

The Beginning of the Good News

The Gospel of Mark

There's Trouble in River City



Trouble Throughout the Roman Empire

Nero





Trouble in Palestine



The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans Under the Command of Titus, 70 CE

Oil on Canvas, David Roberts, c. 1850 CE

The Gospel of Mark

A 3D perspective map showing the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa to Caesarea. The sea is represented by a blue surface, and the land is shown in green and purple. The title "THE GREAT SEA" is written diagonally across the top of the map in large, white, serif capital letters. Below the title, the names of several ancient cities are marked with red dots: Joppa, Sykam, Dor, and Caesarea. The word "SAMARIA" is partially visible at the bottom right. The map uses a grid system to show latitude and longitude.



Scene 1

In Jesus, we encounter God's eternally anointed King. All our self-exalted leaders are idols.

The Prologue

Five Off-Stage Scenes

The beginning of the good news
about Jesus Christ, God's Son,

Mark 1:1

CEB

happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:
Look, I am sending my messenger before you. He will prepare your way,

Mark 1:2–3

CEB

*a voice shouting in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight.”*

Mark 1:2–3

CEB

“Providence . . . has given us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humanity, sending him as a **savior**, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and put all things in order. . . . Caesar, by his appearance, excelled our expectations and surpassed all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done . . . the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning for the world of the **good news** that came by reason of him.”

Scene 1

- Lordship and Kingship are inseparable from Jesus' identity
- Caesar's rivalry for the role of King is wrongful self-exaltation and the imperial cult is revealed as idolatry
- *Pax Romana* is a faux peace.
- We learn what the right ordering of the world is from Jesus, not Caesar.

“Look, I am sending my messenger before you.

He will prepare your way,

a voice shouting in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way for the Lord;

make his paths straight.”

—Mark 1:2-3

I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.

Exodus 23:20

NRSV

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:1

NRSV

A voice cries out: “In the
wilderness prepare the way of
the Lord, make straight in the
desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40:3

NRSV

Scene 1 (continued)

- God's promised during the Exodus (Ex 23:20) to send an angel (messenger) to guard and protect the people and God guided them through the wilderness to the Promised Land
- That promise is expressed in the last oracle of the Hebrew Scriptures as the promise to send a messenger (angel) to prepare the way for the age of salvation.
- Combined with Isaiah 40:3, coming of the messenger building a way of restoration is identified as the signal that the Day of the Lord has come.
- The last prophecy (Malachi 3) expected the messenger to appear at the Temple

Scene 1

In Jesus, we encounter God's eternally anointed King. All our self-exalted leaders are idols.

Scene 2

When our institutions crumble or burn, God
meets and restores us in the wilderness.

John the Baptist

Caravaggio



John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins.

Mark 1:4–8

CEB

Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins.

Mark 1:4–8

CEB

He announced, “One stronger than I am is coming after me. I’m not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals.

Mark 1:4–8

CEB

He announced, “One stronger than I am is coming after me. I’m not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals.

Mark 1:4–8

CEB

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

Mark 1:4–8

CEB

Lo, I will send you the prophet
Elijah before the great and
terrible day of the Lord comes.

Malachi 4:5–6

NRSV

He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.

Malachi 4:5–6

NRSV

Scene 2

- Malachi prophecy ends with prediction of the return of Elijah to return Israel back to the Way of the Lord
- John appeared at the river, dressed and eating like Elijah
- Remission of sins without the hierarchical system (Temple)
- Signaled the Day of the Lord had come
- Preparation needed because the Day of the Lord meant: (1) judgment and (2) outpouring of God's Spirit
- John prepared the Way by calling Israel to return to the wilderness, to repent and renew their status as the sons and daughters of God
- John announced a **stronger one** would come would baptize with the Spirit

Scene 2

When our institutions crumble or burn, God
meets and restores us in the wilderness.

Scene 3

Jesus, God's *anointed* King, brings justice
non-violently through patient faithfulness

About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River.

Mark 1:9–11

CEB

And just as he was coming up out
of the water, he saw the heavens
torn apart and the Spirit
descending like a dove on him.

Mark 1:10

NRSV

And there was a voice from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.”

Mark 1:9–11

CEB

I will tell of the decree of the
Lord: He said to me, "You are my
son; today I have begotten you.

Psalm 2:7

NRSV

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Isaiah 42:1

NRSV

Scene 3

- The ‘tearing’ of the heavens ==> heaven & earth are one
- The descent of the Spirit marks him God’s anointed (*Christos*)
- The voice of God identifies him as the Son of God (and King) and as God’s servant
- Isaiah 42 and Ps 2: the paradox of a suffering, unrecognised Messiah and King who brings justice through patient faithfulness rather than violence

Scene 3

Jesus, God's *anointed* King, brings justice
non-violently through patient faithfulness

Scene 4

Jesus binds up the Strong Man

At once the Spirit forced Jesus out
into the wilderness.

Mark 1:12–13

CEB

He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

Mark 1:12–13

CEB

Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

Psalm 91:9–14

NRSV

Scene 4

- Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness
- Jesus experienced the wilderness character of our fallen world
- Endangered by wild beasts (physical adversity)
- Endangered by Satan (spiritual adversity)
- Protected by angels
- Jesus binds up the Strong Man!

Scene 4

Jesus binds up the Strong Man

After John was arrested, Jesus
came into Galilee announcing
God's good news,

Mark 1:14–15

CEB

saying, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!”

Mark 1:14–15

CEB

Scene 5

The good news is on its way. To benefit, we must trust the good news.

Scene 5

- The time is now! ==> God has a plan for human history
- God's kingdom is inaugurated on earth
- We must see the world and face the future in a new way
- One must trust the good news about God's dominion in order to benefit from it

Scene 5

The good news is on its way. To benefit, we must trust the good news.