

Mark begins his gospel account of Jesus Christ with His entrance into public ministry. This chapter contains brief accounts of Jesus' baptism, His 40 days of being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and the type of preaching and teaching that He did as He began His ministry in Galilee.

The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) and had temporarily accompanied Paul and Barnabas during the first part of Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5) before returning home. This early departure of John Mark later became the point of division between Paul and Barnabas that caused them to part ways as they were preparing to make their second missionary journey (Acts 15:38-40). Barnabas wanted to take him with them but Paul refused because he considered John Mark to be undependable because he had abandoned them early in their first missionary journey. However, John Mark apparently redeemed himself as later Paul considered him useful in the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). John Mark was also a companion of the apostle Peter (**1 Pet. 5:13** "*The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son*"), **Acts 12:12** "*And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying*"). This time spent with Peter apparently led to the writing of Mark's gospel, since many of the early church fathers considered it to be "Peter's gospel." They believed that Mark wrote down Peter's memories of the things that Jesus said and did.

Mark writes in a concise and brief manner. When documenting many events in his gospel, he merely mentions that they happened without going into too much detail before moving on to the next event. We have to look to the other gospels for many of the details that Mark omits. However, Mark seems to emphasize the humanity of Jesus more than the other gospels, mentioning Jesus' human emotions (showing compassion) and human limitations (hunger, needing to sleep, etc.).

Verses 1-8: Mark documents the coming of John the Baptist, quoting from the writings of Isaiah and Malachi to show that John fulfilled certain prophecies. John came as the predicted forerunner of Christ that would prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of their Messiah, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (v. 4).

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

"And it came to pass in those days" – "Those days" are the days referred to in vs. 1-8, when John the Baptist was preaching, baptizing, and proclaiming the coming of the Messiah.

"that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee" – Unlike the gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark does not begin his gospel with the birth of Jesus. Instead, when we first see Jesus in Mark's gospel, he is an adult and is described as coming from Nazareth, a village in Galilee. Nazareth was where Joseph took Mary and his son (Jesus) to live after returning to Israel from Egypt (Matt. 2:19-23). Jesus grew up in Nazareth, which is why He is often referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth."

"and was baptized of John in Jordan" – The first act of Jesus that Mark describes is when He comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. Mark does not record that John questioned the reason that Jesus would come to him to be baptized (Matt. 3:13-15). Instead he merely states the fact that Jesus came and was baptized and then briefly describes what happened immediately afterward.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

Jesus' baptism marks His entrance into His ministry as the Messiah. He is empowered by the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Why did the invisible Spirit choose to manifest Himself in a visible form? Perhaps this was to provide another evidence that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, Who was prophesied to be filled with the Spirit of God (**Isa. 61:1** "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*"). Jesus will later perform miracles and He points to these as evidence that He is the Messiah when the messengers of John the Baptist come to ask if Jesus is the Messiah (Luke 7:20-22).

11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In addition to the visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus, God the Father also gave His testimony that Jesus was His Son and the Messiah by verbally declaring it at Jesus' baptism. He will testify again later at the transfiguration (Mark 9:1-7).

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

The Greek word translated "driveth" means "to drive out forcefully." Being tempted by Satan for forty days was not an accident nor was it Satan seeing an opportunity and taking advantage of it. Rather, the Holy Spirit compelled Jesus to go to the wilderness alone in order to be subjected to the temptations of Satan. Mark gives us little details, telling us that Jesus was "with the wild beasts" (emphasizing the solitude away from other people) and that He was ministered to by the angels. Matthew 4:11 tells us that the angels ministered to Jesus at the end of Satan's temptation, likely to provide food from His Father. These forty days were apparently a period of testing, sanctification and purification for Jesus, preparing Him for His public ministry as the Messiah and His eventual sacrifice on the cross.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

“Now after that John was put in prison” – Mark merely mentions that John the Baptist had been imprisoned by king Herod in this verse, but he does go into the details later in chapter 6. John had preached against Herod’s evil deeds and the fact that he had married Herodias, his brother’s wife (Matt. 14:3-4; Luke 3:19-20; Mark 6:17-18).

“Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” – Jesus seems to have come into Galilee in response to the news of the arrest of John the Baptist (Matt. 4:12 “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee”). Perhaps He left Judea and came to Galilee in order to avoid being arrested by Herod for preaching the same message as John the Baptist. It was not yet His time to be crucified and so it’s possible that He did not want to set events into motion that might circumvent His crucifixion at the correct time since Herod might have had Jesus beheaded.

“And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” – Jesus began preaching the same message that John had preached. The time that God had ordained for the Messiah to come had arrived. Jesus was the Messiah and His coming meant that the kingdom of God was also “at hand” (within reach).

Verses 16-20: Jesus walks by the Sea of Galilee and sees Simon and his brother Andrew using a net to catch fish and he calls them to follow Him. Going farther up the seashore, Jesus does the same with the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, who also follow Him.

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

“And they went into Capernaum” – Capernaum was a fishing town on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew had a home there (v. 29) and the other disciples that Jesus had called by the seaside (James and John) may also have had residences in town.

“and straightway [immediately] on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught” – Jesus began teaching in the synagogue the first sabbath day after His arrival in Capernaum and apparently continued to do so every sabbath while He was in town. Jesus took very seriously the job that His Father gave Him and wasted no time getting to work preaching and teaching.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

“And they were astonished [amazed] at his doctrine [teaching]” – Those that attended the synagogue were amazed when they heard Jesus teach, because what He taught and the manner in which He taught it was different from what they typically heard.

“for he taught them as one that had authority [power of authority], and not as the scribes” – The scribes, often referred to as “lawyers” and “teachers of the law” were experts in the law of Moses. However, when they taught, they referred to great rabbis of the past and the traditions passed down from them as their authority for what they were teaching. Jesus, on the other hand, did not teach in this manner. Not only was His use of scripture different than the scribes, He also did not refer to these rabbis to justify His teaching. Instead He used Himself as the authority for His teaching. Being the Son of God, His authority was absolute since He was the Author of the scripture. We see this in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, where He contrasts the teaching of OT law passed down by rabbis against His own teaching of the same scripture: **Matt. 5:27-28** “Ye have heard that *it was said by them of old time*, Thou shalt not commit adultery: *But I say unto you*, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Verses 23-45: Jesus then had the opportunity to demonstrate His authority, because a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an “unclean spirit” cried out against Him and Jesus cast the demon out. The people began talking among themselves about the new doctrine they were being taught and the fact that Jesus had the authority to cast out demons. As a result, the fame of Jesus began to spread around the region. Jesus, James and John went home with Simon Peter and Andrew, where they found Simon’s mother-in-law sick. Jesus healed her and the news apparently got around because at sunset (apparently when the sabbath had ended) people began bringing their sick and demon possessed for Jesus to heal them, which He did. The next morning Jesus got up before daylight to find a secluded place to pray. When Simon and the others got up, they went searching for Jesus and when they found Him, they informed Him that there were already people looking for Him. Jesus replied that they needed to travel to neighboring towns so that he could preach there as well, which was one of the reasons He was sent by His Father. Jesus proceeded to preach in the various synagogues throughout Galilee, healing the sick and casting out devils. As His fame spread, Jesus could no longer enter the cities in a public manner because He would get thronged by masses of people.