

# Finer Grounds

## Mark

### Lesson 2: Mark 1-2:17 - Jesus' Power Proclaimed

#### Before You Begin:

Read Isaiah Chapter 40 and Malachi 3:1-4

#### Think About It:

What do these verses have to do with proclaiming Christ?

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Out of the entire Old Testament, why would Mark have chosen these passages as his opening proclamation of the deity of Christ?

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#### Read Chapter 1:1-8

Mark's opening statement is a bold proclamation that Jesus Christ is the son of God. It is interesting to note the similarity of this statement with Peter's proclamation in Acts 2:36, especially in light of the belief that Mark's gospel is an account of Peter's time with Christ. As evidence of this proclamation, Mark quotes the messianic prophesy made by Isaiah in Isaiah 40:3. He also includes John the Baptist in this messianic prophecy by quoting Malachi 3:1.

Many people are concerned that Mark only mentions the prophet Isaiah, even though he quotes both prophets. However, we must keep in mind what Mark's purpose is: to proclaim the Messiah. He made sure to reference the Old Testament scripture that specifically referred to Christ, thereby giving it greater importance than

the passage in Malachi that referred to John the Baptist.

There are a few words in these prophecies that are particularly interesting in the original language. For instance: The word "prepare" here literally meant to prepare the way for the King (Zodhiates 2000). By quoting this passage Mark was telling the hearer that royalty was coming, and they needed to be ready. A second term worth noting is: "Straight," which is also a term used for royalty, referring to making the path straight and smooth for the king (Zodhiates 2000).

#### Think About it:

Since Mark was not referring to a physical road to prepare and make straight, what was he referring to?

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What was he asking them to prepare and make straight?

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Can and should we be doing the same thing?

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From here, John literally bursts on the scene proclaiming Christ and teaching baptism for the remission of sins. Mark has taken us straight from the prophecy of John to the fulfillment of that prophecy. Mark tells us that John "appeared," which literally means to come into existence, either naturally or by engineered means (Zodhiates 2000).

## Think About it:

How could this definition of “appeared” fit with what we read about in Luke 1:5-24?

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Why might it have been important for Mark to include this?

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How John appeared, however, is not nearly as important as the message he appeared to proclaim. John’s message was one of repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins. It’s interesting to note the full definition of the word “repentance,” which means to change your mind from evil to good, or from good to better (Zodhiates 2000). Oftentimes as 21st century Christians looking back, we judge the Jews very harshly. The Jews were not necessarily terrible, evil people, John was simply encouraging them to change their minds, which already believed in God and His Old Law, to something better: the proclamation of Jesus the Christ.

This teaching was huge for the Jews in yet another way: according to the Talmud (NET Bible) a proselyte was required to be circumcised, and baptized before being accepted into the Jewish faith. This means that John was asking the Jews to undergo the same ritual that the much looked down upon proselytes underwent (France 2002). This was the Jews first introduction to the idea that things were changing, and they would no longer be the only ones allowed a favored relationship with God Almighty.

## Think About It:

According to verse 8, what was the primary difference in the baptisms of Jesus and John?

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Was the baptism of John sufficient for salvation after the church began in Acts 2?

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What does Acts 19:1-5 teach about this?

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## Read Chapter 1:9-13

Although Mark doesn’t tell us, according to Luke 3:23 Jesus was 30 years old when he began his ministry by being baptized. One important detail that Mark includes is found in verses 10-11. Here we have a rare account of all three persons of the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit present in different forms, doing different things, at the exact same time.

There is much confusion in the religious world regarding the Godhead. In fact, many people don’t believe that there is a Godhead, but rather one entity who takes various forms as needed at the time. The fact that here Mark records all three persons individually, yet united, is evidence of the Holy Trinity, yet this concept can still be very confusing for our human minds. One helpful way to think of this is by thinking of H<sub>2</sub>O. H<sub>2</sub>O is water; water can be a solid, liquid or a gas, each which serves a unique function, yet it always remains H<sub>2</sub>O. What is fascinating, however, is the triple point. The triple point is a scientific term for 0 degrees celsius, a point at which water can be a solid, liquid, and a gas, all at the same time (physlink). In the same way, the Godhead is comprised of the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Spirit, three separate entities that work with man in unique ways, yet are still one (John 10:30, Genesis 1:26).

**Think About It:**

**According to Numbers 4:3, what is the significance of Jesus beginning his ministry at the age of 30?**

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**Mark's account of Jesus' baptism is the least detailed, what do the other Gospels tell us about this moment in the life of Christ that Mark does not?**

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**If John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, why was it necessary for Christ to be baptized?**

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Immediately after his baptism, Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the desert to be tested by Satan. Once again Mark's Gospel is the least detailed, yet as a result he allows us to view Jesus' temptations in a different light. Matthew and Luke both record three specific temptations that Satan laid on Jesus, and Jesus' response to those temptations. As a result it is easy to think that those three temptations were all that Jesus had to overcome, yet Mark plainly states in verse 13 that Satan was continually tempting Christ for those 40 days.

It is also not coincidence that these temptations occurred immediately after Jesus' baptism, have you ever known someone whose entire life seemed to fall apart after they submitted to Christ in baptism? As my daddy says, "Before you are baptized Satan doesn't worry about you,

he already has you. Once you are baptized, he's determined to get you back." This is so true, and we do new Christians a disservice if we don't prepare them for the spiritual warfare they are engaging in (Ephesians 6:12).

**Think About It:**

**What other major Biblical occurrences lasted for a time span of 40?**

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**What was the significance of the number in Jewish numerology?**

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**What is the significance of Jesus' one-on-one confrontation with Satan?**

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**Read Chapter 1:14-15**

After Jesus' triumph over Satan, he goes into Galilee to begin his public ministry. Jesus himself proclaims "the gospel of God". The word chosen for gospel is interesting and special in a way that we often don't think about. Not only does it mean "good news," but also that there is a reward included in the good news (Zodhiates 2000). Jesus isn't just saying, "Hey guess what, something great is happening!" He is saying, "Hey guess what, something great is happening, and if you believe and obey, you will receive an amazing reward!"

**Think About It:**

**What can we learn regarding evangelism from Jesus' first proclamation?**

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## Read Chapter 1:16-20

When it comes to Jesus' apostles, we oftentimes simply think of them as fisherman. For many of us, this frequently includes the idea that they were poor, unsuccessful fisherman. Mark tells us a different story. When Jesus calls James and John, they leave their father and their hired hands to continue the family business and immediately leave to follow Christ. This means that their family was wealthy enough to afford hired hands, and for at least these two, they were leaving a lucrative business to follow Christ. In Mark's account Jesus' call seems a little awkward, as though these men simply dropped everything to follow Christ without having any idea who he was, yet John 1:35-42 shows that they had, in fact, been disciples of John the Baptist, and would therefore know who Jesus was.

In Mark's gospel, the introduction of the apostles is tremendously important. More than any other gospel, Mark shows us the struggles and failures of the apostles, and Jesus' frustrations with them. Yet through their growth, Mark is giving us an outline of what true discipleship is comprised of: the relationship with Jesus, the active promotion of his mission, and total commitment to his cause (France 2002). Mark allows us to relate to the humanness and flaws of the apostles, and thereby gives us hope through their ultimate success.

## Read Chapter 1:21-28

This is where Mark really gets excited with his description of Jesus' ministry. Picture this scene in your mind: Jesus walks into the church building on Sunday morning and begins teaching. Every person in attendance is gripped by his message and the authority with which he speaks, when suddenly a possessed man, wild-eyed stands up in the back of the auditorium, points at Jesus and yells, "I know you! You are the Holy One of God!" This dramatic scene is almost exactly the way Mark describes Jesus' first miracle, which culminates in Jesus silencing and casting out the

demon. Note that there is no pomp and circumstance, no chanting or waving of hands, just a simple, verbal dialogue that leaves the demon no choice but to obey Jesus the Christ.

### Think About it:

**The first miracle that Mark records for us is the casting out of a demon, why is this important, keeping in mind Mark's goal of proclaiming Jesus the Christ?**

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**Why did Jesus command the unclean spirit to be silent?**

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### Take Action:

**There are many times throughout Mark's gospel that Jesus commands both men and demons alike to be silent regarding what he has done (this is at times referred to as the Messianic Secret). Read through the entire gospel and take note of when Jesus does and does not demand silence. What is the difference?**

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## Read Chapter 1:29-34

Jesus did not go out looking for people to heal, but rather as his power was proclaimed, people came looking for him. Might it be the same if we were as zealous in our proclamation of spiritual healing as they were in proclaiming physical healing?

**Think About it:**

**What do we learn about Peter in this passage?**

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**Read Chapter 1:35-39**

At this point Jesus has been ministering almost non-stop and he desperately needs time alone with His Heavenly Father. Yet even as he steals away to nourish Himself spiritually, the apostles, only concerned about the needs and pressure they are feeling from others, find him. Oftentimes, with the best of intentions and without even realizing it, we do the same thing to our ministers and elders today. One of the most daunting problems facing the ministry today is that of minister burn-out. So many times ministers, elders, and their families give and give until they simply have nothing left. Like Jesus, they must be given, and take advantage of, time to recharge spiritually and emotionally.

**Take Action:**

**What is something you can do you for your local ministers/elders to encourage them, and help fill their spiritual cups?**

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**Read Chapter 1:40-45**

This outcast has already heard proclamation of Jesus' power, & believes in his ability to heal even a disease as serious as leprosy, which tells us exactly how far and fast word of Jesus the Christ was spreading. It is also important to notice Jesus' reaction to this man. First of all, this man was violating societal standards by even being close enough to Jesus to speak with him. Most people would have reacted to this man with disgust and revulsion (leprosy was a grotesque and smelly disease), yet our Savior responded with pity.

**Think About It:**

**Jesus did not always physically touch those he was healing, what is the significance of the physical touch here?**

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**What are some ways this man's life was drastically changed due to the compassion of Jesus?**

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**When we see the sick, the poor and the outcast, do we turn away as most do, or do we follow the steps of our Savior and show them compassion?**

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**Jesus was often accused of violating the law of Moses. What does this passage show about those accusations?**

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**How does the crowd's reaction to Christ fit with Mark's goal to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God and demonstrate the path to becoming a true disciple?**

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**What was the crowd's motivation to follow Jesus?**

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What were the crowds willing to give up for him?

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What did Jesus demand that his disciples give up in order to be worthy of Him? What about us?

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**Take Action:**

Find a way to show compassion to someone you might not ordinarily reach out to. What difference can you make for them?

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**Read Chapter 2:1-12**

This is Jesus' first public proclamation that he is, indeed, the Son of God. This is also the first time he is in public conflict with the religious leaders of the day. It is no coincidence that these incidents happened at the same time. This was the first hard and fast evidence that Jesus was different than any man who had ever walked the face of the earth. The Jew's history was ripe with tremendous miracles God accomplished through his prophets, yet never before had any man claimed equality with God. Never before had any man claimed the ability to forgive sins.

**Think About It:**

The scribes never verbalized their thoughts, how then did Jesus know what they were thinking?

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It was common belief in the first century that physical ailments such as paralysis and blindness were the result of sin (John 9:1-2), could this belief be part of why Jesus felt the need to say that the lame man was forgiven of his sins?

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Oftentimes we have a very negative view of all of the Scribes, yet verse 12 says that ALL who were there were amazed and glorified God. This would include the Scribes who had initially doubted.

**Read Chapter 2:13-17**

As a tax collector, Matthew would have been a very undesirable friend. In the first century tax collectors were known to be crooks, in fact they were so unscrupulous, that most would have assumed a tax collector was hopeless. Yet, that's exactly who Jesus reached out to and invited into his inner circle. There is also a great irony in this passage. Jesus was reclining with sinners & tax collectors in Levi's (Matthew's) home. Matthew himself was a tax collector. How did the Scribes see that Jesus was reclining with tax collectors and sinners unless they themselves were in the home of a tax collector?

**Think About It:**

**Do we reach out to the undesirable with the gospel of Christ, or do we save it for those we are comfortable around? What about our hospitality?**

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Mark's gospel opens with an explosive account of John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ bursting onto the scene in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Within the first chapter and a half Jesus' miracles, his power over demons,

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and his proclamation of deity have already brought him multitudes of followers, despite his commands to not tell of his works. Yet they have also already brought him into direct conflict with the spiritual leaders of the day.

## Think About It:

**How does your personal proclamation of Jesus Christ affect your life?**

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**Jesus power made a tremendous impact in the lives of those who believed in him in Mark's gospel, what power is Jesus having in your life?**

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France, R. T. (2002). The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the Greek text. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

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