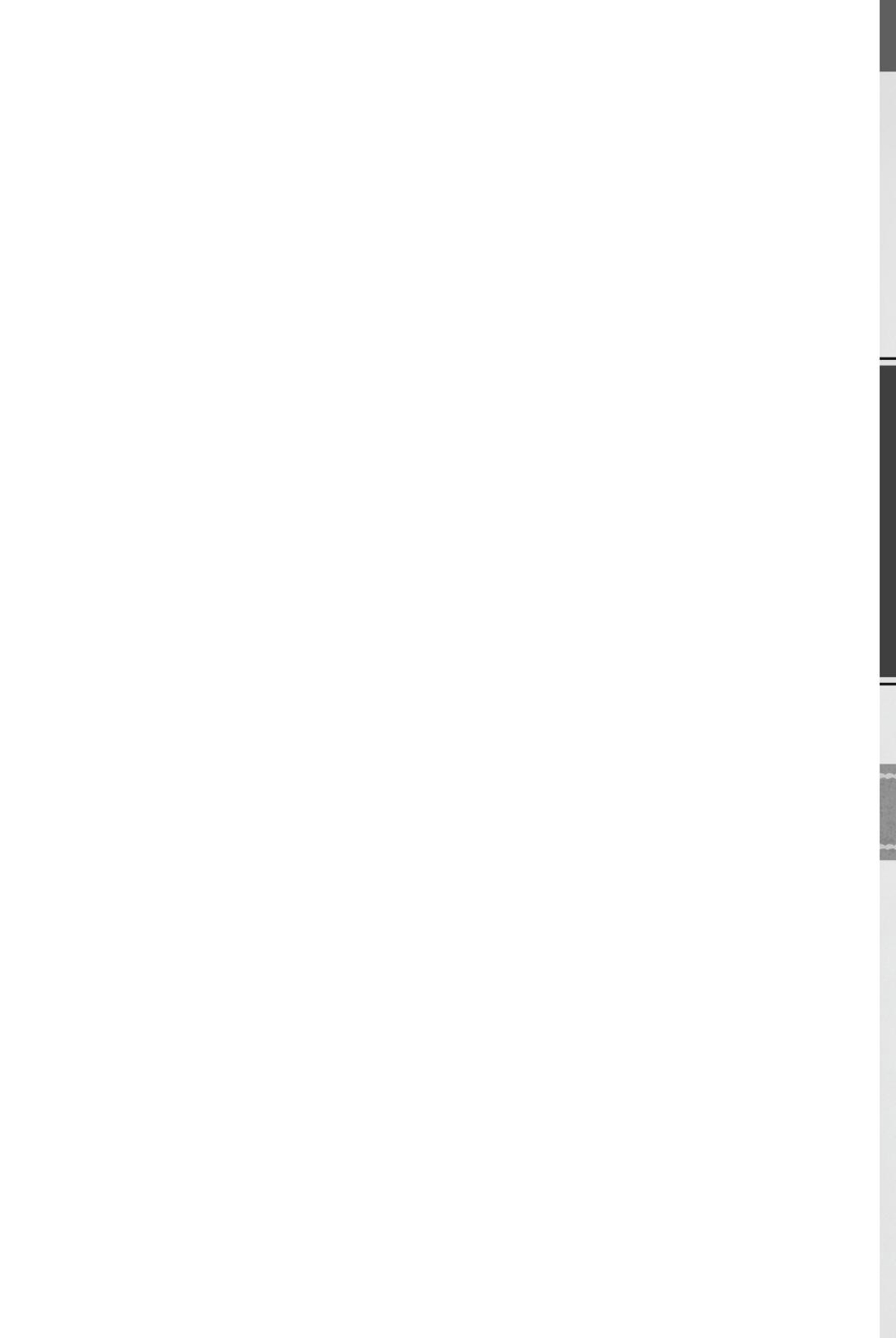


C H R I S T - C E N T E R E D

Exposition



NT / COMMENTARY

AUTHOR Daniel L. Akin

SERIES EDITORS David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida

C H R I S T - C E N T E R E D

Exposition

E X A L T I N G J E S U S I N

MARK



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Mark

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SB

SERIES DEDICATION

Dedicated to Adrian Rogers and John Piper. They have taught us to love the gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, to pastor the church for which our Savior died, and to have a passion to see all nations gladly worship the Lamb.

—David Platt, Tony Merida, and Danny Akin
March 2013

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I would like to thank Michael Guyer, Shane Shaddix, Mary Jo Haselton, Kim Humphrey, Debbie Shugart, and Amy Whitfield, each of whom made significant contributions to this volume. You all have blessed and enriched my life.

—Danny Akin

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

Augustine said, “Where Scripture speaks, God speaks.” The editors of the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series believe that where God speaks, the pastor must speak. God speaks through His written Word. We must speak from that Word. We believe the Bible is God breathed, authoritative, inerrant, sufficient, understandable, necessary, and timeless. We also affirm that the Bible is a Christ-centered book; that is, it contains a unified story of redemptive history of which Jesus is the hero. Because of this Christ-centered trajectory that runs from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22, we believe the Bible has a corresponding global-missions thrust. From beginning to end, we see God’s mission as one of making worshipers of Christ from every tribe and tongue worked out through this redemptive drama in Scripture. To that end we must preach the Word.

In addition to these distinct convictions, the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series has some distinguishing characteristics. First, this series seeks to display exegetical accuracy. What the Bible says is what we want to say. While not every volume in the series will be a verse-by-verse commentary—although most will—we nevertheless desire to handle the text carefully and explain it rightly. Those who teach and preach bear the heavy responsibility of saying what God has said in His Word and declaring what God has done in Christ. We desire to faithfully handle God’s Word, knowing that we must give an account for how we have fulfilled this holy calling (Jas 3:1).

Second, the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series has pastors in view. While we hope others will read this series, such as parents, teachers, small-group leaders, and student ministers, we desire to provide a commentary busy pastors will use for weekly preparation of biblically faithful and gospel-saturated sermons. This series is not academic in nature. Our aim is to present a readable and pastoral style of commentaries. We believe this aim will serve the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, we want the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series to be known for the inclusion of helpful illustrations and theologically driven applications. Many commentaries offer no help in illustrations, and few offer any kind of help in application. Often those that do offer illustrative material and application unfortunately give little serious attention to the text. While giving ourselves primarily to explanation, we also hope to serve readers by providing inspiring and illuminating illustrations coupled with timely and timeless application.

Finally, as the name suggests, the editors seek to exalt Jesus from every book of the Bible. In saying this, we are not commending wild allegory or fanciful typology. We certainly believe we must be constrained to the meaning intended by the divine Author Himself, the Holy Spirit of God. However, we also believe the Bible has a messianic focus, and our hope is that the individual authors will exalt Christ from particular texts. Luke 24:25-27,44-47; and John 5:39,46 inform both our hermeneutics and our homiletics. Not every author will do this the same way or have the same degree of Christ-centered emphasis. That is fine with us. We believe faithful exposition that is Christ-centered is not monolithic. We do believe, however, that we must read the whole Bible as Christian Scripture. Therefore, our aims are both to honor the historical particularity of each biblical passage and to highlight its intrinsic connection to the Redeemer.

The editors are indebted to the contributors of each volume. The reader will detect a unique style from each writer, and we celebrate these unique gifts and traits. While distinctive in approach, the authors share a common characteristic in that they are pastoral theologians. They love the church, and they regularly preach and teach God's Word to God's people. Further, many of these contributors are younger voices. We think these new, fresh voices can serve the church well, especially among a rising generation that has the task of proclaiming the Word of Christ and the Christ of the Word to the lost world.

We hope and pray this series will serve the body of Christ well in these ways until our Savior returns in glory. If it does, we will have succeeded in our assignment.

David Platt
Daniel L. Akin
Tony Merida
Series Editors
February 2013

Mark

The Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God

MARK 1:1-8

Main Idea: The gospel is the good news that God has kept His promise to send a Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

I. We Can Trust God to Keep His Promise (1:1-4).

- A. God kept His word to send the Messiah (1:1).
- B. God kept His word to send His forerunner (1:2-4).

II. We Can Trust God to Send His Preachers (1:4-8).

- A. Like John we should be faithful (1:4-5).
 - B. Like John we need to be humble (1:6-8).
-

The Gospel of Matthew is written to Jews telling them that Jesus is the Messiah King who fulfills Old Testament prophecy. Mark is written to Romans telling them that Jesus is the Suffering Servant who actively ministers on our behalf and gives His life as a ransom for many. Luke is written to Greeks telling them that Jesus is the perfect Son of Man who came to save and minister to all people through the power of the Holy Spirit. John is written to the world, telling that Jesus is the fully human, fully divine Son of God in whom we must believe to receive eternal life.

The Gospel of Mark is fast moving and hard-hitting! By the far the shortest of the four Gospels, it is noted as much for what it omits as what it includes. In Mark there is no genealogy of Jesus, no miraculous birth narrative with Bethlehem and shepherds, no childhood at Nazareth or visit to the temple, no Sermon on the Mount, and few parables.

To summarize, Mark recorded, in rapid-fire succession, specific events from the life and ministry of Jesus to prove to a Roman audience that He is the Christ, the Son of God, who served, suffered, died, and rose again as the Suffering Servant of the Lord depicted by the prophet Isaiah.

As we prepare to walk through this powerful Gospel narrative concerning Jesus Christ, two questions need to be raised and answered. First, who wrote this Gospel? Second, how should we approach any of the Gospels?

Authorship

The early church agreed unanimously that a man named John Mark wrote this Gospel. His mother was Mary, whose home in Jerusalem was a meeting place for believers of the early church (Acts 12:12).

The Hebrew name *John* means “God’s gift.” The Roman name *Mark* means “polite” or “shining.” John Mark, though never mentioned by name in the Gospel, may be the naked boy of Mark 14:51-52. John Mark and his cousin Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 12:25), but Mark turned back before the journey ended (Acts 13:13). This irritated Paul and led to a parting with Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Later Paul and Mark were reconciled, and Mark was “useful” to Paul (2 Tim 4:11).

Finally, the early church affirmed Mark was the apostle Peter’s interpreter. He recorded Peter’s experiences with the Lord Jesus. Mark’s account being especially vivid when it involves incidents with Peter supports this view.

Some Basic Presuppositions Concerning Our Gospels

How do we approach the four Gospels and, in particular, the Gospel of Mark? What presuppositions should we bring to our study?

(1) Gospels are historical and not mythological accounts. What they record really did happen. (2) They will vary because they are written by four different men. However, because they were inspired by God, all they wrote will be true. (3) Gospels are more than thematic biographical studies. They are not biographies in the modern sense. They are historical theologies of the person and work of Jesus Christ. (4) Portions may be summarized and not given as exhaustive accounts. (5) Gospels are more concerned about Christ’s death than His life (more than one-fourth of each deals with the final week of His life). One scholar said Mark “is a Passion Narrative with an extended introduction” (Stein, *Mark*, 33).

As we begin an exciting journey through this Gospel, what does Mark want us to understand concerning the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

We Can Trust God to Keep His Promise

MARK 1:1-4

Jesus said in John 5:39, “You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me.” God had promised to send a Savior, a Deliverer, a Messiah. Mark says the time has arrived, and He has appeared, as well as the one God called to prepare the way for His arrival—Jesus Christ and John the baptizer.

God Kept His Word to Send the Messiah (Mark 1:1)

Without wasting any words, Mark gives the introduction to Mark 1:1-15 as well as the theme of the entire book: it is about good news of Jesus who is the Christ, the Son of God.

The word *beginning* recalls Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. Something new and exciting has occurred. The word *gospel* means a message of good news or of joyful tidings. It speaks of the coming Savior who would provide salvation promised by the prophetic word. The time of God's salvation has arrived! God has kept His promise to send a Messiah.

This Messiah is "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." "Jesus" is the Greek name for the Hebrew *Joshua*: "Yahweh is salvation." "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*: "the anointed one." Initially a title, "Christ" would become a common part of the name of our Lord. "Son of God" is a crucial title for the promised deliverer. It takes Christology to a higher level. Bob Stein says, "Son of God reveals Jesus' unique and unparalleled relationship with God. It is the favorite title of Mark for identifying Jesus (1:11,24; 3:11 [cf. 1:34]; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:61-62; 15:39), and when Mark was written, it conveyed to the Christian community the idea of both preexistence and deity (cf. Phil 2:6-8; Col 1:15-20)" (Stein, *Mark*, 41). One cannot avoid the inescapable conclusion that Jesus is indeed God!

And of all Jesus' titles, the title "Son of God" in particular appears at significant points in the Gospel and sometimes in the mouths of some interesting personalities! Perhaps most striking is that the disciples never recognize Jesus as the Son of God in the Gospel of Mark. The demons get it right (3:11; 5:7). Even a Roman centurion understands it (15:39). Yet not until after the resurrection did the disciples get it. If Jesus' disciples failed to see it, there is hope for those who seem the furthest away from seeing it today.

There are four strategic confessions in the second Gospel: (1) Mark's assertion in 1:1: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (2) Peter's confession in 8:29: "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.'" (3) The Messiah's affirmation by the nation through the words of the high priest in 14:61-62: "Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'" (4) A Roman (Gentile) soldier's recognition of Jesus as the Son of God in 15:39: "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" This is how

TITLES OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK
1. Jesus Christ, Son of God (1:1)
2. Jesus, Son of the Most High God (5:7)
3. Jesus, Son of David (10:47-48)
4. Christ (1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 12:35)
5. Christ, the Son of the Blessed (14:61)
6. Christ, King of Israel (15:32)
7. Son of Man (2:10,28; 8:31,38; 9:9,12,31; 10:33,45; 13:26; 14:21,41,62)
8. Holy One of God (1:24)
9. Lord of the Sabbath (2:28)
10. Lord (5:19; 7:28; 10:51 [Gk]; 11:3; 13:20 [16:19-20])
11. King of the Jews (15:2,9,12,18,26)

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8. Holy One of God (1:24)
9. Lord of the Sabbath (2:28)
10. Lord (5:19; 7:28; 10:51 [Gk]; 11:3; 13:20 [16:19-20])
11. King of the Jews (15:2,9,12,18,26)

the Gospel of Mark unfolds. It begins here with the declaration that this is the “gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

God Kept His Word to Send His Forerunner (Mark 1:2-4)

Before the Messiah, God promises to send a forerunner. Mark 1:2-3 combines three texts, a common practice in that day, evoking the themes of the wilderness, a new exodus, and the forerunner Elijah.

The first reference is Exodus 23:20: “I am going to send an angel [messenger] before you to protect you on the way and bring you to the place I have prepared.” Next he pulls from Malachi 3:1: “‘See, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire—see, He is coming,’ says the LORD of Hosts.” The last reference is Isaiah 40:3: “A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.”

Mark simply references the most significant and well known of the three texts, the prophet Isaiah. God has promised to send His messenger, who will prepare the way; make the road ready ahead of “You,” the Messiah. He will loudly proclaim his message where God has continually met His people calling them to repentance: the wilderness. His message is *simple* and *clear*. Level the roads, make them presentable and safe, for the Lord is

coming! God kept His word to send His forerunner to prepare the way for the Messiah.

We Can Trust God to Send His Preachers

MARK 1:4-8

The sending of John the baptizer was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy signaling a new day in “redemptive history”—which is the series of events by which God redeems His people from sin and death. The culmination of redemptive history is the cross of Christ. Three observations about John the Baptist elsewhere in Scripture are worth noting. Matthew 11:7-12,14 says,

Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft garments? Look, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet. This is the one it is written about: ‘Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You, he will prepare Your way before You.’ I assure you: Among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared; but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. . . . For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come.”

John was greatly esteemed in the eyes of our Savior. John was the Elijah to come, the one who would announce the coming of the Messiah. He was truly at a turning point in redemptive history.

While John prepared the way for the Messiah, he rightly understood his role in God’s plan of redemption: “He must increase, but *I must decrease*” (John 3:30, emphasis added). His ministry was not about himself; it was rightly centered on Jesus Christ.

The message John declared about the Messiah was true, and many came to believe in Jesus. “Many came to Him and said, ‘*John never did a sign, but everything John said about this Man was true.*’ And many believed in Him there” (John 10:41-42, emphasis added). He was not the Savior, but he pointed many to Him.

Chuck Swindoll says these verses concerning John the Baptist give us the “profile of a strange evangelist!” Indeed! In John the Baptist we see a character and life worth emulating. The great thing is that when we do start living like John the Baptist, we end up looking a lot more like Jesus Christ in our own lives.

Like John We Should Be Faithful (Mark 1:4-5)

Mark records with his usual brevity, “John came baptizing in the wilderness.” He suddenly appeared. He was “baptizing,” but he was not concerned about mere ritual or ceremonial rite. The message he preached was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” This baptism was preparation for the forgiveness Christ would accomplish by His death and resurrection.

In short, John’s message was, “The time is now to get right with God!” Popular with some and unpopular with others, John was faithful to God! He truly lived by the dictum, “All that matters in life is that I please God.”

How did the people respond? They came from everywhere to hear him, even Jerusalem! Rich and poor. Rural and urban. They responded to John’s preaching by repenting (turning from sin), confessing (acknowledging their sin), and being baptized (an outward sign of humility giving evidence of the inward change of their hearts). He called people to prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah.

Like John We Need to Be Humble (Mark 1:6-8)

Our tendency is to want to make John’s character like that of a modern man. That will not work. He was not the kind of man to be a presidential cabinet member; rather, he was a wandering preacher who lived in the wilderness. God chose a forerunner entirely different from the type we would have picked. Mark helps us take a straight and honest look at this man. Not only does he appear unusual by today’s standards; he was unusual by the standards of his own day. He had no credentials, had not studied in a formal school with Pharisees or rabbis, and wore funny clothes and ate weird food!

Humble in *appearance*? He wore a camel-haired garment with a leather belt. Sounds like Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8.

Humble in *home*? He lived in the desert.

Humble in *diet*? He ate locusts (a clean animal; Lev 11:22) and honey. At least it was high in protein and minerals.

Humble in *message*? John effectively said, “One greater than me is coming [v. 7]. He is so great, I am not worthy to do what only a Gentile slave would do [v. 7]. My baptism is outward with water: a symbol. His baptism is inward with the Spirit: the real thing [v. 8]. The One who is coming is *mightier* than I am! He is *more worthy* than I am! He is *more powerful* than I am! I have touched your body with water. He will touch your soul with the Holy Spirit! I know who I am in God’s plan. I know who He is in God’s plan too!”

John would not live to 35. He would be imprisoned and beheaded. The world, no doubt, scoffed at this crazy man. Heaven, however, would smile. J. C. Ryle rightly demonstrates the implications of John's life:

The principal work of every faithful minister of the gospel, is to set the Lord Jesus fully before His people, and to show them His fullness and His power to save. The next great work He has to do, is to set before them the work of the Holy Spirit, and the need of being born again, and inwardly baptized by His grace. These two mighty truths appear to have been frequently on the lips of John the Baptist. It would be well for the church and the world, if there were more ministers like him. (Ryle, *Mark*, 4)

Conclusion

Early Christians used one symbol to mark the tombs of believers or to designate secret meeting places because of Roman persecution. It was sometimes signed in sand to distinguish a friend from an enemy. Further, it captured beautifully the evangelistic intent of Jesus' ministry and the essence of who Jesus was. It also summarizes well the theme of Mark's Gospel. I do not speak of the *cross*, but of the *fish!* The Greek word is ICHTHUS (ΙΧΘΥΣ). It is a perfect acrostic for *Iesous Christos Theou Huios Soter*, or in English, "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior!" Here is the essence of Mark's Gospel. Here is the essence of the good news about Jesus.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What is the advantage of having four Gospels, all telling essentially the same story?
2. How might Mark's consciousness of having a Roman audience affect his selection and presentation of the facts?
3. How did Mark's missionary work with Paul and Barnabas and his association with Peter prepare him to write this Gospel?
4. What are the implications of Jesus' title "Christ" in the lives of His followers? What are the implications of His being "the Son of God"?
5. Why did the demons and the Roman centurion recognize that Jesus was the Son of God before the resurrection, but His disciples did not? How does the disciples' slowness give hope for us and our loved ones?
6. How does John the Baptist function as a transitional figure from the Old Testament to the new covenant?
7. How do John and his preaching style compare with current notions of how to gain a following and grow a church?
8. Why do you think John gained a large following? What was his message? How did that message contribute to his popularity and to his death?

9. How is John's humble message about Christ similar to what we should tell others about Christ? How is our message different?
10. God fulfilled His promise to send a messenger and send a Savior. What are some of the other promises of God that have not yet been fulfilled? How does Mark 1:1-8 encourage you concerning these promises?

The Baptism and Temptation of the Servant-King

MARK 1:9-13

Main Idea: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, the Servant-King who fights God's enemies on behalf of God's people.

I. The Baptism of Jesus Was a Declaration of Sonship (1:9-11).

- A. It inaugurated His public ministry (1:9).
- B. It identified Him with sinful humanity (1:9).
- C. It associated Him with John's ministry (1:9).
- D. It demonstrated His approval by His Father (1:10).
- E. It revealed the triune God (1:9-11).
- F. It showed His total dependence on the Holy Spirit (1:10).
- G. It declared the type of Messiah He would be (1:11).

II. The Temptation of Jesus Was a Declaration of War (1:12-13).

- A. Jesus was submissive to the Spirit (1:12).
 - B. Jesus was engaged by Satan (1:13).
-

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not our ways. His ways are higher. His thoughts are higher (Isa 55:8-9). His ways surprise us. His plans often are mysterious. Sometimes they seem downright strange.

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry is a perfect example. It starts not in a thriving metropolis but in the rugged wasteland of the Judean wilderness near the Dead Sea; not with a press conference but a baptism; not with a parade and feast but with 40 days of solitude and fasting even further in the desolate and dangerous wilderness, being tempted by the archenemy of God.

To be sure, the baptism and temptation of Jesus show us that God's ways are not our ways, but His ways are, as Romans 12:2 affirms, always good, acceptable, and perfect. What then do we learn from these two critical events in the life of Jesus?

The Baptism of Jesus Was a Declaration of Sonship

MARK 1:9-11

Jesus comes to John probably in the middle or latter days of John's ministry. He comes to be baptized, an event so significant that it is recorded in all four Gospels (cf. Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:28-34). Mark uses the word *baptize/baptism* six times in the first nine verses of the book. Still, this act is surprising: Why was He baptized? Matthew tells us that John the Baptist was opposed to baptizing Christ, and he had a pretty good argument (Matt 3:14; cf. Mark 1:7). Jesus, however, says it must take place "for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). But then, what does that mean?

I believe we can tease out the answer as we look at seven truths His baptism teaches us. The baptism is the beginning of His humiliation as He faithfully submits to the Father's will and willingly identifies Himself with sinful humanity. It is no more odd for Jesus to be baptized in the Jordan River than for Him to hang on the cross at Calvary as the sinless and spotless Son of God (Dever, "Jesus' Debut").

Jesus' Baptism Inaugurated His Public Ministry (Mark 1:9)

Jesus came from Nazareth, a small town in the middle of nowhere. The region of Galilee was despised because of its distance from Jerusalem and for its infestation of Gentiles. The town of Nazareth was even worse—unknown and unmentioned. Jesus was a nobody from nowhere! But He comes to John and thereby begins His public ministry. He was probably in His early thirties. His public ministry would last only three years or so. The time has come for the Servant King to ascend to the public stage.

Why in the wilderness? God has often met with His people there. Recall the exodus, when God brought His children out of Egypt into the wilderness where He would give them His law, feed them, and lead them by cloud and fire. Again in Hosea 2:14-15 He promised His presence: "Therefore, I am going to persuade her, lead her to the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. . . . There she will respond as she did in the days of her youth, as in the day she came out of the land of Egypt."

Jesus' Baptism Identified Him with Sinful Humanity (Mark 1:9)

In His baptism Jesus joins those who seek a baptism of repentance and who are confessing their sins. Jesus neither repents of sin nor confesses His sin because He had no sin (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15). Still, He aligns Himself with those He came to save. Like Moses in the first exodus (Exod 32:23), He does not set Himself apart from their sins (Lane, *Mark*, 55).

Jesus' Baptism Associated Him with John's Ministry (Mark 1:9)

Jesus does not hesitate to connect Himself to John the Baptist regarding the fulfillment of prophecy and his message of repentance (cf. 1:15!). No one had higher praise for John than Jesus. As the Christ, the Servant King, He makes His public appearance, He endorses the ministry of His cousin John (Luke 1:36).

Jesus' Baptism Demonstrated His Approval by His Father (Mark 1:10)

Immediately—an important word in Mark's Gospel (here translated "as soon as")—the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus through an opening in the sky. Jesus sees the heavens being "torn open." The word occurs only one other time in Mark's Gospel, when God the Father tears the temple curtain in two from top to bottom! At His baptism and at His crucifixion the Father intervenes supernaturally, eschatologically, declaring that Jesus is the Son of God.

Isaiah 64:1 had predicted this: "If only You would tear the heavens open and come down, so that mountains would quake at Your presence." The tearing apart of the heavens signals a significant moment in history and in the life of the Servant King. In this way the Father first gives His approval through action.

Jesus' Baptism Revealed the Triune God (Mark 1:9-11)

Adrian Rogers said, "The doctrine of the Trinity is not beyond logic and reason—just above it!" And as difficult as it can be to wrap our minds around the concept of a triune God, we clearly see all three persons of the Godhead at Jesus' baptism. The Son is baptized, the Father speaks, and the Spirit descends into (*eis*) Jesus "like a dove." Like the ending of Matthew's Gospel (28:19-20), the beginning of the Gospel of Mark gives us a brief glimpse into the nature of our God, the great Three in One. It also serves as a confirming witness concerning the identity of Jesus the Son.

Jesus' Baptism Showed His Total Dependence on the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10)

The presence of the Spirit on the Messiah was promised in Isaiah 42:1: "This is My Servant; I strengthen Him, this is My Chosen One; I delight in Him. I have put My Spirit on Him; He will bring justice to the nations." The prophet elaborates on this promise in Isaiah 11:2: "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."

Jesus is the fulfillment of these promises. *Like* a dove (it was not literally a dove), in gentleness and purity, the Spirit came into Jesus, and He was equipped for His ministry. Even though the Spirit came *into* Jesus (Gk *eis*), this is no “adoptionistic” Christology. He did not become the Son of God at the moment of His baptism. No, He was declared to be and empowered as the Son of God for the Suffering Servant ministry. John Piper says,

When Jesus was baptized along with all the repenting people who wanted to be on God’s side, it was as though the commander-in-chief had come to the front lines, fastened his bayonet, strapped on his helmet, and jumped into the trench along with the rest of us. And when he did that, his Father in heaven, who had sent him for this very combat, signified with the appearance of a dove that the Holy Spirit would be with him in the battles to come. (Piper, “Christ in Combat”)

Jesus’ Baptism Declared the Type of Messiah He Would Be
(Mark 1:11)

Mark 1:11 is surely one of the most important verses in the Bible! It is echoed again at the transfiguration in 9:7, along with the admonition for the disciples to “listen to Him.” It is a combination of three massively significant Old Testament texts. The phrase, “You are My Son” comes from Psalm 2:7, and in quoting this Davidic psalm, the Father announces, “You are the Messiah-King, the greater Son of David who will rule the nations.” In calling Christ “beloved,” we are reminded of the way Abraham saw Isaac, the son he was called to sacrifice (Gen 22:2). It bears the weight of Christ being the “One and Only” Son of the Most High God. The third phrase, “I take delight in You,” comes from Isaiah 42:1, which is the first of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant songs. These passages climax in the great Isaiah 53 text where the Servant is crushed by God as He bears the sins of the world!

This declaration of the Father’s love for His Son cannot be overstated and must not be overlooked. No prophet ever heard words like these! Abraham was a friend (Isa 41:8). Moses was a servant (Deut 34:5). Aaron was a chosen one (Ps 105:26). David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:4). But only Israel (Exod 4:23) and the king of Israel (as their representative; Ps 2:7) were called God’s sons. Now they are united in the person of the Servant King, Jesus of Nazareth! James Edwards says, “Jesus is Israel reduced to one” (*Mark*, 37). As the Messiah and Son of God, Jesus is a second Adam, a new Israel, and a perfect King who will succeed where they each failed!

That we must accept “Son of God” as a declaration of deity is easily demonstrated by the actions of this Son: He forgives sins (2:5), heals the

sick (1:40), casts out demons (1:24; 5:1-20), is Lord of the Sabbath (2:28), raises the dead (6:35-43), and ultimately rises from the dead Himself (16:1-8). This declaration coupled with Jesus' life, ministry, miracles, and resurrection make His deity undeniable.

So the Father has attested, "You are the promised Messiah-King—My Son and My delight. But You will realize Your kingdom by being a faithful Servant to Your Father even to the point of a crushing, painful, and humiliating death." Would Jesus accept such an assignment? In light of this lingering question, it is no coincidence that "immediately" Satan came to tempt Him, trying to divert the Savior from His mission.

The Temptation of Jesus Was a Declaration of War

MARK 1:12-13

A commissioning by God is often followed by a time of testing. In this time of testing, will Jesus continue to "trust and obey" the will of the Father now that the course of His life is made clear? The Gospel of Mark gives us a brief summation of the "war in the wilderness" (cf. Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). The battle begins here, but it will rage all the way to a Roman cross and an empty tomb. Here is Christ in deadly combat for the eternal souls of men. If He loses, we are lost!

Jesus Was Submissive to the Spirit (Mark 1:12)

Jesus acted "immediately," this time going further into the wilderness to be tempted. But He didn't just decide to go—"the Spirit drove Him" out. He was "impelled" or "cast out." Mark will use the same word to describe Jesus casting out demons! Jesus' temptation was no accidental encounter, no chance meeting. It was a divine appointment scheduled by the Father and implemented by the Spirit. It is not what we would expect to happen after the baptism and the voice from heaven. We would expect a reception or some kind of celebration, but instead we see an expulsion further into the wilderness. The same Spirit that descended is now casting Him into the wilderness.

Thankfully, Jesus yields to the Spirit and embraces this test. The Servant King has a job to do, and the Spirit immediately compels Him. Rather than shrinking back, as Israel was so prone to do, our King, our Commander in Chief, the true Israel goes out to fight in the trenches with us and for us. In so doing He turns back the enemy and provides hope and a pattern for us to do the same.

Jesus Was Engaged by Satan (Mark 1:13)

Now we see a snapshot of what this battle looked like. “He was in the wilderness 40 days, being tempted by Satan.” This was the *deep* wilderness. This was no vacation spot. The conditions were grueling, and Jesus was undoubtedly tired and weak. To grumble, complain, or give in would have been easy.

This reminds us of Israel’s 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, where they grumbled, complained, and failed to trust their God. This also reminds us of Moses’ 40 days on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:28) and Elijah’s 40 days at Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8). Jesus is not only a new Adam and a second Israel, but He is also a better Moses and a superior prophet!

Jesus said in John 8:44, “[The Devil] was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars.” Satan (meaning “adversary”), the Devil (meaning “accuser”), meets our King in the desert.

A few things about this meeting in the desert would have made it especially difficult. (1) Satan meets Jesus in the wilderness, not a garden. (2) Jesus has been fasting 40 days (Matt 4:2). (3) Jesus is alone. (4) The wilderness is filled with wild animals. The wild beasts are mentioned immediately following the mention of Satan, suggesting they are in partnership with him. Further, remember Mark’s Roman audience, especially during the Neronian persecution of AD 64–68. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote in his *Annals*, “[Christians] were covered with the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs” (*Annals*, 15:44). People associated wild animals with adversity and persecution, so including that detail would undoubtedly heighten the horror and danger of our Lord’s 40 days in the desolate and untamed Judean wilderness. It appears from all of these conditions that Jesus does battle with Satan on Satan’s home field. It is a divine invasion of enemy territory.

Christian, be encouraged. Christ knows what you are going through. Even more, His angels came to His aid. They may be sent by God to serve us as well (Ps 34:7; Heb 1:14)! First John 3:8 reminds us, “The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil’s works.” In this text we see a wonderful picture of that happening. It is a preview of coming attractions.

What was Satan’s goal? He wanted to defeat the Son! But how? Ultimately it seems that Satan’s goal was to get Jesus *not to suffer*! Satan was at the baptism I am sure! He saw and he heard it all! The suffering and death of Jesus meant Satan’s doom and destruction, and it meant salvation for you and me. This is what was at stake in the war in the wilderness!

Mark does not record our Lord's victory with the same detail as do Matthew and Luke. This is just round one of a 15-round bout. The Servant King won this round. The war in the wilderness was not the end. It was just the beginning, or more precisely it was the resumption of a war begun long ago in Genesis 3:15.

Conclusion

God's ways are not our ways, are they? His ways are often full of unexpected twists and turns we do not see coming. But aren't you glad His ways are good, acceptable, and perfect? If you doubt this, just look at the baptism and the temptation of the Servant King! God's will is not always safe, but it is always best!

Reflect and Discuss

1. What is most surprising or mysterious to you about the way God accomplished the salvation of mankind?
2. What do you consider to be the meaning of the rite of baptism in your church?
3. Why do you think God chooses the wilderness as the place to communicate with His children?
4. What does Mark 1:9-11 teach us about the Trinity?
5. What can we learn from the ideal connection between God the Father and God the Son?
6. In what way does the Holy Spirit represent power in Jesus' life and in ours?
7. What did Jesus do during His life to show He was a second Adam, a new Israel, and a perfect King?
8. How have you been tested since you gave your life to Christ? Are there things you can do now to amend your score on past tests?
9. Satan is a liar and a murderer. How has he shown that in your life?
10. How has popular culture portrayed angels? What does the Bible teach about them?

Building the Kingdom of God

MARK 1:14-20

Main Idea: Jesus came to inaugurate His kingdom by proclaiming the message of the gospel to faithful followers who would carry this message to all people.

I. We Must Proclaim the Right Message (1:14-15).

- A. The time is fulfilled.
- B. The kingdom of God has come near.
- C. Repent!
- D. Believe in the good news.

II. We Must Find the Right People (1:16-20).

- A. Jesus calls.
- B. Jesus commissions.

III. We Must Follow the Right Master (1:17-18,20).

- A. See who He is.
 - B. See what He does.
-

What does it take to build a great organization? How does one attract followers, build devotion, and inspire lifelong commitment? I believe three things are absolutely essential: (1) a *compelling vision*, (2) a *few good people* who can provide the necessary foundation, and (3) a *great leader*.

God brings all three of these essential elements together for the building of His kingdom. A *compelling vision*: “I will make you fish for people! You will play a part in building My kingdom, the kingdom of God” (v. 17). The *few good people*: Simon (Peter) and Andrew (v. 16), James and John (v. 19). A *great leader*: Jesus! The Christ! The Son of God! As we live as citizens of His kingdom, we must hold fast to these same components.

We Must Proclaim the Right Message

MARK 1:14-15

Jesus calls His followers to fish for people. That is accomplished not with bait, hooks, or nets, but with a powerful, confrontational, and compelling message! It is the same message we must proclaim today.

Jesus delayed His preaching ministry in Galilee until John the baptizer was imprisoned. Verses 14-15 summarize well the preaching ministry of Jesus. It is the “good news of God.” This is popular in Paul’s letters. It refers to the good news *from* God now revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus will proclaim the gospel, and indeed He *is* the gospel! Further, this gospel is crucial to the coming of something called “the kingdom of God.” The message of Jesus breaks down into four components: (1) The time is fulfilled, (2) the kingdom of God is near, (3) repent, and (4) believe in the gospel.

The Time Is Fulfilled

Jesus announces that “the time is fulfilled.” He is proclaiming that the One John said would come (1:7) has appeared! The “time” is a decisive and critical moment in history. Now begins “the Great Galilean Ministry,” which will last for one and a half years (Robertson, *Harmony*, 30). Jesus returns to Galilee (away from unbelieving Jerusalem) for the inauguration of His public preaching ministry, and it is the occasion for, in effect, a first-century “press release.”

The Kingdom of God Has Come Near

Jesus proclaims, “The kingdom of God has come near.” This phrase has provided a lot of discussion and disagreement among Bible scholars. I find the comments of Mark Strauss helpful:

Did Jesus preach that the kingdom was something that would arrive in the future in a dramatic and cataclysmic fashion, or was it a present reality for those who would accept it? . . . Albert Schweitzer claimed that Jesus drew his expectations from the Jewish apocalypticism of his day, which viewed God’s kingdom as his dramatic intervention in the future to deliver his people, judge the wicked, and establish his kingdom on earth. (Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 440)

According to Schweitzer’s understanding, Jesus was sorely mistaken and was nailed to a cross for His error! Strauss continues:

British New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd argued that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as wholly present. Through Jesus’ person and work, God’s eternal reign had already begun. The hope of the Old Testament prophets has been realized in history. (Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 440)

This understanding of the kingdom is personal, subjective, and inward in focus. A future cosmic kingdom is not in view. Therefore, Strauss concludes,

The problem with both of these views is that they ignore much contrary evidence. Jesus taught *both* present and future dimensions of the Kingdom. The best interpretation of the data is that the kingdom *has been inaugurated* through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection but *awaits consummation* in the future. . . . Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as both *present* and *future*, as "*already*" but also "*not yet*." (ibid.; emphasis added)

With the appearance of the Messiah-King, the "kingdom of God" has drawn near. In the person of Jesus Christ, men are confronted head-on with the kingdom—the reign of God. What should be our response? Jesus gives His hearers two commands.

Repent!

Those who are confronted with the kingdom of God must repent, that is, "change their minds leading to a change in behavior." It is both a rational decision and a willful act. It involves a turn from sin and a turn to the Savior. It is a call that we find in the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter (Acts 2). It is at the heart and soul of our response to the gospel and the coming of the King.

Believe in the Good News

When one encounters the kingdom of God, repentance is complemented by belief in the gospel. Repentance notes that we turn from sin; belief highlights what (or whom) we turn toward. Both *repent* and *believe* are present imperatives. We are commanded to live in a state of repentance and trust. This call is not to a momentary, one-time decision that has little if any lasting effect. This is a life-altering change, a radical transformation of our life orientation! A King has arrived who rightly demands that we follow and radically obey Him. This is the unchanging and uncompromising message and vision of the eternal kingdom of God.

We Must Find the Right People

MARK 1:16-20

A great movement must have the right people to get its message out. These people must embody that message if it is to have lasting impact. Based on John 1:35-49, Jesus seems to have already met the two sets of brothers we see in this passage: Simon (Peter) and Andrew, and James and John. All four were successful fishermen. Jesus capitalizes on this occasion to call them to a new vocation and a new intimacy with Himself.

Jesus Calls

Verse 17 is crisp and clear: “Follow Me . . . and I will make you fish for people!” This is a call to discipleship and a unique one at that. In the rabbinic schools of the day, the aspiring student sought out the respected rabbi. Further, the student’s allegiance was to the Law, not to the teacher. Jesus’ form of discipleship is fundamentally different! Jesus seeks them out, and their allegiance will be to Him.

Jesus looks for men and women who will commit to Him, who will learn from Him, who will deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him (8:34). As the Messiah King, the Son of God, He has this authority, this right.

There is no prerequisite to following Him. This is a grace call. He does not tell them to improve their moral character or their social acceptability. Jesus finds them where they are, and He simply calls, in effect, “Come! Come as you are, but come, you must and come right now.” They are to follow, immediately and in faith. This was a radical call for those fishermen, to be sure, and it is no less radical today!

Jesus Commissions

The Old Testament roots of “fish for people” are often overlooked. It is more than a play on words in light of their vocation. In the Old Testament God fishes for people, and the texts are often foreboding in the context of divine judgment.

*“I am about to send for many fishermen”—this is the LORD’s declaration—
“and they will fish for them. . . . I will first repay them double for their guilt
and sin because they have polluted My land. They have filled My inheritance
with the lifelessness of their detestable and abhorrent idols.” (Jer 16:16,18)*

*This is what the Lord God says: “Look, I am against you, Pharaoh king of
Egypt, the great monster lying in the middle of his Nile, who says, ‘My Nile is
my own; I made it for myself.’ I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish
of your streams cling to your scales. I will haul you up from the middle of your
Nile, and all the fish of your streams will cling to your scales. I will leave you
in the desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open
ground and will not be taken away or gathered for burial. I have given you to
the beasts of the earth and the birds of the sky as food.” (Ezek 29:3-5)*

*The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: Look, the days are coming when you
will be taken away with hooks, every last one of you with fishhooks. (Amos 4:2)*

“The summons to be fishers of men is a call to the eschatological task of gathering men in view of the forthcoming judgment of God. It extends the demand for repentance in Jesus’ preaching. Precisely because Jesus has come fishing became necessary” (Lane, *Mark*, 68).

Like Simon and Andrew, James and John did not hesitate: they left their father and the hired servants in the boat! This is striking and captures what it truly means to follow Jesus. To follow Jesus, we are called to forsake *everyone* and *everything* else. We must not rationalize or explain away Jesus’ call as mere hyperbole!

Don’t assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; the person who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Matt 10:34-37)

He replied to them, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” And looking about at those who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! Whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:33-35)

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26)

The call to follow Jesus is clear and it is unconditional! In essence He puts before us a blank contract and says, “Sign at the bottom, and I will fill in the details!” This is what it means to be the right men and women with the right message. But there is a third essential.

We Must Follow the Right Master

MARK 1:17-18,20

There is only one right Master to follow in life and into eternity. His name is Jesus. Jesus called and they left everything to follow Him. The authority of the call and the immediacy of their responses raise the question as to who this Man is that demands such obedience. Actually, Mark has given us a pretty clear picture of who this Teacher is, even in the opening verses of the book.

See *Who He Is*

This One we are called to follow is the Christ (1:1), the Son of God (1:1), the Lord (1:3), the mighty One (1:7), the worthy One (1:7), the One who

baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:8), the Spirit-anointed One (1:10), the beloved Son (1:11), the One who pleases God (1:11), and the One who brings the kingdom of God (1:15).

See What He Does

We will learn we are called to follow in radical discipleship the One who is the astonishing Teacher (1:22), the One with authority (1:22), the Holy One of God (1:24), who is able to cast out demons (1:26,32-34,39), heal the sick (1:31-34), and even cleanse lepers (1:42). And this is just chapter 1! The kingdom of God has come near because the King is here. Everything has changed. Nothing will ever be the same again. The hour of decision is now. What will be your response?

Conclusion: Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

Jesus calls us to believe the gospel. One way we do this is to preach the gospel continually, not only to others, but also to ourselves. The result will be that you will see yourself as a much bigger sinner than you thought, but you will also then see Jesus as a much greater Savior than you ever imagined.

How do you preach the gospel to yourself?

See and own your sin. Examine yourself in the mirror of God's Word. Pray that God would bring to light your negative emotions and attitudes as well as blatant rebellion against God's holiness. As you do this, guard yourself against sin's deceitfulness. You will likely feel the tendency to water down God's standard, compare yourself to others, shift blame, or commit to trying harder. These are reflective of man-centered moralism.

See the sin beneath the sin. Push the "Why?" question until you find whatever you are looking to, other than Jesus, for meaning and value in life—your "functional messiah."

Expose the idols of your heart. Idols always disappoint. They are *weak*. They can't deliver when you succeed; they can only raise the bar. They can't forgive you when you fail; they can only lower the boom. They are *harmful*. They hurt you spiritually, emotionally, and physically. They hurt others by undermining your ability to love. They are *grievous*. By going after these idols, you are saying to God, "Jesus is not enough. I also need _____ in order to be happy."

As you expose these idols, confess, "I am a much bigger sinner than I thought. I am a worthy recipient of God's judgment. Trying harder won't cut it. I am helpless and hopeless in myself. *But* there is One who can deliver and rescue, so I flee to Him and Him alone!"

View repentance as a gift. Pray for the gift of repentance. Do not *try* to stop sinning; ask God to change your heart. You may change for a season by your own willpower, but eventually you will become resentful or fall back into worshiping your idols, false saviors that distract you from the true Messiah.

See Jesus as the only true Savior. Jesus *lived* for you; think about and give thanks for specific ways He has lived obediently where you have failed. Jesus also *died* for you; think about Jesus' death on the cross for your specific sins and idolatry. Thank God that your sin has been punished once and for all. God sees you in Jesus; think about how God sees you clothed with Jesus' perfect righteousness. Thank Him specifically for how He provides for you in Christ—ways your idols promised but could never deliver. Jesus lives in you; thank God that He does not leave you to live the Christian life on your own, since the Spirit of Christ now dwells in you. Ask Him to live His righteous life through you, specifically in the areas where you have repented and confessed sin.

Embrace the gospel as your motivation for living. Embrace it and know that the gospel changes you, the gospel empowers you to serve, and through the gospel you meet God. (For this section I have drawn from the insights of Thomas and Wood, *Gospel Coach*, 81–91.)

The King has come, and He calls all of us to repent and believe the gospel, to walk away from the idols of our life, our former allegiances, and to come follow Him. Leave your nets, leave your occupation, leave your friends, leave even your family, and come follow Him. The demands are great, but then Jesus is a great King, and the blessings of knowing Him are far greater!

Reflect and Discuss

1. Think of a great secular organization. How did a compelling vision, a strong core team, and a good leader bring success?
2. If a non-Christian asked you, how would you summarize the good news in two sentences?
3. In what way is the kingdom of God already here? In what way is it yet to come in the future?
4. How is repentance related to confession and obedience?
5. Compare and contrast the words *belief*, *faith*, and *trust*. In what way is “No, Lord” an oxymoron?
6. Does the assignment to “fish for people” involve grace or judgment? Explain.
7. What have you given up since you responded to Jesus' call, “Follow Me”?
8. Who is Jesus that we should follow Him?

9. What did Jesus do that gave evidence He is the King and Lord, worthy of worship?
10. In your culture, what are the idols many Christians are tempted to rely on for happiness? Which is the most tempting for you?

Why Jesus Should Have Absolute Authority in My Life?

MARK 1:21-28

Main Idea: Jesus' teaching and power over demons give a picture of His kingdom and show that He has absolute authority over all creation.

Jesus Should Have Absolute Authority in My Life

- I. **Because of His Teachings (1:21-22,27)**
 - A. His teachings are astonishing (1:21-22).
 - B. His teachings are with authority (1:22,27).
 - II. **Because of His Power over Demons (1:23-28)**
 - A. Demons recognize Him (1:23-24).
 - B. Demons obey Him (1:25-28).
-

All of us have a source of authority in our lives that will determine how we think and live. For some it is **reason**—I live the way I live because I *think*. For others it is **experience**—I live the way I live because I *feel*. Still others rely on **tradition**—I live the way I live because *we have always done it this way*. Finally, someone might look to **revelation** for their authority—I live the way I live because *God says so*.

For those of us whose authority is revelation, we understand it to take the form of a *proposition* and a *person*—a written Word and a living Word. The written Word we call the Bible. The living Word we know as Jesus. One we love. The other we love and worship. The written Word points us to the living Word, and that One has the right to demand complete and absolute lordship in our lives.

Why should Jesus have absolute lordship in your life? Mark 1:21-28 provides two of many reasons.

Because of His Teachings

MARK 1:21-22,27

Taking along His new followers, Jesus goes to Capernaum. It was located on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, a freshwater lake, seven miles wide and 13 miles long, teeming with fish. Capernaum was a significant port in Jesus' day with a mixed population of Jews, Gentiles, and Roman soldiers and officials. It was well situated for Jesus to employ as a base while He traveled throughout the region of Galilee evangelizing. Immediately upon His arrival, things kick into action. He begins to teach the crowds, and they learn several things about this new teacher.

His Teachings Are Astonishing (Mark 1:21-22)

Jesus began to teach on the Sabbath, the Jewish day of worship that ran from sundown on Friday to the same on Saturday. His setting was the Jewish synagogue. Analogous to a local church building in our day, the synagogue was an assembly hall where the Scriptures were read and taught. There was only one temple—in Jerusalem—but synagogues were established wherever 10 or more Jewish males, 13 years of age or older, lived. The Jews used them for worship, education, and community gatherings. Their origin can probably be traced to the Babylonian exile in 586 BC.

Mark tells us nothing about the content of Jesus' teaching in this passage. Mark's focus is the One who is teaching, His authority, and the astonishing response of the hearers. The listeners were amazed and alarmed. His teachings were disturbing in their very nature. Today we might say, "They were blown away!"

His Teachings Are with Authority (Mark 1:22,27)

The people immediately saw a contrast between the teachings of Jesus and those of "the scribes." The scribes, also called "teachers of the law," were skilled in the exposition of the Torah, the law of Moses. This much-respected and celebrated group of scholars traced their origin back to Ezra (Ezra 7:6,11). Later called "rabbis," they could render binding judgment on the interpretation of the law. They "combined the offices of Torah professor, teacher and moralist, and civil lawyer, in that order. Their erudition and prestige reached legendary proportion by the first century, surpassing on occasions that of the high priest" (Edwards, *Mark*, 54). Many were Pharisees, though there were also Sadducees and priests among them. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, was made up mostly of scribes.

Thus, these men were greatly respected—the religious elite—and it was an honor to sit under their instruction. However, they stood in opposition to Jesus and His ministry. Jesus will not challenge the legitimacy of their office, but He will call out their legalism, hypocrisy, and pride.

If some persons fear that they are too bad to be saved, this group ran the risk of believing that they were so good they did not need to be saved! This is a danger those raised in a highly religious context always face.

Mark is careful to contrast the authority of Jesus with the scribes' lack thereof (vv. 22,27). The scribes derived their authority from the "tradition of men" (see 7:8-13). By quoting the fathers of Judaism, they rested on the famous and respected teachers who had preceded them.

Not so with Jesus. Like the prophets His authority came directly from God, His Father (1:11). Lane says, "Jesus' word, presented with a sovereign authority, which permitted neither debate nor theoretical reflection, confronted the congregation with the absolute claim of God upon their whole person" (Lane, *Mark*, 72). The One who brings the teaching that astonishes and has authority is Himself the Christ, the Son of God. He has the right not only to decide what is true but also to demand a decision. Note Mark's second compelling argument for the complete lordship of Christ.

Because of His Power over Demons

MARK 1:23-28

There is "a man with an unclean spirit." The more usual term for "unclean spirit" is "demon" (used 63 times in the New Testament). Who or what is a demon? They could be (1) the spirits of a pre-Adamic evil race, (2) the spirits of evil men, (3) the product of angels cohabitating with women in Genesis 6:1-4, or (4) fallen angels. This fourth option is the most likely. Mark calls them "unclean spirits" 11 times and "demons" 13 times.

What else can we know about demons? (1) From Revelation 12:4, it seems that one-third of the angels fell with Satan in his rebellion against God. (2) Some are now free to roam (Mark 1:21-34). (3) Some will still be free during the tribulation (Rev 9:13-19). (4) Others are confined now, never to roam freely (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). (5) They are powerful personalities, though not omnipotent (Mark 1:24). (6) Their activity may have increased during the time of Christ, and it will do so again in the coming end time (see Rev 6-19). (7) They are set up under Satan's control (Eph 6:11-12), probably in rank and possibly in geography (Dan 10:10-12). (8) They have authority and can promote disunity, propagate false doctrine, inflict disease, cause

mental difficulties, and hinder Christian growth. (9) Demons can *oppress* but not *possess* believers.

So here is a demon-possessed man in, of all places, a house of worship! If this demon made his way into the first-century synagogue, we should not assume that our own churches are beyond their reach.

Demons Recognize Him (Mark 1:23-24)

Upon seeing Jesus, the demon cries out, “What do You have to do with us, Jesus—Nazarene? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” The demon recognizes Jesus in terms of His humanity and His deity: the “Nazarene” and “the Holy One of God.” Even the demons stand in awe of the God Man!

The demon is chiefly concerned with Jesus’ intentions. “Us” may refer to multiple demons in the man or to the demonic realm as a whole. In either case he recognizes the threat that Jesus is to their authority and power. “Come to destroy” may be a declaration instead of a question. They understand more clearly than humans that the Son of God’s coming is a decisive moment in history. It spells their doom!

Confessing Jesus as the “Holy One of God” is perhaps an attempt to gain some power over Jesus by claiming to know His name. It is more likely, however, a recognition of His deity, His sonship, and the great antithesis that exists between an unholy, unclean spirit and the Holy One of God.

Referring to Jesus, demoniacs use language such as “Holy One of God” (1:24), “Son of God” (3:11), and “Son of the Most High God” (5:7). In contrast many of the ordinary sick whom Jesus healed referred to Him more in terms of His humanity: “Lord” (7:8), “Teacher” (9:17), “Son of David” (10:47-48), and “Master” (10:51). It’s not that these latter titles were incorrect, but the demons had remarkable theology and a view of Jesus’ identity that is frequently loftier than our own.

The kingdom of God goes head-to-head with the forces of evil at the first public ministry of the Son of God. It is a “no contest” event with an immediate and devastating knockout! The “binding of the strong man” has begun (3:27). The demons are forced to acknowledge, grudgingly, what the Father declared in verse 11!

Demons Obey Him (Mark 1:25-28)

Knowing that the demon recognizes Him, Jesus issues a direct command. “Be quiet.” It is an imperative, an unqualified rebuke, as though Jesus were saying, “Shut up; muzzle it!” Again He commands, “Come out!” It only takes

a few direct words from an absolute authority! No spell or incantation is necessary. He says the word and they obey.

The demon immediately convulsed, cried out, and came out just as the Lord said. The people were “all amazed” (“all” is emphatic in the Greek) and asked, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” As a result, His fame spread everywhere—not just around Galilee but to surrounding regions! People were hearing the good news of the kingdom everywhere.

Conclusion

The disturbance of men and demons by the Servant King of God has begun. Life will never be the same! Demons are expelled, and broken people are made whole. This is God’s kingdom. This is what the great King can do. This is why He should have absolute authority in your life, my life, and every life.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Other than revelation, which source of authority—reason, experience, or tradition—exerts the most influence in your life?
2. How is the respect we show for the Bible, the written Word of God, different from the worship we owe to Jesus, the living Word of God?
3. Which teachings of Jesus do you find astonishing?
4. How can a person show respect for a teacher or preacher of the Bible while still examining the Scriptures to verify their message (Acts 17:11)?
5. What are the advantages to being raised in a “good, Christian home”? What are the disadvantages?
6. What are the limits on the authority of a pastor? How are these limits enforced?
7. What examples of evil are “natural” and what are demonic? What evidence have you heard of or seen that demons are active in the country where you live?
8. Why would demons have better theology than some people?
9. What does Jesus’ absolute authority over demons mean for us today? How can it affect your life?
10. In what ways can demonstrations of the authority of Jesus be used to spread the gospel today?

A Day in the Life of Jesus

MARK 1:29-34

Main Idea: Jesus is the Messiah King of the world who came to live as a servant for the sake of His people.

I. Jesus Came to Heal the Diseased (1:29-34).

II. Jesus Came to Deliver the Demonized (1:32-34).

III. Excursus: Why Did Jesus Conceal His Messiahship During His Ministry?

In a day when pragmatism rules, most people ask two questions: “What can you do for me?” and “What have you done for me lately?” This focus is on utility, performance, and means to an end. Oftentimes those questions enter into the spiritual realm. We arrogantly thrust them before God as if He were our servant, obligated to meet our needs and respond to our call. “OK, God, what have You done for me lately? What have You done for me ever?”

Amazingly, in the incarnation and the sending of His Son, God answers our questions. God does serve us; He does minister to us; He even sacrifices Himself for us. Perhaps the key verse that summarizes the Gospel of Mark and the ministry of Jesus is found in 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many.” The ransom, the payment for sin, will occur on the cross. His service to wounded and helpless sinners would be characteristic of His ministry from beginning to end, as exemplified on this day in the life of Jesus.

Mark presents these events with five uses of his favorite word: “immediately” (or “right away” or “at once”; 1:21,23,28,29,30). With a sense of mission and urgency, Jesus is here and there, ministering to this one and then another. He truly is the Servant of the Lord, healing the physically sick and setting free spiritual prisoners held captive by the prince of darkness and his demonic hoards! So we ask, “What can Jesus do for me?” The answer is, much more than we ever hoped or imagined!

Jesus Came to Heal the Diseased

MARK 1:29-34

Jesus has just left the synagogue where He taught with authority and delivered a demon-possessed man. Next, He enters Simon Peter’s house with His four closest disciples. This will be a “base of operations” for Jesus in and

around Capernaum (see 2:1; 3:20; 9:33; 10:10). Peter's mother-in-law¹ is sick with a fever. The nature of the illness is not what is important—the power of the Healer is! “At once” they inform Jesus of her illness, and just as quickly He goes to her, touches her, and heals her!

Again, there are no spells, incantations, or rituals. With compassion and a personal touch, Jesus restores Peter's ailing mother-in-law to full health. Verse 34 adds that on this particular day “He healed many who were sick with various diseases.” They kept bringing the sick to Him, and He kept healing them with love and compassion.

This scene raises a theological question: Is there healing in the atonement? Isaiah 53:5 says, “We are healed by His wounds.” Matthew 8:17, in the parallel account of these events, even adds a quote from Isaiah 53:4: “Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.” The answer, then, is a resounding “Yes!” There is healing in the atonement! For some it is *immediate* but *temporary*, since all still die. But for all who trust Jesus as Savior and Lord, it is *eternal* and *permanent*. This is plain in Revelation 21:4-5:

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away. Then the One seated on the throne said, “Look! I am making everything new.” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.”

Jesus Came to Deliver the Demonized

MARK 1:32-34

Jesus' fame is spreading like wildfire (v. 28). People are probably aware that He is in Peter's house and that He has healed his mother-in-law. Now that the Sabbath has ended (at sundown), people show up from everywhere, bringing the sick, until “the whole town was assembled at the door.” With so many around Him, what would Jesus do? “He healed many.”

The sick were not the only ones who came: they also brought those who were oppressed by demons, and He “drove out many demons.” Satan and his minions had once again met the Savior in spiritual combat (cf. vv. 23-27) and it was no contest. Bring many demons face-to-face with God's Son, and they experience an immediate and decisive thrashing.

¹ Obviously, therefore, Peter was married! We have no other details than this.

The last phrase of verse 34 is instructive. Men may be confused as to the identity of Jesus, but never so with the demons: “They knew Him” and they feared Him. What a contrast with foolish, fallen, and unbelieving humans!

A distinction is made between those “who were sick and those who were demon-possessed” (v. 32) and those “who were sick with various diseases” (v. 34). All disease and sickness is the result of sin, but not all disease and sickness is the result of demonic oppression or activity. Satan and his demons *may* inflict physical illness, but not *all* physical afflictions are demonic in origin. The ancients were not as naïve and ignorant as they are sometimes accused of being.

Still, Mark’s point in giving this scene is, “Watch the servant serve!” He healed many who were sick. He cast out many demons. The kingdom has come in the person of the great and awesome King, and it is moving forward with great speed and success. And not one thing can stop Him!

Excursus: Why Did Jesus Conceal His Messiahship During His Ministry?

Why does Jesus not permit the demons to speak (v. 34)? Why does Jesus tell the leper to say nothing to anyone (v. 44)? This oddity, called the “Messianic Secret,” is an important and interesting issue discussed by both believing and unbelieving scholars. James Edwards helps us see why the question was raised in the first place:

On three occasions *demons* are enjoined to silence (1:25; 1:34; 3:11). Jesus commands silence after four *miracles* (cleansing of a leper, 1:44; raising of a dead girl, 5:43; healing of a deaf-mute, 7:36; healing of a blind man, 8:26). Twice the *disciples* are commanded to silence (8:30; 9:9). Twice Jesus withdraws from *crowds* to escape detection (7:24; 9:30). Beyond these explicit admonitions to secrecy, Mark implies secrecy in other aspects of Jesus’ public ministry. But ironically, the command to silence often results in the opposite: “the more he [commanded to silence], the more they kept talking about it” (7:36; 1:45; 5:20; 7:24). (Edwards, *Mark*, 63)

At least seven observations can be made about this phenomenon.

1. Jesus wanted to avoid the impression of being a mere miracle worker or a magician. Those who conjure up tricks seek attention for themselves. Jesus is different. He came to defeat the power and effects of sin in the whole world.

2. Jesus wanted to avoid unhelpful publicity to have more moments of private teaching with His disciples. Obviously, Jesus' reputation gathered a crowd. This crowd demanded attention, and every moment Jesus spent in public was a moment He could not spend intimately discipling His closest followers.

3. Jesus wanted to avoid the people's misconceptions about the Messiah. His Messiahship was characterized by service and suffering, not sensational displays of miraculous activity that would excite political-Messiah fever. Even with Jesus' attempts to reign in misconceptions, the people still thought He came to overthrow Roman rule.

4. Jesus wanted to express His humility as the Suffering Servant of the Lord.

5. Jesus wanted to inform us that only through the medium of faith, ultimately in a crucified and humiliated Savior, is His messiahship personally apprehended (cf. 1 Cor 1–2). One cannot grasp the fullness of His worth without realizing that He must die. We don't simply like Jesus because He can do miraculous works. We trust Him because His death was on our behalf, and His resurrection is for our victory.

6. Jesus wanted to avoid recognition from an undesirable source such as the demons and the hypocritical religious leaders.

7. He wanted His identity concealed to point to the hostility of the religious and political leaders of the day. There was a stark contrast between Jesus' humble love and the Pharisees' look-at-me religiosity. This disparity is seen most clearly in Jesus' own choice to walk resolutely into the destined hour of His passion.

Some have suggested that Mark invented this portrait of Christ in order to explain why Jesus was not recognized as the Son of God prior to the Easter event, but this suggestion is untenable and should be rejected as liberal conjecture grounded in an antisupernatural bias. The reason nobody recognized Him as the Messiah is that they were looking for a political, military Messiah who would liberate them from Rome. And the Gospel writers were Hebrews rooted in Jewish monotheism. The idea that they would have fabricated Jesus as Messiah in terms of His divine sonship is simply not believable. Instead, we can confidently affirm that the Messianic Secret arose from Jesus Himself. He self-consciously identified with the Suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah's prophecy, and He knew the need to guard His messianic identity from premature and false understandings.

He was not the kind of Messiah the first-century world hoped for, but He was the kind of Messiah the first-century world—indeed the whole world—truly needed. Our greatest ailment is not sickness but sin, not demons but

death. We did not need a Messiah who would only bring liberation from political oppression and healing from disease. No, we needed a Messiah who would give His life as a ransom for sinners like you and me. Praise God, He sent us the kind of Messiah we needed!

Conclusion

God cares about our problems in this fallen, sin-infested world. God knows that we hurt and that sin is a constant reminder of our finite, mortal humanity. God has remedied our hopeless condition by sending Jesus. As did the diseased and the demonized, we should run to Him and Him alone. And like Peter's mother-in-law, we should be quick to serve Him and serve others out of grateful appreciation for such a wonderful Savior and such a marvelous salvation. It was a normal day in the life of Jesus. It was anything but normal for those who encountered and experienced His saving power!

Reflect and Discuss

1. When Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, He did not use any spells, incantations, or rituals. What does this say about His power and authority?
2. What examples of miraculous healing have you seen or experienced?
3. In what way is physical healing temporary? In what way is it eternal and permanent?
4. Why is it important that the Bible distinguishes between those who were sick and those who were demon possessed?
5. How was Jesus different from sensational "miracle workers" and magicians? How should that affect the way we promote Christianity?
6. What is "therapeutic" Christianity? Can emphasis on physical deliverance distract Christians from the message of the gospel these days?
7. How can a pastor's fame distract from the message of the gospel? How can a well-known pastor use his fame effectively for the kingdom?
8. Compare the attitude of the crowds when they were being healed or fed with the response to the crucifixion and to the command that we "take up [our] cross" (8:34).
9. What kind of Messiah were the Jews looking for in Jesus' day? What might have happened if they had become convinced that Jesus was such a Messiah?
10. Do you know of any churches or denominations today that proclaim Jesus to be a political deliverer or a physical healer? How does that fail to tell the whole story?

The Kingdom of God Marches On

MARK 1:35-45

Main Idea: Jesus' life illustrates the advancement of God's kingdom through prayer, proclamation, and healing.

- I. The Kingdom Advances Through Prayer (1:35-37).**
 - II. The Kingdom Advances Through Preaching (1:38-39).**
 - III. The Kingdom Advances Through Cleansing (1:40-45).**
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Shackled by a heavy burden,
'Neath a load of guilt and shame;
Then the hand of Jesus touched me,
And now I am no longer the same.

Since I met this blessed Savior,
Since He cleansed and made me whole;
I will never cease to praise Him—
I'll shout it while eternity rolls.

He touched me, oh, He touched me,
And oh, the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened, and now I know,
He touched me and made me whole. (Gaither, "He Touched Me")

Those words, penned by Bill Gaither in 1963, could have been inspired by the text before us, the healing of a leper, a sure sign that God's kingdom had come and was indeed marching on.

Jesus has just had an extraordinary day of teaching the Scriptures, casting out demons, and healing the sick—all on the Sabbath. He has served the hurting late into the evening, well past sundown (1:32). And even though the day is drawing to a close, there is more to be done to enable the kingdom to advance against the powers of darkness and evil. In this text Jesus exhibits the strategy by which God continues to advance His purposes. Three clear aspects emerge in our text. Bracketed by the miracles of healing and exorcism, we find the essential elements of prayer and preaching. Without both, the advance of the kingdom would have stopped dead in its tracks. The same is true today!

The Kingdom Advances Through Prayer

MARK 1:35-37

Though He had been up late, Jesus still rises “very early” the next morning, “while it was still dark.” He leaves Peter’s home alone, going “to a deserted place” for solitude and privacy. A place for restoration and fellowship with His Father.

There are three prayers of Jesus in Mark: The first is found here at the beginning, when His ministry is being defined. The second comes in the middle of the Gospel, when the people wanted to “take Him by force to make Him King” (John 6:15). The final prayer is near the conclusion, in Gethsemane, asking the Father to “take this cup away” (Mark 14:32-42). These are critical moments. The setting in each instance is darkness and solitude, recalling the wilderness and the cosmic conflict between our Lord and Satan. Here, Jesus finds strength in the solitude of prayer and intimate fellowship with His Father. What a valuable lesson that too many of us ignore!

Peter and those with him sent out a search party. Apparently the crowds had returned for more miracles. Peter’s words are almost a rebuke: “Everyone’s looking for You!” In other words, “What are You doing here? This is not where You should be! You need to be with the crowds! We are building a following. Things are beginning to happen. You do not have time to be alone and pray!” Oh, how we are so much like Peter, not understanding the ways of God and how His kingdom will come! Yes, there will be healings and exorcisms. But there must also be prayer.

The Kingdom Advances Through Preaching

MARK 1:38-39

Jesus, as He so often does, responds to Peter in a surprising manner. He will not return to those who are looking for Him. Rather, He says, “Let’s move on. Let’s go to the next town. I will preach there also. This is why I came.”

The crowds at Peter’s house came for the miracles. Now, apparently, they want more. The call to repent and believe the gospel (1:15) was not on their spiritual radar. Like so many today, they wanted a Jesus of their liking, a Jesus who would perform miracles and fit into their agenda.

Neither the crowds nor the disciples understood why He had come into the world. But He knew! Jesus came to preach, to herald, to proclaim the gospel of salvation, a message that is both *by* Him and *about* Him. Indeed, He is the gospel! But sadly, the crowds missed Him.

God had only one Son, and He made Him a preacher. No pastor is worthy of the office who does not preach the Word. No church will prosper spiritually without the preaching of the Word. John Stott said, “Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the Word of God” (*Between Two Worlds*, 15). Luther would add, “Let us consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever” (*Three Treatises*, 23).

Jesus went throughout all Galilee, preaching the gospel and casting out demons. He did this out of a life of prayer. Prayer and preaching is a one-two punch that cannot be defeated. This is how the kingdom marches on anywhere and anytime.

The Kingdom Advances Through Cleansing

MARK 1:40-45

As He was traveling and ministering, Jesus is met by a leper. This encounter is startling, provocative, and even offensive. A leper was a man whom the culture considered an outcast, the law judged unclean, and the people deemed cursed by God. Even one with AIDS today fares far better than the leper of the first century. A leper was to stay at least 50 paces from others. That he came near to Jesus, so close that Jesus could touch him, was unthinkable.

The word for leprosy covered a number of skin diseases (including what we today call “Hansen’s Disease”), each of which was difficult to diagnose and heal. The person with the disease was mocked and shunned. The leper had to wear torn clothes, leave his hair unkempt, cover his face, and cry out “Unclean!” He was forced to live in isolation. Josephus said a leper was “in no way differing from a corpse” (*Antiquities*, 3.264).

Leviticus 13–14 discusses the disease. It was usually regarded as an evidence of divine punishment. As such, the cure could only come from the Lord. Other illnesses could be healed, but leprosy had to be both healed and cleansed. Needless to say, no one in the Bible healed a leper by touch other than Jesus.

Warren Wiersbe notes, “When you read the ‘tests’ for leprosy in Leviticus 13, you can see how the disease is a picture of sin. Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (v. 3); it spreads (vv. 5-8); it defiles and isolates (vv. 44-46); and it renders things fit only for the fire (vv. 47-59). Anyone who has never trusted the Savior is spiritually in worse shape than this man was physically” (*Be Diligent*, 19).

All of this makes it remarkable that the leper came to Jesus. He violated every convention and custom of society in that day. He was desperate, and he believed only Jesus could heal him and make him clean. He came, knelt, and begged, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Wow! His faith is astounding! The issue is not whether Jesus *could* heal him, but *would* He? This man comes to Jesus with great courage, great humility, and great faith—the same way we, as sin-sick sinners, must come to Him. He came believing in the only One who could change his life and make him whole.

Surprisingly and scandalously, Jesus makes the unclean clean! Rather than turning away from the man, He turns to him with compassion and touches him, thereby removing his curse, taking away his shame, and removing his defilement. As the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:4, He takes on Himself the infirmities of this man, cleanses him, and makes him whole!

Jesus’ touch speaks louder than words ever could, yet His words must have thrilled this man’s soul: “I am willing.” Unlike any ordinary man, the Lord Jesus is not polluted by the leper’s disease when He touches him. Instead, the leper is cleansed by the gracious touch and contagious holiness of the Son of God.

It is not surprising that Jesus sends the man to a local priest, according to the ritual for cleansing in Leviticus 14. What is surprising is the stern charge and quick exit Jesus demands. He sends him packing with a command to keep his mouth shut. Jesus does not want persons who merely seek miracles. He wants followers who seek Him! People are always tempted by the sensational. Jesus desires followers who long for truth and want to know Him. He does not want people to come to Him to get what they want. He wants people to come to Him to get Him!

The leper went and talked freely about what Jesus had done. We can understand his enthusiasm. We cannot, however, justify his disregard of our Lord’s clear command. He talked of it everywhere. This caused a restriction on Jesus’ preaching ministry, as He “could no longer enter a town openly.” He again frequented “deserted places” (cf. 1:35). Still, the people “would come to Him from everywhere.” What Mark will say in 7:24 is already true now: “He could not escape notice.”

Ironically, Jesus and the leper have traded places. The leper is now on the inside with family and friends. Jesus is on the outside in a lonely and desolate place. This picture of substitution is the heart of the gospel. It is why Jesus came. He will take on Himself our sin, our sorrow, and our shame. In return He gives us His forgiveness, His holiness, and His righteousness—praise the Lord! What an exchange!

Conclusion

The rabbis said that it was as difficult to heal the leper as it was to raise the dead. Both are impossible for man; neither is a problem for God's Son. He cleanses the defiled and raises the dead by a simple touch or a simple word. He truly touches lives and makes them whole. He did that for me. Has He done that for you?

Reflect and Discuss

1. How is individual prayer different from corporate prayer? How is individual prayer intensified by isolation?
2. What is the best time for you to spend time in intense prayer: early in the morning, during the day, or in the evening?
3. If you are under pressure, and there is not sufficient time to (1) get enough sleep, (2) spend enough time in prayer, and (3) take enough time to do a job well, which of these are you likely to compromise?
4. Do people still come to church wanting blessings without repentance? What blessings are they hoping to receive?
5. What constitutes "preaching" besides what a pastor does on Sunday mornings? Is there a kind of "preaching" that any Christian man or woman can and should do?
6. What kinds of people are shunned today in a way that approaches how lepers were avoided in Jesus' day? How might we reach out and touch such people?
7. How is asking Jesus, "If You are willing . . ." (1:40) different from asking Him, "If You can do anything . . ." (9:22)?
8. Why was it surprising that Jesus touched the leper? Why was it theologically significant?
9. The leper's publicity of his healing changed what the people expected from Jesus' ministry. What should we publicize about what goes on in our churches in order to give people a true picture of what they should expect?
10. Besides physical health, what did the leper gain from his encounter with Jesus? How does that compare with what we gain?