisteuete en*, the only NT appearance of this combination) is to commit oneself wholeheartedly to an object of faith. Thus to believe in the good news meant to believe in Jesus Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the “content” of the good news (cf. v. 1). Only by this means can one enter into or receive (as a gift) the kingdom of God (cf. 10:15).

As a nation Israel officially rejected these requirements (cf. 3:6; 12:1–12; 14:1–2, 64–65; 15:31–32), and Jesus taught that His earthly Davidic reign would not come immediately (cf. Luke 19:11). After God completes His present purpose of saving Jews and Gentiles and building His church (cf. Rom. 16:25–27; Eph. 3:2–12), Jesus will return and set up His kingdom on this

earth (Matt. 25:31, 34; Acts 15:14–18; Rev. 19:15; 20:4–6). The nation of Israel will be restored and redeemed (Rom. 11:25–29) and will enjoy the fulfillment of the kingdom promises.

B. Jesus' call of four fishermen (1:16–20) (Matt. 4:18–22; Luke 5:1–11)

Jesus' call of four fishermen, two pairs of brothers, to be His followers comes immediately after the summary of His message. So Mark made clear that to repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15) is to break with one's old way of life and to follow Jesus, to make a personal commitment to Him in response to His call. With this call Jesus began His work in Galilee. This anticipated His appointing and sending out the Twelve (3:13–19; 6:7–13, 30).

1:16. **The Sea** (a Semitic designation) **of Galilee**, a warm-water lake about 7 miles wide and 13 miles long, about 685 feet *below* sea level, was the scene of a thriving fishing industry. It was geographically central to Jesus' Galilean ministry.

As He was walking along the shore, **Jesus ... saw Simon** (surnamed Peter) and **Andrew**, his **brother**, each throwing out a circular casting **net** (10–15 feet diameter) **into the lake**. The significant thing about this, Mark explained (*gar, for*), is that **they were fishermen** by trade.

1:17–18. The words **Come, follow Me** are literally, “Come after Me,” a technical expression that meant “Go behind Me as a disciple.” Unlike a Rabbi whose pupils sought Him out, **Jesus** took the initiative and called His followers.

The call included Jesus' promise: **and I will make you** to become (*genesthai*) **fishers of men**. He had “caught” them for His kingdom; now He would equip them to share His task, to become (*genesthai* implies preparation) fishers who catch “men” (generic for “people”; cf. 8:27).

The fishing metaphor was probably suggested by the brothers' occupation but also had an Old Testament background (cf. Jer. 16:16; Ezek. 29:4–5; Amos 4:2; Hab. 1:14–17). Though the prophets used this figure to express divine judgment, Jesus used it positively to indicate an avoidance of divine judgment. In view of the impending righteous rule of God (cf. Mark 1:15) Jesus summoned these men to the task of gathering people out of the “sea” (OT imagery for sin and death, e.g., Isa. 57:20–21).

At once (*euthys*; cf. Mark 1:12) Simon and Andrew **left their nets** (their old calling) **and followed Him**. In the Gospels the verb “follow” (*akoloutheō*), when referring to *individuals*, expresses the call and response of discipleship. Later events (cf. vv. 29–31) show that their response meant not a repudiation of their homes but rather giving Jesus their full allegiance (cf. 10:28).

1:19–20. On the same occasion Jesus **saw James** and **John**, the sons **of Zebedee** (cf. 10:35), **in their boat, preparing** (from *katartizō*, “put in order, make ready”) **their nets** for another night's fishing. They were partners to Simon (cf. Luke 5:10). **Without delay** (*euthys*) Jesus **called them** to follow Him. **They left** behind their old way of life (fishing boat and nets) and prior claims (**their father Zebedee** and **the hired helpers**) **and followed** (lit., “went away after”) **Him** as disciples.

Mark did not mention any previous contact with Jesus by these fishermen, though John 1:35–42 indicates that they had already acknowledged Him as Israel's Messiah. Later Jesus gathered the Twelve around Himself in a Teacher-pupil relationship (Mark 3:14–19). Mark abbreviated historical events (1:14–20) to emphasize Jesus' authority over people and the obedience of those who followed Him.

Discipleship is prominent in Mark's Gospel. Jesus' call would pose two questions in the minds of Mark's readers: “Who is this One who calls?” and “What does it mean to follow Him?” Mark provided them an answer in his Gospel. He assumed there were basic similarities between

the Twelve (cf. comments on 3:13; 13:37) and his Christian readers, so that whatever he would reveal about the former would be instructive for disciplining the latter. Discipleship is the expected norm for all who believe the gospel (cf. 1:15).

C. Jesus' authority over demons and disease (1:21–45)

The authoritative nature (v. 22) and importance (vv. 38–39) of Jesus' word already experienced by the four fishermen was demonstrated further by His powerful deeds. Verses 21–34 describe a single, perhaps typical, Sabbath Day's activities in Capernaum: His power over demons (vv. 21–28), the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (vv. 29–31), and the healing of others after sunset (vv. 32–34). Then verses 35–39 present a brief withdrawal for prayer and a summary of a preaching tour in Galilee. One significant event on that tour was the healing of a leper (vv. 40–45). Jesus' authoritative words and deeds provoked both amazement and alarm and set the stage for controversies (2:1–3:5).

1. THE CURE OF A DEMONIAK (1:21–28) (Luke 4:31–37)

1:21–22. The four disciples accompanied Jesus into nearby **Capernaum** (cf. 2:1; 9:33), on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was their hometown and became the hub of Jesus' Galilean ministry (cf. Luke 4:16–31). In due course (*euthys*; cf. Mark 1:10), on **the Sabbath** (Saturday) **Jesus** attended the regular worship service in **the synagogue**, a Jewish place of assembly and worship (cf. vv. 23, 29, 39; 3:1; 6:2; 12:39; 13:9). No doubt by invitation from the ruler of the synagogue, He **began to teach** (cf. Acts 13:13–16). Mark often referred to Jesus' **teaching** ministry (Mark 2:13; 4:1–2; 6:2, 6, 34; 8:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35; 14:49), but recorded little of what Jesus taught.

His hearers **were amazed** (*exēplēssonto*, lit., “astounded, struck out of their senses, overwhelmed”; also in 6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18) at the manner and the content (cf. 1:14–15) of Jesus' teaching. **He taught** with direct **authority** from God and had the power to evoke decisions. This contrasted sharply with **the teachers of the Law** (lit., “scribes”) who were schooled in the written Law and its oral interpretation. Their knowledge was derived from scribal tradition, so they simply quoted the sayings of their predecessors.

1:23–24. **Just then** (*euthys*; cf. v. 10), the presence of Jesus and His authoritative teaching in the **synagogue** provoked a strong outburst from **a man** under control of **an evil spirit** (lit., “an unclean spirit,” Semitic for “demon”; cf. v. 34).

The demon spoke through the man who **cried out, What do You want with us ...?** These words translate a Hebrew idiom which expresses the incompatibility of opposing forces (cf. 5:7; Josh. 22:24; Jud. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22).

This question, in the NIV, could be punctuated more forcefully as a declaration: **“You have come (into the world) to destroy (ruin, not annihilate) us.”** The pronoun “us” in both sentences indicates that this demon perceived the significance of Jesus' presence (cf. Mark 1:15) to all the demonic forces. Jesus was the ultimate threat to their power and activity.

The demon, in contrast with most people, recognized Jesus' true character and identity as **the Holy One of God** (cf. 3:11; 5:7), the One empowered by the Holy Spirit. Thus the evil spirit knew the explanation for Jesus' authority.

1:25–26. In a few direct words (no incantations) **Jesus sternly** rebuked (*epetimēsen*; cf. 4:39) the evil spirit and ordered the demon to **come out of** the man. The words **Be quiet** translate the

forceful *phimōthēti*, “be muzzled or silenced” (cf. 4:39). Submitting to Jesus’ authority, **the evil spirit** convulsed (cf. 9:26) **the possessed man**, and **with a loud shriek**, left **him**.

Jesus did not accept the demon’s defensive utterance (1:24) because doing so would have undermined His task of confronting and defeating Satan and his forces. His authority over evil spirits was evidence that God’s rule had come in Jesus (cf. v. 15). This initial exorcism set the pattern for the sustained conflict Jesus had with demons—an important element in Mark’s account. (See the list of Jesus’ miracles at John 2:1–11.)

1:27–28. All **the people** were greatly **amazed** (*ethambēthēsan*, “surprised, astonished”; cf. 10:24, 32). Their question, **What is this?** referred both to the nature of Jesus’ teaching and His expulsion of a demon with only a word of command. His **teaching** was qualitatively **new** (*kainē*) **and came with authority** (cf. 1:22) that extended even to demonic forces who were forced to **obey** (submit to) **Him** (cf. 4:41). In summary, Mark declared that very soon (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) all **Galilee** heard the **news about Him**.

Church, C.L. (1998). *Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 429-431). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

INTRODUCTION (1:1–13)

Already in Mark 1:1 the titles applied to Jesus point to His suffering and death. The Greek term “Christ” corresponds to the Hebrew “Messiah,” meaning *anointed king*. Jesus would be anointed in preparation for His burial (14:3, 8). “Son of God” was used as a title for kings descended from David (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:6–7). Jesus is, however, a king unlike other kings. By some mystery Mark did not explain, Jesus is both “Son of David” and “David’s Lord” (12:35–37). Though the demons discerned Jesus’ mysterious identity from the start (1:24, 34; 3:11), only the cross opened human eyes to the “Son of God” (15:39).

For Mark the “good news of Jesus Christ” began with John the Baptizer. John’s God-authorized ministry (see 11:29–32) fulfilled Scripture (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3). Both John’s clothing (2 Kgs. 1:8) and his preaching of repentance and forgiveness (Mal. 4:5–6) recall the prophet Elijah. John’s baptism symbolized an inner commitment to lead a changed life. Mark’s audience doubtless understood Jesus to be the more powerful Coming One John anticipated. On receiving John’s baptism, Jesus was confirmed as the beloved Son who pleased God by His identification with sinners.

The experience of God’s affirmation quickly gave way to Satan’s temptation. God’s Spirit is not just a comfort; here the Spirit thrust Jesus into the situation of testing. Though Mark did not indicate Jesus’ triumph over Satan, the exorcisms that follow demonstrate that Jesus had bound the Satanic “strong man” and was plundering his human possessions (3:27).

JESUS’ AUTHORITY REVEALED (1:14–20)

The first major section of Mark highlights Jesus’ role as authoritative teacher, healer, and exorcist. Jesus began His ministry following John’s arrest (see 6:14–18). The “fulfilled time” was the era the prophets anticipated when God’s rule would become a reality. The necessary response to God’s work in Jesus was repentance (a change in life direction) and trust in the good news of God’s reign.

Jesus' call to the first disciples included both a demand, "Follow me," and a promise, "I will make you fish for people" (NRSV). In the Old Testament fishers caught persons for God's judgment (Jer. 16:16–18). Here persons are caught for salvation. The immediate response of leaving nets and father illustrates the sacrificial commitment of those first disciples.

RESPONSE TO JESUS (1:21–45)

Jesus, like Paul, frequently taught in the synagogue (1:21, 39; 3:1). There Jesus surprised the crowds by teaching "as one having authority," not like the scribes who taught on the basis of legal precedents. Ironically, only the "unclean spirit" knew Jesus' true identity, and His authority exposed it for what it was. This exorcism evidenced the power of Jesus' words, which broke the power of evil and changed lives.

The incident in Simon's home clarifies that discipleship does not necessarily involve severing family ties and abandoning possessions. The grateful service to Jesus by Simon's mother-in-law represents the first of many women modeling proper responses to Jesus.

Jesus' response to His newfound popularity was solitary prayer. Already Simon Peter emerged as the leader of the disciples ("Simon and his companions," NRSV). For the first time Jesus had to clarify His mission for His disciples. "The message" Jesus proclaimed to "the neighboring towns" was the good news sketched in 1:15. By His dual ministry of preaching and exorcism, Jesus established the pattern for the disciples' subsequent mission (6:12–13).

Mark affirmed Jesus' full humanity by portraying the scope of His emotions. According to a few ancient manuscripts, Jesus was moved to anger, not pity, by the leper's request that expressed doubt that Jesus—and the God active in His ministry—willed his healing. Jesus' response and reference to the cleansing laws (Lev. 14) underscored God's willingness to heal. The "free proclamation" of Jesus' authority to heal hindered Jesus' mission to the neighboring towns by forcing Him into the open country.

Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 618-619). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

I. THE GENESIS OF THE GOSPEL (MARK 1:1–20)

The passage—Although Mark probably wrote primarily for Gentile readers, he begins by linking his account to the Old Testament. The obvious difference in these opening verses as compared to Matthew and Luke can probably best be explained by the different audiences to whom these Gospels were addressed. A Roman audience would not be nearly so interested in Hebrew genealogy as would a Jewish audience.

The message of John the Baptist was a clarion call for repentance. The baptism of John was a repentance kind of baptism, or one that gave proof of repentance.

The popularity of John's ministry is shown in verse 5. Undoubtedly the crowd was composed in part by curiosity seekers. Yet there were many who genuinely repented, as proven by their willingness to follow Jesus when he began his public ministry.

Special points—Much has been said about John's asceticism. Some have suggested he was an Essene. John did not withdraw from the world in disgust; he attacked in the power of God.

There is a movement abroad today away from the institutional church. Some feel the church moves too slowly, while others feel the church is moving too rapidly, especially in social

ministries. There is a need for men like John. He stood his ground, condemned hypocrisy, and called for repentance and godly living.

Beginning in verse 9 Mark shows how Jesus was approved. He received the approval of John, known far and wide as God's prophet. To this was added the approval of John's baptism. Then came the certification of God himself, at the time of the baptism. On the basis of this authentication, Jesus embarked on his earthly ministry.

In verse 15 we find the assertion of God's unique sovereignty. The age of the eschaton had finally dawned. The coming of Jesus Christ marks the embarkation of man upon the last days.

II. GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY (MARK 1:21–6:13)

Authority (Mark 1:21–45)

The passage—The concentration of the early ministry of Jesus in this province was doubtless by design. It was the rural, agrarian area of Palestine as compared to the more urban Judea. The people who lived there were removed from the strong influence of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Through this area ran the arterial highway connecting Egypt, Syria, and Arabia.

Mark moves quickly to establish Jesus' authority. It was not the conferred authority marked by a robe, crown, and scepter. It was the inherent authority of a Spirit-controlled personality. It was obvious to those who listened that Jesus was not like the scribes.

Mark records four illustrations showing Christ's authority over illness. The first showed how an unclean spirit yielded to the authority of the Son of God (1:23–28). Jesus came into the world as the Redeemer, but ministered to human need in such a way as to teach and to save.

The fever of Peter's mother-in-law (1:29–30) is an entirely different kind of sickness from that of the unclean spirit. Jesus had authority over this fever, and the proof of the cure is in her ministry to them.

There seems to be a distinction in Mark between demons (1:32–34) and unclean spirits (1:23–28). Whatever the malady caused by these, Jesus Christ had authority over both.

Perhaps the most tragic illness of that day was leprosy (1:40–45). It did not immediately kill, but left one maimed and crippled. Jesus touched this leper, in defiance of the ritual law. This serves to substantiate the priority Jesus gave to persons over the petty legal restrictions of the Jewish law.

Special points—We must allow latitude in our approach to the subject of demons. It is not possible for us to positively identify these with modern day mental illness or psychoses. Whether or not these exist today in the same form cannot be stated.

It is certain that the people of the first century believed in demons. It is apparent that Jesus shared this belief, at least to the point of getting to the source and effecting a cure. We are on safe grounds when we interpret every illness, of whatever nature, as an opportunity for Christian ministry.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 1:1-28. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.