

The Gospel according to Mark

Mark1 - Title and Opening preaching of Jesus

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Abbreviations:

DSA^{ubs4} = Discourse Segmentation Apparatus of UBS4 ¹⁹⁹⁴
 UBS4¹⁹⁹⁴ = Greek Text of the United Bible Societies, 4th Edition 1994
 NA²⁸ = Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland, 28th edition

Some opening summary remarks:

1. The Old Testament references in Mark [69]
 - a. [1.1-13/15] Prologue [6]
 - b. [1.14/16-8.21-26] Section 1 [17] in 13 locations
 - c. [8.22/27-10.45/52] Section 2 [22] in 12 locations
 - d. [10.45/11.1 - 16.8] Section 3 [24] in 13 locations
 - e. Doubles in the last eight chapters
 - f. Half are from the prophets [37] Daniel [9], Isaiah [19] esp. Is 40-66 [14]; and the Torah [19]
 - g. They concern: [a] Jesus' identity and mission [36]
 [b] Points of Law [16]
 [c] threats of judgment [10]
 [d] warnings in relation to discipleship [7]
2. Section 1 - Jesus' astonishing divine authority
 - a. To forgive sins [Mk 2.7], effect deliverance [Mk3.27] pronounce on and even embody the Torah [Mk 3.5]
 - b. Generates hostility: leads to [Mk 3.29,4.12,7.6,10] including the uncomprehending disciples [Mk 8.17-18]
3. Section 2 - on the way to Jerusalem
 - a. Focus on Jesus' rejection, suffering and cross bearing. This latter shows the true nature of discipleship and hoiness.
 - b. Only two points of law are towards outsiders.
4. Section 3 - In Jerusalem
 - a. Three Davidic Psalms, two of which are Messianic
 - b. Two texts [Mk 14.24,27] show the meaning of Jesus' death
 - c. Three non-Messianic Psalm references [all from Psalm 22, close out the narrative
5. Eschatology
 - a. Mark 13
 - b. Only in a crucified Jesus does true holiness finds its fulfilment

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6. Isaiah 40-55 and the New Exodus
 - a. Study of Mark 1.2-3
 - b. The amalgum of three texts
 - c. How we need to understand the OT themes to see the quotations in their setting and development
7. Study of Isaiah 40-55
8. Study of Exodus 23.20
9. Study of Malachi 3.1

Mark 1.1-8 The preaching of John the Baptist [Matt 3.1-12; Luke 3.1-9,15-17; Jn 1.19-28

See Special study on the opening title and section.

Mark 1.9-11 the Baptism of Jesus [Matt 3.13-17; Luke 3.21-22]

1.9

...Jesus came...

In 1.4-8 the Lord is announced indirectly by John the Baptist as the greater One who is coming. Now here, in 1.9-11 he is introduced directly. He comes from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized by John.

By placing verse 8 and 9 together Mark achieves a powerful contrast between the baptism that Jesus us to bring to others – one of life giving power and union with God - and the one which he himself submits to – the baptism into repentance and submission to the judgment of God of which Israel is caught up and deserving. Jesus comes to John as a true Israelite.

John's ministry has indicated that the judgment time is coming – Jesus steps into the water to indicate that He will bear the brunt of this judgment and accept it for and on behalf of Israel. That is the burden of his mission.

Notice that 1.5 and 1.9 are both built syntactically in the same way.

[1] In one Judea and Jerusalem are in view – the central province and the holy city; on the other Nazareth – an unpromising region with real disinterest in the Law. This serves to express the concealment of Jesus even while this event will make significant revelation of Him – post resurrection!

[2] All the people come forth to be baptised: in the other one single representative is given us to consider. Only the one from Galilee turns out to be the unique Son who genuinely responds to the prophetic call.

So we learn that Mark wants us to consider Jesus, not as a single individual responsible for his own righteousness, but one who shares the inherited predicament of his people. Like Moses, he does not set himself apart from their sins [Exod 32.23].

1.10

...and immediately... [καὶ εὐθὺς]

Here is the first occasion of a form of construction Mark uses between 40 and 50 times in his Gospel. Sometimes it conveys, as its translation should, a sense of immediacy, so we translate “at once”. Other times, as the context dictates, it conveys a logical order of the events.

Either way, once we look at the whole Gospel throughout, we are prepared by the

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Old Testament to know that all revelation of God is an event – it takes place in space and time.

Armed with this understanding, we are left with the clear impression then, that for Mark, the revelation of God that is coming with Jesus as the kingdom draws near in Him, that everything in this man's life is an event of revelation one after the other. What He does next, may be introduced as a new immediacy, a new happening in which there is more revelation to see and recognize.

...coming up...coming down...

Only the man from Nazareth has the answering coming down from heaven as he himself comes up put of the water. There is a threefold movement to consider:

[1] the rending of the heavens [Isaiah 64.1; LXX 63.19; Ezek 1.1]. The pattern of Exodus 19.10ff meant that God could not come down until the people had been consecrated. Jesus had done this by his confession of sin on behalf of many; He had walked into the waters of baptism in obedience to his Father's will expressed through his prophetic relative. He had consecrated Himself in faith to trust his Father in this enterprise.

1.11

[2] The voice from heaven

There is a sonship if Israel which is to be renewed in the wilderness [Ex 4.22ff; Jer 2.2; Hos 11.1-3]. This is Sonship at its peak – God announces his pleasure and that He is such a beloved Son. He is the object of God's election.

Beloved conveys the idea of a unique Son.

He does not become Son at his baptism; none of what happens here alters Jesus essential status, but serves to indicate the significance of his submission to the Father

[3] The descent of the Spirit as a dove.

Both [2] and [3] are associated with the new Exodus of Isaiah [32.15;44.3;63.10-14]. The Spirit comes upon Jesus in fulfillment of this.

Mark 1.12-13 The beginning of the Galilean Ministry [Matt 4.1-11; Luke 4.1-13]

This appears to be, as we read the other evangelists, to be an incredibly truncated, short record of the temptation of Jesus. But we must read this as Mk wants us to understand it.

It tells us what it means for Jesus to heed John the Baptist's message. In spite of his being told that He is God's beloved Son, he needs to remain submissive. The Spirit does not give Him the freedom to abandon the wilderness after his baptism. This teaches us, amongst other things to read the baptism as a beginning of something serious and significant.

We notice that he sees the temptation taking place over the 40 days.

1.12

...the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness...

The wilderness is especially associated with demons and is an unclean place [Lk 8.29; 11.24; Mtt 12.43].

1.13

This verse clarifies the consequences of what it means for Jesus to have been baptized. It means confrontation with Satan, temptation, the exposure to wild beasts

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and the reception of the ministry of angels.

All of these details arise historically in the wilderness tradition. So we are invited to see Jesus as reminiscent of Israel's struggles in the wilderness.

...in the desert 40 days...

Matt adds the reason for this impulsion of the Spirit – it is to be tempted of the devil. The forty days recalls Moses time on Mt Sinai, and Elijah's wanderings in the wilderness to Mt Horeb.

Both Moses and Elijah are men who are shaped by the wilderness. It is this that leads us to see the wilderness as that which is not exhausted by the 40 days, but rather indicative of the whole of Jesus' public ministry. This is going to mean that we might take the whole of the public ministry of Jesus as a representative/substitutive ministry as the servant of God.

...being tempted by the devil...

See Ex 24.18; 1 K 19.8,15; Acts 1.3

Remaining in the wilderness always leads to temptation. This is the historical circumstances of Israel. And it is here that Satan attempts to frustrate the work of the kingdom, and so this is what it means for Jesus to have embarked upon it. These things happen "immediately".

Mark does not record the victory over the devil, nor the end of the temptation. It is this evangelists' distinctive understanding that Jesus did not win the decisive victory in the wilderness during the forty days, nor did he cease to be tempted.

This means that Mark, who does not report the content of the temptation – what it consisted in – makes it clear that what is uppermost is the confrontation. The whole Gospel will demonstrate the manner in which Jesus was tempted.

...he was with the wild beasts...

Only Mark records this. The wilderness is a place of curse, no good tree, fruit or anything grows there – it is only a place for wild beasts and significantly, when paradise is finally to arrive there are no wild beasts, harmful to men and women, there [Is 35.9; Ezek 34.23-28].

This may also recall the scapegoat, the second animal of Yom Kippur. It bears the sins away into the wilderness, thus leaving the camp of Israel cleansed. Is there a theme here being announced of how Jesus' life and ministry will be bearing the cure of the destiny of the scapegoat who cleanses his people by bearing away the uncleanness to the only place where uncleanness is fitting to be placed – the wilderness.

...angels ministered to him...

See 1 Kings 19.5-7

There is no indication in Mark that the serving angels are withdrawn. Mark thinks the wild beasts, the angels as the servants of God attend Jesus throughout the public work.

Mark 1.14-15 The beginning of the Galilean Ministry [Matt 4.12-17; Luke 4.14-15]

See also Daniel 9.25; Galatians 4.4; Ephesians 1.10 cf Luke 21.8

1.14

...after John was handed over...

This is a definite terminus a quo – a point of departure for all that follows.

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Both Matt and Mk assume that it is well known. Luke tells the story Lk 3.18-20. This teaches us that, while it is the actions of men and women to handover John the Baptist nevertheless, the timing of God is uppermost in the beginning of Jesus ministry. We are left in no doubt that, it is not the actions of men that are decisive for the ministry – this is a timing of God; as Jesus indicates.

Later, coming down from the Transfiguration, the comments of Jesus on JB will make clear that his demise was consistent with this time when God is among his people as a suffering servant.

...Jesus came into Galilee...

The journey, as seen from John's perspective was in fact a withdrawal from Judea where the death of John and Jesus' fame had stirred up the jealousy of the Pharisees [Jn 4.1]. John states that Jesus 'came again' and that the route was through Samaria.

...preaching the gospel of God...

The coming into Galilee was a preaching tour of Jesus. If we read the genitive as a subjective genitive it would mean God's gospel or the gospel of God. This puts the emphasis upon the fact that God is the source and author of the good news and that this is what Jesus is preaching. He is announcing news that comes from, and originates with God.

It implies a gracious initiative of God to announce that something of import to those who hear has taken place.

1.15

...the time has been fulfilled...

We think of a point of time when things take place or happen. The Hebrews thought of a space of time which must elapse before something happened. [So Cranfield quoting Campbell].

This directs our thinking back to the promises of God with reference to what He had said would be in the future for Israel.

...the time...

Or, as *καίρος* can be translated, the season. It is the 'right' time, the appropriate time. It designates a choice of God, it speaks of when He wants to do something which He had promised [Romans 1.1-4].

...the kingdom of God has drawn near...

Here we have the arrival of the rule of God among the people of God. In this sense there is an activity which has now taken place in the person of Jesus which is the initiative of God in coming to his people as a direct fulfillment of his promises.

Such a coming not only sets up the appropriateness for the response Jesus will call for, they are the grounds for such a response and therefore its command.

...repent...believe in the good news...

These imperative verbs make clear for us that this commanded response will yield the blessing if obeyed. They are responses that God deems to be appropriate since

[a] the time is fulfilled

What time is this? What promises are we thinking of here?

[b] the kingdom of God has drawn near

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The actions of God, as gracious actions of [a] and [b] are the basis for the required response. Unless the actions of God had set up the conditions where repentance and faith are possible, then such responses would be meaningless.

Here we need to see that Jesus preaches the kingdom of God? As it draws near, this, in the understanding of Jesus, is good news. It is because it can be responded to.

Later we see that the apostles preach Jesus.

Mark 1.16-20 The calling of the four fishermen [Matt 4.18-22; Luke 5.1-11]

1.16

...sea of Galilee...

Matthew and Mark carry us directly to the sea shore. Luke prefaces the preaching at Capernaum with the synagogue scene at Nazareth.

John adds Tiberias. Luke adds in 5.1 Gennesaret which was apparently the name for the western shore [Mark 6.53].

...Simon and Andrew...

They both come from Bethsaida [John 1.44cf Mk 6.45]but at this time they are residing in Capernaum [Mk1.20]. Their father's name was Jonas [Mtt 16.17] or John [Jn1.42; 21.15-17]. Andrew had been a disciple of the Baptist [Jn 1.35,40] but both Andrew and Simon had been following Jesus for some time, seeing miracles in Galilee [Jon 2.7] and Jerusalem and also they were baptizing [Jn 3.22,4.2].

1.17

...follow after me...

Other forms of this command are

[i] ἔρχεσθαι Mk 8.34

[ii] ἀπέρχεσθαι Mk 1.20

[iii] ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω Mtt 10.38

Here the word simply implies any personal attendance such as that of a soldier.

...fishers of men...

Used in the OT in the bad sense only Jeremiah 16.16cf Ezekiel 29.4ff; Amos 4.2ff Hab 1.14-17.

Or it may be simply that the men's occupation suggested the image that Jesus used.

1.18

...followed him...

Here we have the use of ἀκολουθεω which suggests what is more clearly a disciple-rabbi relationship. If these are the words of Peter, then they may betray what he understood as to what he thought they were doing.

1.19

...James...John...

Luke 5.10 tells us that James and John were commercial partners to Andrew and Simon. When John is mentioned second as the 'his brother' then we might understand that John is younger than James.

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...and they ... [or they too...]

Just as Jesus had seen Simon and Andrew in their boat, so now he saw this second pair cf Luke 1.36; Acts 15.27,32]. They were putting their nets in order [καταρτίζοντες] which would involve mending, folding and cleaning them ready for another night's fishing.

1.20

...he called them.....

καλω, κλησις, κλητος are very rich words in theological significance in the Bible. We can make a preliminary study of Prov 1.24; Is.41.9; 42.6; 43.1; 45.3; 46.11; 48.12,15; 50.2; 51.2; 65.12; Roman 8.30; 9.11,24; 1 Cor 1.9,26; 1 Pet 1.15; 2.21; 5.10.

Mark 1.21-28 The man with the unclean spirit [Luke 4.31-37]

1.21

...Capernaum...

There are few places named in Mark . It is on the NW shore of Galilee 2 miles west of the place where the Jordan flows into it.

...he taught in the synagogue...

The synagogue teaching seems to be a feature of the earlier part of Jesus' ministry, we hear no more after 6.2.

There was a conviction in Jesus that the will of God was to be found expressed in the scripture and the law. His unquestioned competence compelled their attention; even though he did not possess the conventional qualifications [Jn 7.15; Mk 6.2ff]

1.22

...they were amazed...

Amazement is a strong feature of this gospel. We see it at:

[i] the effect of the teaching of Jesus on the people [11.18]

[ii] upon the disciples 10.26

[iii] the effects of a miracle 7.37

[iv] θαυμάζω 5.20; 15.5,44

[v] ἐκθαυμάζω 12.17

[vi] θαμβοῦμαι 1.27, 10.24,32

[vii] ἐκθαμβοῦμαι 9.15 [16.15ff]

[viii] ἐξίστημι 2.12. 5.42; 6.51; etc

...scribes...

was a word used for ordained theologians in the oldest Rabbinic traditions, according to Daniel Rops.

1.24

...come to destroy us...

Only one demon seems to be in control for this man, yet he speaks for the whole of the demons as a class. There is a recognition of the identity of Jesus [James 2.10] and there is an awareness that He is the destroyer of the demons. Notice the demon is concerned about being destroyed, not being evicted. Jesus will be content

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to evict them – his focus is on the salvation and liberty of men and women at this time.

...be quiet and come out...

The offence was two fold

[a] the demon is confessing that they know who he is. To have allowed the disclosure of Jesus' divine Sonship to have gone un-rebuked would compromise the veiledness which is the essential characteristic of God's self-revelation. The word used here $\phi\mu\omicron\upsilon\nu$ has the literal meaning "be muzzled", be silent.

[b] the inhabiting of one of God's creatures made in his image. Hence the command to come out, and this is the work of a word of command, not a matter of touching the person of the man.

1.26

...after convulsing him...it came out.....

"Convulse" may be right; the word is to rend, tear. Luke puts the emphasis on the completed nature of the demon's defeat.

In coming out the spirit obeyed. This is a sign of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God [Matt 12.28/ /Luke 11.20 and the understanding of John is that Jesus came to "destroy the works of the devil [1 John 3.8].

There are six features, listed by Barrett to this exorcism.

- [1] There are details which demonstrate the demonized man's state
- [2] Recognition of the demons by the exorcist
- [3] The address of the exorcist to the demon
- [4] There is an expulsion by a word of command
- [5] There is evidence of the expulsion
- [6] There is the amazement of the onlookers

1.27

"...new teaching..."

This is 'new' in respect of quality, not 'new' in the sense of time. Here was not a teacher speaking some novelty [eg as they do on Mars Hill]. Rather this is new in the sense of a different order.

The RV [1888] and the RSV [1949] place a stop after the word new and they take 'according to authority' with the following words.

Cranfield thinks it goes with the "new" so: What is this? New teaching with authority!"

Mark 1.35-39 A preaching Tour [Luke 4.42-44]

1.35

...in the morning, a great while before day... $\pi\rho\omega\acute{\iota}$ $\epsilon\grave{\nu}\nu\upsilon\chi\alpha$ $\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ we have three adverbs together.

$\pi\rho\omega\acute{\iota}$ means 'in the early hours' which is the last watch of the night between 3am and 6am. $\epsilon\grave{\nu}\nu\upsilon\chi\alpha$ $\lambda\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ means literally '[while] very dark' lonely or quiet place - $\epsilon\grave{\rho}\eta\mu\omicron\nu$ - is used adjectivally. It doesn't necessarily mean 'desert' here. It is better to translate 'lonely' or 'quiet' - the country around Capernaum was cultivated at this time.

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1.36

...he hunted for him... a strong word is *κατεδιώξεν* meaning to track down, hence pursue. Weymouth translates this 'searched everywhere'

...those with him... presumably Andrew, John and James.

1.37

Luke has the crowd finding Jesus.

...everyone is searching for you... perhaps the disciples do not want Jesus to lose the opportunities that are being generated by his visit.

1.38

Let us go...

Ἄγωμεν is a hortatory subjunctive *ἄγω* has two meanings: [a] to bring or lead and [b] to go. It is [b] here.

...so that I might preach there also...

Jesus had come to proclaim the kingdom. The delivery of the word was the primary in breaking activity of the rule of God; the healings and the casting out of demons was a demonstration of it.

...that is why I came out...

His "coming out" refers,
[a] either to his exiting Capernaum. This is supported by the use of the same verb for his leaving Jerusalem [verse 35]
[b] or his mission from the Father. [John 8.42,13.3] And notice Luke's substitution of *ἀπεστάλην*. Perhaps Luke is leaving the inference deliberately veiled.

1.39

"into the whole of Galilee"

Such a preaching cycle may have lasted months. Notice that Jesus confined his preaching to the synagogues.

Mark 1.40-45 The Cleansing of the Leper [Matt 8.1-4; Luke 5.12-16]

1.40 a leper *λεπρός* – this is a wide term covering a variety of skin diseases. *λέπρα* means a 'rough scale' a 'bark or a husk'.

If you wish/will you are able to cleanse me – the leper understands within himself that the Lord can certainly do what he is asking. What he seeks from Him is whether He would wish to do so.

1.41 the expression for the compassion of Jesus *σπλαγχιθεὶς* has a textual variant in Codex Bezae, which has *ὀργισθεὶς* 'being angry'. It is certainly the more difficult reading of the two variants. Those who accept the variant think in terms of Jesus being angry because ;

[a] the man approached him

[b] he had interrupted his preaching

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[c] implied some doubt as to his willingness to be compassionate

[d] He was angry at Satan, and the state of affairs, that such leprosy was within this man's life at all.

Calvin, who accepts the variant of Jesus feeling compassion for the man, states 'By his word alone He might have healed the leper but He applied...the touch of His hand, to express, the feeling of compassion.'

See also 7.33 – where He puts fingers in the ears of the deaf man; and 8.22 where the people bring him a blind man so that He might 'touch' him.

1.42 The disease is described as 'leaving' the man – it was forced to go away. His subsequent state is described as cleansed, which makes the picture of a defiling element which has attached to the man and is now forced to leave.

1.43

The Aorist Middle participle ἐμβριμησάμενος does not contain the idea of anger. It was originally used of horses 'boiling over' with anger, but here it indicates a strong emotion. [The Lord uses this word of Himself in John 11.33,38]. It conveys a strength of feeling shown in the tone and the manner of his speaking – 'He gave him a stern injunction...'; Jesus is driving home his request for secrecy.

1.44 – μη with an Aorist subjunctive is one method of expressing a prohibition. Mark is fond of using the double negative, as here; they do not cancel each other out.

'Go!' – ὑπάγε is a favourite Markan word. The -ἄγω root is intransitive and means go and should not be confused with the other meaning of ἄγω which means bring. ὑπάγω has been described as a homely word which means that 'he goes his way'. It is much less formal than Luke's word πορεύομαι.

NA²⁷ leads us, through its marginal cross reference, to Jesus' command to the leper as referring to Leviticus 13.49,14.2-4 LXX

[i] This will have the effect of undercutting the charges of law breaking which the next five controversy pericopes will raise [2.1-3.6]. Jesus' basic orientation to law and the priesthood is one of compliance, and this demonstrates that Jesus is an obedient Son. See Jesus attitude to law in 7.1-23; 10.1-12;;19-21

[ii] Whereas the law can only declare [confirm, ratify] the healing Jesus can effect the healing. In this way He is placed in relation to Moses' priesthood as the prime initiator of healing, whereas the priesthood is seen simply as a recogniser that a change in the status of the leprosy has taken place.

1.45

There is a change of subject mid-way this verse. We are perhaps best to understand the leper as going out and proclaimed it everywhere.

"he began to preach..."

Mark is very fond of the ἤρξατο followed by an infinitive. He uses it 26 times. Matthew and Luke usually turn these phrases into a single verb and omit the . Some scholars think that this reflects a Semitic idiom. Moffat translates "he proceeded to proclaim...'

Jesus, by virtue of his incarnation, can only be in one place at a time. This means that he cannot preach where and how he likes.