

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Session 1

Chapter 1

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism of Jesus

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The Temptation of Jesus

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

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Jesus Calls the First Disciples

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

40 A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Malachi 3:1

1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

Isaiah 40:3

3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Intro to New Testament - Introduction by JBap; an Initial Day (1:1—2:28)

Mark's opening (1:1-15) presents the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3.

JBap is the prophesied messenger crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. That preparation consists in announcing the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, namely, Jesus. A voice from heaven, echoing Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1, speaks to him as God's beloved Son; and at his baptism the Spirit descends. The affirmations that Jesus was tested by Satan (the opponent of the Spirit) and that JBap was arrested suggest to the reader from the start that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom will encounter major obstacles. Although some would translate the proclamation to mean that the kingdom or rule of God has come, the best translation of the verb *eggizein* is probably "come near" - the kingdom is making itself felt but has not fully arrived. Jesus begins by *calling four men to be his followers and "fishers" who will catch people (1:16-20)*, thus presaging that these men will have a role in the proclamation. Indeed, the reactions of these disciples will mark major stages in the Gospel.

In describing what appears to be *the initial day of Jesus' ministry (1:21-38)*, Mark familiarizes the readers with the type of things done in proclaiming the kingdom: teaching in the Capernaum synagogue with authority, exorcising an unclean spirit (the continued opposition of Satan), healing Simon's mother-in-law, healing many more diseased and possessed, and finally seeking a place to pray on the following morning, only to be importuned by his disciples pressing demands on him. Several factors should be noted. Teaching and an exercise of divine power in healing and driving out demons are united in the proclamation of the kingdom, implying that the coming of God's rule is complex. Those who claim to be God's people must recognize that some of their attitudes stand in the way and must change their minds; the presence of evil visible in human affliction, suffering, and sin must be contravened; and the demonic must be defeated. Jesus can teach with authority unlike other people, and even the demons must obey him - all this is related to his being Son of God. Yet Mark never describes Jesus being given such authority and power; he simply has it because of who he is (n. 2 above). Paradoxically the unclean spirit that opposes him recognizes that he is the Holy One of God, while the disciples who follow him do not understand him fully despite his teaching and powerful deeds.

In 1:34 Jesus forbids the demons to speak "because they knew him." This is the first instance of what scholars call Mark's "Messianic Secret," whereby Jesus seems to hide his identity as the

Son of God until it is made apparent after his death on the cross. We shall comment later (p. 153 below) on W. Wrede's detection and interpretation of the Secret, but the simplest meaning in the narrative is that demonic knowledge of him, although it invokes a true title, does not catch the mystery of his person (which, as we shall see, involves suffering and death). A struggle in Jesus' vocation between tranquil prayer and activity is glimpsed in 1:35-38.

The expansion of Jesus' activity (1:39-45). Jesus' ministry of preaching, driving out demons, and healing moves through the towns of Galilee, a geographical range that will be enlarged in subsequent chaps of Mark. Notice that the silence (or secrecy) motif is now extended to the healed leper because publicity would make it impossible for Jesus to circulate openly. Implicitly, too, enthusiasm for the wonderful could give the wrong understanding of Jesus.

Chapter 2

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

1 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'?" 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus Calls Levi

13 Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. 14 As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

The Question about Fasting

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to

them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.

21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

Pronouncement about the Sabbath

23 One sabbath he was going through the grain fields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" 25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? 26 He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; 28 so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

Chapter 3

The Man with a Withered Hand

1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." 4 Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Intro to New Testament - Controversies at Capernaum (2:1-3:6).

At this town on the Lake of Galilee, which now has become Jesus' home, Mark centers five incidents where objections are raised by the scribes and the Pharisees and others to his forgiving sins, to his association with sinners, to the failure of his disciples to fast, and to their and his doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath. Clearly Jesus is being presented as one who, on the basis of his own higher authority (2:28: "the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath"), does not fit into the religious expectations of his contemporaries - an attitude that gives rise to a plot on the part of the Pharisees and Herodians to destroy him. The proclamation of God's kingdom is opposed not simply by demons but by human beings, and that opposition will be aimed at Jesus the proclaimer.

Chapter 3

A Multitude at the Seaside

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; 8 hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. 9 He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; 10 for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, "You are the Son of God!" 12 But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.

Jesus Appoints the Twelve

13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus and Beelzebul

Then he went home; 20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." 23 And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

28 "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" — 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

The True Kindred of Jesus

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Intro to New Testament - Jesus Chooses the Twelve and Trains Them as Disciples by Parables and Mighty Deeds

Mark closes the previous section and begins this section with *a summary* (3:7-12) showing that Jesus' ministry was attracting people from an ever widening region beyond the Galilee of 1:39. Amid this appeal to many, Jesus goes up to the mountain and *summons the Twelve* (3:13-19), whom he wants to be with him and whom he will send forth (*apostellein*, related to "apostle") to preach. The next chaps, show what he does and says when they are with him, presumably to train them for being sent forth (6:7). It may be observed that Luke 6:13-15 and Acts 1:13 present a list of the Twelve that differs from that in Mark (and in Matt 10:2-4) in one of the last four names; and so by the time the evangelists wrote, amidst agreement about Jesus' choice of the Twelve, recollection of the minor members was uncertain (see pp. 208, 725, 748 below and NJBC 81:137-46).

In the sequence 3:20-35 we encounter a narrative arrangement that scholars acknowledge as a feature of Marcan style, an intercalation sometimes called inelegantly the "Marcan sandwich." In it Mark initiates an action that requires time to be completed, interrupts it by another scene filling in the time (the meat between the surrounding pieces of bread), and then resumes the initial action bringing it to a close. Here the action begins with Jesus' relatives, who do not understand this turn of life where he is not even taking the time to eat (3:20-21) and want to bring him back home. The time it requires to move from Nazareth where they are to Jesus' new "home" at Capernaum is filled in by scribes who come from Jerusalem (3:22-30). The relatives' objection "He is beside himself" is matched by the scribes' "He is possessed by Beelzebul [Beelzebub]," the one expressing radical misunderstanding and the other antagonistic disbelief. At the end of the intercalation (3:31-35), the mother and brothers of Jesus finally arrive; but, now that the proclamation of the kingdom has begun, they have been replaced: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother." The intermediary scene with scribes from Jerusalem constitutes one of the Marcan Jesus' clearest statements about Satan, whose kingdom opposes the kingdom of God. With the appearance of Jesus the two kingdoms are locked in struggle. The allegorical parable in 3:27 suggests that Satan is the strong one in possession of his house and goods (this world) and that Jesus is the stronger one who has come to bind him and take his possessions away. The unforgivable blasphemy in Mark 3:28-30 is to attribute Jesus' works to an unclean spirit rather than to the Holy Spirit.