

Journey Into Experiencing the Power of Jesus

LESSON 1 . . . Starting Right (Mark 1:1-13)

NOTES

The gospel of Mark is probably the first gospel written. With only sixteen chapters, it is also the shortest and fastest-moving of the four gospels. Mark uses the words *straightway* and *immediately* more than thirty-five times to quickly move from event to event. He uses them eight times in the first chapter alone.

Matthew records Jesus' teachings in detail. Luke records His parables, and John writes about His indescribable love. However, since he is writing primarily to the Romans, who were impressed with power, Mark describes the incomparable power of Jesus. Therefore, Mark records eighteen of Jesus' miracles—more than any other gospel. Mark presents Jesus as powerful, but also as the ultimate Servant. The key verse is Mark 10:45. Write it below.

Mark was not one of the original twelve disciples. So, since his gospel contains many details only an eyewitness could observe, where did he get his information? Most scholars agree Mark's main source was probably the apostle Peter, who may have led him to Christ.

Mark was a Jew who was born in Jerusalem, probably to a well-to-do Jewish family. His mother, Mary, had a large house in which early believers met. When Peter was released from prison, he went directly to Mary's house (Acts 12:12). Also, Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Col. 4:10), and accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. On this journey, Mark abruptly deserts them, so later Paul refuses to let him go on the second missionary journey. However, near the end of Paul's life, Mark and Paul's relationship is obviously fully restored. In Paul's last epistle, just before his martyrdom, what does he write in 2 Timothy 4:11b-c?

To experience Jesus' power, you must start right. This requires at least **three** actions: **investigate baptism, participate in baptism, anticipate temptation.**

1. Investigate baptism (1:1-8).

Mark begins his gospel by telling us who he is writing about: *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* (1:1). The word translated *gospel* (EUANGELION, you-ong-gel'-e-on) is the word from which we get our words "evangel" and "evangelism." It means "good news." It is good news because of Jesus' sacrificial death, through which we can have all our sins forgiven and receive an eternal home in heaven. Both forgiveness and heaven are free grace gifts we accept through faith (Eph. 2:8). To be sure there is no mistake about whom the book is written, Mark makes it clear in the very first verse. This book is about *Jesus Christ*, which means Jesus the Messiah. But more than that, Jesus is also *the Son of God*.

Mark begins differently than Matthew and Luke, who each give detailed accounts of Jesus' birth. Mark omits the first thirty years of Jesus' life and begins with His baptism by John the Baptist. In verses 2-3, Mark quotes Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 to indicate John the Baptist is the forerunner of the Messiah sent to *prepare His way*. John comes on the scene and is baptizing *in the wilderness*. What is he preaching (1:4b)?

The word translated *baptism* (BAPTISMA, bap'-tis-mah) means to dip or immerse in water. The word *repentance* (METANOIA, meta-no'-oy-ah) means "a change of mind" that results in a change of attitude toward God and a change in life choices. *Repentance* is turning from sin to living for Jesus.

Baptism is *for the remission of sins* (1:4b). The Greek word translated *for* (EIS, ice) can mean "because of" instead of "in order to," just as it can in English. For example, "He was sent to prison for murder." Does that mean he was sent to prison "in order to" murder? No! It means "because of." Obviously, *repentance* must take place before baptism. Two things are required before a person can be baptized. What are these requirements, according to Acts 20:21b?

John the Baptist was not a fancy or classy dresser. He wore *camel's hair* and a *girdle* (belt) *of a skin*. Also, John was a very basic eater. He liked "fast food" because he ate *locusts* (grasshoppers) *and wild honey* (1:6, explanation mine).

John was highly respected by the Jews as a prophet. However, he declares there is One coming after him who is so much greater than he that he is not worthy to *stoop down* like a slave *and unloose* His sandals (1:7). John tells his followers he is baptizing them with *water* (1:8a). What does John then say about the Messiah's—Jesus'—baptism (1:8b)?

John's baptism was external, symbolizing one's desire to break away from an old life of sin. Jesus' baptism would be internal, changing a person from the inside out and giving them direct fellowship with God. When Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, we are empowered and transformed. Jesus offers us both forgiveness and the power to live for Him (Acts 1:8).

To start right, **investigate baptism** and . . .

2. Participate in baptism (1:9-11).

One day, Jesus (now about thirty years old, Lk 3:23) comes from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan River (1:9). This raises the question as to why the sinless Son of God would be baptized with a *baptism of repentance*. Jesus is baptized by John to inaugurate His earthly ministry. He is also teaching us the first thing we should do to begin our new life in Him is be baptized. Matthew records John the Baptist was hesitant to baptize Jesus. Therefore, how does Jesus respond (Matthew 3:15)?



This means baptism is a part of fulfilling all of God's righteous requirements. Jesus gave us the example. If we want to start right in experiencing Jesus' power, we must first be baptized because of our *repentance* toward God and our *faith* in Christ.

When Jesus comes up out of the water, *straightway* He sees the heavens open and the Spirit descends on Him *like a dove* (1:10). Why does the Holy Spirit descend *like a dove*, rather than a hawk or an eagle? Doves don't descend rapidly to catch their prey; they descend slowly and peacefully. The dove is a symbol of gentleness and peace. As soon as Jesus comes up out of the water, He hears a voice from heaven. What does that voice say (1:11)?

At Jesus' baptism, we see all three members of the Trinity at once—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The word trinity means “tri-unity” and refers to the undivided unity of the threefold nature of God, which is a mystery beyond human comprehension.

To start right in experiencing Jesus' power, **investigate baptism, participate in baptism**, and . . .

3. Anticipate temptation (1:12-13).

Immediately after His baptism, *the Spirit* of God drives Jesus into the wilderness for *forty days* (1:12-13a). What happens there (1:13b)?

The Christian life is often like the experience of Jesus after His baptism. We quickly go from a mountaintop experience to a deep dark valley.

Only Mark tells us Jesus is in the wilderness with *wild beasts* (1:13c). The wilderness of Palestine had ferocious animals, such as boars, jackals, wolves, and hyenas. This would make the temptation experience even more difficult and frightening.

Why did Jesus' temptation take place in the wilderness with *wild beasts*? Probably to contrast with the very first temptation in the Garden of Eden. The first temptation took place in a paradise where all animals were tame and lived in harmony with Adam and Eve. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness with vicious, *wild beasts* reveals how great is the Fall caused by sin.

Today, we live in a spiritual wilderness that is often hostile to us. You can see it on TV, on the internet, in printed materials, and in American culture in general. Our entire culture tempts us to give in to the ways of Satan.

After Jesus resists three temptations by quoting Scriptures, the devil leaves Him (Mt 4:1-11). Then, angels *ministered* to Him (1:13d). Just as God did not leave His Son alone in the fierce battle between good and evil, He does not leave us alone. We are always accompanied by Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, and though we sometimes forget it, by angels also. What does Hebrews 1:14 reveal about angels?

To start right in experiencing the power of Jesus, **investigate baptism, participate in baptism, and anticipate temptation.**

