

OneBook.

DAILY-WEEKLY

The Gospel of Mark

Brad Johnson



** THIS IS THE GOSPEL OF GOD*

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan River, confessing his sins. ¹⁰When Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Just as he came up, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, saying, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased."

Jesus Preaches in Galilee

¹⁴Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
¹⁶As he was going along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them,

⁹Or proclaiming

¹⁰The Gr here can be translated in, with or by

¹¹Lit the Nazarene

¹²Or served

A TWELVE-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

OneBook.

DAILY - WEEKLY

The Gospel of Mark

Brad Johnson

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WELCOME TO ONEBOOK: DAILY-WEEKLY

John Wesley, in a letter to one of his leaders, penned the following:

O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not: what is tedious at first, will afterwards be pleasant.

Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days. . . . Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer. Take up your cross and be a Christian altogether.

Rarely are our lives most shaped by our biggest ambitions and highest aspirations. Rather, our lives are most shaped, for better or for worse, by those small things we do every single day.

At Seedbed, our biggest ambition and highest aspiration is to resource the followers of Jesus to become lovers and doers of the Word of God every single day, to become people of One Book.

To that end, we have created the OneBook Daily-Weekly. First, it's important to understand what this is not: warm, fuzzy, sentimental devotions. If you engage the Daily-Weekly for any length of time, you will learn the Word of God. You will grow profoundly in your love for God, and you will become a passionate lover of people.

How Does the Daily-Weekly Work?

Daily. As the name implies, every day invites a short but substantive engagement with the Bible. Five days a week you will read a passage of Scripture followed by a short segment of teaching and closing with a question for reflection and self-examination. On the sixth day, you will review and reflect on the previous five days.

Weekly. Each week, on the seventh day, find a way to gather with at least one other person doing the study. Pursue the weekly guidance for gathering. Share learning, insight, encouragement, and most importantly, how the Holy Spirit is working in your lives.

That's it. When the twelve weeks are done, we will be ready with twelve more. Four times a year we will release a new edition of the Daily-Weekly. Over time, those who pursue this course of learning will develop a rich library of Bible learning resources for the long haul. Following is the plan for how we will work our way through the Bible.

The Gospels: Twelve weeks of the year the Daily-Weekly will delve into one of the Gospels, either in a broad overview or through a deep dive into a more focused segment of the text.

The Epistles: Twelve weeks of the year the Daily-Weekly will explore one of the letters, sermons, or the Acts of the Apostles that make up the rest of the New Testament.

The Wisdom Writings: Twelve weeks of the year the Daily-Weekly will lead us into some part of the Psalms, Proverbs, or prophetic writings.

The Old Testament: Twelve weeks of the year the Daily-Weekly will engage with some portion of the books of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy), the historical books, or other writings from the Old Testament.

If you are looking for a substantive study to learn Scripture through a steadfast method, look no further.

WEEK ONE

Mark 1:1–15

Prologue

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark is one of four biblical accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus. Written within a generation or so of Jesus himself, Mark's account is the shortest of the four Gospels. It is fast-paced, to the point, and chronicles episodes of Jesus' public life beginning at about age thirty. The Gospel details Jesus' teaching and miracles through the first half of the book. The second half narrows in more precisely on the events leading to his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. Because Jesus is the central focus throughout, Mark's Gospel is somewhat biographical. But unlike modern biographies, Mark does not begin with a narration of Jesus' birth and childhood (as do the Gospels of Matthew and Luke). Instead, Mark begins with a rather dramatic prologue.

The use of a dramatic prologue is an age-old practice still in use today. In fact, I remember being surprised as a youth by the opening screen crawl of my first *Star Wars* movie. It was in theaters during its first run in 1977, and much to my surprise the movie (subtitled *Episode IV: A New Hope*) seemed to begin in the middle of things. In a similar way, Mark begins his story in the middle of things with a screen crawl that spans the first fifteen verses of his Gospel. The appearances of John the Baptizer and Jesus in the Judean wilderness are not isolated events on the timeline of history, but part of a much larger saga that is often referred to as “salvation history.”

Mark's Gospel is a single episode in God's epic drama. That drama begins in Genesis when God creates the heavens and the earth. It continues through the Old Testament as God's people alternate between periods of obedience and sin. The epic takes a new direction in the four Gospels when Jesus appears

on earth to provide victory over sin and death, and it comes to conclusion in Revelation when God creates a new heaven and earth, and banishes death forever. Mark's opening verses are his way of inviting the reader into an epic drama that begins in the middle of things.

ONE

The Beginning of the Gospel

Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Understanding the Word. For years, scholars and commentators on the Gospel of Mark have tried to understand Mark's opening sentence. Does "the beginning of the gospel" refer to the first part of Mark's Gospel, or does the entire account of Jesus' life and ministry as recorded in Mark represent "the beginning of the gospel"?

In the introduction to this week's lessons, I suggested that the first fifteen verses of Mark function as a prologue (or screen crawl) by inviting the reader into the larger story of salvation history. There are good reasons for thinking so. One of those reasons can be found in the opening of Matthew's Gospel. The first verse there reads: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The next sixteen verses list the generations of Jesus from Abraham through David to Jesus, while verse 17 provides an appropriate conclusion to this unit. Matthew's account of Jesus' life and ministry begins in verse 18. Matthew thus begins his Gospel with a prologue.

In a similar way, Mark begins with an introduction, the title of which is, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Why does this matter? It matters because it gives us clues into the writing strategy of Mark and to his reliability as a Gospel writer. Unlike Matthew and John (two of the four Gospel writers), Mark was not one of the twelve disciples whom Jesus chose to accompany him during his years of public ministry. Therefore, Mark was not an eyewitness to the events he reports. Church tradition reveals, however, that Mark was the close companion of Peter, who was not only one of the Twelve but quite arguably their leader. The tradition indicates that Mark carefully recorded what he heard Peter proclaim.

It seems that Mark begins Peter's story at the time in which Peter first encounters Jesus. That meeting comes in Mark 1:16–17, when Jesus calls Peter away from his nets to follow him. Thus, Peter's memoirs begin in verse 16. (We will look at this more closely in next week's lesson.) This presents something of a challenge, though. What might explain the fact that a commercial fisherman would abandon his business interests to follow a traveling, Jewish teacher around the Galilean countryside? Mark has likely penned his introduction (vv. 1–15) at least in part as an explanation for Peter's act: the man who had summoned Peter was the one anticipated by Isaiah hundreds of years earlier and proclaimed by John the Baptizer on the banks of the Jordan River. This was indeed the very Son of God, as the heavenly voice declares in Mark 1:11.

In light of this, we can see how Mark begins with a title for his prologue so as to set it off from Peter's accounts. "The beginning of the gospel" has its origin in the prophetic ministry of Isaiah, continues through the baptizing ministry of John at the Jordan River, and comes to a climax with the advent of Jesus, who is baptized by John, approved by God, tempted by Satan, and introduced in the closing sentence of verses 14–15 as the One who rightly proclaims the coming of God's kingdom.

1. What epic dramas do you recall reading or watching?
2. What role does the opening part of an epic drama play in helping you understand the background to the story?
3. In the instance of Mark, how does the prologue (vv. 1–15) help to set the stage for your encounter with the Gospel?

TWO

True North

Mark 1:2–4 *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; ³the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight—"*

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Understanding the Word. Throughout his Gospel, Mark places directional cues for his readers as they navigate his text. As we read through Mark, I will highlight some of those cues, many of which come at the beginning. In order for us to find and maintain the course Mark intended, we need to heed his cues carefully from the onset, lest we miss his intended destination. Mark 1:1–15 is just such a directional cue, giving us the background information we need to make sense of a story that begins in the middle of things.

Just as good navigators establish their positions relative to fixed points, Mark makes it clear as early as the second verse that Isaiah represents true north on our journey. Mark's message *must and can only be understood* in light of Isaiah's prophecy. He offers no rationale, no explanation, no justification for this move; he simply does it, and he expects his readers to follow his lead. What, then, might such a move suggest about Mark's intended audience? How would they understand a fixing of the narrative to the point of Isaiah?

In order for us to understand Mark's initial course heading, we must first understand Isaiah. As a major prophet of the Old Testament, Isaiah's message was one of both warning and hope. The *warning* was to a people who had too often redirected their allegiance to human kings instead of their one true King. The consequence of such disobedience is punishment, and God can swing a pretty large paddle. Governed for centuries by its own rotten kings, Israel found itself weakened and under attack by foreign empires. The result was captivity in Babylon. God was exercising his justice, but not from a perspective of vengeance. No, his perspective was love. This is the *hope*. God is faithful to his promises, and was not about to leave his people in such a hopeless state. But salvation could not be offered until the punishment had accomplished its purpose. As the author of the letter to the Hebrews knows, "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:6). Thus can Isaiah's message be understood as a message of hope. Israel's time of punishment was nearing its end; God was about to send a messenger to proclaim the good news of salvation (see Isaiah 40:9; 52:7).

In some sense, during the time of Jesus God's people were still battling issues of allegiance. Some placed their trust in their works of righteousness. Others placed their trust in the increasingly popular pagan culture. Still others placed their trust in the sword. In each case, God's people were established on

a wrong heading, and the role of John the Baptizer was to provide a course corrective through the means of baptism. As the forerunner anticipated by Isaiah, John's work was to prepare the way for the coming King.

The time of John marks a time in which people who walked in darkness saw a great light (see Isaiah 9:2). A period of more than four hundred years stood between the people in John's day and the last written word of Hebrew Scripture. His time marked the conclusion to a long period of agonizing anticipation during which the land of God's people was dominated by pagan, foreign empires.

1. What distracts you from pursuing God? Have you unknowingly pledged your allegiance to that distraction?
2. What is the cost of that false allegiance? Or to put it differently, who is paying the price for your loyalty to that distraction? How much is that price?
3. Who in your life functions as a messenger of either warning or hope? How do you allow such persons to speak forthrightly into your life?

THREE

The Function of a Prophet

Mark 1:5–8 *And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

Understanding the Word. If Mark's first directional cue to his readers is to set their reading in light of Israel's history, his second move seems to narrow the focus to the role of a prophet. Verses 5–8 provide a number of details that highlight both John's seeming peculiarities and his practices.

Mark offers this short narrative about John in very descriptive ways. He seems intent on communicating to the reader important markers for understanding, such as the size of the crowds (“*Everybody* was there!”), the food and clothing details of John, and the surpassing magnitude of the One to come. Why are such details important to Mark? And why—in a world where writing was difficult by modern standards—would Mark waste valuable writing space recounting the dietary and fashion habits of John?

It seems likely that Mark is bringing images to the reader of the Old Testament prophets. Several possible allusions here to Old Testament passages (beyond the explicit reference to Isaiah) strongly suggest that Mark wants his readers to understand John as a prophet of old. These include Malachi 3:1, Exodus 23:20, 2 Kings 1:8, and Zechariah 13:4. How, then, should modern-day interpreters understand such a prophet of old? The answer must come at least in part from an understanding of the nature of the prophetic office.

In the Old Testament accounts, the ongoing role of the prophet was to remind Israel of its one true King: God Almighty. That prophetic role was likely an unpopular one, especially when prophets were called upon to rebuke human kings who acted in their own self-interests rather than pursuing the interests of the true King. The prophet’s job was to issue a call to repentance, demanding that God’s people surrender their false allegiances and return humbly to their God. John makes it clear that One is coming after him who greatly surpasses John in power and authority. Receiving such a One would require preparation: specifically, a surrendering of unholy allegiances. Although a noble task, fulfilling the mission of a prophet could certainly evoke the wrath of the reigning king. John’s work would, in fact, earn him a beheading at the hands of Herod (see Mark 6:17–29). Nevertheless, John appeared publicly in the Judean wilderness, tending to the assembled masses on the banks of the Jordan, preparing themselves for whatever was about to happen next.

But what was the nature of that movement to the Jordan River? Was it the peaceful setting we see in movies, with folks patiently waiting their turns to be gently immersed by a grizzly-looking baptizer speaking with a proper British accent? More likely, the response took the shape of a crisis. People knew that the coming of the One would be a double-edged sword, bringing salvation to the righteous and judgment to the wicked. Recall the words of Isaiah as we read them yesterday. Note how Luke captures that tension in Luke 3:6–7. Even though Isaiah’s prophecy (as stated in Luke) suggests that all flesh will see the

salvation of God, John the Baptist understood that this would be a word of warning to the proud: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7).

1. If the role of the prophet was to challenge false allegiances, who plays that role in your life today? Should such a role be reserved for our clergy, or does every believer have the right (and responsibility) to speak a word of truth into the life of another believer?
2. What would be the cost of allowing someone to speak a prophetic word of warning into your life today? What would be the cost of *not* allowing such a person to speak such a word?
3. What experience have you had with public acknowledgment of sin? Are you carrying an ongoing sin that you’d like to make known, even to just one other person?

FOUR

The Return of the King

Mark 1:9–13 *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; ¹¹and a voice came from heaven, “Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.”*

¹²The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.

Understanding the Word. If Mark 1:2–4 is a directional cue to guide our reading with reference to Isaiah, and if verses 5–8 are a more specific cue with regard to understanding John within the tradition of Old Testament prophets, then verses 9–11 provide a further narrowing of directional heading by means of a wording shift. Whereas John was largely in the spotlight in verses 4–8, the primary focus shifts abruptly to Jesus as the main actor in verses 9–15. In effect, the spotlight—which began broadly with Isaiah and narrowed with John—now shifts to Jesus. What is not said in Mark is that John baptized

Jesus. What *is* said in verse 9 is that Jesus “was baptized” by John. Although a seemingly minor grammatical point, the use of the passive voice here is a dramatic way for Mark to make Jesus the central focus as John recedes into the background.

This creates a clear and dramatic contrast. Jesus is both *like* and *unlike* John. If we understand John to operate within a long, prophetic tradition, then we can see Jesus likewise operating within that same tradition. However, John is quick to illustrate the differences between Jesus and himself. The coming One would surpass John’s ministry in all ways (and, in fact, the ministries of all the prophets). Not only does Jesus receive divine affirmation when the sky splits, he also successfully faces Satan in the wilderness. But why would Jesus be sent into this barren, dangerous region? Further, how should we understand Jesus’ encounter with Satan?

One of the distinctive features of Christianity is the reality of an *incarnational* God, or a God who takes on human flesh to dwell among his people. So far in our reading, we’ve seen that Jesus seems to come from a normal locale: Nazareth. His background could have been anyone’s background. Further, we notice that he submits to baptism at John’s hands, just like everyone else. Now we learn that Jesus is subject to temptations . . . again, like we all are. The key difference here is that his temptations are on a scale that really suggests that Jesus is anything but a typical human being. Although Mark is careful to make sure that Jesus is like other persons in many ways, he also makes it clear that Jesus differs from other persons in his relationship to God, bearing the very stamp of divine sonship.

As we consider the reality of Jesus, it’s of utmost importance that we remember that Jesus—in ways that are difficult to understand—uniquely and completely balances his human and divine characteristics. Surviving in the wilderness, without food, without water, without shade, and without shelter for forty days would be painful. It would, in fact, be difficult to watch. However, and in spite of the ongoing snares of Satan, Jesus prevails precisely because of God’s care for him through the ministry of angels.

In sum, Jesus emerges as the rightful heir to the divine throne precisely because his allegiance to the King is *complete*. Even in the face of Satan’s temptations, Jesus remains solidly grounded in his submission and loyalty to the true King.

1. Have you noticed that, up to this point, Mark does not record Jesus as having yet spoken? Why do you suppose Mark would intentionally keep the star of the show silent?
2. Looking back on Mark's opening, Isaiah seems to provide the authorization for John's ministry, and John likewise seems to provide—at least in some measure—the authorization for Jesus' ministry. How do you suppose the declaration of the heavenly voice (v. 11) adds to Jesus' status?
3. As you consider the voices in your life that seem to speak with authority, what is it *specifically* that lends such authority to their voices?
4. How does knowing that Jesus fully identified with humanity impact your confidence in him? How would your faith be different if this temptation narrative were not included in the Gospel?

FIVE

“Repent . . . and Believe!”

Mark 1:14–15 *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

Understanding the Word. The idea of “the kingdom of God” is central in this passage. However, our modern understanding of kingship and kingdoms has shifted since the time of Jesus. We tend to think of royalty reigning from palaces, serving as visual symbols of a nation's values and might. To be sure, ancient kingship during the era of Jesus shares some similarities with modern ideas. However, we must have a better sense of kingship in the ancient Near East if we are to more fully understand what Jesus might have meant by his proclamation about the approach of the kingdom of God.

Kingship in the days of Jesus would have carried with it certain historical and cultural assumptions. For instance, most ancient persons would likely have understood that kings were often interested in working cooperatively (in varying degrees) with their subject peoples. An incoming king would invite

respect and allegiance by offering the subject people various provisions, like political identity, military protection, and economic stability. In exchange for these provisions, the king would expect (and even demand) that his subjects would contribute to the king's treasury through their earnings or resources. He would expect his subjects to obey his laws, and to provide a fighting force in the service of the king. And perhaps most important, the king would demand *absolute allegiance* from his subjects. Forming alliances and making treaties with other political powers or kingdoms would earn the subjects swift and terrible punishment.

With this understanding of kingship in mind, how might Jesus' message have been received by his hearers? Most likely, they would have heard in Jesus' message an announcement that things were about to change; that there was a new sheriff in town. Further, they would have heard in Jesus' message a word of hope, specifically that this long-awaited kingdom was at hand. Finally, they would have understood that repentance would require a breaking of all other allegiances. Only under such unconditional loyalty would the advancing kingdom be understood as truly good news.

Notice also the order in which Jesus' first two commandments are given. First he issues a call for repentance, and *then* he invites his hearers into belief. A study of the two words for *repent* and *believe* quickly reveals something other than what many Christians today think. Repentance, normally thought of as a change of behavior, actually refers to a change of thought. In the days of Jesus, to repent was often a word used by a surrendering army as it abandoned its position in opposition to the stronger army. To repent would be something like "to surrender" one's commitments, position, or allegiances. In addition, to believe was not simply a matter of what one thought (as it is widely held today), but rather a term that expressed the placing of one's confidence or trust in another. For example, to *believe in* someone or something required one to step out in the confidence that the individual or entity was reliable.

In this way, we see Jesus ushering in the kingdom of God with a simple formula. The first step is to rid oneself of foreign allegiances and false loyalties; in effect, to cleanse one's mind. The second step is to fully trust the King as provider, sustainer, and protector. Only in this way will the full benefit and good news of citizenship in the kingdom be realized.

Prologue

1. Questions of *allegiance* have been numerous in our study so far. As you read through this week's lessons, what new insights do you have regarding your own allegiances, distractions, and things that might tempt you?
2. When you consider those things, who or what can you turn to for support?
3. In what ways do you find yourself unwilling or unable to fully trust God, even if you're potentially willing to shed other allegiances?

COMMENTARY NOTES

General Comments. The English word “gospel” is used principally in two different ways. On one hand, it refers to a proclamation of good news, and the Greek word *euangelion* on which “gospel” is based (or “godspell” in Old English) gives us the English word “evangelism.” The opening of Mark is curious because it could be read in one of two ways: either Mark is documenting the good news *about* Jesus (e.g., that he forgives sins and raises the dead), or he is documenting the good news *from* Jesus (e.g., announcing that “the time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand”). It’s also possible that Mark means both at the same time. On the other hand, “gospel” came to refer to a written account of the life of Jesus. We have four Gospels in this sense in our New Testament: those of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John. Titles were later added to each Gospel to distinguish them from one another, and each was referenced as *The Gospel According to X*, where *X* represents the name of the Gospel writer. In the case of Mark, the title of his work became *KATA MARKON* (that is, “according to Mark”). As with other commentaries on the New Testament, I’ll distinguish the gospel (the good news about and/or from Jesus) from the Gospel (the written account of Mark) by means of upper- and lower-case letters: gospel versus Gospel.

General Comments. Although most versions of Mark’s Gospel conclude at 16:20, the earliest available manuscripts (i.e., handwritten documents) conclude Mark abruptly at 16:8. It seems that some have made attempts to provide more suitable endings to Mark, but they are most likely not original to Mark’s pen.

Day 4. Why is it important to note this change of focus? Recall that John reported that the coming One would: come *after* John; be *of greater magnitude* than John; and baptize *in the future* and with the *Holy Spirit* (Mark 1:7).

Day 4. When the region of “the wilderness” is mentioned in the prologue, we probably ought to dismiss any notions of a forest or deep woods, for the wilderness as it is referred to here was more likely a dry, desert-like region. The sense of the underlying Greek word is a desolate, uninhabitable place. It was the abode of bandits who would assault defenseless travelers. It was the place for wild and dangerous animals. It lacked water and shelter. But perhaps most important, it was often the stage where spiritual warfare took place. Palestine, as the setting for the life and events of Jesus, consisted of a variety of regions. The mountainous ridge on which Jerusalem sits, the deep valley of the Jordan River basin, and the slowly rising flatlands of the coastal regions all contribute in some

Prologue

way to the landscape of the Holy Land. But perhaps no region is more packed with significance than the “wilderness,” and Mark skillfully orients his readers to that locale through several references to

wild places and things (vv. 3–4, 6, 12–13). Such a concentration of words related to the *wild* occurs nowhere else in Mark. The Greek word is *erēmos*.

WEEK ONE

GATHERING DISCUSSION OUTLINE

- A. Open session in prayer. Ask for specific celebrations of God's goodness.
- B. What new insights have you gained from this week's readings? What has encouraged you? What has challenged you?
- C. View video for this week's readings.
- D. Discuss questions selected from daily readings.

1. **KEY OBSERVATION:** The Gospel of Mark begins with a dramatic prologue.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In what areas (literature, film, etc.) have you encountered prologues? Name some examples. What is their function? How might Mark 1:1–15 set the stage for the drama about to unfold?

2. **KEY OBSERVATION:** Isaiah represents true north for Mark.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What do you know about Isaiah? How might an understanding of the message of Isaiah help Mark's reader to better understand the message of his Gospel?

3. **KEY OBSERVATION:** John the Baptizer was a prophet in the tradition of Isaiah.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: When you consider the term *prophet*, what images come to mind? What attributes do prophets typically have?

How did John the Baptizer demonstrate those attributes? Why is it important to see John within the tradition of Old Testament prophets?

4. **KEY OBSERVATION:** Jesus emerges as the legitimate heir to the kingdom of God on earth.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: In what ways is Jesus Christ the King? How does an understanding of kingship in his day affect our understanding of his lordship today?

5. **KEY OBSERVATION:** Allegiance to God's kingdom requires repentance and belief.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does the video challenge your ideas about *repentance* and *belief*? What allegiances do you or your congregation need to abandon in order to more fully make room for the kingdom of God? What is the price of trusting Jesus as Lord?

- E. What facts and information presented in the commentary portion of the lesson help you understand the weekly Scripture?
- F. Close session with prayer. Ask for specific concerns to be brought before our Lord.