

The Gospel of Mark

(Mid-Week Bible Study)

Week 1: The King Arrives -- Mark 1:1–20

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest, fastest-paced, and most action-oriented of the four Gospels. Early Christian tradition records that Mark wrote down the preaching of the apostle Peter, presenting Jesus as the powerful Servant of God who came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Where Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the promised King of Israel and Luke traces His humanity in careful detail, Mark moves quickly from scene to scene, urging the reader to see Jesus in action and to respond.

Mark opens not with a genealogy, not with a birth narrative, not with stories from Jesus' childhood, but with a single, sweeping declaration: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." From the first sentence, Mark wants us to understand who Jesus is. The long-awaited Messiah has come. The kingdom God promised through the prophets is breaking into history. John the Baptist appears in the wilderness, preparing the way through a message of repentance, just as Isaiah and Malachi had foretold.

When Jesus steps onto the stage, the heavens are torn open. He submits to baptism at John's hands, the Spirit descends on Him, and the voice of the Father declares, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." After being tested in the wilderness, Jesus comes proclaiming, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." The age of preparation is over. The King has arrived, and His reign is being announced.

His very first act is to call followers. Walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus summons Simon, Andrew, James, and John — ordinary working men — to leave their nets and follow Him. And they do, immediately. This sets the tone for everything that follows in Mark's Gospel: the King has come, the kingdom is here, and the only fitting response is repentance, faith, and obedient discipleship that costs us everything.

Group Discussion: Why do you think Mark begins his Gospel so abruptly — with no birth narrative, no genealogy, no childhood stories — and instead jumps directly into the ministry of John the Baptist and the arrival of Jesus? What does this immediate, action-driven opening suggest about Mark's purpose for writing?

Personal Reflection: Jesus' opening words in Mark are a call to "repent and believe in the gospel." When you consider your own walk with Christ, where might He be calling you to a deeper repentance, a fuller trust, or a more obedient response this week?

Read Mark 1:1–20

Study Questions

1. Mark 1:1 introduces this book as “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Why does Mark identify Jesus with both titles — “Christ” (Messiah) and “Son of God” — in the very first verse, and what does each title affirm about who Jesus is?
2. In verses 2–3, Mark grounds the arrival of Jesus in Old Testament prophecy, quoting from Malachi and Isaiah. Why is it significant that Mark begins his Gospel by anchoring the ministry of John and Jesus in passages written hundreds of years earlier?
3. John the Baptist appears in verses 4–8, preaching “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” What do John’s message, his lifestyle, and his location in the wilderness teach us about what was needed to prepare people to receive Jesus?
4. In verses 7–8, John insists, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.” How does John’s humility serve as a model for how Christians today should point others to Christ rather than to themselves?
5. Verses 9–11 record the baptism of Jesus. Why would the sinless Son of God submit to John’s baptism, and what does His example teach about obedience to God’s revealed will?
6. At the baptism, the Father speaks from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (v. 11), and the Spirit descends on Jesus. What do these events reveal about the identity of Jesus and about God’s pleasure in obedience?

7. Verses 12–13 briefly describe Jesus being driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He was tempted by Satan for forty days. Why is it important that Jesus faced and overcame this testing before beginning His public ministry, and what encouragement does this give to believers?
8. In verses 14–15, Jesus proclaims, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” What does it mean that the kingdom of God was “at hand,” and why does Jesus pair the commands to “repent” and to “believe”?
9. In verses 16–20, Jesus calls Simon, Andrew, James, and John, who “immediately” leave their nets — and even their father — to follow Him. What does their swift, costly response teach us about the nature of true discipleship?
10. Looking at this passage as a whole, how does Mark introduce Jesus as the King who has arrived, and what does it mean for us today to recognize Him as King and respond as His disciples?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: **Isaiah 40:1–11** — The promised messenger preparing the way of the Lord; **Malachi 3:1–4** — The Lord’s messenger and the coming of the Lord to His temple; **Acts 2:36–41** — The first sermon’s call to repent and be baptized; **Luke 14:25–33** — Counting the cost of following Jesus