

The Gospel of Mark – Week 2

Mark 1:1-15

Main Idea: Jesus is the Son of God who calls us to repent and believe.

Mark 1:1-15 is the prologue to the Gospel of Mark. He gives us important information about the identity of Jesus.

Question: How does the opening of Mark differ than the three other Gospels?

Mark gives us lenses through which to view his Gospel that give us a perspective that those who encountered Jesus did not understand until after the resurrection. The light was too bright for them to see and understand.

Jesus is King. Jesus is the long-anticipated Messiah of Old Testament longing. He is the promised one who the prophets spoke of with hope.

Mark 1:1–15 (ESV)

¹ The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ”

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

- Mark ties the story of Jesus into the story of God’s **unfolding plan of redemption** in the Old Testament.
 - Isaiah 40:3 (ESV) ³ A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

- Exodus 23:20 (ESV) ²⁰ “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.
- Malachi 3:1 (ESV) ¹ “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.
- **Summary** - John the Baptist, is the messenger (the prophet like Elijah) sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Just as Isaiah 40:3, declares the hopeful message to exiles that God will comfort his people and make a highway for them to return to their home, Mark points our attention to the greater fulfillment of this in the announcement from John that a greater one is coming who will bring us back from the greater exile of sin.
- **This greater one is...**
 - Jesus – Yeshua – Yaweh saves
 - Christ – Meshiac/Christos – Anointed One – King
 - Son of God – God’s unique divine Son.
 - He will be the suffering servant of Isaiah who will bring salvation
- John calls all people to be baptized in preparation for the coming Messiah. This is a shift because we don’t have any evidence of this kind of baptism prior to John. Ritual washings for purification of sin were common, but this marks something new. After Christ, there is evidence of Jews requiring Gentiles to be baptized, but this command is different. The point here is that ALL people need forgiveness. All people are called to repent and be forgiven.
- The voice in the wilderness calling out from a prophetic character from the fringes of society, outside of the social elites in Jerusalem, prepares the people for what God is about do through His Son. John knows that dip in the muddy waters of the Jordan do not have power to forgive or change anyone. His work is preparatory for the one who will baptize all people who turn to him with God’s own Spirit. True forgiveness and life will be given from God’s own Son to all who trust in Him.
- God is doing something new. Mark doesn’t want us to miss this. The long anticipated King has returned – the king who will right all that is wrong.

Jesus is Creator.

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

- Jesus enters into the muddy waters of the river Jordan is baptized by John. He does so not out of need for forgiveness but to fully identify with us.
 - The heavens are torn (schizo) – Mark says that Jesus saw the sky being torn open. Heaven comes down and the barriers are removed. Mark wants us to know that this is not an opening that only occurs at his baptism and then closes... the heavens have been torn open and God has come down. There is access – heaven has come to Earth. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 64:1 – “Oh that you rend the heavens and come down.” This has come to pass. God is doing something new that never will be undone.
 - The spirit descends on Jesus like a dove. God’s reign does not swoop down like a hawk or an eagle, rather it hovers and descends gently as a dove. This same Spirit hovered over the waters of Creation in Genesis
 - Genesis 1:2 (ESV) ² *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*
 - The beginning of the Gospel is the beginning of a New Creation. The spirit that hovered over the waters of Creation now rest upon God’s chose Son. God will transform and restore fallen humanity.
 - The voice comes from Heaven. “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” The voice is directed to Jesus. He is the beloved eternal Son of God.
- To the crowds Jesus comes as an ordinary person from Nazareth, a place that is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is truly – NoWheresVille. He comes as on in the crowd to be baptized. He is not recognized by the crowds, his followers, the leaders... but He is the Son of God. We will see this theme unfold in the book – he will be proven ultimately to be the Messiah – the King – the Lord of all. (NIV Application Commentary)

Jesus is Conqueror.

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

- The same Spirit that hovered on Him at baptism, now drives Jesus into the wilderness. God sends Jesus, his beloved son, into the wilderness to be tested. God tested Israel in the Old Testament after he called them out of Egypt through the waters, there God's people failed the test and rebelled against God. Jesus goes into the wilderness and is there for 40 days. Satan, who is presented here as powerless, tempts Jesus to choose another way than God has planned. Satan's attempt fail and backfire... his temptations only serve to accomplish God's purpose for testing.
- Jesus transforms the place that the people of Israel remembered to be the place of failure, judgement, and beginning of a new beginning – into a place of new creation. Jesus is the new Adam – unsoiled by sin and the curse of the fall. The wilderness becomes a place of victory over sin and new creation. Jesus is with the wild animals in peace and the angels minister to him.
 - Isaiah 11:6–9 (ESV) ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
- Jesus is the conqueror of sin, death, and the curse of the fall.

Jesus Calls all People to Repent and Believe the Good News.

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming 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."

- Jesus ministry begins as John is arrested.

- He proclaims the good news as the King, the Creator, and the Conqueror. He is God's Sons. The heavens have been torn open and now God has come down. The kingdom of God is here.
- Jesus message to all people is to Repent and Believe the Gospel (Good News)
 - Why is repentance so difficult for readers today? From David Garland.
 - It has been abused by preachers to scare or to harshly/legalistically criticize others. Most of us think of repentance as though we are answering to the older brother, not the loving father – who runs to welcome us back when we turn to him.
 - We have believed the greatest lie of our generation that no one has the right to tell us to change our behavior. We all are free to chart our own way to happiness in our own individualistic way... this lie has led to so much hurt and pain in our world today. We resist the idea for all call to change.
 - We have forgotten the seriousness of sin. Every time I sin a part of me dies.
 - Example of how we often view our sin: Satire – Prayer of General Confession - “Benevolent and easy-going Father: we have occasionally been guilty of errors of judgment. We have lived under the deprivations of heredity and the disadvantages of environment. We have sometimes failed to act in accordance with common sense. We have done the best we could in the circumstances; and have been careful not to ignore the common standards of decency; and we are glad to think that we are fairly normal. Do thou, O Lord, deal lightly with our infrequent lapses. Be thy own sweet Self with those who admit they are not perfect; According to the unlimited tolerances which we have a right to expect from thee. And grant us as indulgent Parent that we may hereafter continue to live a harmless and happy life and keep our self-respect.¹

¹ Garland, David E.. Mark (The NIV Application Commentary Book 2) (p. 65). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Example of a right view of sin from the Puritan Prayer book – Valley of Vision. SEARCHER OF HEARTS, It is a good day to me when thou givest me a glimpse of myself; Sin is my greatest evil, but thou art my greatest good; I have cause to loathe myself, and not to seek self-honour, for no one desires to commend his own dunghill. My country, family, church fare worse because of my sins, for sinners bring judgment in thinking sins are small, or that God is not angry with them.

Let me not take other good men as my example, and think I am good because I am like them, For all good men are not so good as thou desirest, are not always consistent, do not always follow holiness, do not feel eternal good in sore affliction.

Show me how to know when a thing is evil which I think is right and good, how to know when what is lawful comes from an evil principle, such as desire for reputation or wealth by usury.

Give me grace to recall my needs, my lack of knowing thy will in Scripture, of wisdom to guide others, of daily repentance, want of which keeps thee at bay, of the spirit of prayer, having words without love, of zeal for thy glory, seeking my own ends, of joy in thee and thy will, of love to others. And let me not lay my pipe too short of the fountain, never touching the eternal spring, never drawing down water from above.

- We have a shallow view of repentance. We think to repent is to change our behavior on our own – to put on spiritual deodorant or to run to religious activity to better ourselves.
- What it really means to Repent and Believe
 - It is a change of direction. It is a person who is capture by the curse of sin, death, rebellion against God – hearing the good news of Jesus the Messiah who is King, the Creator and Conqueror of the curse. We don't have to continue on the road of sin that leads to death. Repentance is not first a change of behavior – it is first a change of direction. The behavioral change follows as we allow Christ to save us and cleanse us. It is a making a Spiritual U-turn

- Illustration – Driving the wrong way on Fayette. Radical U-turn. When you are headed the wrong direction that is leading to destruction it is good news to be told to repent! Come back.
- The desert is the place of new beginning... it is the place where a change of direction is really possible... but we have to believe in who Jesus is or we won't see the need to turn around and turn to God's unique Son. The message of new beginning comes in the wilderness – the desert. Jesus' ministry begins in the wilderness where he is tested and tempted... the wilderness is the place of new beginning and new creation.

Do you believe who Jesus is – King, Creator, Conqueror?

Will you answer his call to repent and believe the good news?