

A PERSONAL  
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

MARK

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## **Mark 1:1 ¶ The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;**

As I read through this first chapter, it became obvious that Mark is framing snapshots of the ministry of Jesus. Scholars note that his writings are probably a product of the teaching of the Apostle Peter based on the writings of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis. According to many sources, Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, described Papias as a “hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp.”

The “gospel” is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Why was this such good news? It is because His coming to earth as a man marked the end of the old covenant based on the law and the beginning of the new covenant, salvation by grace through faith.

The name Jesus emphasizes the truth that Jesus came as a man. Christ is the name that denotes Jesus as the promised Messiah. “Son of God” testifies that His origin is of God, the self-existent eternal LORD of creation.

Guzik provided an interesting bit of information: “When Bible translators go to a people who have never had the Scriptures in their own language, they usually begin by translating the Gospel of Mark. Mark is the most translated book in all the world. One reason is because it is the shortest Gospel; but the other reason is because this Gospel was written for people unfamiliar with first century Judaism. Mark wrote it for the Romans.”

**Mark 1:2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.**

**Mark 1:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**

Mark quotes from Malachi and Isaiah...

*Malachi 3:1 “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me....”*

*Isaiah 40:3 “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”*

...as he introduces the ministry of John the Baptist. John’s ministry was to prepare the hearts of the people to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Both the wilderness (Mark) and the desert (Isaiah) describe a place that is desolate. I believe this is a reference to the spiritual desolation that marked the people of Israel at that time. Yes, the temple was the center of their society and the practice of “religion” was in full swing; but it had become a religion of legalism, of going through the motions with no understanding of the heart, no true spiritual connection with God.

The Greek word “LORD” in verse three affirms the deity of Jesus as He who is supreme in authority. It was interesting to see the Greek root for the word “paths”; it states, “in a passive or horizontal posture.” In other words, it is a

reference to submission. I think it is referring to a ministry of urging the people to turn from their sin and submit to the LORD. The following verse falls right in line with this thought.

**Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**

**Mark 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.**

John baptized and preached the baptism of repentance for deliverance from sins. His ministry was located in an area along the Jordan River, and people came to him from throughout Judea and Jerusalem to hear his message. Many confessed their sins and were baptized. Confession is the act of acknowledging or admitting that one is a sinner and needs forgiveness.

It should be noted that John was the first prophet of God to come on the scene since Malachi. There had been a marked silence of God and no prophets had spoken for about 400 years. Little wonder that he quickly garnered so much attention.

Reminder: Other scripture reveals that John was the cousin of Jesus. John's mother Elisabeth was the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

**Mark 1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;**

**Mark 1:7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.**

**Mark 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.**

John was a unique man. His clothing was made of camel's hair, and he wore a belt of animal skin about his hips. His diet consisted of locusts and wild honey. John was very careful to declare that he was just a messenger sent to declare the coming of one of whom he was not even worthy to stoop down and remove his shoes.

Guzik again provides some insight: "John says this because in his day, the rabbis taught that a teacher might require just about anything of his followers, *except* to make them take off his sandals. That was going too far! But John says that he is not even worthy to do this for Jesus."

John described his baptism as one of water, while the one that he spoke of would baptize with the Holy Ghost. The Greek word for "baptized" makes reference to immersion, "to make fully wet." The comparison would infer that baptism with the Holy Ghost would immerse one completely under the power of the Holy Ghost, the very Spirit of God. Both baptisms were done in response to the desire of the person being baptized—in repentance of one's sins and in desiring to yield to God as Lord.

**Mark 1:9 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.**

**Mark 1:10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:**

**Mark 1:11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**

The time came when Jesus came from his hometown of Nazareth in the Galilee to be baptized of John in the Jordan. Jesus didn't come to be baptized in repentance of sin because He was sinless. John knew that.

*Matthew 3:13–14 “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?”*

Jesus came to be baptized so that God could affirm Him as the One about whom John was preaching.

*John 1:29–34 “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”*

Verses 10-11 are directly related to the account in the Apostle John's gospel.

All three persons of the trinity were manifest in some way at Jesus' baptism—Jesus in the flesh, the Holy Spirit as a dove, and God the Father as He spoke.

It should be noted that before Jesus ever officially began His public ministry God the Father declared that He was “well pleased” with His “beloved Son.”

**Mark 1:12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.**

**Mark 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.**

The Spirit of God immediately compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness to a solitary place. It was there that the faith of the man Jesus would be tested and proven. We know from other scripture that He fasted during the 40 days that He spent there and are told how Satan tempted Him.

It was at His weakest point that Satan came to tempt Jesus. Three times he tried to get Jesus to go against God's will and sin. He knew that Jesus was hungry so he tempted Him to prove He was the Son of God by turning the stones into

bread instead of waiting for God's provision. He took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tempted Him to prove He was the Son of God by jumping off and calling the angels to rescue Him. Finally, he offered to give Jesus rule over the kingdoms of the world if He would but worship him (in essence trying to get Him to bypass the cross). Each time Jesus answered Satan by quoting scripture and standing firm in His faith and obedience to the Father. It was after Satan left him that the angels came and ministered to Jesus.

*Matthew 4:2–11 “And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”*

I think that the LORD is still sending His angels as ministering spirits to those in need of spiritual encouragement and strength. That seems to be one of their main responsibilities.

*Hebrews 1:13–14 “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”*

I wonder how many times I have benefitted from such ministry without recognizing that fact. There have definitely been times while driving that I think angels intervened.

I almost skipped over the mention of the wild beasts around Jesus. I think the point being made is that they proved to be no threat to Jesus. It seems that they innately recognized their Creator.

**Mark 1:14 ¶ Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,  
Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**

John was very bold in preaching against sin and was not the least bit concerned about being politically correct or for his personal safety. Eventually, this led to his imprisonment and death. We learn more from Matthew.

*Matthew 14:3–10 “For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in*

*prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison."*

I'm sure this is not what John expected nor is it what we would expect. Yes, it caused John to question the LORD, and that is understandable from our limited perspective.

*Matthew 11:2–3 "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"*

We know that he stayed strong in his faith because of the testimony of Jesus concerning him.

*Matthew 11:7 "And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John.... Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist...."*

Just as with John, it is not wrong for us to question God about what He allows in our lives. Just as Jesus told John, we are to look to the scripture for strength and encouragement. I always cling to the truth declared in two places in scripture in those times.

*Isaiah 55:8–9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

*Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

Mark now turns his attention to the ministry of Jesus. He went to Galilee and began preaching the good news about the kingdom of God. He declared that the kingdom of God was approaching for those who would repent of their sins and believe His message.

So what is the kingdom of God? It is a term identifying the place where God rules over men who have yielded themselves to Him as LORD and Savior. Only those that choose to repent of their sins and believe/trust His message of salvation will get to enjoy the eternal blessings of that kingdom.

**Mark 1:16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.**

**Mark 1:17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to**

become fishers of men.

**Mark 1:18** And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

**Mark 1:19** And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

**Mark 1:20** And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Mark's next snapshot is a description of the calling of Jesus' first four disciples—Simon, Andrew, James and John. They were all fishermen doing business on the Sea of Galilee. These four men responded to the call of Jesus by immediately stopping what they were doing and following Jesus. This was a voluntary act of accepting Jesus as their rabbi, their spiritual leader/teacher. The indication is that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were part of quite a successful business venture with their father since they had hired servants.

**Mark 1:21** And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

**Mark 1:22** And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus and His disciples went to Capernaum; and, as custom allowed, He went into the synagogue and taught. His teaching amazed those who heard them because He taught with authority—quite different from how the scribes taught.

**Mark 1:23** ¶ And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

**Mark 1:24** Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

In the synagogue that day was a man with an unclean spirit. I couldn't help but think, "Why was he there? You'd think that was the last place he would choose to be."

The spirit cried out through the man telling Jesus to leave them alone. They even knew that He was Jesus of Nazareth. They feared that He had come to destroy them since they knew that He was "the Holy One of God."

I assume that the usage of the plural was in reference to the man and the spirit.

**Mark 1:25** And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

**Mark 1:26** And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

**Mark 1:27** And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine *is* this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

**Mark 1:28** And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region

**round about Galilee.**

Jesus rebuked the spirit, telling him to be quiet and come out of the man. The spirit, of course, had to obey Him and caused the man to convulse and yell as he came out of him. The people in the synagogue were amazed at what they had witnessed and began to talk among themselves. This was something new. They had never witnessed one who could command unclean spirits with such authority and compel them to obey. It wasn't long before the news traveled throughout the whole region around the Galilee.

**Mark 1:29 ¶ And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.**

**Mark 1:30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.**

**Mark 1:31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.**

When they left the synagogue, Jesus and His four disciples went to the home of Simon and Andrew. They told Jesus that Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. Jesus took the sick woman by the hand and lifted her up. She was healed immediately and began to serve them.

We will see over and over again that much of Jesus' ministry was to perform miracles of healing giving proof to His power over the forces of nature, that He was the Messiah.

**Mark 1:32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.**

**Mark 1:33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.**

**Mark 1:34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.**

After the sun had gone down and free from Sabbath restrictions, people from all around had gathered around the house bringing all those who were suffering from diseases and those that were possessed with devils. It seemed that the whole city was gathered at the door. Jesus healed many that were sick of various diseases and cast out many devils. He did not allow the devils to speak out and tell who He was.

The word "many" stood out to me. Why didn't it say "all?" Did the "many" sick and the "many" possessed comprise the "all?" I tend to think so.

**Mark 1:35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.**

Well before sunrise the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to a solitary place to pray.

This has always been a wonder to me, but then I remember that He was

functioning as the man Jesus through the empowerment of the Spirit just as we are empowered to do. The important difference is that Jesus had no sin nature to deal with in the process. I am sure He was strengthened and encouraged from the time of fellowship spent with His heavenly Father.

**Mark 1:36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.**

**Mark 1:37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee.**

**Mark 1:38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.**

**Mark 1:39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.**

The four disciples went out to look for Jesus. When they found Him, they told Him that everyone was looking for Him. He told them that they should go into the neighboring towns because He needed to preach in those towns as well. So He traveled throughout the Galilee teaching in the synagogues and casting out devils.

It stands out to me that there were a great many people recognized as possessed by devils. I can't help but think that the same is true today, but that we simply don't know how to so discern. We know that sickness is a consequence of sin, but scripture also indicates that possession can cause one to be mute, deaf, blind epileptic, etc.

**Mark 1:40 ¶ And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.**

**Mark 1:41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.**

**Mark 1:42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.**

**Mark 1:43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;**

**Mark 1:44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.**

**Mark 1:45 But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.**

Mark's next snapshot is of a leper that came to Jesus on bended knees declaring that he knew that Jesus could make Him clean if He wanted to. Jesus was moved with pity for the man and reached out to touch him, telling him that He did want to and pronouncing him clean. As soon as He spoke, the man's leprosy disappeared. Jesus then told the man to go to the priests and make the sacrifices called for in the law as recorded by Moses. He also told him not to talk to others about what He had done for him; He wasn't yet ready to make a public declaration of who He was. The man couldn't help himself; I think he was just too overjoyed. He talked about it so much that Jesus could no longer go into the

city (for fear of being mobbed I am sure). He stayed out in the desert places, and the people came from everywhere to see Him.

One more insight from Guzik: "The people of Jesus day went further than the Old Testament told them to. Back then, they thought two things about a leper: *you are the walking dead and you deserve this because this is the punishment of God against you.* Jewish custom said that you should not even greet a leper. Custom said you had to stay six feet from a leper."

Jesus not only greeted the leper, He also touched him. That touch did not make Jesus unclean. That touch simultaneously made the leper clean and whole again.