

HOLMAN  
*New*  
*Testament*  
Commentary



HOLMAN  
*New*  
*Testament*  
Commentary

*Mark*

GENERAL EDITOR

Max Anders

AUTHOR

Rodney L. Cooper



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Holman New Testament Commentary

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*W*riting this commentary on the book of Mark was not only inspirational but transformational as well. I want to thank three key people who were my “team” in finishing well.

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Thanks to my mom, Avanel Cooper, whose love and encouragement are always an inspiration.

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— March 2000 —





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# Editorial Preface

Today's church hungers for Bible teaching and Bible teachers hunger for resources to guide them in teaching God's Word. The Holman New Testament Commentary provides the church with the food to feed the spiritually hungry in an easily digestible format. The result: new spiritual vitality that the church can readily use.

Bible teaching should result in new interest in the Scriptures, expanded Bible knowledge, discovery of specific Scriptural principles, relevant applications, and exciting living. The unique format of the Holman New Testament Commentary includes sections to achieve these results for every New Testament book.

Opening quotations from some of the church's best writers lead to an introductory illustration and discussion that draw individuals and study groups into the Word of God. "In a Nutshell" summarizes the content and teaching of the chapter. Verse-by-verse commentary answers the church's questions rather than raising issues scholars usually admit they cannot adequately solve. Bible principles and specific contemporary applications encourage students to move from Bible to contemporary times. A specific modern illustration then ties application vividly to present life. A brief prayer aids the student to commit his or her daily life to the principles and applications found in the Bible chapter being studied. For those still hungry for more, "Deeper Discoveries" take the student into a more personal, deeper study of the words, phrases, and themes of God's Word. Finally, a teaching outline provides transitional statements and conclusions along with an outline to assist the teacher in group Bible studies.

It is the editors' prayer that this new resource for local church Bible teaching will enrich the ministry of group, as well as individual, Bible study, and that it will lead God's people to truly be people of the Book, living out what God calls us to be.

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and Stephen Bramer
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Stephen R. Miller

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Series Editor  
Managing Editors  
Project Editor  
Marketing Manager  
Product Manager  
Typesetter

Max Anders  
Trent C. Butler & Steve Bond  
Lloyd W. Mullens  
Greg Webster  
David Shepherd  
TF Designs, Mt. Juliet, TN

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## *Introduction to*

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# Mark

### LETTER PROFILE

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- Written for Gentile readers, especially Romans.
- Mark presents Jesus as the ultimate servant.
- Mark emphasizes what Jesus did rather than what he said. The word *immediately* is used over forty times to show Christ as a servant of “action.”
- Eighteen miracles (over half of Christ’s thirty-five recorded miracles) are in the Book of Mark.
- Mark is the earliest and shortest of the Gospels.
- Some consider that Mark recorded the recollections of the apostle Peter about Jesus’ life.
- Chapters 1–8 center on Christ’s ministry to the multitudes; chapters 8–10 deal with his ministry primarily to the disciples.
- Chapters 11–16 focus on Jesus’ rejection by the Jewish rulers and his sacrifice of his life for the multitudes.
- Mark devotes almost as many chapters to the last week of Christ’s life (six chapters) as he does to the prior three years of ministry (eight chapters).
- Key verse to summarize Mark’s message is 10:45.

### AUTHOR PROFILE

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- Tradition holds that Mark is the author of this Gospel.
- Jewish; born in Jerusalem, probably from a well-to-do family. His mother, Mary, had a large house that was a meeting place for believers and they had servants (Acts 12:12–16).
- He was Barnabas’s cousin, and he went on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas.
- Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Restored by Barnabas’s not going with Paul on the second missionary journey.

## Mark

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- Very close to the apostle Peter, who may have been the one who led Mark to Christ.
- Fully restored to service because Paul, nearing the end of his life, said Mark was useful for service and asked Mark to come see him.

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# Mark 1



## Sent to Serve

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- I. INTRODUCTION  
*Lights, Camera, Action!*
- II. COMMENTARY  
A verse-by-verse explanation of the chapter.
- III. CONCLUSION  
*Service Is His Business*  
An overview of the principles and applications from the chapter.
- IV. LIFE APPLICATION  
*Special to God*  
Melding the chapter to life.
- V. PRAYER  
Tying the chapter to life with God.
- VI. DEEPER DISCOVERIES  
Historical, geographical, and grammatical enrichment of the commentary.
- VII. TEACHING OUTLINE  
Suggested step-by-step group study of the chapter.
- VIII. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION  
Zeroing the chapter in on daily life.



Q u o t e

*I*n the master there is a servant,  
in the servant a master.”

C i c e r o

# Mark 1



## I N A N U T S H E L L

*This is what Mark is saying to the Gentiles, especially those who are Romans, in chapter 1: According to prophecy, John the Baptist got people ready for the Messiah’s ministry by preaching a message of repentance and forgiveness. Jesus appeared and was baptized by John at which time he received “the commission and blessing” from his father to start his ministry. Jesus then confronted his greatest enemy—Satan—and defeated him. After passing the “wilderness test,” Jesus began his ministry of “servanthood.”*

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# Sent to Serve

## I. INTRODUCTION

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### Lights, Camera, Action!

“Lights, camera, action!” These are the words I heard when I saw a scene being filmed for the movie *Jingle Bells*, a light action comedy starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. I was walking through this mega-mall called “Mall of America” in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when I saw a crowd of people standing at the railing shrieking and yelling, “Hi, Arnold.” I walked over to the railing and sure enough, this mountain of muscle, “Mr. Action” himself, was below waving up at us. They put some makeup on him, combed back his hair, and then the producer yelled, “Lights, camera, action!” Off Arnold went to save the day.

These are words we have all heard at one time or another. But what is their significance? Why use this ritual to start a scene of a movie or television show? I asked one of my friends who is a video producer why they uttered these three key words. When he told me, it made sense.

Before one frame of film can be shot, hours and hours of preparation are required to make sure the scene is perfectly set. They would like to get the scene on the first take. The two things that are crucial for filming the scene are the lights and the cameras. The cameras are important because too much light could wash out the key features of the actor or overshadow a key prop that needs to be displayed. Too little light and one would not be able to see the slight movements or facial expressions of an actor that could be crucial to the scene. Also, the cameras are important because they need to be in certain positions and at certain angles to catch the flow of the action. There may be as many as six or seven cameras for one scene.

The director is the person who coordinates the position of the cameras and tells the camera operator when to come in for a close-up or when to back away. Each camera has to be ready to do its job on command. If the camera people are not ready, then the scene must be taped over. Therefore, once the preparations are made and everything is set, the director says, “Lights, camera, action,” as a check-off of final preparation to start the scene. The director is basically saying, “Get ready—this is for real.”

Mark, in essence, is uttering, “Lights, camera, action!” In chapter 1 of his Gospel, Mark sets the stage by positioning the *lights* of Old Testament prophecies from Isaiah and Malachi and the messenger who will fulfill this prophecy—John the Baptist. John heralds the message of the coming Messiah as well as prepares the people through the act of baptism for the upcoming

entrance of the Messiah. He is not that light, but he positions the lights in such a way that when Jesus appears everyone will know he is the main player in this drama.

The *cameras* are in position to start the filming through the baptism of Jesus, his blessing from the Father, and his temptation and defeat of Satan in the wilderness. From every angle we are seeing that this is not just another person to be baptized; this is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

The *action* begins when Jesus starts his ministry of service in the synagogues of Galilee preaching the “good news” and performing a series of miracles: casting out demons, healing Peter’s mother-in-law, and healing a leper. The stage has been set, the cameras are rolling, and the drama has begun with incredible action.

As Christians, we often forget that God is just as concerned about the “lights and the positioning of the camera” in our own lives as the actions that follow. God is a God not only of action but of preparation. The Lord painstakingly sets up events in our lives and prepares us personally for what lies ahead so that when “action” is necessary the groundwork has been laid. You may feel that there is not much “action” in your life right now or that God is not at work.

Do not fret. Remember, God is “preparing the way” and preparing you so that when it comes time for action you will be ready. Remember, God may not always come when you want him, but he is always right on time. Lights, camera, action!

## II. COMMENTARY

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### Sent to Serve

**MAIN IDEA:** *After Jesus is presented by John the Baptist and empowered by the Spirit, he begins his ministry, preaching the good news. Then he calls his disciples and performs various miracles.*

### **A** The Prologue (1:1)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Jesus is the unique servant of God.*

1:1. Mark wastes no time in telling us the theme of his book. It is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Since Mark is writing to a Roman audience, he has no need, like Matthew or Luke, to establish Christ’s lineage to prove his credentials as the Son of God to his readers. There are two reasons the Romans did not need such information. First, the Romans had the same attitude as those who are from Missouri—“show me.” They were not so much interested in qualifications as they were in actions.

Second, since Jesus is being portrayed as a “servant” or “slave,” there would be no need to show his genealogy since, from a Roman’s standpoint, slaves do not have genealogies.

Finally, Mark makes it clear about Jesus’ uniqueness. Jesus is a personal name; it was common among the Jews, being the same as “Joshua” and meaning “the salvation of Jehovah.” **Christ** is an official title; it is the Greek equivalent of the term “Messiah.” It declares the “anointed one” who is coming to save us from our sins. **Son of God** expresses the divine nature of our Lord. Mark wanted to make it clear that this was no ordinary servant or just a good man—this was the Son of God, who had come to take away our sins.

## **B** John the Baptist Prepares the Way for the Sacrificial Servant (1:2–8)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *John the Baptist fulfills the Old Testament prophecies as the messenger to prepare the people for the ministry of the sacrificial servant.*

1:2–3. Mark quoted from two Old Testament prophets to show that Christ’s coming had been foretold long ago. In fact, it had been at least three hundred years since a word had come from God. The two prophets that Mark quoted from were Isaiah (40:3) and Malachi (3:1). Mark combined the sayings of these two prophets but named only Isaiah probably because Isaiah emphasized the servanthood and salvation of the Messiah whereas Malachi highlighted the judgment of the Messiah. In both cases, a messenger was sent to prepare the way for Christ’s coming.

The figure of speech, **prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him**, refers to the custom of sending an officer before a monarch who was to make a royal journey. This person was to level and smooth out any ruts in the road so the monarch’s journey would be smoother. The **messenger** being sent to **prepare the way** was John the Baptist.

1:4. The appearance of John the Baptist in the wilderness was the most important event in the life of Israel for more than three hundred years. It had been that long since Israel had heard a “word from God.” The **desert region** in which John started his ministry of **baptism** is estimated by scholars to be between Judea and the Dead Sea. This area is known for its stark surroundings and rugged terrain. In the Old Testament, it is sometimes called *Jeshimon*, which means “the devastation.” John was no city dweller; he was a man of the wilderness, and he performed his ministry in the wilderness to make a point.

The wilderness in Israel’s history symbolized rebellion and disobedience. The nation of Israel, after the deliverance of God and the Exodus from Egypt, disobeyed God by not going into the promised land. As a result they

wandered in the wilderness for forty years before they actually entered the promised land as God's people. By coming to the wilderness to be baptized, the people were admitting their wandering from God and their rebellion toward God and their desire for a fresh start.

Also, John's preaching of a **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** was highly unusual for a Jew. Jews believed that only Gentile converts to Judaism needed to be baptized. The baptism of Gentiles was a ritual washing from all the defilement of their past. The Jews were being asked to do something they had never done before. To call all Israel to be baptized meant that in some way all of Israel was defiled and needed cleansing. In Matthew 3:9 John criticized the people for presuming to be righteous and secure with God just because they were children of Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. He warned, in Matthew 3:7–12, that they would be purged and rejected if they did not bear fruits of repentance.

The baptism by John was a baptism of **repentance**. Repentance means a turning away from something and turning in a new direction. Israel was being asked to turn away from its disobedience and rebellion and to start anew by turning toward the coming Messiah. By doing so they would be forgiven—released—from their sins and would experience the grace of God through the Messiah.

1:5. This verse says that **The whole Judean countryside and all of the people of Jerusalem went out to him**. It is estimated that as many as three hundred thousand people came out to be baptized by John. **Confessing their sins** demonstrates their acknowledgment of disobedience and rebellion toward God. The location of the baptism was the Jordan River, which was several miles outside Jerusalem.

1:6. The reference to John's clothing and diet emphasizes that he was not *mainstream*. John's dress and lifestyle were a protest against the godlessness and self-serving materialism of his day. You would not see John staying at the Jerusalem Hilton—nor would he be welcome. To go out to be baptized by this man meant a break with the institutions and culture of Jerusalem. His clothing and food were those of a wilderness nomad. John wore clothing made of **camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist**. His camel-hair robe was the kind worn by the very poor, and his belt was nothing but a leather thong.

His clothing also, especially the leather belt, was reminiscent of another man of the wilderness who was also a prophet preparing the way—Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:8). The explicit identification of John with Elijah is referenced by Mark later in 9:9–13. Not only did John dress like Elijah, but he also understood his ministry to be one of reform and preparation, just as Elijah's was. A popular belief of the time was that Elijah would return from heaven to

prepare the way for the Messiah (Mal. 4:5–6). John reminded the people of Elijah because of his dress and behavior.

His food was **locusts and wild honey**. There are two possible meanings for these words. The **locusts** could be the actual insect or also a kind of bean or nut that was the food of the poorest of the poor. The **honey** could actually be from the honeycomb of bees or a kind of sweet sap that distills from the bark of certain trees. John's diet was very simple and "down to earth."

1:7. John made it clear that he was the servant of the coming Servant. John's task was to prepare the way and then get out of the way. John appeared as a powerful figure, but he made it clear that he would pale in comparison to the Messiah when he appeared. He showed his insignificance compared to the Messiah by saying, **the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie**. Sandals were made of leather soles fastened to the foot by straps passing through the toes. The roads in those days were not paved. In dry weather they were dust and in wet weather they became rivers of mud. To remove the sandals and wash the feet was the job of a slave. John was saying that he was not even worthy of the office of slave when compared to the One coming after him.

1:8. John made it clear that his ministry was only preparatory, symbolic, and temporary. His baptism was **with water**. John was administering an external rite that symbolized moral cleansing and a desire to break away from the sin that had separated people from God. The one to follow him would **baptize you with the Holy Spirit**. John was pointing out that the Messiah's baptism would bring about lasting change. The Messiah's baptism would be internal, changing a person from the inside out. Jesus' baptism would secure purity of heart and life, deliver his followers from the guilt and power of sin, and bring them into fellowship with God.

## **The Presentation and Preparation of the Sacrificial Servant (1:9–11)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The sacrificial servant obediently submits to John's baptism and is affirmed by his father in preparation for the ministry of service.*

1:9. In verses 1–8 John had been preparing the people for the coming of the sacrificial servant. He had declared that the coming Messiah would be "mightier" than himself—one whose sandal thong he was not worthy to untie. Yet, with such a great declaration Mark showed Jesus entering public life as a servant, without great fanfare. Mark tells us that Jesus came **from Nazareth in Galilee**. The people being baptized for the most part were from Jerusalem, the center of the religious life of Israel. One would think the Messiah would come from there. Yet, Mark, in keeping with his theme of the

sacrificial servant, has Jesus coming from a remote village of no reputation in Galilee. Jesus was **baptized by John** not because he needed to repent of sin but to identify himself with sinful humanity (2 Cor. 5:21) and to give approval to John's ministry.

**1:10–11.** After Jesus was baptized, three key events happened in quick succession. The first two appear together where Jesus **saw heaven being torn open** and the **Spirit descending on him like a dove**. Mark seems to suggest that only Jesus saw the heavens open and the Spirit descend. The descent of the Spirit was **like a dove**. The dove is usually a symbol of gentleness, possibly contrasting the ministry of Jesus as a gentle servant who brought healing and restoration with the ministry of John, who proclaimed judgment. Whatever else the descent of the Spirit on Jesus meant, it clearly indicated his anointing and empowerment for ministry. Jesus himself proclaimed this anointing in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:18) when he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me."

The third event happened shortly after the Spirit descended. Mark says the Father spoke to his Son by saying, **You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased**. The Father's response joins the concept of the messianic king of the coronation psalm (2:7) and that of the Lord's Servant of the prophet Isaiah (42:1). The main emphasis is on the unique sonship of Jesus. Mark opened his Gospel (1:1) by confessing that Jesus was the Son of God. Here, the Father himself proclaimed Jesus as his Son and expressed his approval. This event in a remote place in the Judean wilderness has cosmic significance. Here is the blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## **D** The Testing of the Sacrificial Servant (1:12–13)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The sacrificial servant is tested by his greatest enemy, Satan, in his final preparation for fulfilling his mission.*

**1:12.** After his baptism Jesus **at once** went into the wilderness. Mark says the Spirit **sent him out** into the wilderness. The other Gospel writers used the term *led*, but Mark used the word *sent* in keeping with his servant theme. Servants are not led—they are "driven" or "commanded to go." The humbling of Jesus at the baptism by his identification with the failure and sin of humankind is continued by his subjection to the onslaughts of Satan.

**1:13.** Mark does not present the testing of Jesus in detail as the other Gospel writers do, but as one major clash. Mark's account of the testing is brief, recording no victory over Satan. This seems to indicate that Jesus' entire ministry would be a continuous encounter with Satan—not limited to this one experience in the desert. In fact, Mark uses the term Satan (adversary) as opposed to Devil (accuser), which is used by the other Gospel writers. Mark is getting ready to write about the mighty works of the sacrificial

servant, but in the process Jesus will continually be striving with his “adversary”—Satan.

The **forty days** are symbolic. They recall the experiences of Moses (Exod. 24:18) and Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:8,15) in the desert. Both were deliverers of Israel from bondage. They also remind us of the forty years of wandering by the nation of Israel in the wilderness. Only Mark mentions the **wild animals**. This demonstrates the fierceness of Jesus’ wilderness experience and God’s protection from lions and other dangerous animals. Mark is the only Gospel writer who mentions that **angels attended him**. It seems that these angels sustained Jesus in the midst of his testing. There is no indication by Mark that these angels withdrew after the testing.

## **The Ministry of the Sacrificial Servant Begins** **(1:14–15)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The sacrificial servant begins his ministry with the preaching of the good news.*

1:14. Jesus now began his public ministry in the province of Galilee. Palestine had three major provinces. Galilee was the northernmost province. It contained beautiful lakes, forests, and mountains. Most of Jesus’ ministry was conducted in this province. Jesus embarked on what is called his early Galilean ministry (1:14–3:12).

The beginning of Jesus’ ministry is related to the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Mark does not give us the events that took place after the temptation of Jesus and the imprisonment of John. The other Gospel writers fill in those details. Mark concentrated on the work of the servant, so he pointed out that John’s work of preparation had ended by his imprisonment and the ministry of Jesus was now to begin.

Jesus began his ministry of service by **proclaiming the good news of God**. The good news is both from God and about God. This good news is the gospel that brings forgiveness, restoration, and new life. Men and women have been longing to hear such a message. Now they not only hear it but actually encounter the One who is able to deliver it.

1:15. The phrase **the time has come** shows the exact timing of God. Jesus was saying that the critical moment in history had arrived. God was about to act decisively by bringing redemption and restoration to his people through his servant, Jesus.

Jesus’ message was that **the kingdom of God is near**. The kingdom of God was central to Jesus’ teaching. The kingdom of God was simply the rule of Messiah on earth. This had been promised in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 15:18; Ps. 29:10; Isa. 43:15), and the Jewish people had longed for it. The kingdom “is near” because Jesus, the ruler of that kingdom, has now

arrived. Yet, the only way into that kingdom is to **repent and believe**. John had already been preaching for the people to **repent**, but Jesus added the word **believe**. Only through “repentance” from their sinfulness and “belief” in the **good news** (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ) would they enter the kingdom. Jesus was presenting an urgency about the nearness of God’s kingdom and the need to act decisively.

## **📖 The Calling of the Servant’s First Disciples (1:16–20)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The sacrificial servant begins his ministry by forming a team to help him preach the good news of the kingdom.*

1:16–18. Jesus’ task was to gather around him a community whom he could teach so they might be sharers of this good news. Jesus, after his resurrection, would commission his disciples to carry the gospel “unto all the world.” He began the preparation of his disciples to carry out that commission.

Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is a beautiful fresh-water lake. Fed by the waters of the upper Jordan River, it is seven hundred feet below sea level, fourteen miles long, and six miles wide. It was also called the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1) and the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1; 21:1). In Old Testament times, this lake was known as the Sea of Kinnereth (Num. 34:11). Most of Jesus’ teaching and miracles were performed in this area.

A lot of fishing took place at this lake. Josephus, a famous historian of the Jews, recorded that up to 330 fishing boats sailed this lake. Among those who fished this lake for a livelihood were Simon and his brother, Andrew. Jesus called Simon and Andrew to **Come, follow me**. Mark says nothing of a previous encounter of these two disciples with Jesus. These men may have been followers of John. Perhaps they were encouraged by John to follow Jesus. Also, they may have been in the crowd when Jesus was preaching.

Jesus declared that he would make them **fishers of men**. This phrase was a metaphor used by the Old Testament prophets for the gathering of people for judgment (Jer. 16:14–16; Amos 4:2). Jesus was calling Simon and Andrew to the urgent task of rescuing people from the impending judgment implied by the coming of the kingdom in the person and work of Jesus. This urgency demanded a response. The phrase **at once** indicates that urgency. Leaving their nets showed their willingness to make a total commitment as disciples of Christ.

1:19–20. Jesus extended the same call to James and John, who were known as the sons of Zebedee. The price of discipleship is further illustrated in their actions. They not only left their livelihood; they also broke family ties and tradition by leaving their father.

## **G**The Sacrificial Servant Begins His Ministry of Service (1:21–28)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The sacrificial servant begins his ministry of service by preaching with authority and proving this authority by casting out a demon.*

1:21. Jesus and his team entered a small city called Capernaum, located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. This city was probably the home of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, his new disciples. Capernaum became a major site for Jesus' healing and preaching ministry—a kind of base of operations for his Galilean ministry. The Sabbath was set aside as a day of worship and rest. The people would gather at the synagogue for prayer and exposition from the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus entered the synagogue and **began to teach**. A Jewish custom permitted visiting teachers, like Jesus, to preach by invitation of the leaders of the synagogue.

1:22. The people were **amazed** at Jesus' teachings. His teachings were different because he taught as **one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law**. The scribes were professionally trained scholars who applied and interpreted the law. The difference between Jesus' teaching and the scribes was that the scribes never gave an independent opinion. They always quoted other experts such as "rabbi such and such" to back up their interpretations of the law. Jesus did not quote any source. He was the ultimate authority in and of himself. Jesus taught with authority that came straight from God.

1:23–24. The synagogue service was interrupted by the cries of a man **who was possessed by an evil spirit**. Immediately Jesus was opposed by Satan. This was a key event because Jesus had the opportunity to show his authority over the power of Satan. The term "evil spirit" means that this man's personality had been damaged to the point that the core of his being was under the control of a demon.

The question **What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?** shows that there was more than one demon in the man. There must have been several demons possessing this man and causing him to cry out. The demons also clearly recognized the authority and mission of Jesus. The demons seemed to know that Jesus' preaching brought judgment. If one did not respond to Jesus' preaching, then judgment would occur.

The use of Jesus' name by the demons and his title **the Holy One of God** is believed to be an attempt by the demons to gain control over Jesus. It was widely believed that by uttering one's name, an individual could gain power or control over that person. The demons seemed to hope to do this with Jesus.

1:25–26. Those who could cast out demons, called exorcists, would usually identify themselves by name to some deity or power and then pronounce

some authoritative phrase to cast out the demon. Jesus needed no magical formula to exorcise the demon. He was the ultimate authority. He ordered the demon to **be quiet**. At this authoritative word of power, the evil spirit convulsed the man, then left him with a **shriek**.

1:27–28. The people were **amazed** once again. In fact, they said, **What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!** They had never experienced such power and authority. Jesus' authoritative teaching was backed up by authoritative action. Jesus' authority was inherent within himself. As usual, Jesus' teaching not only generated great discussion but caused his fame to spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

### **The Servant Continues His Ministry through Healing Miracles (1:29–45)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The sacrificial servant backs up his words with works and in the process solidifies the faith of his disciples. He also draws crowds to hear the good news of the gospel.*

1:29–31. According to Jewish custom, the main Sabbath meal came immediately after the worship service in the synagogue—at the sixth hour, or around 12 o'clock noon. The Jewish day began at 6 A.M. and the hours were counted from there. It appears that Simon (Peter) and Andrew's house was close to the synagogue. This miracle was private, and not public, possibly to begin to solidify the faith of these early disciples in the claims of their leader. The "team" found Peter's mother-in-law **in bed with a fever**. Simon and Andrew told Jesus about her condition. This was a personal need, and they felt comfortable in going to Jesus with their needs.

In Jesus' time many people considered fever an illness in itself and not a symptom of a disease. According to Leviticus 26:16 and Deuteronomy 28:22, a fever could be interpreted as a punishment sent by God to those who violated his covenant. According to custom, only God could intervene in such cases. And he did! The recovery of Peter's mother-in-law was so complete that **she began to wait on them**. Jesus showed his compassion and love in the way he healed her. Notice that **he went to her, took her hand and helped her up**. Then the fever left her. He could have just spoken the words, but Jesus reached out and touched her. Jesus came to enter into our pain—not just observe it.

1:32–34. The people waited until **that evening after sunset** because Jewish law did not allow the carrying of any burden through a town on the Sabbath. That would have been considered work, so it was forbidden on that day. A new day began after 6:00 P.M. The people probably knew it was safe to come out and not break the law when the sun had set and the stars were out.

The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many people of their diseases and cast out demons. Everyone in Capernaum knew Jesus was in town. The exorcism of verse 26 and the healings of verse 31 were not isolated cases. Jesus also continued to **not let the demons speak because they knew who he was**. Jesus wanted to show by word and deed what kind of Messiah he was before he declared himself openly as the Messiah. He would declare who he was—not the demons.

1:35–37. The events up to this point had been rapid, coming one after the other. They also would have been emotionally and spiritually exhausting. The humanity of Jesus is evident in these words: **Jesus got up and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed**. Even Jesus needed to recharge his batteries by withdrawing from the crowds and talking with his Father. This was a time of renewal and preparation for Jesus. Two other times in Mark's Gospel we see Jesus getting away to pray (6:46; 14:32–41). Each time he was preparing for a crisis.

While Jesus was concerned about focusing on God's mission for him, the disciples seemed to be caught up in the increasing popularity of Jesus. Perhaps they felt they should seize the day: **Simon and his companions went to look for him; and when they found him, they exclaimed, "Everyone is looking for you!"**

1:38–39. Jesus' desire to go to the nearby villages showed his desire not to be seen as just a popular miracle worker. He reiterated his purpose by saying, **so I can preach there also. That is why I have come**. Jesus' primary mission was to preach the good news. The miracles of healing and casting out of demons was secondary—a means to the end of presenting the gospel and getting people to respond to that good news. Jesus continued a pattern of presenting the gospel by going into their **synagogues and driving out demons**. The synagogue was the primary place where the Scriptures were interpreted. What better place to proclaim the good news to the people and their leaders? The preaching of the word preceded the demonstration of miracles, showing that the miracles backed up the authority of the Messiah's proclamations.

1:40. The account of the healing of the leper seems to connect 1:21–29 and 2:1–3:6 as two distinct units in Mark's Gospel. The word **leprosy** was used in biblical times to designate a wide variety of skin diseases. In Leviticus 13 seven forms of this skin disease are described. According to ceremonial law, a person with leprosy was to wear distinct clothing to signify he had the disease as well as to shout "unclean, unclean" as he approached others. A person with leprosy was not allowed to touch others for fear he would defile them and make them unclean. A person with leprosy was considered a walking corpse.

Instead of the leper keeping his distance from Jesus, as the law directed, he came directly to Jesus, fell on his knees, and cried out for Jesus to make

him clean. This man was full of faith. He did not doubt Jesus' *ability* to heal him, but he was not sure of Jesus' *desire* to heal him. But he was willing to take the risk.

1:41–42. The phrase **filled with compassion** is probably better translated as “being angered.” Jesus was probably angry because he recognized this foul disease as the work of Satan. Jesus' anger was not focused on the man and his desire for healing but on Satan, whose work he came to destroy.

Jesus expressed his compassion for the leper by touching him. Most people would have healed the man first and then touched him. But not Jesus. He knew this man had not felt human touch in a long time, so he reached out to touch him first. By touching the man, Jesus revealed his attitude toward ceremonial law. By touching the leper, he himself would be made ceremonially unclean. Jesus placed love and compassion above ritual and regulation.

1:43–44. Jesus then **sent him away**. This phrase is also used of driving out demons. Jesus also gave the man a **strong warning**. Jesus did not want to gain the reputation of being just a miracle worker. This would hinder his ability to spread the good news and fulfill his mission. Instead, he instructed the cleansed leper to show himself to the priest to be pronounced ceremonially clean (Lev. 14:2–31). The phrase **as a testimony to them** means a testimony to the priest and the people of the reality of the man's cure. If leprosy was like being a walking corpse, then the cleansing of leprosy would be the equivalent of raising a person from the dead. The religious authorities would ascribe such healing to God, thus admitting that Jesus was truly God.

1:45. The leper disobeyed Jesus by proclaiming his healing to everyone. Because he ignored Jesus' warning, Jesus **could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places**. Jesus had to curtail his public ministry and stay in isolated places. But even in his isolation, people still found him.

**MAIN IDEA REVIEW:** *Through the preparation and presentation of John the Baptist; blessing of the Father, and empowerment of the Spirit for the work of service; Jesus begins his ministry of sacrifice and service by preaching the good news of salvation, which is spread through his team and verified through his miracles.*

## III. CONCLUSION

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### Service Is His Business

There is a service station by our house. There is a saying under the sign that reads, “Service is our business.” The sign implies that whatever your needs might be concerning the care of your car, do not worry, do not even lift a finger. The service station will take care of it. Mark is essentially saying the

same about Jesus in chapter 1. Service is Jesus' business. Whether confronting a fever, demons, or the crippling curse of leprosy, Jesus displayed the power and love of God for lost and hurting people. Jesus was willing to do whatever it took to meet our needs. Jesus came to meet our needs, but especially our primary need to hear the good news for salvation.

Many years ago the Prince of Wales visited India. A formidable barrier had been set up to keep back the masses of people who wanted to catch a glimpse of royalty. When the prince arrived, he shook hands with some of the dignitaries who were presented to him. Then, looking over their heads to the crowds beyond, he said, "Take down those barriers." They were quickly removed and all of the people, regardless of social rank, had free access to the heir to the British throne. Some time later when the prince came to that district again, ten thousand outcasts waited under a banner inscribed with the words, "The Prince of the Outcasts." What the Prince of Wales did in that moment sounds very much like what Jesus would have done in the same situation. He was a king to be sure but a king who demonstrated his power through service to his people. The entire Gospel of Mark captures the servant heart of Jesus, and chapter 1 starts us on our way.

### **PRINCIPLES**

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- Believers can trust in the perfect timing of God. He may not always come when you want him, but he is always right on time.
- Believers can trust in God's Word. He is faithful to do what he has promised.
- Believers must consistently repent and confess sin so that God can work in and through them.
- Believers can trust God to protect, preserve, and provide for them during the "desert times" of their lives.

### **APPLICATIONS**

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- Trust in the fact that God keeps his word and submit your fears to him.
- Select a special place you can go to daily for quality time with the Lord.
- Recognize that God is at work on your behalf, whether or not you see anything happening. Thank him for what he is doing and look expectantly for him to work.
- Recognize that there is no wasted experience for a believer. Rejoice that God will use all your experiences to prepare you to be more effective for him.

## IV. LIFE APPLICATION

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### Special to God

I was hot, tired, sweaty, and most of all—angry. I had what my friends affectionately call a “stupid attack.”

I had just finished playing a round of golf. It was one of those rounds where you leave the course knowing that the only thing about your game that has improved is your prayer life. After stuffing my golf bag in the trunk of the car and changing shoes, I was ready to go home. I was sitting in my little sports car, which means there was not a lot of room.

I carry a little bag where I keep all of my valuables like money, car keys, and wedding ring. I emptied the pouch into my hand—and then it happened. My hands were sweaty from playing golf. Instead of wiping off my hands, I tried to put on my wedding ring. It slipped out of my sweaty hands and dropped through a narrow opening next to the emergency brake of the car. I looked through the crack in the floor and could see the ring barely hanging on a small bolt.

I tried to reach the ring with a penknife, but it was just out of reach. My frustration was mounting. I was already late for dinner—and this is where the “stupid attack” happened. I thought if I drove home slowly enough, the ring would stay on the bolt. When I got home, I could get the proper tools to retrieve it. I began my journey home, stopping every few feet to make sure the ring was still there.

After about the fourth stop, I looked and—you guessed it—no ring. I got out of my car and retraced my steps for the several hundred feet I had gone. I got down on my hands and knees and crawled over the area as if I was looking for a contact lens—but no ring. I drove home frustrated and angry, repeatedly reminding myself I could have called my wife to bring the tools I needed. But nooooo!

It was dinner time when I got home, but I couldn't eat. Instead I stayed out in the garage and tore apart the emergency brake assembly, hoping I would find the ring. Alas, no ring. I was depressed for weeks.

Why the mad search for this ring? It was only, at most, a fifty-dollar gold band. But it was valuable because of what it represented. It was my father-in-law's wedding band. He couldn't wear it because of an accident that had caused his finger to swell. The doctor had been forced to cut the ring off. There was not enough gold in the ring, after cutting it off, for the ring to fit his finger. After my father-in-law and his wife talked, they offered the ring to me. They wanted me to wear it as a continual reminder of their love and support of our marriage. Every time I put it on, it reminded me not only of the

bond between my wife and me, but also of her family's commitment for us . . . for me.

That ring was special. It was irreplaceable—a one-of-a-kind item. Maybe something similar has happened to you. You know the disappointment and ache that comes from losing something that is precious and valuable to you. You know what it is like to search for it and long for its return. So does God.

God was like Hallmark greeting cards: He cared enough to send the very best. He cared enough to put aside his kingly status and become a sacrificial servant to bring us back to himself. We are one of a kind. We are valuable to God, and he proved it by serving us and then sacrificing himself for us through his Son, Jesus.

The next time someone tries to put a bargain-basement price tag on your worth, remember what Jesus did: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). A ransom for me. Now in return, live in a way that shows your gratitude for his sacrifice for you.

## V. PRAYER

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Father, thank you for sending the very best. Thank you for Jesus. Grant that I may live and love like Jesus. Help me first of all to ask what I can give rather than what I can get. May I “improve my serve.” May I impart the same sense of value to those around me as you imparted to me through your sacrifice for my sin. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

## VI. DEEPER DISCOVERIES

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### A. Repentance (1:4)

Someone once said that you cannot keep walking down a wrong road and hope that it will eventually turn out right. That is a good picture of repentance. Repentance is realizing that you are on the wrong road and then turning around so you are going the right way. You can know you are on the wrong road and still not turn around. You can even be sorry that you are on the wrong road. But until you turn around and head the right way, you have not repented.

The Bible uses two words for repentance: *niham* and *shub*. *Niham* is most frequently used of God in the Old Testament. It signifies a contemplated change in God's dealings with humanity. The word *shub* carries the meaning “to turn back, away from, or toward.” It is confessing that you are on the wrong road, turning away from your current direction and turning toward the right way (Matt. 3:6).

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Commentator William Barclay notes that confession must be made to three different people. First, men and women must confess to themselves. We all want to justify ourselves, to rationalize our sinful behavior. Sometimes we rationalize it, based on physical characteristics that we have no control over: “I’m Irish; I can’t help it if I get angry.” At other times, we justify ourselves by comparing ourselves to others: “At least I don’t drink as much as he does” or “at least I don’t smoke like she does.” The sin of “at least” may be one of the biggest pointers to sin in our lives!

Luke recounted a wonderful parable of Jesus that shows the sin of “at least.” Two men—one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector—went into the temple. The Pharisee stood at a distance and prayed, “Thank God I am not like other people, especially this tax collector. I fast, I tithe, I do all the right things.”

The tax collector, on the other hand, knew himself. He repented. He confessed and called himself a sinner. Jesus commended him (Luke 18:9–17). Most people miss the marvelous thing about this story in their hurry to get to the parable. It is in verse 9: He also told this parable “to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else.”

So the first step in repentance is to confess to ourselves that we are sinners desperately in need of a Savior. Barclay comments, “There is no one in all the world harder to face than ourselves; and the first step to repentance and to a right relationship to God is to admit our sin to ourselves.”

Second, we must confess to those whom we have wronged. Jesus said that we must clear away human barriers before we come to the Father (Matt. 5:22–24). For most of us, it is easier to confess that we are wrong to God than to another human being. After all, the other person may not forgive us. He or she may agree with us that we are wrong and then we will be tempted to justify ourselves, to minimize our sin. One of the steps in Alcoholics Anonymous is to confess to people who have been wronged when it will do no further harm. Admitting our sin to another person has the wondrous effect of loosening its grip on us. Secret sins lose their power when they are not secret.

Third, we must confess to God. Echoing again the parable of the tax collector, Barclay notes, “It is not the man who desires to meet God on equal terms who will discover forgiveness, but the man who kneels in humble contrition and whispers through his shame, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’” (Barclay, *Mark*, p. 15).

A good example of a call to repentance is found in Isaiah 55:6–7: “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him return to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” Jesus called everyone to repentance (Mark 1:15). This repentance calls for a

change of the entire person, physically, volitionally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Through repentance and conversion, humans dethrone themselves and place Christ on the throne as the rightful ruler.

R. E. O. White shows the link between repentance and conversion (or the new birth in Christ): “In Jesus’ openness and friendship toward sinners, the loving welcome of God found perfect expression. Nothing was needed to win back God’s favor. It waited eagerly for man’s return (Luke 15:11–24). The one indispensable preliminary was the change in man from rebelliousness to childlike trust and willingness to obey. That shown, there followed life under God’s rule, described as feasting, marriage, wine, finding treasure, joy, peace, all the freedom and privilege of sonship within the divine family in the Father’s world” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 968).

## **B. Baptism (1:5,8,9)**

John the Baptist must have seemed bizarre, even dangerous, to the people of his day. He came preaching repentance for the forgiveness of sins and then he baptized Jews. We perhaps have lost sight of the meaning of his baptism. Our own baptisms may have been surrounded with stained-glass windows and white robes, or perhaps the fervency of a camp meeting. For some, perhaps, the ritual took place before we could remember it, let alone realize its significance.

For the Jews, baptism was primarily a cleansing. The bronze basin in the tabernacle represented this type of cleansing (Exod. 30:18–21). Cleansing was necessary before the priest approached the altar. Barclay notes that symbolic washing and purifying was woven into the very fabric of Jewish ritual. Gentiles, who were ritually unclean, needed to do three things when they became proselytes: They received circumcision as the mark of the covenant people; a sacrifice had to be made for the atonement of sin; and the proselytes had to undergo baptism to symbolize their cleansing from the stain of their past life.

John, however, was not urging Gentiles to repent and be baptized; he was virtually demanding that the Jews be baptized. But they were Jews! They were not supposed to need baptizing. After all, they had the priests who made daily, weekly, and yearly sacrifices for them. Why did they need baptism? Barclay further points out that “John’s baptism made sure that the Jews realized that to be a Jew in the racial sense was not to be a member of God’s chosen people” (Barclay, *Mark*, p. 14). John denounced this kind of nationalism, “Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (Luke 3:8). Robert Guelich states: “Repentance connoted much more than sorrow or remorse. It included the reorientation of one’s total life . . . baptism was both an acknowledgment of one’s sins and one’s desire to repent and an

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acknowledgment of God's acceptance of that repentance. The ultimate goal of repentance-baptism was the forgiveness of sins and acceptance by God in the coming day of salvation" (Guelich, *Mark*, p. 26).

In the New Testament, baptism became the primary rite of Christian initiation. It symbolized death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–4). It symbolized washing, regeneration, and renewal (Titus 3:5). Spiritually, it is a work of the Holy Spirit based on what Christ has done through his own baptism of death.

The meaning of baptism in the New Testament is given by three Old Testament types: the flood (1 Pet. 3:19–20), the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1–2), and circumcision (Col. 2:11–12). These three types show us the different aspects of baptism. The flood and the Red Sea linked death and redemption, as does baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. It is a symbol that a person has died and is raised to new life. It is God's act of judgment and grace—judgment upon the old nature that has been crucified with Christ and grace with the bestowal of the new nature. Circumcision represented the divine covenant between God and Abraham. This act set aside Abraham and the Israelites as particularly chosen by God. They became a peculiar community, characterized by their obedience to God. Baptism is a sign that we have been adopted into a new community, a new family, and we are characterized by our obedience to God through Jesus Christ.

Mark states that Jesus was baptized by John. We know that Jesus did not need to repent. He had no sin from which to be cleansed. Why was he baptized? Barclay (*Mark*, p. 19) makes note of four reasons. First, it was the moment of decision, the launching of Jesus' ministry. Second, it was the moment of God's approval. At the baptism Jesus submitted his decision to God, and this decision was unmistakably approved. Third, at his baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon him, equipping him for the task ahead. Fourth, Jesus identified himself with sinful humanity.

G. W. Bromiley believes that identification with sinners is the true baptism: "This identification with sinners in judgment and renewal is what Jesus accepts when he comes to the baptism of John and fulfills when he takes his place between two thieves on the cross. Here we have the real baptism of the New Testament, which makes possible the baptism of our identification with Christ and underlies and is attested by the outward sign . . . Christ has died and risen again in our place, so that we are dead and alive again in him, with him, and through him" (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 113).

### **C. Baptized with the Holy Spirit (1:8)**

The baptism with the Holy Spirit was originally, and I believe correctly, identified with judgment. John the Baptist was warning of coming judgment, of a purification that was both personal and national in nature. As Robert Alan Cole notes, "God's intervention, that was to result in the establishment

of his rule upon earth, was at the very doors.” Jesus Christ, the coming one John referred to, ushered in the age of grace and judgment. Jesus stated this himself in the synagogue at Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry. He took the Book of Isaiah and read from it: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18–19) (Cole, *Mark*, p. 58).

This is the age of grace. Of course, the scroll from Isaiah did not stop with those words. It continues, “And the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:2). While Jesus did not fulfill these words with his first coming, he will with his second coming. John the Baptist warned of a radical, fiery purification. The alternative he offered was to accept his baptism in water as a symbol of total repentance and reformation of life.

Some interpreters see the baptism of the Spirit as a judgment upon the temple and the sacrifices that are now made obsolete. Others see the baptism of the Spirit as a purification by the Holy Spirit that happens as the baptism of repentance occurs so that the two baptisms become synonymous.

This phrase should not be confused with “the baptism of the Spirit” found especially in Pentecostal and charismatic circles. This expression places less emphasis upon the indwelling of the Spirit, with the illumination of mind (John 14:26; 16:8–15), the refinement of character (Gal. 5:22–23, 1 Cor. 12:27–13:13), and the gifts of peace, power, and joy that the Spirit bestows. Instead, the phrase has become associated with the initial and continuing filling of individuals by the Spirit with miraculous powers, gifts, abilities, and emotional resources, manifest in spiritual healing, speaking in unknown tongues, prophesying, leadership, exuberant emotion, and other forms of equipment for Christian service. Some also indicate that this is a second baptism, an “in-filling,” a second blessing that supplements conversion. Others argue that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all believers and that the unique outpourings at Pentecost were for the purpose of launching the church and having it testify to God’s work.

#### **D. Kingdom of God (1:15)**

John the Baptist was the herald of the king. If he had owned a horn, he could have blown it to announce the king’s presence. When Jesus Christ came into Galilee and began saying, “The kingdom of God is near,” he made reference to his own incarnation. He was saying, in effect, “God’s rule has just broke into human history.”

*Basileia* (kingdom) means, first, the authority to rule as a king and, second, the realm over which the reign is exercised. In the Old Testament, *malekut*, when used of God, almost always refers to his authority. We may think of

the kingdom as primarily God's realm, but it is first his authority. He has authority as the Creator. In the New Testament, the kingdom of God is the divine authority and rule given by the Father to the Son. When Jesus testified to Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, he was not saying that he had no authority on earth. He was saying that his authority was not given to him by anyone in this world. God the Father had granted him the authority of the kingdom (Luke 22:29).

The Book of Isaiah pointed to the kingship, the authority, of Jesus: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever" (Isa. 9:6–7).

Jesus separated the present and future aspects of the kingdom. His incarnation, earthly ministry, death, and resurrection accomplished certain kingly objectives. When earthly kings invaded a land, they usurped the reigning power and released any prisoners that the king had captured. Christ's objective was to usurp Satan, redeem humanity, and deliver people from the powers of evil. Christ's present reign means the destruction of all hostile powers, the last of which is death. It brings to people "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17) and deliverance from the "dominion of darkness" (Col. 1:13). It is accomplished by the new birth (John 3:3).

Christ will exercise his rule until he subdues all that is hostile to God and returns in glory. In the age to come, Satan will be defeated for all time (Matt. 25:41); the dead in Christ will be raised in incorruptible bodies (1 Cor. 15:42–50) which are no longer subject to death; every knee will bow before him; and every tongue will confess him as Lord (see Phil. 2:10–11).

### **E. Demons or evil spirits (1:23)**

Earthly kings freed their subjects from enemy lands. It is no coincidence that Jesus' first recorded miracle in the Gospel of Mark was casting a demon out of a man. This was Mark's way of authenticating what he had just reported: The kingdom was indeed at hand, and the king was exercising his authority. Jesus' conquest in the desert becomes the pattern for the rest of the Gospel as they report the power of Jesus to heal the sick and cast out demons (Lyon, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 120).

Barclay points out that the era of Jesus' earthly ministry was a time filled with superstitions and fear. He notes that in ancient cemeteries skulls have been found in which a hole had been drilled. It was clear from bone growth that this boring had taken place during life. The reason? To allow demons to escape from the body. As Harnack says, "The whole world and the circumam-

bient atmosphere were filled with devils; not merely idolatry, but every phase and form of life was ruled by them. They sat on thrones, they hovered around cradles. The earth was literally a hell” (Barclay, *Mark*, p. 33).

Scripture does not elaborate on the origin of demons. Two major themes emerge: the unnatural offspring of angels and women prior to the flood (Gen. 6:2; Jude 6); and Lucifer’s original rebellion (Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:7–9). The Jewish apocalyptic work 1 Enoch is a major source for the former view. Rabbinic tradition viewed demons as spirits who were left bodiless when God rested on the Sabbath or as the builders of the Tower of Babel who were punished and transformed into demons. Origen developed the later concept of a precosmic rebellion. All intelligent creatures were created with a free will. Lucifer rebelled against God. In his descent to hell, he took fallen angels with him. These became demons. This has become the prevailing Christian view, although Scripture does not speak definitively about this.

The Greek terms *daimon* and *daimonion* originally held no inherently evil connotation. They were used to specify a god or a minor deity, a personal intermediary believed to exercise supervision over the cosmos. Hebrew usage is more consistent in its uses of *sedim* and *se’rim*. The practices of idolatry, magic, and witchcraft were related to demonic forces (Deut. 32:17; Ps. 96:5) and were specifically prohibited by God (Deut. 18:10–14; 1 Sam. 15:23). Demonic activity in the Old Testament is a force opposed to God and his own personal intermediary beings, the *mal’akim* (angels).

Major characteristics of the recording of Jesus’ encounters with demons include: (1) a statement concerning the physical or mental affliction caused by the possession, such as nakedness, mental anguish, masochism, inability to speak, blindness, lunacy; (2) the demon recognized and feared Jesus as the Holy One of God; and (3) Jesus’ power is demonstrated, usually by exorcism, through the power of his word, or by Jesus’ permission for them to depart. This power is also found in Jesus’ disciples and is promised to all believers (Mark 16:17).

The Middle Ages saw many abuses of exorcisms, including witch hunts. The Lutheran church first restricted and then abolished exorcism by 1600. Calvinists renounced the practice as applicable only for Jesus’ day. Although the power and duration of Satan’s work is limited, Christians still feel the power of his hatred for the things of God. No matter what we believe of the origin of Satan or his minions, we can believe without question in what Scripture teaches—that Christians must be prepared to combat demons (Eph. 6:10–18). We can also take heart when we remember that we belong to the kingdom of God and that these beings are destined to share in the destruction which God has prepared for Satan (Matt. 25:41).

## VII. TEACHING OUTLINE

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### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Lead Story: Lights, Camera, Action!
2. Context: In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, he declares, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (v. 1). Mark does not mince words. He is straight and to the point from the beginning of his Gospel. Chapter 1 sets the stage for an action-packed drama that is about to unfold through the service and sacrifice of Jesus Christ the Messiah. The prophets foretold his coming; John the Baptist prepared the people for his coming; the Father blessed his coming; the Holy Spirit empowered him when he came and strengthened him for his mission. After gathering his team, Jesus was ready to proclaim the good news through words backed up by deeds.
3. Transition: As we look at this chapter, we see the care and compassion of Jesus Christ. We see his "servant" attitude and how quickly he sought to bring help and healing to those in need. We see Jesus as a man of authority, action, and passion to fulfill his mission of preaching the good news of salvation.

### B. COMMENTARY

1. The Prologue (1:1)
2. The Ministry of John the Baptist Prepares the Way for the Sacrificial Servant (1:2–8)
3. The Presentation and Preparation of the Sacrificial Servant (1:9–11)
  - a. Jesus submits to John's baptism
  - b. Jesus receives approval from his father
4. The Testing of the Sacrificial Servant (1:12–13)
5. The Ministry of the Sacrificial Servant Begins (1:14–15)
  - a. John the Baptist is imprisoned
  - b. Jesus begins preaching the good news
6. The Calling of the Servant's First Disciples (1:16–20)
7. The Sacrificial Servant Begins His Ministry of Service (1:21–28)
  - a. Preaching in the synagogue
  - b. Casting out demons
8. The Sacrificial Servant Continues His Ministry through Healing Miracles (1:29–45)
  - a. Healing Peter's mother-in-law
  - b. Healing and casting out demons

- c. Time to reconnect
- d. Preaching and casting out demons
- e. Healing a leper

### **C. CONCLUSION: SPECIAL TO GOD**

## **VIII. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

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1. Why is waiting so difficult in our culture? Name a time in your past when God's timing was perfect.
2. Define temptation. Is temptation sin? If not, why not? What was Jesus' main weapon against temptation? Name some key verses you might find useful when tempted.
3. How did Jesus "renew" himself after an exhausting time (1:35-37)? Why does busyness lead to barrenness? If you have a day off, do you rest? Are you restless? Why or why not? When is the best time for you to renew yourself?
4. Name two things you are trusting God for, even though nothing seems to be happening. Thank him right now for his perfect timing.

