

Mark 1:1-13 ~ Scripture Verses

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

¹ The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”– ³ “a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’ ” [a]

⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Footnote:

a. Mark 1:3 – Isaiah 40:3

[New International Version, NIV, 1984]

Mark 1:1-13 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What does the word “gospel” mean?
2. Mark quoted a passage from the Old Testament that he said was from Isaiah. Was it? (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1)
3. Why is it important to prepare for the coming of an influential person? Who did Mark say came to prepare the way for Jesus?
4. Why do you think Mark said nothing about the birth of Jesus? (Remember from the last lesson what we said inspired Mark’s writing.) (Acts 10:37-38)
5. What was the basic message of John the Baptist? (Mark 1:4) What does repentance involve? Would John baptize anyone who came to him? (Matthew 3:7-8) Does John’s type of baptism apply to us today?
6. How was Jesus’ baptism different from John’s? (Mark 1:8, John 20:22-23) Was Jesus’ baptism promised by prophets in the Old Testament? (Joel 2:28-29)
7. What was important about Jesus being baptized by John? (Matthew 3:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21) What was unique about it? Think “trinity.” (Mark 1:9-11)
8. What happened right after Jesus baptism? Is this something you would expect of the Holy Spirit? Why do you suppose this happened?
9. Mark’s description of the temptation of Jesus in a single verse (Mark 1:13) is quite abbreviated compared to that found in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.
 - A. Mark is also the only one who speaks of wild animals; why would he mention them?
 - B. Mark says that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Does Satan tempt us today? (1 Peter 5:8–9, Ephesians 6:12)
 - C. The longer accounts describe three temptations: fleshly desires, power, and pride. How did Jesus respond to the temptations? (Luke 4:8) Are we tempted by these things today? What does John say we should do when we are tempted? (1 John 2:15-17)
 - D. Do we have tools to help us overcome temptation? What are they? (Ephesians 6:16-17, Matthew 26:41)
 - E. After overcoming temptation, angels ministered to Jesus. Do you think the same could happen to you? (Hebrews 1:14)

Mark 1:1-13 ~ Leader's Guide

1. What does the word “gospel” mean?

(See last question in the previous lesson.)

2. Mark quoted a passage from the Old Testament that he said was from Isaiah. Was it? (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1)

Mark 1:2 is actually a quote from Malachi 3:1 and Mark 1:3 is from Isaiah 40:3. Mark may have thought that mentioning the better-known prophet gave his writing more credibility. This same passage is quoted in both Matthew (11:10) and Luke (7:27) but those writers say simply that it was from in the [OT] scriptures. John (1:23) quotes only the second part of the passage and correctly attributes it to Isaiah.

3. Why is it important to prepare for the coming of an influential person? Who did Mark say came to prepare the way for Jesus?

Understanding the ministry of Jesus must begin with the OT where we find several quotes speaking of the messenger (John the Baptist), the desert (where he made his home), and the Lord (who he preached about).

4. Why do you think Mark said nothing about the birth of Jesus? (Remember from the last lesson what we said inspired his writing.)

Mark learned what Jesus did and said from the stories and preaching of Peter—preaching directed to the needs of the early Christian communities. Thus, Mark begins where Peter begins his proclamation of the gospel in Acts 10:37.

Acts 10:37-38 – ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

5. What was the basic message of John the Baptist? (Mark 1:4) What does repentance involve? Would John baptize anyone who came to him? Does this type of baptism apply to us today?

John was preaching “repentance-baptism,” i.e., baptism that was preceded or accompanied by repentance. Baptism was not new to John’s audience. They knew

that Gentile converts had to be baptized but they had not heard that Jews, the descendants of Abraham, needed to repent and be baptized. Repentance involves deliberately turning from sin to righteousness, and John's emphasis recalls the preaching of the prophets. God grants forgiveness when one repents.

John would not baptize Pharisees and Sadducees because they failed to give any evidence of repentance. (Matthew 3:7-8)

Matthew 3:7-8 – ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

6. How was Jesus' baptism different from John's? (Mark 1:8)

John baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize with the Spirit—by which he would cause those who believe in him to participate in the powers and graces of the new life he came to give. (John 20:22-23)

John 20:22-23 – ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all of God's people was promised in the description of the Day of the Lord in Joel 2:28-29 – ²⁸ “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

7. What was important about Jesus being baptized by John? (Matthew 3:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21) What was unique about it? Think “trinity.” (Mark 1:9-11)

Matthew 3:15 – Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his Messianic, public ministry. His baptism was “to fulfill all righteousness” indicating that he was consecrated to God and officially approved by him, as especially shown in the descent of the Holy Spirit and the words of the Father. All God's righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met by Jesus.

Also, by his baptism, Jesus completely identified himself with humanity's sin and failure, becoming our substitute as noted in 2 Corinthians 5:21 – God made him

who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus' baptism was unique in that it involved all three persons of the Trinity: 1) the Father speaks, 2) the Son is baptized, and 3) the Holy Spirit descends on the son. Note that the Spirit descended like a dove symbolizing the gentleness, purity, and guilelessness of the Holy Spirit.

8. What happened right after Jesus baptism? Is this something you would expect of the Holy Spirit? Why do you suppose this happened?

The Holy Spirit sent Jesus into the desert. The inference here isn't that Jesus thought it would be a good idea if He wandered about in the wilderness for a period of time in order to prove to God that He was serious about the ministry that He was being called into. No—the Scriptures actually say that it was at the Spirit's compulsion that Jesus found Himself thrust into the Judean Wilderness away from inhabited communities to wander without food for forty days.

It seems to be a principle of God's dealings with men that there is always a wilderness experience in our preparation for service. Just as Jesus was tried in the wilderness, so are we. A similar wilderness experience can be found in the lives of many important Biblical characters: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David. As many believers throughout time have discovered, there is no way, it would appear, to achieve something worthwhile for God without first going through a time of testing.

9. Mark's description of the temptation of Jesus in a single verse (Mark 1:13) is quite abbreviated compared to that found in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

A. Mark is also the only one who speaks of wild animals; why would he mention them?

The mention of wild animals emphasizes that God kept Jesus safe.

B. Mark says that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Does Satan tempt us today? (1 Peter 5:8-9, Ephesians 6:12)

1 Peter 5:8-9 – ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the

rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Although Satan tempts us, much of what tempts us is internal and built in to us as humans. Don't blame Satan for all your temptations and especially don't blame Satan for giving in to them.

C. The longer accounts in Matthew and Luke describe three temptations: fleshly desires, power, and pride. How did Jesus respond to the temptations? (Luke 4:8) Are we tempted by these things today? What does John say we should do when we are tempted? (1 John 2:15-17)

Luke 4:8 – Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’ “

1 John 2:15-17 – ¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

D. Do we have tools to help us overcome temptation? What are they? (Ephesians 6:16-17, Matthew 26:41)

Ephesians 6:16-17 – ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Matthew 26:41 – “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

E. After overcoming temptation, angels ministered to Jesus. Do you think the same could happen to you? (Hebrews 1:14)

Hebrews 1:14 – Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Mark 1:1-13 ~ Additional Discussion Questions

1. Mark 1:2 quotes Malachi 3:1, which says, “I will send my messenger...” Who is the “I” that says he will send a messenger? Why would he do this?
2. What were the two aspects of John’s ministry mentioned in Mark 1:4?
3. What had to happen before John could baptize a person? (Mark 1:5)
4. What was John’s attitude toward Jesus? (Mark 1:7)
5. John said that Jesus “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” What must you do to receive this baptism? Have you received it?
6. List three ways that the Holy Spirit can work in your life.
7. What usually prevents us from being a witness for Christ? How can your witness reflect humility and respect for Jesus?
8. In what ways can you prepare others for Christ? What specific step could you take *this week* toward becoming a better witness for Christ? How can you encourage other Christians to become witnesses for Christ?
9. What does Jesus being baptized by John say about his character? One reason that Jesus was baptized was to set an example to others. How should we respond to this example?
10. In Mark 1:11, to whom was the voice in heaven speaking? What did the voice have to say about Jesus?
11. In the desert (Mark 1:12-13), Jesus was obviously hungry, lonely, uncomfortable (hot in day, cold at night), and scared (wild animals). It was not his choice to be there; the Holy Spirit didn’t just allow him to be tempted but had actually sent him out there. What implications does this have for the temptations that we face?
12. What difference does it make to you that the Holy Spirit not only allows you to be tempted but sometimes pushes you into a bad situation? What might God be trying to teach you through tempting situations?
13. There are temptations of commission (doing what you shouldn’t) and omission (not doing what you should). What temptations (name five) are difficult for you to resist?