

# EPIC

*A journey through the Gospel of Mark*

## **WEEK 1** **STUDY GUIDE**



**CENTRAL**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



# MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2022

**Read:** Mark 1:1-13

**Scripture Verse:** *"This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* -Mark 1:1

## Today's Thought:

"A man's car broke down on his way home. The good news is he broke down in front of a monastery. He goes to the monastery, knocks on the door, and says, "My car broke down. Do you think I could stay the night?" The monks graciously accept him, feed him dinner, and even fix his car. As the man tries to fall asleep, he hears a bizarre sound. He asks the monks what the sound was the following day, but they say, "We can't tell you. You're not a monk."

The man is disappointed but thanks them anyway and goes about his merry way. Some years later, the same man breaks down in front of the same monastery. The monks again accept him, feed him, and fix his car. That night, he hears the same strange noise that he had heard years earlier. The following day, he asks what it is, but the monk replies, "We can't tell you. You're not a monk."

The man says, "All right, all right. I'm dying to know. If the only way I can find out what that sound was is to become a monk, how do I become a monk?" The monk replied, "You must travel the earth and tell us how many blades of grass there are and the exact number of sand pebbles; when you find these numbers, you will become a monk."

The man sets about his task. Some 54 years later, he returns and knocks on the monastery's door. He says, "I have traveled the earth and have found what you have asked for. There are 145,236,284,232 blades of grass and 231,281,219,999,129,382 sand pebbles on the earth".

The monk replies, "Congratulations. You are now a monk. We shall now show you the way to the sound."

The monks lead the man to a wooden door where the head monk says, "The sound is right behind that door." The man reaches for the knob, but the door is locked. He says, "Real funny. May I have the key?" The monks give him the key, and he opens the door. Behind the wooden door is another door made of stone. The man demands the key to the stone door. The monks give him the key, and he opens it, only to find a door made of ruby. He demands another key from the monks, who provide it. Behind that door is another door, this one made of sapphire, and so it went until the man had gone through doors of emerald, silver, topaz, and amethyst.

Finally, the monks say, "This is the last key to the last door." The man is relieved to know that he has finally reached the end. He unlocks the door, turns the knob, and behind that door, he is amazed to find the source of that strange sound...But the man can't tell you what it is because you're not a monk." And neither can I because I'm not a monk.

Whether you are a monk or not isn't what's essential as we begin our new journey through the book of Mark. What's important to Mark is the fact of the good news! He opens his book and gets straight to the point, *"this is the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* Mark is one of several eyewitnesses to claim the life and identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He has seen many of the events he writes about as he followed Christ throughout His ministry. We know that Mark lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary and that his home was a meeting place for the believers. Mark is not just remembered for his writing; there is strong evidence that he may have been the first-ever "streaker" in history, as recorded in Mark 14:51-52. I will let you decide.

Now that you know a bit more about Mark, I want to get back to today's text and this critical verse because it is so vital to the theme of our study. It is probable that Mark traveled with Peter and that Peter may have been the one to lead him to faith in Christ. There is even reason to believe that Mark was Peter's interpreter since much of his writing so closely reflects Simon's personal ministry and witness. Both men's focus was the good news about Christ. As Mark introduces us to the one who will prepare the way for the Messiah, he calls it the beginning of the gospel. The word "gospel" means "the good news." The Gospel of Jesus Christ" is all about the news that God's Son has come into our world and died for our sins. The Good News states our sins can be forgiven and that we now belong to God's family. The Good News contains the promise that we will one day live with God in heaven forever. The Good News is the proclamation of our victory over sin, death, and hell! And it's just the beginning of the story Mark sets out to tell; it will be Epic!

- Who is Mark? What are some things we know about him?
- Why is verse one such an important opening statement?
- What does verse one tell us about Mark?
- What is the "gospel?" What does it mean to us?

**Further Reading:** Luke 24:47-49

## TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2022

**Read:** Mark 1:1-13

**Scripture Verse:** *“Long ago Isaiah the prophet wrote, “I will send my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare your way.” (Malachi 3:1) “A messenger is calling out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him.’” (Isaiah 40:3) – Mark 1:2-3*

### Today’s Thought:

Eyewitnesses are people often called into a court of law to give testimony about what they have seen. An eyewitness is a person who has firsthand knowledge of an event from witnessing the event. In a court of law, an eyewitness can be critical in proving the guilt or innocence of someone accused of committing a crime against another. Generally, a person claiming to be an eyewitness must satisfy the court regarding their presence on the spot through some kind of circumstantial or corroborative evidence.

In Mark 1:1, we are told that he is an eyewitness to Christ's life on earth and his identity as the Son of God. To add more credibility to his statement about Christ and the proclamation of one who would set the course for His arrival, Mark provides us with two additional witnesses. In doing so, Mark quotes two Old Testament prophets, Malachi, and Isaiah. They foreshadowed the coming of a messenger and voice that would introduce the Messiah's presence and ministry. During that day before a king would visit any part of the kingdom, he sent out a messenger before him to prepare the way. And through their prediction of the forerunner, Malachi and Isaiah join voices to confirm their witness to the reality and identity of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We know from the text that both prophets were announcing the arrival of John the Baptist. Mark confirms their prediction with his eyewitness account, then describes John as the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah by calling the nation to repentance. The Jewish people were exuberant, to say the least, because they had been waiting a long time for this day to come. The Jews were looking for a military leader that would lead them to victory over the Romans and set up a Jewish state. Jesus the Messiah and the Son of God was about to make his public debut. Tragically, most people would be disappointed because Jesus did not show up as the warrior Messiah they had anticipated.

Jesus came to earth the first time, not to crush the Romans but to save us from our sin. He would accomplish this by laying down His life and becoming a servant to death on a Roman cross. To the Jews, their Messiah was defeated, but God provided the ultimate victory by the resurrection of His crucified Son! Through His obedience, the Father's plan for our salvation for all humanity was complete! Amen!

- Why are eyewitnesses important?
- Why do you think Mark shares the words of Malachi and Isaiah?
- How do the words of Malachi and Isaiah strengthen the proclamation of Mark?
- What is the significance of a "forerunner"? Who did they pave the way for?

**Further Reading:** John 1:23

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022

**Read:** Mark 1:1-13

**Scripture Verse:** *"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."*

- Mark 1:4-5

### Today's Thought:

In his opening statement, Mark introduces us to the One who was, who is, and who is to come, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Then he introduces us to John, Jesus' cousin, who would come before to pave the way for the coming of Christ. Also included in Mark's opening chapter are three precise terms he will use to form the rest of the narrative he will share with the world; they include gospel, Christ, and Son of God. We will become very familiar with them throughout our study of Mark's Gospel.

God had sent Moses and Aaron to deliver His people from Egypt, and later God would deliver His people from their captivity in Babylon. Both Malachi and Isaiah foretell a messenger who would come ahead to prepare the way for the Messiah who would deliver the people from their sins. John, the Baptist, would be that "voice crying out in the wilderness." His cries throughout the countryside made ready the appearance of God's Son to the world. John may have only been a voice, but the message he proclaimed still echoes through the corridor of all future generations. His high and holy mission was to pave a straight path that would lead directly to the Messiah. The way to Jesus is unmistakable!

Mark doesn't spend much time conversing about John but make no mistake; his appearance was no mere event; it is an epoch. And his coming was no coincidence, and it was in exact accordance with the prophetic words of Malachi and Isaiah. The predicted messenger, John, was the real beginning of the spoken message about the Son of God. Known as the baptizing one in the wilderness, John preached the baptism of repentance and baptized all who came in the Jordan River. I want to take us down a short "rabbit" trail to clarify what John's message concerning repentance means. The trouble with translating the original language into English sometimes takes away from the more profound understanding of a word. This translation issue is the case with the word repent. In English, "repent" means "to be sorry, again,"

which is a poor rendition of John's word in Greek "metanoias," which meant to "change the mind and to turn from sin" a much better description of our repentance. Based upon the repentance and confession of sin, John baptized the people, which Paul would later explain as a picture of death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4).

John came as the forerunner for Christ, the Messiah. The Old Testament pointed to John as the one who would pave the way for the Lord. He presented the message of repentance and confession to a pagan Jewish nation that needed to repent, confess their sins, and return to the kingdom of God. And through the book of Mark, we will continue to uncover the evidence declaring the establishment of God's reign and the good news of salvation to the world. Even today, this gospel cannot be understood in a safe and sterile way. This salvation that entered our realm entered with a bloody cost, not only for Jesus, but for all who choose to follow Him. If we are to be His disciples today, we must abandon everything we have of value to follow Jesus and pick up and carry our own cross daily.

- Who is Mark clearly introducing us to in the opening 5 verses?
- What three terms will Mark be using throughout his narrative and why are they important?
- Can you think of any other times God delivered His people in addition to the ones mentioned? Why are those pictures of deliverance significant?
- Explain what it means to "repent" as John meant it for baptism?
- How did Paul later illustrate John's baptism to those he ministered to?

**Further Reading:** Romans 6

## THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2022

**Read:** Mark 1:1-13

**Scripture Verse:** *“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. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

- Mark 1:7-8

### Today's Thought:

Although John's methods were a bit more like that of Elijah's, as noted by his attire (v.6), manner of life, and message, he preached a message to the people that symbolized their living in a "spiritual wilderness." The spiritual wilderness with which they lived was far worse than the physical wilderness their ancestors had to endure for 40 years prior to entering the promised land. John's call to the people was to leave their spiritual wilderness and trust the One who would follow (Jesus) and enter their inheritance.

John witnessed the coming of the greatest prophet ever, Jesus Christ. Yet, he was always careful never to magnify himself above Jesus. John taught the people that baptism by water for the repentance of sins was his mission, but the "coming One" would baptize them with the Spirit. Even though God authorized John's water baptism, it would one day, at the coming of the Messiah, be replaced by the baptism of the Spirit of God. John's message and baptism prepared the people, making them ready to meet and place their trust in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He was initiating a transition from a spiritual wilderness into a spiritual life in Christ.

Have you ever found yourself in a spiritual wilderness like the people of Israel? You read God's Word every day, pray, meet with other believers in Bible study, attend church regularly, give your time and treasure, but the valleys still come. I believe we all go through periods of spiritual drought or wilderness even when we're "doing" all the right things. What can cause those times? Is it an unconfessed sin? Is God asking you to take the next step of faith, but you refuse? Are you looking for a warrior King instead of a loving Savior before his time? Or maybe you've taken your eyes off Jesus and have them on your circumstances? These things seemed to happen to the Jewish people time and time again. Each time they found themselves in a time of wandering, they would eventually turn back to God confess their sin, and He was faithful every

time to restore them to a right relationship with Him. It may be that for you, or maybe it's just a time when God is being silent, teaching you to listen and wait for His next instruction. Regardless, always read His Word, talk to Him, and trust Him to bring you through. He got His chosen people through, He brought His Son through, and God will do the same for you and me! Oh, and by the way, God has a pretty good track record. You can trust Him.

- Why was John more concerned with Israel's spiritual wilderness than a physical one?
- How was John preparing the way for the transition from spiritual wilderness to spiritual life?
- Who and what brings the ultimate spiritual change to our lives?
- How would you rate your current spiritual journey? Haven't started? Lost in the wilderness? Seeking my next step? On the right track and growing?

**Further Reading:** 2 Kings 1:8; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 17:10–13

## FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2022

**Read:** Mark 1:1-13

**Scripture Verse:** *“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”* – Mark 1:9-11

### Today's Thought:

As we begin our study through the Gospel of Mark, he has introduced us to several eyewitness accounts that authenticate the reality of Jesus Christ and his mission. In Mark's prose, we will find story after story about Jesus, many of which will bear the mark of eyewitness testimony. Mark's introduction launches right into Jesus' adult life, unlike Matthew and Luke, who begins with the narrative of His miraculous birth. As we meet Jesus in Mark's Gospel, he bursts unexpectedly onto the scene in a flurry of essential activity. Mark's goal is to make sure that we all understand who Jesus is and everything about him.

For the last few days, we dissected the introduction to Mark's Gospel. In it, we have discovered the eyewitness testimony of Malachi, Isaiah, John, and Mark to the identity of the coming Messiah. We have met the man, John, the Baptizer, who has paved the pathway for Messiah to come by calling the people to repent and be baptized. John came to administer an outward sign of water baptism but declared the Coming One would be the One who would bestow a life-giving Spirit to all those who believe in Him. John recognized that his baptism with water was limited and only preparatory. By receiving John's baptism, people pledged to welcome the Messiah to baptize with the Holy Spirit, the expected gift of His coming. When we participate in baptism by immersion, we give an outward testimony of the inward change Jesus has made in our hearts. Before, dead to our sin but now raised to a new life in Christ! We become symbolic participants in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection through the sacrament of baptism. We are a new creation!

All the people who came to John to repent and receive baptism came from Judea and Jerusalem. To fulfill the Father's plan and purpose, Jesus came from Nazareth down through Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But why would Jesus present himself for baptism when he was without sin? Jesus indeed had no sin that needed to be

washed away. The simple answer, He came to be an example for all those turning to God. In addition, we see something unique and exciting happen as Jesus comes up out of the water. At Jesus' baptism, we see the converging of three key players as introduced by Mark. The text says that John came to be the forerunner of the Messiah. In verse 9, it says that Jesus came from Nazareth and to be baptized, and in verse 11, a voice came to authenticate and announce the coming of the Messiah, God's Son. Mark has given us an incredible picture of the Holy Trinity at work! When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the Father announced from heaven that Jesus, the Messiah, was His beloved Son. Although the people at the river didn't hear the voice or see the dove, both Jesus and John did. The significance of the Father's declaration from heaven is uniquely affirmed in Psalm 2:7 *"I will announce what the Lord has promised. He said to me, "You are my son. Today I have become your Father," and Isaiah 42:1 says, "Here is my Servant. I take good care of him. I have chosen him. I am very pleased with him. I will put my Spirit on him. He will make everything right among the nations."*

From these opening verses of Mark's Gospel, we witness Jesus' authentication by God the Father, along with John and Mark. We can trust by the evidence presented that Jesus is God's One and only Son who came to save the world from sin. Christ, the true Servant-Messiah, would suffer greatly in fulfilling the Father's will. He would die as our guilt offering and serve as our sacrificial Lamb. His baptism marked the beginning of his Servant's role, approved by the Father, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is who He said He is, the Son of God! Amen.

- Why is John the Baptist so important to the story of Jesus?
- How well do you think he fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy?
- What is the significance and purpose of Jesus' baptism?
- How did Jesus' baptism prepare Him for his public ministry?
- What would you like to hear God say to you?

**Further Reading:** Isaiah 42:1-9

# NOTES







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