

The Gospel of Mark

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Introduction

Mark is a very succinct, quick, gospel. He focuses on Jesus as a worker, the deeds of Jesus. That's the significance of this book. Mark was not part of the 12 disciples. He was a young boy during the life and ministry of Jesus. The early church of Jerusalem met in Mark's home. He accompanied the apostle Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their missionary outreach. Mark later became a sort of assistant to the apostle Peter. And most of these events were an eyewitness testimony of Peter, because Mark was so young during the time.

1 Chapter 1

1.1 John Appeared, Baptizing in the Wilderness

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

This gospel of which we are concerned, is the only everlasting good news. Without Jesus, our mentality becomes very materialistic, happiness becomes the end. There would be no meaning to life, and everyone tries to be happy, so they will end up doing bad stuff.

²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

”Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
Who will prepare your way,
³The voice crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight,”

(Mark 1:2)

Mark is referring to the prophecy given by Isaiah.

¹Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

(Isaiah 1:1-3)

This is one of many Old Testament prophecies that actually has a dual fulfillment in that this prophecy relates to the first coming of Jesus, and also the second coming of Christ. And that is many case with many Old Testament prophecies. Mark is pointing out the fact that Isaiah prophesied of one who would come and prepare the way. And we're told who that is.

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And 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.

(Mark 1:4-5)

This is a huge move of God, because people were gathering, for one purpose: to confess their sins. It's not easy to get people to get together to talk about their sin, even more so repenting of it. It's a miracle! What does it mean to repent though? Repent means to have a change of mind, to change your actions based on your change of mind. What is this move of God going to do? How does repentance prepare the way of the Lord? We have to go to another gospel account to answer this question.

1.1.1 Why is repenting important?

²⁹When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, ³⁰but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

(Luke 7:29-30)

The power of repentance is that it opens our hearts to hear God, and respond to him in a positive manner. If there is a hardness of heart that refuses to repent, the Word of God just kind of bounces off us. The people who received Jesus and understood him, they prepared by repenting.

1.2 The Spirit of Elijah

⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey.
(Mark 1:6)

Elijah wore much of the same clothes. But more interesting than that is that, in Luke, when the angel prophesied to Zechariah about John the baptist, that John would go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. But John never performed a miracle, yet the Bible tells us he goes forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, which is shown in his clothing.

⁷And 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."

(Mark 1:7)

To the Jew particular statement elevated Jesus and humbled John. The teachers in Judaism used to say that a teacher could ask pretty much anything of his student except to help him off with his shoes. That was supposed to be beneath any student. John comes along and to speak of the greatness of the one who comes after and says I am not worthy to take off his shoes. He further goes on to contrast his ministry and continues with verse 8.

⁸"I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you
with the Holy Spirit."

(Mark 1:8)

John is immersing you in water, and he's preparing you to meet Jesus. But Jesus is going to immerse you in God. Jesus is going to bring God into your life. Baptism doesn't change your life, the spirit of God does. Living in him. Baptism won't change the condition of your heart, but being filled with the Holy Spirit will.

1.3 The Baptism of Christ

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 being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

(Mark 1:9-11)

Jesus came to the midst of the Jordan river filled with sinful people, and identified with them. Jesus would hang on the cross after 3 years for these sinners. The bible says he became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.

1.4 Driven into the Wilderness

¹²The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³And 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.

(Mark 1:12)

Jesus had 40 days of temptation, even though we only learn of 3 particular temptations. Imagine being tempted for 40 days. This is Jesus going through what we go through. Most of our lives we have to deal with temptation and the enemy trying to bring us further from God. Jesus came to drink the entire cup of the condition of man.

1.4.1 The sympathy of Jesus

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

(Hebrews 4:15)

He not only experienced what we experienced, but also gave the way not to fall into temptation. With the word of God, and faith, he came through with victory. Which can now become our victory. To be victorious over sin, its not a method, we look to Jesus. We enter into his victory. The source is a person, not a few steps. (As we see on facebook or whatever)

1.5 Jesus Proclaims the Gospel

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

(Mark 1:14–15)

Jesus spoke repentance as well. He also said the time was fulfilled, the coming of Messiah!

1.6 Follow Jesus

¹⁶Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And 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.

(Mark 1:16–18)

This is actually the second time Jesus has spoken to them, and Mark does not record the first time. But now that he has started his Galilean ministry, he called them and they immediately followed him. And Mark loves to use this word “immediately”, uses it about 40 times. Peter had a family, and they dropped everything and immediately followed Jesus, even though he was probably the only breadwinner. When Jesus calls us, it’s nay or yay. It’s impossible to do both. It’s a decision, are you going to follow Jesus?

¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets.

²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

(Mark 1:19–20)

And he says, “I’m going to make you fishers of men.” We all talents, what he’s saying is take the things he has given you and follow him to the kingdom of God. These guys were fishermen, Jesus said “Fine, let’s go fish, but we’re gonna fish for different things. You’re a bulider, let’s go build different things. You’re a banker, let’s go invest in different things.” What you are in the world, bring it into the kingdom, that has eternal scope and value. New goals for old powers.

1.7 The Authority Of Jesus

²¹ And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

(Mark 1:21–22)

The Jewish teachers back in those days, they would spend a lot of time quoting other teachers. And sometimes give opposing viewpoints of different Rabbis, but Jesus didn’t do that, he just spoke by the authority of his own word. We forget sometimes when we get into debates, that truth is not a debate process, truth is a person. When we get into debates, it’s important to remember not to get caught up in the conversation of opinion, but rather let the words of Jesus to speak for itself. Because Jesus spoke with authority. Don’t get lost in other people’s and your own opinion. It’s not just important to tell others what Jesus said, it is also important to pinpoint it for others.

²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,

(Mark 1:23)

The word unclean is a borrowing from an Old Testament concept of ceremonially unclean. But here it just sort of means possessed by demonic spirit. Mark uses language in the greek, which is similar to the language Paul uses when he describes a believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Be possessed by the Lord's spirit, it will bring you freedom, peace, and eternal life.

1.7.1 How does one get possessed by a demon?

The Bible doesn't really explain it. Is it possible for me as a Christian, to be possessed by a demon? Stay invested in God's spirit, the two cannot dwell together. You never even see or hear of the mention of an exorcism for a believer in the Bible. But rather a testing of faith, and to repent if you sin. You can't blame demonic possession.

¹⁸We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. (John 5:18)

"He" refers to Jesus. When it comes to believers, its a hands off approach when it comes to the work of the enemy. That does not mean we won't have spiritual battles, or testing.

⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

So the reality of satanic activity real according scripture.

¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Battles are a lot in life. But as a believer, possession is not in the cards for you

1.8 The Authority Of Jesus

²⁴"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." (Mark 1:24)

The demons would often speak through the host to expose Jesus, and then start freaking out. Jesus always commanded to be silent, not to tell who he was. But why? The Jews wanted to be free of Roman leadership, Jesus knew that the Zealots would jump at the opportunity to go against the Roman Empire.

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him saying,

”Be silent, and come out of him!”

²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

(Mark 1:26)

This guy has authority, his exorcism is short. Which is different from other exorcisms.

²⁷And 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.”

²⁸And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

(Mark 1:27–28)

²⁹And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

(Mark 1:29–31)

What does she do with the new life and the healing that was given her? She just starts serving him. God wants to restore to us what we have lost, and serve him with it. Just like this woman. What has God restored in your life? Serve the Lord with all of your heart, give it to him.

³²That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

(Mark 1:32–34)

This is God’s compassion, trust in the compassion of God. We do not need to pray him into compassion. His heart is moved by people with faith in him.

1.8.1 The Demons know Jesus

¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder!

You believe in God? Even demons believe in God. Do not rest in the superficiality of knowing Jesus, or even just believing that he exists. Do not stop at the superficial, it has to be personal.

¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

(John 1:12)

Communion is a picture of receiving Jesus. It is not intellectual, but it is of partaking, and now it is inside of you. Have you received him as your saviour? It is going past religion, to relationship.

1.9 The Inconvenience of Following God

³⁵And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

³⁶And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,

³⁷and they found him and said to him,

”Everyone is looking for you.”

³⁸And he said to them,

”Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”

³⁹And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

(Mark 1:35–39)

A long day of ministry, goes into the night, Jesus probably lays down to get some rest and before the sun even rose, he went out to pray. This shows his heart toward prayer. Some of us wait for prayer to be convenient, it is not convenient. It is never convenient to pray. It’s hard work, its challenging, and you may have to give something up to do it. For Jesus, he gave up his sleep, which we hang onto so tightly. Prayer for Jesus meant sacrifice too. No one likes getting up when its dark. But let’s do it because it needs to be done.

1.10 Talking to God

⁴⁰And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, ”If you will, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹Moved with pity, he

stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴²And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. (Mark 1:40-42)

When you think about what this man said to Jesus, think about it like a prayer. We don't have to use eloquent speech. There is an expectation that they have to say it right. Prayer is nothing but talking, but talking to God. No King James English is okay. Let's dissect this man's prayer.

1. It was sincere and desperate — "imploring him"
2. It was reverent — "and kneeling said to him"
3. It was humble and submissive — "If you will"
4. It was believing — "you can"
5. It acknowledged his need — "MAKE me clean"
6. It was specific — "make me CLEAN"
7. It was personal — "make ME clean"
8. It was brief — just five words in the greek

Five short words and it got God's attention. He's not waiting for you to be flowery, he just wants a relationship with you and for you to talk to him. We need to get over our American Idol approach to prayer that elevates one person's prayer above another just because we think they are more spiritual. That is a worldly attitude, not a biblical one. You need to see people from the perspective of the kingdom of God. You wanna know who's the greatest? The least among you. Everyone has the same access to the throne of Grace. The bible says,

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:16)

And in Jesus we are all made righteous. Because you have made him Lord of your life, and you have put on the robe of righteousness. So your prayers are powerful and effective.

What's even more wonderful is that Jesus took pity on the leper, and even touched him, and healed him! In that day, no one would even greet a leper not mentioning touching them. But Jesus with such compassion, with such grace, reached down, touched him and healed him. This is God's heart towards those who are hurting.

⁴³And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴and said to him,

”See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”

(Mark 1:43–44)

Jesus told this man, in keeping with the law of Moses, to go and have his physical condition examined by the priest, so that he may be declared clean and be able to enter the temple and worship with the people. But also communicate with the priest that a miracle had taken place! Not what he did though.

1.11 The People Need Jesus

⁴⁵But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

People are still seeking out Jesus. There seems to be a lot of darkness in the world. But there seems to be some amazing compelling effect of being in darkness, to push you toward the light. And we are the light of the world. People are drawing to the light of Christ. God intended for you to be alive today, people need to hear about Jesus Christ. Let your light shine wherever you are.

2 Chapter 2

¹And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

(Mark 2:1–4)

2.1 The Authority Of Jesus

⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ”Son, your sins are forgiven.” ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷”Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, ”Why do you question these things in your hearts?” ⁹Which is easier,

to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven, or to say 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?" (Mark 2:5-9)

To a Jewish mind, this was like a trick question, in their mind, both of these questions are equally difficult to do. To put yourself in the place of God by saying "Your sins are forgiven" would be blaspheming. And to say "rise up, take your bed and walk." would be to do a miraculous work of healing. Jesus was going to prove that he has the authority to do that which is unseen — forgive sins, to do that which is seen — healing the man.

¹⁰"But you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he said to the paralytic — ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹²And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:10-11)

Since Jesus can do what you can see, then he can do what you cannot see, which is say that an individuals sins are forgiven. And we can do it too, through Jesus.

2.1.1 Your Sins are Forgiven

³⁸Let it be know to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. (Acts 13:38)

We have been given permission to speak on the authority of God's word. To say, "Your sins are forgiven."

2.2 Levi Called

¹³He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (Mark 2:13-14)

Levi is the same as Matthew, in that he was a Jew, and a tax collector by trade. He was despised by the Jews, because they collected taxes for Rome — tyrannical governmental structure. Some tax collectors would also overcharge people, and then pocket the difference. But Jesus says to him, "Follow me."

2.3 Jesus came not for the righteous

¹⁵And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax

collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

(Mark 2:15–17)

It doesn't excuse the behaviour of those he was eating with. But those people were his mission. Keeping the law got in the way for the Pharisees to accept Jesus, and repent of their sins.

2.4 Fasting

¹⁸Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him,

"Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁹And Jesus said to them,

"Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰The days will come when the bridegroom is taken from them, and then they will fast in that day."

(Mark 2:18–20)

Jesus is the bridegroom, and we are the bride. Who thinks of fasting during a joyous celebration? And indeed it was a joyous celebration, the gospel is here. Fasting expressed sorrow, grief, mourning. In verse 20, I think Jesus is referring to the time between his death and resurrection.

2.5 The Old and New Covenants

²¹No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. ²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins — and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.

(Mark 2:21–22)

Christians are not to base their faith on Judaism, although the Law is important. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

2.6 The Sabbath

²³One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.
(Mark 2:23)

To the Jews, that meant harvesting, which was considered to be work on the Sabbath.

²⁴And the Pharisees were saying to him,

”Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

²⁵And he said to them,

”Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: ²⁶how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?”

And he said to them,

”The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

(Mark 2:24–28)

Human need should take precedence over the ceremonial law. Jesus made the same point about the priests on the Sabbath with circumcision. The Sabbath was intended to serve the people, not for people to serve the Sabbath. It should be a blessing to the people.

¹²And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³”You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ’Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout the generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. ¹⁴You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. ¹⁶Therefore the

people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout the generations, as a covenant forever.”

(Exodus 31:12–16)

It was a covenant between God and Israel. It is wisdom to hang out in God’s presence and take a day of rest. But more than that, the Sabbath is part of the ceremonial law, that point to Jesus Christ. That we should rest in the finished work of the cross. Rest in what Jesus did.

⁹So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

(Hebrews 4:9–11)

If you’re constantly feeling condemned, you are not resting in his works. That’s a works-based salvation. We do not enter into salvation by our own works. So he says, whoever has entered into God’s rest, has rested from his own works. We who have believed entered that rest, by faith in Jesus, and what he has accomplished on the cross. Peace and joy are only found in Christ. Having a legalistic view tends to make one struggle with the belief that they are really saved. But deeds are not a guarantee of your salvation.