

the
gospel
of
Mark

2017 Study Notes
Part 1

Getting Started

At great cost, God has made the way for us to approach him anytime in Jesus' name. Naturally then, as a church family we want to take advantage of this immense privilege and so are committed to starting and finishing in prayer.

So, as we come to each of these studies let's remember to start and finish in prayer.

to start off...

1. Who generally might people compare Jesus with? Why?

Read Mark 1:1 below

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What's in a name?

Christ

Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Messiah* and literally means *anointed*. In the Old Testament, it was used of one who was anointed (ie, had oil poured on him) as a symbol that he held office by divine appointment. The kings of Israel were often anointed in this way. (1 Samuel 16:12-13, Psalm 89:20)

2. What do the following passages tell us about the Christ?

2 Samuel 7:5-16

That night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying:

5 "Go and tell my servant David ... 12 'When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one

who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD— 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

*He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;*

*4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.*

*He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.*

*5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*

*6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.*

*7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

*8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest.*

*9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.*

10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

*“The days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.*

*6 In his days Judah will be saved
and Israel will live in safety.*

This is the name by which he will be called:

The LORD Our Righteousness.

3. If Jesus is the Christ, what might be the good news (gospel) that accompanies him?

Son of God

4. Who is God's 'Son' in the following:

Exodus 4:22-23

Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'

Hosea 11:1

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 Samuel 7:5-16

That night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying:

5 "Go and tell my servant David ... 12 'When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you ... 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. ... 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.'"

Psalms 89:26-27

He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Saviour.' I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.

Mark 3:11

Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."

5. Is the title the *Son of God* a divine title or a title given to humans in the Old Testament?

6. What is the nature of the *Son of God* as it applies to Jesus? What is the connection to the Old Testament? How has the meaning of the title changed?

7. In what ways might Jesus being the *Son of God* be good news?

Read Mark 1:1-4 below from the Good News Translation (GNT)

This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 It began as the prophet Isaiah had written: "God said, 'I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you.'

3 Someone is shouting in the desert, 'Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!'"

4 So John appeared in the desert, baptizing and preaching. "Turn away from your sins and be baptized," he told the people, "and God will forgive your sins."

8. When did the good news about Jesus begin? What does this tell you about reading the Old Testament?

9. Who is John?

10. What is his job? (vs 3) How does he do this? (vs 4)

Read Mark 1:5-8 below

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."

John's clothing echoes that of the prophet Elijah and serves to reinforce his role as a prophet (see Mark 9:13). John's diet, although bare and squeamish, has God's approval (Leviticus 11:2-23) and shows his utter dependence on God (ie: by living off the land).

11. Who is coming after John?

12. What do you think it means for him to baptise with the Holy Spirit?

Read Mark 1:9-11 below

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."

The voice from heaven in verse 11 alludes to a number of Old Testament passages, Psalm 2:7 "You are my Son", Genesis 22:2 "You are my Son, whom I love" and Isaiah 42:1 "with you I am well pleased".

Read Psalm 2:1-9, Genesis 22:1-18 and Isaiah 42:1-7 below (highlight any surprising or noteworthy elements connected to the sons in the passages):

Psalm 2:1-9

*Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together
against the LORD and against his Anointed One.*

3 *"Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."*
4 *The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.*
5 *Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,*
6 *"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."*
7 *I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.*
8 *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the
earth your possession.*
9 *You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like
pottery."*

Genesis 22:1-18

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

2 *Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love,
and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one
of the mountains I will tell you about."*

3 *Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He
took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough
wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4
On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He
said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over
there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."*

6 *Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son
Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went
on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"*

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

*"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the
burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for
the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.*

9 *When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built
an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid
him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and
took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him
from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"*

"Here I am," he replied.

12 *“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”*

13 *Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”*

15 *The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”*

Isaiah 42:1-7

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.”

5 This is what God the LORD says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:

6 “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

13. In the light of these passages, who is God in Mark 1:11 declaring Jesus to be?

14. Put all these together, what does it mean for Jesus to be God’s son?

15. Why is this good news?

Read Mark 1:12-15 below

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.

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Unlike Israel, God's son of yesteryear (see Ex 4:22-23 above) who wandered the desert for 40 years grumbling against God, Jesus, despite being tempted, remains the faithful son of God.

16. According to Jesus, what is the good news of God?

17. How does this relate to Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God?

18. What do you think Jesus is specifically asking people to repent of here?

19. Do you need to repent?

Pray

... for the link missionary and church ministry your growth group has adopted for this term.

Jesus vs Spirits, Sickness and Sins

Mark 1:16-2:17

Getting Started

This section begins and ends with Jesus calling his first disciples Simon, Andrew, James and John and ends with the calling of Levi (Matthew). But between these callings we begin to see a concrete picture of what it means that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God. He is shown to have authority over various powers within creation. Keep in mind as you read that while we the readers have the benefit of the introduction to Mark's gospel; his readers were discovering clues to Jesus' identity as he acted and spoke. Try to put yourself in the shoes of the disciples, Pharisees and other observers as we read along.

The first disciples

Read Mark 1:16-20 below:

Mark 1:16-20

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

1. What is the most interesting thing for you when you read this description of Jesus calling the first disciples?

2. How do you explain why Simon, Andrew, James and John at once left their nets and followed Jesus? What was it like when you first responded to Jesus' call in your life?

An Evil Spirit

Read Mark 1:21-28.

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.” 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

3. Where did Jesus begin his teaching? What is the significance of this?

4. What does it mean that Jesus taught with authority? What is the display of Jesus' authority in this passage?

In verse 22 we are introduced to one of the main groups of characters in Mark's narrative, the 'teachers of the law' (other translations call them the 'scribes'). "The teachers of the law" were a special group who concerned themselves professionally with the Law. Although various religious groups, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, each had their own scribes, the vast majority of scribes seem to have belonged to the Pharisees in Jesus' day. They had at least three tasks regarding the Law (a) to develop and interpret the Law pertinent to the times, (b) to teach students the Law, and (c) to act in judicial situations.

It's worth noting that in Mark's story they always appear as a counterpoint to Jesus' teaching or actions. Watch how their attitude (along with the Pharisees) change towards Jesus as the story progresses.

5. Remember, the people around Jesus were learning about him as the story develops. But here the demon knows from the outset who Jesus is. ('the Holy One of God'). What is the significance of this?

Many healed

Read Mark 1:29-34.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

6. What's interesting about the way that Jesus heals? Does the description of the healing make it seem amazing? What does this tell us about Jesus authority over sickness and disease?

7. What is Simon-Peter's mother-in-law's response to being healed by Jesus? What does this show us about how we should response to Jesus when we have been saved/healed by him?

8. What is the people's response to Jesus power and authority?

9. Why did Jesus not let the demons speak about who he was?

Prayer Time

Read Mark 1:35-39.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

10. In Christian theology, Jesus is said to be one person with two wills, a divine will and a human will. Jesus therefore knew the will and heart of God perfectly. What does it tell us about the significance of prayer that even with a perfect understanding of God's will and heart Jesus still took time alone to pray to God?

11. What continues to be the response of the people to Jesus' power and authority?

12. How does Jesus respond to the crowd's desires to find him? Whose plan is he interested in? How might this challenge us and comfort us?

13. What is the continued refrain about where Jesus preaches and what he demonstrates when he gets there?

Jesus vs Leprosy

Read Mark 1:40-45.

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am

willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

14. Again, is the healing described as a difficult feat for Jesus to perform? Why not?

15. What does Jesus' response to the man's request and his willingness to heal him tell us about Jesus?

16. How is the man's response to Jesus' command a show of both joy and immaturity on his behalf? What is the negative consequence of his disobedience?

17. What conclusion can we draw from the assumption that Jesus knew the man would not listen to Jesus' command to not tell anyone about his healing, but healed him anyway?

18. What does it tell us again that Jesus did not want what he was doing talked about widely yet?

Jesus vs Sin

Read Mark 2:1-12.

2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging

through it, lowered the mat the paralysed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

19. Given Jesus' response to other sick people in the narrative so far, what is surprising about his response to the paralytic man when he is first presented to Jesus?

20. What is the response of the teachers of the law? Are they right or wrong in their response?

21. What is Jesus' point in asking the Pharisees about what is harder to do and his subsequent healing of the paralytic? What is Jesus' ability to heal meant to point to?

22. How does Jesus healing of a physical ailment here and its connection to forgiving sins possibly foreshadow his work upon the cross?

Levi, Tax Collectors and Sinners

Read Mark 2:13-17.

13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

23. What are the similarities between Levi's response to Jesus and the first disciples' response? How does it differ from the leper who was healed, the paralytic and the teachers of the law?

Tax collectors in Jesus day were disliked partially for their role in serving the foreign power of Rome that ruled over the Jewish land but more so for their dishonesty. 'Sinners' were in a general sense those who the Pharisees perceived to be failing to live according to the ritual law of the land but seeing as Jesus and his disciples would have fallen into the same category, it seems like that the word 'sinners' here was designating people of particularly ill repute.

The Pharisees were one of the leading Jewish religious parties alongside with two other groups, the Sadducees and Essenes, in Jesus' day. Their roots are difficult to trace, but they appeared as a group by the second century B.C. The name itself apparently means "separatist" or "specifiers". The name was almost certainly descriptive of their attitude and role in Jewish life, especially regarding ritual purity and the Law.

Consisting of lay people from all walks of life, their focus was clearly on doing and teaching the Law of Moses. Accordingly, they developed a "hedge" around the Law with their oral interpretation of it known as the "tradition of the elders" (see 7:1–13). This interpretation itself came to have the validity of the

Law of Moses. After the fall of Jerusalem to foreign invaders, they became a dominant force in Judaism by rallying the people around the Law. This concern for the Law makes them the natural opponents of Jesus in these controversies concerning ritual purity, fasting, and the Sabbath laws.

24. What was the response of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees to Jesus dining with tax collectors and 'sinners'? What explains this reaction?

25. What is Jesus' response to them? How is this response similar to the concern of the disciples earlier that Jesus had gone off to pray when all the people were looking for him?

26. How do the 'healthy' in this short narrative reveal their inherent illness? What must they do if they are to receive the wellness that Christ has come to offer?

27. In what ways can we become like the Pharisees? What does our response need to be when we realise we've made this mistake?

28. Which character out of the a) 'teachers of the law', b) the disciples, 3) the healed, 4) the tax collectors and sinners, and 5) the Pharisees, should we emulate in their response to Jesus? What does this look like?

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