

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: Introduced

TEXT: Mark 1:1-13

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Introduce Option One:

- Display: “The Wait is Almost Over”
- While you might not care that college football is beginning again most avid college football fans have been anticipating this time of the year for months. The following video might describe their anticipation.
- Play Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vniFgDIGONE>
- Today, our Scripture begins with the end of a long wait by the people of God for the coming Messiah. However, Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, is introduced in a much different way than one might expect.

Introduce Option Two:

- If you are married or engaged, do you recall the time when you first met your bride or groom-to-be?
- How did you meet and what made your meeting unique or special?
- Who introduced the two of you?
- Today, our scripture will explore the beginning of our (Christians’) love story with our Lord Jesus. We will be introduced to Jesus through the eyewitness account of Mark.

Mark introduces Jesus at the beginning of his gospel writing that bears his name—The Gospel of Mark. It is the second of the four gospel accounts of Jesus’ life. It is called a gospel account because it announces the “good news.” “Gospel” comes from a Greek word “evangelion,” which literally means “good news.” In the New Testament, it refers to the announcement that Jesus has brought salvation to the world through his life, death, and resurrection from the dead.

Mark begins with the introduction of Jesus to the world through a man called John the Baptist. John the Baptist had lived in the wilderness, looked different, wasn’t of royal blood, and was baptizing and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But his most important job would be to introduce to the world, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Mark simply, yet powerfully, introduces Jesus to a primarily Gentile audience. It opens with the phrase in Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” With this simple and powerful introduction, Mark takes us down a path to help us understand more fully who Jesus is, why He is the Messiah, and what it truly means that He is the Messiah.

Even in the introduction of Jesus, we discover that the long-awaited Messiah was going to be much different, yet much more than what the Jewish people anticipated. Through this study of The Gospel of Mark, perhaps you, too, will discover that Jesus as Messiah is much different than what you might expect, and, at the same time, much more than what you ever realized.

Perhaps it will help answer the question or confirm for you regarding why you should follow Jesus. In the first three verses we see that God always sends people to be His messengers of the Good News of Jesus Christ. In this case, it was John the Baptist.

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Prepare the Way for the Messiah—Mark 1:1-3

¹ The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. ³ A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!

Discuss: Notice the word “beginning” in verse 1. Do you recall other important “beginnings” in the Scripture? (Chapter 1 of Genesis, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and Chapter 1 of John, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”)

- What is significant about the way Mark describes this beginning?
- Why is it important that Mark used the words, “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

For centuries, the Jewish people had been longing for the Messiah's arrival. But since they were expecting a military leader who would free them from Roman rule, many missed the significance of Jesus once He burst onto the scene. Mark was led by God to begin with Jesus' earthly and public ministry instead of His birth and early years as did other gospel accounts.

His first sentence is a declaration, a title page for the One being introduced: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This description of Jesus was very important. It presents the entire message of the gospel that is only available through Jesus Christ.

- "Jesus" – from the Hebrew name "Joshua." It means "The Lord is salvation."
- "Christ" – A Greek word meaning "anointed." Jesus was anointed by God. It also corresponds to the Hebrew world "Messiah."
- "Son of God" – So as not to leave any doubt, Mark introduces Jesus as the "Son of God" thus proclaiming the deity of Christ and affirming that Jesus is fully God and fully man. This would be a recurring theme throughout Mark's gospel.

We are also introduced to the messenger, John the Baptist, in verse 1. In ancient cultures a forerunner would be sent ahead of a king to prepare for the king's entrance into a town. He would make necessary arrangements and line out the path in which the king would enter. Jesus was The King. While His kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18:36), as the Son of God, He was anointed to redeem His people who were of this world.

Respond: Read Mark 1:3 again. There were two actions this messenger from the wilderness was to take. How can these actions apply to believers today?

Believers are messengers from the wilderness as well. As believers we will or should be viewed differently from others. Our actions may seem unusual and, at times, very different than most of society. However, we are to be ones who "cry out in the wilderness" the gospel message. We are to remove all barriers so that the Messiah has a clear path to the hearts of men.

As John prepared the way, he could have become prideful because of the results in his personal ministry. Verse 4-8 reveals this was not the case.

Move out of the way for the Messiah—Mark 1:4-8

⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶ John wore a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He proclaimed, "One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Consider: Imagine if this were today. Because of what was taking place, would people be more attracted to the ministry of John the Baptist than to the One he was introducing? In what ways did John's actions and lifestyle demonstrate his humility? Why do you think his humility was necessary in carrying out the mission with which he was charged?

"John was preaching something different than what the first-century Jews had been hearing. As a result, he created a great deal of excitement throughout the region. . . John's preaching created so much excitement that it had people talking across the region. Great numbers were flocking to the countryside to hear him preach.

This would not have been an easy trip since the Jordan River is more than twenty miles from Jerusalem, including a descent of around 4,000 feet. Those who traveled to hear him were committed to hearing what he had to say. Going out suggests that people were continually coming." – Source, ETB Leader Commentary.

John denied any pretense of self-indulgence so that all attention would be directed toward the coming Messiah.

Guide: What if John had ignored Jesus and considered his popularity and message more important because of the crowd's response? How does Acts 19:1-4 help us understand why John had to point people to Jesus? How does this help us understand that simply repenting of sin is not enough? What if John had ignored this in order to maintain His popularity?

John knew people needed to be directed to the Messiah for salvation. Yet at this point the Messiah was not present. But this was about to change. While John was preaching repentance and preparing the people for the Messiah, Jesus showed up.

Present the Messiah – Mark 1:9-13

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. ¹⁰ As soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.” ¹² Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him.

Jesus arrived and was baptized in the Jordan by John. Jesus would have traveled around fifty miles from Nazareth to reach the Jordan River. One should also note that Jesus’ baptism was not for repentance or for salvation. Jesus needed neither. He was completely sinless. Instead, He chose to be baptized out of obedience to the will of His Father (See 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18). Jesus’ baptism signified the beginning of His earthly ministry and was an example for others.

Guide:

- How did God make known that this was an epic event like no other?
- What do you make of the point that the heavens were “torn open”? (This brings to mind the veil covering the holy of holies being torn open when Jesus died.)
- Why do you suppose the Holy Spirit was described as being “like a dove”? (The dove is used throughout the Scripture to represent peace, purity, innocence, and beauty.)

This was an epic event that revealed God’s love for His Son, and the revelation of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The introduction of Jesus was not only an affirmation but a demonstration as God’s power.

Verse 11 gives us a declaration from God that is very much the basis for all we cherish and hold true in our faith. Most of us can relate in a small way to the love and pride God felt as He declared the words of affirmation to His Son.

Identify: Notice what took place next in verses 12-13. Notice it was the Holy Spirit that took Jesus to the wilderness. What can we learn about serving God as we read this passage?

Jesus had just been affirmed by the Father and His Spirit. But the Spirit had an additional task to perform. He was to “drive” Jesus into the wilderness. This is a strong word that indicates that the Spirit was insistent that Jesus go, and Jesus obeyed.

Jesus needed to come face-to-face with everything you and I would face as we seek to follow Him. He was taken into the wilderness to be subjected to the temptations of Satan and to face the dangers of wild animals. But there is one important statement no one should forget. As Jesus was guided by the Spirit into situations where He would face temptations and danger, the angels were there “serving Him!”

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

Let’s consider a few questions as we conclude:

- John was to prepare the way and clear the path for the coming Messiah. What actions should we take that prepare others to meet Jesus Christ? What actions indicate that we are clearing the path instead of cluttering the path to the Savior?
- How can you remain humble when others begin to respond to you because of your faith in Christ?
- How does Jesus obediently following the Spirit into the wilderness to face danger and temptation help you as you follow Jesus?

As you go about your daily routines this week, consider how you can introduce people to Jesus. Perhaps some of the characteristics of John the Baptist and the reality of who Jesus really is will change the way you introduce others to the Good News of the Gospel!