

EPIC

A journey through the Gospel of Mark

WEEK 2 **STUDY GUIDE**



CENTRAL
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022

Read: Mark 1:13–31

Scripture Verse: *“He was in the desert 40 days. There Satan tempted him. The wild animals didn’t harm Jesus. Angels took care of him.”* –Mark 1:13

Today’s Thought:

As we begin today’s thought, I feel it vital for us to take a minute to talk about the experience Jesus had in the wilderness before moving on to his overall mission because of how they relate to one another. Mark, throughout his writing, tends to give us a macro-view of the happenings he records. We get a glimpse of this in verse 13, where he just briefly mentions Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness following his baptism. There must be a reason why the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness before entering his public ministry. By heading out into the wilderness, Jesus goes on offense against the temptation and evil he would battle throughout His ministry.

Jesus headed out into a desert-like, dry, and uninhabited place, an area traditionally viewed as a haunt for evil powers west of Jericho. He was out there for 40 days opposed by Satan, like the 40 days that Goliath taunted Israel before God gave David victory. During this time, Jesus was “tempted” by Satan. The tempting could be seen in a good sense or bad. The word “tempted” is a form of the Greek word ‘peirazo,’ which means “put to the test, make trial of,” usually to detect what kind of a person someone is. For example, we see God’s testing in 1 Cor. 10:13, *“You are tempted in the same way all other human beings are. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted any more than you can take. But when you are tempted, God will give you a way out so that you can stand up under it.”* And in Hebrews 11:17, we see another example with Abraham, *“Abraham had faith. So he offered Isaac as a sacrifice. That happened when God put him to the test. Abraham had received the promises. But he was about to offer his one and only Son.”* In a bad sense, temptation can become the enticement of Satan and his cohorts to get us to sin against God.

God the Father put Jesus to the test in the wilderness to show the world His qualifications to fulfill His messianic mission. But it was Satan that tried to entice Jesus to turn away from His divine call. Jesus’ experience is an example for us. Jesus’ sinlessness can never rule out that he was indeed tempted. And at the same time, it confirms His full humanity.

Paul reminds us in Romans 8:3, *"The written law was made weak by our sinful nature. But God did what the written law could not do. He made his Son to be like those who have a sinful nature. He sent him to be an offering for sin. In that way, he judged sin in his Son's human body."*

Throughout Romans 8, we are provided with a beautiful portrait of Jesus' entire mission even though we only see its beginning in Mark 1.

Satan is the tempter and adversary opposed to everything God desires for us. Jesus faced it for us so that we, too, could face it in our lifetime. Satan and his cohorts are in a constant, intense battle against God's purposes for our lives, and he was especially against Jesus and His mission. Satan works night and day to try and get us to turn aside from God's will for our lives. And when we do fall at times, he runs to present them before God as our accuser seeking to ruin us. Because Jesus took the fight against Satan personally in the wilderness before ever having to confront any of his forces, Jesus entered His mission and ministry, having already defeated him setting his captives free! John put it this way, *"Those who do what is sinful belong to the devil. They are just like him. He has been sinning from the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the devil's work. Those who are born again because of what God has done will not keep on sinning. God's very nature remains in them...."* Those in Christ are no longer condemned and no longer accused because Jesus completed His mission not only in the desert but on the cross! *"...They can't go on sinning. They have been born again because of what God has done."*

When we find ourselves battling the characteristics of the wilderness, desolation, loneliness, and danger from things that attack, remember that Jesus faced the same things and overcame them. He is always with us to protect us, offer us a way out of the temptation, or provide the strength to stand up under it. When we take on the life of Christ and follow him, know that it will be the beginning of an ongoing conflict with Satan, our adversary. He will try to get us to turn away from God's will for our lives through many devious means. But Jesus, by His death, burial, and resurrection, has established His authority over Satan and provides us victory!

- Why is it vital for us to understand Jesus' 40-day wilderness experience?
- What does Jesus' experience teach us about our own spiritual journey?

- Has God ever put you to the test or allowed for you to be tempted? What happened and how did you respond?
- When have you found yourself wandering in the wilderness? What characterized your wilderness? How did you know and what did you do to overcome?
- How does Romans 8 help us in our wilderness moments?

Further Reading: Romans 8

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2022

Read: Mark 1:14–31

Scripture Verse: *“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God”* – Mark 1:14

Today’s Thought:

In Mark 1, Jesus is about to announce publicly that His ministry will begin. However, several things had to happen to prepare the way for His announcement. Taking a closer look at the text, we find the signs that point to this introduction of Christ to the world. Here is a list of the signs paving the way for the Messiah:

1. John showed up in the wilderness preaching a message of repentance and baptism.
2. John announced the coming of the Messiah.
3. Jesus appeared from Nazareth and was baptized by John.
4. God reveals Jesus as His Son via the Holy Spirit, coming upon Him like a dove.
5. Jesus went into the wilderness for a time of testing and temptation.
6. John had to be arrested and put in prison.

We have already looked at the first five, but we can't just skip over number 6, John's arrest, and imprisonment. Why is John's arrest essential or significant to introducing Jesus' mission? Mark opens verse 14, pointing this out, I think it's because John's ministry is finished, paving the way for Jesus to continue and complete His mission. Interestingly, Mark uses a specific Greek word to describe John's arrest and imprisonment. He uses the word "paradothenai," which translates in English as "deliver up or hand over, to betray." This word is the same verb used by Judas to betray Jesus in the garden. Was Mark foreshadowing to the reader the coming betrayal of Christ by one of his disciples? It seems that way. But back to the point, I think John had to be betrayed by Herod and put in prison out of the way so the focus could turn to Jesus, fulfilling God's plan and purpose. God fulfilled his purpose in John's arrest, which triggered the exact timing for Jesus' ministry to begin in Galilee. Don't you love it when a plan comes together!

- What do you think is significant about each of the signs listed?
- Why do you think God gave so many clues?

- What is the significance of John's arrest?
- Do you think Mark was foreshadowing the betrayal of Christ? Explain.
- What does the fulfillment of all the signs confirm about God?

Further Reading: Matthew 4:12-17

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022

Read: Mark 1:14–31

Scripture Verse: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Turn away from your sins and believe the good news!”* – Mark 1:15

Today's Thought:

Mark opens his Gospel by confirming many signs leading up to announcing Jesus' public ministry and mission. Quietly, Jesus ministered as He has traveled from Judea down to Galilee for His baptism. Now, with the signs of His coming fulfilled, Jesus would begin to proclaim God's Good News to the people publicly. These events have led to a significant shift in Mark's story about Jesus' speaking ministry. In verses 14–15, a new headline has been written. It is a headline announcing the new rule of God as proclaimed by Jesus, who said, *“the time has come,....the kingdom of God is near.”* As Mark's readers, we are given "insider information" that those participating don't seem to be aware of concerning these facts. Yet, the second declaration of God's new rule appears at the end of verse 15, summarizing Jesus' ministry in Galilee. For the first time in the Gospel, Jesus and John are proclaiming an almost identical message.

Jesus had now moved from Judea to Galilee to minister necessitated by John's imprisonment. Mark sets the stage for God to retake His dominion in the world through Jesus, His Son. John had great success with his powerful and loud call to repent and be baptized, evidenced by the response of all those in Judea and Jerusalem. As Jesus began to preach as a higher authority than John, it became strong and offensive to the religious elite. He could no longer preach in the city and had to return to the wilderness where John had found his success. With so many responding to John's message, you would think their response to Jesus would be even greater. People responded but not as they did for the weaker John. The time had now come for Jesus to preach God's good news of salvation, yet sadly, His call to repentance and belief in Him was at best only superficially fulfilled.

As we move deeper into this journey through Mark and the further, he takes us on his journey with Jesus, the more we will see how His call to repent and believe fell on deaf ears and hard hearts. The more Jesus taught the good news of the Gospel and the coming Kingdom, the more the people rejected it. It seems complicated for us to believe people

could resist such a message, having received the good news ourselves, until we realize that many Jews misinterpreted the "kingdom of God" to mean political revolution to overthrow the Romans. Jesus came not to bring political upheaval but salvation as the Lamb of God. The kingdom He spoke of had to do with His reign in the hearts and lives of His people, and the only way to enter into God's kingdom is to believe the Good News of the Gospel and be born again of the Spirit. The time has come, and His kingdom is nearer today than yesterday. It is time to turn from our sins and believe the good news! Have you?

- How would you write the "headline" introducing verses 14-15? Explain?
- What was God's new rule be declared to the world?
- Why was Jesus relocated his ministry from Judea to Galilee?
- Why do you think the people responded differently to Jesus' message compared with John's? (Weren't the messages almost identical?)
- How do we become born again?

Further Reading: John 3:1-7

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2022

Read: Mark 1:16–20

Scripture Verse: *“Come. Follow me,” Jesus said. “I will make you fishers of people.”* – Mark 1:17

Today’s Thought:

Mark uses his opening chapter to provide us with signs paving the way for the coming Messiah. He also authenticates the identity of Jesus.

John the Baptist authenticates Jesus by his witness, and God Himself confirms it at His Son’s baptism. Mark does this intentionally to initiate the rest of his Gospel as further proof that Jesus is God’s Son.

From the beginning of his book to the end, Mark will continue to build on the theme of authenticating Jesus’ identity, life, and mission. Crucial to his story was the selection of Jesus’ followers or disciples. These disciples would accompany Jesus everywhere He went and would be able to give eyewitness accounts of Jesus’ entire life and ministry, building a solid historical foundation of the faith. Mark tells us that Jesus chose twelve men to serve as His witnesses.

In today’s text, we read of the calling of the first four disciples, which just happened to be two sets of brothers which Jesus had met previously. First, Jesus came across Simon and Andrew while fishing in the lake. A short time later, Jesus finds James and John, the sons of Zebedee, preparing nets for fishing. These four men were all fishermen working in their family businesses. Knowing how important these men were to their families, Jesus called them to be His disciples, to leave all their stuff behind and follow Him. Did you notice how the men responded? Simon and Andrew left their nets at once. James and John left their father and the hired hands immediately and followed Jesus. The call of Jesus is so strong that these loyal fishermen never even hesitated to leave their families and businesses behind to follow Him.

In our day, with the same strength and authority that he called these men to follow him, Jesus calls you and me. Upon receiving our salvation, we, too, become witnesses to the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is now our mission to share that good news with those in our sphere of influence, to make disciples who make disciples. Simon, Andrew, James, and John left everything they knew to follow Christ the Messiah without hesitation. How will you answer? We are all chosen and called to make disciples, yet many refuse. What will you do?

- What is one of the main themes of Mark's Gospel?
- Why is it crucial to Mark to tell the story about Jesus' choosing of His disciples?
- What was it that the witnesses saw as Jesus launched His ministry that authenticated Him as Son of God?
- Why do you think Jesus chose so many fishermen as disciples?
- What did you notice about how the brothers responded to Jesus' call?
- How is our mission today the same as the original disciples?

Further Reading: Luke 5:1-3,10-11

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2022

Read: Mark 1:21–28

Scripture Verse: *“The people were amazed at his teaching. He taught them like one who had authority. He did not talk like the teachers of the law.”* – Mark 1:22

Today’s Thought:

As Jesus moved across the countryside, His authoritative teaching amazed the crowds of people who listened. He was in Capernaum, the hometown of the first four disciples Jesus had chosen to follow him on this day. And as Jesus taught, the people immediately recognized there was something different, something more to what Jesus taught compared to the teachers of the Law.

The following Sabbath, Jesus was invited by the local ruler of the synagogue to teach. Little was written about what Jesus shared that day, but we know the people were astonished by His teaching and authority. What made Jesus’ message so unique was that He taught by direct command from God, which evoked spiritual decisions from the listeners. In fact, on that Sabbath day, the power of Jesus’ words provoked a strong outburst from a man in the crowd who was under the control of an evil spirit. The demon that possessed this man cried out to Jesus, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” Did you notice how forceful the demon’s public declaration was concerning Jesus? Mark has just spent most of the first chapter authenticating the identity of Christ through various other signs, and now an evil spirit comes forth and does the same, calling Jesus “the Holy One of God!” Even the evil spirits know the significance of Jesus’s first appearance and the His ultimate threat to their power and activity. The evil spirit knew the true character and identity of God’s Holy Son and the authority he holds.

Jesus immediately quieted the evil spirit and commanded that he leave the man. After Jesus’ stern rebuke, the evil spirit shook the man violently before leaving him with a scream. Jesus would not accept the demon’s utterance of defense because it would have undermined His task of confronting evil forces and defeating Satan. Jesus’ authority over evil spirits was further proof that God’s rule had come in His Son. Although this was the first battle Jesus would have with the demonic, it would not be the last.

As you can imagine from the text, the people who witnessed this event were astounded! Even the evil spirits that hated Jesus publicly con-

fessed that He is the Son of God and the news quickly spread about what Jesus had done. The people began to ask each other, "What is this?" In asking the question, the people, although skeptical, knew there was something new and different about the nature of this Jesus' teaching and the power in which He exorcised the unclean spirit from this man. The people kept talking, but it was never Jesus' intention to create public excitement that would distract from His true mission and the Gospel. Nor was it to attract followers only interested in His power to heal or overthrow the Roman government. As the talk spread against His wishes, it only created problems.

It took the presence of the Son of God to expose the demon within this man. Jesus called the evil spirit out and healed the man. The unclean spirit confessed great fear that Jesus would impose judgment on him and send him to the pit. At the command of Christ, the evil spirit submitted to His authority and left. There are those among us today who attend church just like this man, able to identify who Jesus is and even tremble with fear of judgment yet do nothing and remain lost! Jesus came to save us from our sins by His death and resurrection. He died for all humanity, but we choose to repent and believe or refuse the free gift of eternal life. Which choice will you make? Choose to repent today and believe in Christ as your Lord and Savior and begin to enjoy His promise of eternal life in heaven.

- What did the people notice about Jesus' teaching?
- What did Jesus' teaching invoke from the people?
- What does the evil spirit say by calling out who Jesus is?
- Why does Jesus command the unclean spirit to be quiet and the people not to spread talk of his miracles?
- What spiritual lessons can we learn from the story of the possessed man?

Further Reading: Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36–37; 8:26, 30; 9:9

NOTES



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