

Mark

Lesson 1

Chapter 1:1-12

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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Mark 1:1-12, Lesson 1

Opening Prayer

Introduction

Church tradition holds that Mark wrote the gospel of Mark, a missionary disciple who traveled with Paul (2 Timothy 4:11), Peter (1 Peter 5:13), and Luke (Philemon 1:24). Mark may be the same person as John Mark in Acts 12 and 15 who went on a missionary journey through Turkey with Paul and his cousin Barnabas but returned to Jerusalem when they reached Pamphylia (southern Turkey). On his second journey, Paul would not take John Mark. John Mark sailed for Cyprus with Barnabas, where Barnabas was martyred. John Mark continued his missionary journey to Turkey, where Paul gave him a letter of reconciliation and introduction (Colossians 4:10).

Mark's gospel was written as early as 50 AD to as late as 60-68 AD near the time of Peter's death in Rome. Mark is a simple, brief account of the gospel of Jesus' life, proclaims him to be the Son of God, the Son of Man, and calls us to discipleship. This study will include highlights from Mark and illustrate how Mark provided a foundation for Matthew and Luke.

Read Mark 1:1-8

Mk 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mk 1:2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" [Mal 3:1] ³ "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" [Is 40:3]

Mk 1:4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mk 1:5 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. Mk 1:6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

Mk 1:7 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. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

1. What is the first thing we learn about Jesus in Mark's gospel, verse 1:1?

Mark makes a profound declaration of Jesus is "the Son of God." The truth of Jesus' divinity is so fundamental to Christianity that it has come under attack by modern skeptics. They argue that later writers added references to the divinity of Jesus because some early

manuscripts of Mark 1:1 do not have "the Son of God." However, the phrase "the Son of God" occurs three times in Mark and 40 times in the New Testament.

Jesus referred to himself most often as the "Son of Man." The reference occurs 13 times in Mark and 65 times in the other gospel writers.

2. What is significant about Mark (verse 2) following his declaration of Jesus as the Son of God with quotes from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3?

Fulfillment of prophecy in Isaiah 40:3 would have been particularly significant to the Jewish community searching the scripture to understand when and how the Messiah would come.

3. How was John's baptism different from Jesus'? See also Acts 18:24-26 and 19:1-7

Acts 18:24 Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 19:1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

Acts 19:3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

Acts 19:4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

Acts 19:5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

- a. **John's baptism was for repentance of sins, not for rebirth in Jesus name through the Holy Spirit.**
 - b. **Paul baptized 12 believers in Ephesus in Jesus' name. Then the Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke in tongues (Acts 19:1-7). Note, the gift of tongues was a sign to the believers, and to others, they had received the Holy Spirit.**
 - c. **Apollos, a Jewish disciple, preached boldly accurately in Corinth but only knew of John's baptism. (Acts 18:24-26)**
4. What is the benefit of baptism in the name of Jesus?

These passages point out we receive the Holy Spirit through baptism, but there are others. Luther's Catechism answers the question this way: "It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from

death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.”

5. What is the significance of John’s clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt and diet of locusts and wild honey? See 2 Kings 1:8, Malachi 4:6, Matthew 17:10-13.

^{2Ki 1:7} The king asked them, “What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?”

^{2Ki 1:8} They replied, “He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist.” The king said, “That was Elijah the Tishbite.”

^{Mal 4:5} “See, I will send you the prophet **Elijah** before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

^{Mt 17:10} The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that **Elijah** must come first?”

^{Mt 17:11} Jesus replied, “**To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.**

^{Mt 17:12} **But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way, the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”**

^{Mt 17:13} Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

The description figuratively identifies John as the prophet Elijah who would come before the day of the LORD. Consequently, John was herald to Messiah, Jesus, and fulfilled scripture prophecy.

6. Why was John the Baptist so significant to Jesus’ ministry – especially in proclaiming the gospel to the Jewish community?

John the Baptist fulfilled the scripture that Elijah would come before the "Day of the LORD." That day was today!

7. What does the comparison of John the Baptist and the prophet Elijah teach you how about the manner God can fulfill prophecy? See also 1 Corinthians 1:21-24.

^{1Co 1:21} For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

God's fulfillment of prophecy is, at the same time, both mysterious and straightforward. God spoke to Elijah, not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper. No one would associate John the Baptist with Elijah who was to come but it is clearly understood once it is

pointed out. Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies, but understanding their fulfillment is only made clear by faith.

Followers of Judaism hold that Jesus was not the Messiah because he did not fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies, particularly those about Zion. They believe God's kingdom is one of world peace established by the Messiah from Zion, not a spiritual kingdom preached by Jesus and established from Zion by his death. Neither do followers of Judaism have a concept of the second coming of the Messiah when all scripture prophecies will be completed.

Read Mark 1:9-13 and compare to Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34

Mk 1:9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Mk 1:10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

Mk 1:11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Mk 1:12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert,¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Mt 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

Mt 3:14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Mt 3:15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

Then John consented.

Mt 3:16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

Mt 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Jn 1:29 The next day [after Jesus' baptism] John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

Jn 1:32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

Jn 1:34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

8. Matthew and John add essential details to the account of Jesus' baptism. Why did Jesus need to be baptized since John was right, he needed to be baptized by him, the one who was without sin and did not need to repent [Jesus was without sin (1 Peter 2:22)].

1. Jesus baptism identified him as fully man. He modeled God's will for humanity as he would soon teach Nicodemus, **"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit"** (John 3:5). Fully as man, Jesus demonstrated he was a man under the law. One day he would suffer the full burden of the law's punishment for sin.
 2. Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism, just as we do. He did not do any miracles before his baptism.
 3. Jesus' baptism also gave testimony as to who he was. God declared him to be his Son, who he loved. John testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Son of God, because he had seen the sign of the Holy Spirit.
9. Jesus' baptism is a compelling example for baptizing adults (otherwise known as believer's baptism). On what basis are infants baptized, and what is the benefit of infant baptism? Refer to the following texts:

Ephesians 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

The New Testament records four accounts of the baptism of new believers and their entire household; Cornelius (Acts 10:24-48), Lydia (Acts 16:15), the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:30-33), and Stephannas (1Corinthians 1:16). Acts 16:15 is an example:

Acts 16:15 When she [Lydia] and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home.

Mark 10:13-16,¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them.

Mk 10:14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**

¹⁵ **I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."**

Mk 10:16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Infant baptism is not explicitly commanded in the New testament but is inferred by understanding how God brings salvation to us by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture teaches us that we owe our faith and salvation to God's choosing and grace. We are entirely in his hands – from birth, even before the creation of the world. Secondly, new believers' baptism was undoubtedly the practice of the New Testament apostles (and still is

today). As new believers came to faith after hearing the gospel, they were baptized along with their entire household. We can assume the household included all ages. Thirdly, Jesus called the little children to him, even the babies, and declared any who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. How then are we to refuse them entry into God's kingdom through baptism since God has already chosen them?

What is the benefit of infant baptism? There is no difference in the benefits of baptism for an infant or an adult. We are baptized by water and the Word (in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and so we enjoy the communion and fellowship with God as his children. We receive the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sin, and eternal salvation. These blessings are to be remembered daily and are received by faith, a gift given by God.

10. Mark makes a passing reference to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (verses 1:12-13).

^{Mk 1:12} At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

As time permits, refer to Matthew 4:1-11 or Luke 4:1-13 for details of Jesus' temptation and discuss: Why would God cause his Son to suffer hunger, thirst, and temptation in the wilderness for such a long time - 40 days? See Hebrews 4:5

^{Heb 4:15} For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are —yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:15 teaches us that Jesus needed to be tempted and tested in every way – yet was without sin, so that we can approach him with confidence knowing that he knows our suffering and weakness and will give us mercy and grace in our time of need. Jesus suffered much more than temptation in the wilderness. He suffered beatings, crucifixion, the rejection of those he came to serve, and even the condemnation of God so that we might be saved.

11. As time permits, peruse the first three chapters of Matthew and Luke, and the first chapter of John. What additional accounts do they include in the gospel of Jesus?

Matthew (focus on the fulfillment of prophecy)

Genealogy from Abraham – fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus in the lineage of David

The virgin birth of Christ in Bethlehem – fulfillment of prophecy

Magi – natural signs announcing the birth of the king of the Jews

Escape to Egypt – fulfillment of prophecy, out of Egypt I called my son

Return to Nazareth – fulfillment of prophecy; he shall be called a Nazarene

John the Baptist – fulfillment of prophecy, Elijah to come before the LORD

Luke (focus on testimonies for Jesus as Christ)

Angel Gabriel tells Zechariah that he and Elizabeth will have a son, John the Baptist, a miraculous birth for miraculous purposes.

Angel Gabriel tells Mary she will give birth to the Son of God.

Mary's Song

The birth of John the Baptist, Zechariah's song

Jesus' birth announced by angels to shepherds

Simeon and Anna prophecies when Jesus was presented at the temple for circumcision on the 8th day – Mary and Joseph keep the law

John the Baptist prepares the way of the LORD, fulfills prophecy and preaches repentance

Jesus baptized, God's testimony

Genealogy of Jesus from Adam

John 1 – the word made flesh

Closing Prayer and Blessing