

OneBook.

The BIBLICAL
JOURNEY

THE GOSPEL OF
MARK

WITH JOSEPH R. DONGELL

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Week One

Setting the Stage for Jesus

MARK 1:1–11

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

²As 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. ⁵And 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.”

⁹In 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.”

Before your lesson preparation each day, please review Our Prayer Covenant on page xxii.

Lesson Preparation: Engaging the Word

Three Days Before the Lesson

Read the weekly scripture.

REFLECT: What *basic information* (e.g., people, places, times, events, outcomes) can you list as the harvest of your first reading of the passage?

RESPOND:

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Two Days Before the Lesson

Read the weekly scripture using two or three different translations.

REFLECT: What *questions* now begin to emerge? Are there puzzles, or gaps, or ambiguities in this passage? What might trip up someone new to the Bible? What might stump even a seasoned Christian? Are there any significant differences between the Bible versions you read?

RESPOND:

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One Day Before the Lesson

Read the weekly scripture.

REFLECT: Identify one important insight you have already received, and the one question for which you would most like a good answer.

RESPOND:

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Encountering the Word Together

Lesson Note-Taking Outline

WHY STUDY MARK?

- 1 It likely was the first (of the four canonical gospels) written
- 2 It has a fascinating and carefully designed plot
- 3 It might contain the essence of the apostle Peter’s memory and preaching
- 4 Whenever we read the Bible, we may meet God
- 5 In reading Mark, we can “walk along with” Jesus himself

The Title of the Gospel

Mark 1:1

- 1 **The Secret Identity of Jesus:** He is “the Son of God”
- 2 **The Beginning:** Not of a book, but of God’s final work of salvation in human history
- 3 **The Gospel:** Good news (grand public announcement) of God’s work to bring the golden age to the whole world (its peoples and the whole of creation)

NOTES:

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John’s Appearance

Mark 1:2–8

- 1 **Old Testament Prophecies:** God’s long-anticipated plan is beginning to happen
- 2 **A Strange Man:** John the Baptist as the “re-appearance” of the Great Elijah
 - A His clothing
 - B His food
- 3 **A Great Revival**
 - A The great scope of the revival: all . . . all
 - B The message of the revival
 - » “*Repent!*” (total reversal, complete change of mind)
 - » “*A Stronger One is coming!*” (he will baptize with the Holy Spirit)

NOTES:

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Jesus' Arrival

Mark 1:9-11

1 From Galilee

- A A place of "mixed" population (Jewish and Gentile)
- B A place not viewed highly, either religiously or culturally

2 To Be Baptized

- A Jesus is not confessing sins (as were all others)
- B Jesus is privately addressed by His Father: "You . . ." (NIV).
- C The skies are (violently) torn open = important revelation from God
- D The Spirit of God (appearing visibly to Jesus) descends upon Jesus
- E Jesus' identity is confirmed (by the Father) to Jesus: "my Son, my beloved"
 - » Wider witness of the Christian message: Son = Jesus is "divine"
 - » Historical background in 2 Samuel 7:14, etc.: Son = "King of Israel"
 - » Israel's king = The one through whom God will redeem and rule the whole world
 - » Jesus, not Caesar, is the world's rightful savior and ruler

NOTES:

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For Further Study

READING THE OLD TESTAMENT: Malachi 3:1–12 and/or Isaiah 40:1–8

A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isa. 40:3–5 NIV)

REFLECT: How does this passage connect with Mark 1:1–11? How does the Old Testament passage help me see God’s character, God’s will, and the gospel of Jesus better?

RESPOND:

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READING THE PSALMS: Psalm 107:1–22

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. (Ps. 107:1–3 NIV)

REFLECT: This great psalm of deliverance goes nicely with the beginning of the story of Jesus the Great Deliverer. What parts of this psalm about God’s great delivering love most speak to you?

RESPOND:

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READING THE NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 2:1–21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1–4 NIV)

REFLECT: Here we read the fulfillment of John the Baptist’s promise regarding Jesus: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” What one thing strikes you most about the day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2:1–21?

RESPOND:

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Additional Resources

TEXTUAL COMMENTS

- A. *Evangelion*:** a Greek word: *eu* (good) + *ange-lion* (good news, official message, joyful public announcement).
- B. *Pax Romana*:** a Latin expression meaning “the peace of Rome” (i.e., the peace, security and prosperity that Roman rule brought throughout the Mediterranean region (and beyond) for more than two centuries, beginning around 50 BC).
- C.** It is not clear that the expression “Son of God” was part of the original wording of Mark’s gospel, since some early Greek manuscripts lack these words. Either the eye of an early scribe (manuscript copier) accidentally skipped over some letters (in the back-and-forth motion of copying), or an early scribe reverently added these words in light of the whole message of Mark. Either way, there is no need to imagine a conspiracy of any sort. (Metzger)
- D.** The expression “the gospel of Jesus Christ” is capable of being interpreted in many ways, given the ambiguity of the Greek genitive case: “the gospel *about* Jesus, the gospel *from* Jesus, the gospel (*preached by*) Jesus, the gospel (*which is*) Jesus . . .” and so on. (Wallace, 119–21)

(See appendix for additional source information.)

FURTHER STUDY RESOURCES

SELECTED COMMENTARIES ON MARK’S GOSPEL

See **Ben Witherington** for a more detailed account of the *Priene* Inscription and the relationship between “good news” and the Roman emperor.

See **James Edwards** for a splendid report on the golden age anticipated through the reign of the Roman emperors, especially Caesar Augustus.

See **Joel Marcus** for an exploration of the possible significance of the dove.

See **William Lane** for a more detailed account of the complex of Old Testament scriptures quoted in Mark 1:2–3.

See **R. T. France** for a note on the textual confusion in Mark 1:1, regarding whether “Son of God” was originally part of Mark’s title.

See **Robert Geulich** for a variety of senses that “beginning” (1:1) might have.

See **Robert Gundry** for an explanation of Jesus’ great superiority over John the Baptist.

See **Sharyn Dowd** for comments on how the death of Elijah foreshadows those of John the Baptist and Jesus.

RELATED DICTIONARY ARTICLES

In IVP’s *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*:

Baptism; Elijah and Elisha; Galilee; Gospel (Good News); Holy Spirit; John the Baptist; Mountain and Wilderness; Rome; Son of God

In IVP’s *Dictionary of New Testament Background*:

Galilee; Holy Spirit; Pax Romana; Roman (Emperors, Empire, Overview)

OTHER RESOURCES

An account of the Asbury Revival can be found in Robert E. Coleman, *One Divine Moment: The Account of the Asbury Revival of 1970*. See place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruits for digital copies.

Week Two

Jesus Enters the Battle

MARK 1:12–28

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

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

¹⁶And passing 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.¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.”¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zeb’edee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets.²⁰ And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zeb’edee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him.

²¹And they went into Caper’na-um; and immediately on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught.²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit;²⁴ and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

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Encountering the Word Together

Lesson Note-Taking Outline

Review and Background

Mark 1:9–11

1 Jesus as the (Divine) Son/King

- A All of David's (royal) sons were "adopted" by God as his own "sons" (see 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 2, Psalm 110, Psalm 72)
- B Therefore Jesus, as God's Son, is a *royal* son, Israel's *King*

2 The Role of a King

- A God is the King of Israel, and King of the world (often taught in the Psalms)
- B God establishes a human king upon Israel's throne (David and his sons)
- C The role of Israel's king as conduit of blessing from God (see Psalm 72)
 - » Protection/military strength/military leadership versus enemies
 - » Order/justice/law versus chaos (a corrosive death force)
 - » Agricultural bounty versus famine and drought (more death forces)
- D Good news! Whenever God establishes a king (a conduit of divine blessing) on Israel's throne

3 The Descent of the Spirit upon Jesus

- A We see the Trinity: Father (voice); Son (Jesus); Spirit (as a dove)
- B Explaining Jesus' power:
 - » Jesus is divine, but not depending on his own divine power
 - » Jesus is fully dependent on the Spirit as seen
 - in the Spirit's influence: "drove [Jesus] out" into wilderness
 - in Luke's description of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:1, 14, 18)
 - in Peter's sermon at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:34ff)

NOTES:

The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness

Mark 1:12–13

- 1 **Much "Left Out" of Mark's Story:** We must accept the specific purposes Mark has in mind for his gospel
- 2 **Jesus Replays (and Re-does) Israel's Wilderness Experience**
 - A God's "original" son (Israel) failed when tested in the wilderness (see Hosea 11:1ff)
 - B God's eternal Son (Jesus) will succeed when tested in the wilderness (though directly facing God's supreme enemy: Satan)
- 3 **Jesus Is "with" the Wild Beasts**
 - A Some view this as a *positive* renewal of Eden's harmony (compare the vision of peace between animals and humans in Isaiah 11:6–9; 43:18–21; 65:25)

- B More view this as a *negative* feature, linked to the negatives of wilderness, fasting, and Satan’s presence

4 Jesus’ Success in the Face of Satan’s Temptation

- A Assisted by God’s Spirit (not stated, but implied)
- B Assisted by angels

NOTES:

Jesus Launches His Galilean Ministry

Mark 1:14–15

1 John the Baptist Is First Removed from the Scene

- A His arrest points to governmental displeasure at him (and his message)
- B His arrest points ahead to a likely fate for Jesus

2 Jesus Returns to Galilee

- A Jesus chooses not to go immediately to Jerusalem, the Jewish capital: this contradicts the “worldly wisdom” offered by Jesus’ own brothers (see John 7:1–9)
- B Even in Galilee, Jesus does not enter its major cities (Chorazin, Sepphoris), but hangs out in small villages, towns, and the countryside: a “rural ministry”
- C People “come out” to Jesus: Jesus is an “attracting” person
- D Little, obscure, and supposedly insignificant things/places/people are often where God chooses to show his glory

3 Jesus Has a Message

- A The time has come
- B The kingdom of God has drawn near
 - » God’s rule is something God initiates, builds, controls
 - » God’s rule “comes near enough” to allow us then to “enter” it
- C Repent
 - » Jesus picks up John’s message (repent): Turn away! Turn around! The gospel includes this strong *negative* message
 - » God’s rule “comes near enough” to allow us then to “enter” it
- D Believe the good news
 - » Jesus pushes beyond John’s message: The kingdom/gospel is now! The gospel includes this strong *positive* message
 - » The good news: that God, beginning in/with/through Jesus, is now starting to rescue and renew the whole world, all people, even all creation

NOTES:

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Mark 1:16–20

- 1 **Geographical Background** (some basic coordinates)
 - A Mediterranean Sea as the *western* boundary to the land of Israel
 - B Sea of Galilee near the *northern* end of the land of Israel
 - C The Dead Sea near the *southern* end of the land of Israel
 - D The Jordan River connecting the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea
- 2 **He Calls Fishermen**
 - A Galilee is a place of “mixed” population (Jewish and Gentile)
 - B Galilee is a place not viewed highly, either religiously or culturally
- 3 **He May Have Known These Disciples Beforehand**
- 4 **Jesus Assembled a Band of Followers . . . from the Very Beginning**
- 5 **Jesus (Not the Disciples) Takes the Initiative: Jesus Does the Calling/Inviting**
- 6 **Jesus Calls to *Himself*: the Call Is to Become Attached to the Person of Jesus**
- 7 **Jesus Calls Them to Become “Fishers of Men”:** a positive image of rescuing people from the sea of chaos/danger/death
- 8 **Jesus Declares Himself Able to Make/Shape Disciples into Such Fishermen**

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Jesus Launches His War Against the Forces of Evil

Mark 1:21–28

- 1 **Into a Synagogue**
 - A Galilee is a place of “mixed” population (Jewish and Gentile)
 - B Galilee is a place not viewed highly, either religiously or culturally
- 2 **Mark “Not Interested” in Many Features of This Story:** (*We must allow Mark to focus on his own unique narrative purposes, and accept the fact that he will leave many other elements “to the side”*)
 - A Exactly what Jesus was actually teaching
 - B How Jesus was invited/permitted to teach
 - C The man’s story (when/how he came to be possessed)
- 3 **The Exorcism Event Itself**
 - A The unclean spirit knows Jesus’ real identity
 - B The unclean spirit knows Jesus’ real mission: to destroy the forces of evil
 - C The unclean spirit must not be allowed to advertise Jesus’ real identity
 - D The unclean spirit causes convulsions upon its exit

E Good Questions

- » Why does the spirit brag about knowing Jesus' identity?
- » Who fears being destroyed? (one spirit? all spirits? us?)
- » Why is the spirit allowed to "act up"?

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For Further Study

READING THE OLD TESTAMENT: 1 Kings 19:9–21

The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. (1 Kings 19:11–12 NIV)

REFLECT: Does this Old Testament passage about the call of Elisha illuminate our passage this week?

RESPOND:

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READING THE PSALMS: Psalm 27:1–6

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. (Ps. 27:1–3 NIV)

REFLECT: This great psalm of deliverance goes nicely with the beginning of the story of Jesus the Great Deliverer. What parts of this psalm about God’s great delivering love speak most clearly to you?

RESPOND:

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READING THE NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 28:16–20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:16–20 NIV)

REFLECT: Here we read Jesus’ instructions that all participate in God’s great mission of rescuing lost humanity. How does this passage in Matthew extend our understanding of Mark’s story of Jesus calling disciples to be fishers of men?

RESPOND:

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Additional Resources

TEXTUAL COMMENTS

A. Some ancient Greek manuscripts have (in 1:14) Jesus preaching “the gospel of the kingdom of God,” rather than simply “the gospel of God.” The first option likely results from the well-known tendency among text copiers to expand certain expressions (e.g. “the gospel of God”) to correspond with more familiar expressions (e.g. “the kingdom of God”). The shorter option, therefore, is likely what was originally written. (Metzger)

B. The exclamation/question, “What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” is idiomatic, and is likely equivalent to, “Leave us alone!” (Wallace, 150–51)

FURTHER STUDY RESOURCES

SELECTED COMMENTARIES ON MARK’S GOSPEL

See *Ben Witherington* for a fine summary of Mark’s theology of miracles. (92–93)

See *James Edwards* for comments about Mendel Nun and Bargil Pixner, who have spent a lifetime investigating the Sea of Galilee.

See *Joel Marcus* for an unpacking of the warfare and violence against Satan implied in the exorcism performed by Jesus.

See *William Lane* for a more detailed exposition of “the gospel of God” in 1:14.

See *R. T. France* for comments about continuity between the ministries of John and Jesus.

See *Robert Geulich* for a careful treatment about the “fullness of time” in 1:15.

See *Robert Gundry* for how Jewish legends about how Satan, Adam, and Eve might serve as background for the story of Jesus’ temptation.

See *Sharyn Dowd* for an interesting discussion of the significance of “catching fish” in both Greek and Jewish cultures.

RELATED DICTIONARY ARTICLES

In IVP’s *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*:

Authority and Power; Demon, Devil, Satan; Galilee; Kingdom of God; Temptation of Jesus

In IVP’s *Dictionary of New Testament Background*:

Apocalypticism; Demonology; Galilee; Roman Military