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Mark 1

Jesus' Early Ministry

During the events of Mark's account, Roman legions are keeping the peace in an empire that extends from Britain in the west to Persia in the east. John the Baptist and Jesus begin their ministries in Galilee and along the Jordan River, unnoticed by Tiberius Caesar in Rome and his governors in Palestine.

Verse 1 can be read as the title for the whole book of Mark. **Messiah** is a Hebrew word that is translated **Christ** in Greek. It is a title that means "anointed one."

Read Mark 1:1-8

1. Mark quotes an Old Testament prophecy about a messenger who will come from God. Where will the messenger work?

What is his task?

What is his message?

2. In what ways does John the Baptist fulfill the Old Testament prophecy about the messenger?

Note: To the Jews, John's dress signified he was a prophet like the Old Testament prophet Elijah. His food was that of the poor.

3. In what ways would John's ministry prepare the people for the Messiah?

How does repentance prepare us to receive a Savior?

Read Mark 1:9-15

4. Locate Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and the Jordan River on the map on page 127. Notice that Jesus walks more than 60 miles to be baptized by John. What are the unique events at Jesus' baptism?

How are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit represented here?

5. Imagine verses 12 and 13 as a large painting. What facts about the temptation does Mark emphasize by the setting, and who and what he includes?

6. After his temptation, Jesus begins to preach the good news of God in Galilee. What does this suggest about the outcome of his temptation?
7. What similarities and what differences do you see between Jesus' preaching (verse 15) and John's (verses 4, 7-8)?

Read Mark 1:16-20

8. From what class of society does Jesus call his first disciples?

Why do you think he does not call religious leaders, scribes, and priests?

9. How does Jesus change the focus of the work of Simon and Andrew?

What indications are there that James and John are perhaps younger and financially better off than Simon and Andrew?

10. What comments might the families or neighbors have made when these four followed Jesus?

What reactions would there be today?

Read Mark 1:21-28

11. In the synagogue at Capernaum, what impresses the people about Jesus' teaching (verses 22, 27)?
12. How does the unclean spirit address and identify Jesus?

What pronoun does the spirit use in referring to himself?

What does he fear?

13. How do Jesus' two commands make it clear that he regards the unclean spirit as a separate entity from the man it is possessing?

Note: Do not spend a lot of time at this point discussing evil spirits. Mark will mention them several times in his book and you will learn more as you study further.

Read Mark 1:29-34

14. How do the four disciples react to the crisis they find in the home of Simon and Andrew?
15. What events of this Sabbath day stimulate the crowd's activity at sundown?

Note: The Jewish Sabbath ends at sundown.

16. Once again Jesus refuses to let demons speak (verses 25, 34). What reasons do you think he has for this action?

Read Mark 1:35-39

17. On the Sabbath day Jesus taught in the synagogue, cast out the evil spirit, healed Simon's mother-in-law, and after sunset healed the sick and cast out many demons from the people the crowd brought. After such a day when, where, and why does Jesus pray?
18. Why are Simon and the disciples looking for Jesus?

How is this a temptation for Jesus?

19. Why does Jesus set the priorities on his ministry of preaching and healing as he does?

Locate on your map the places where Jesus preaches in his early ministry.

Read Mark 1:40-45

20. The reader might conclude from verse 38 that Jesus does not care about people's physical needs, but in verse 40, Mark records Jesus' response to a man with leprosy. What question does the man have?

What would it mean to this man to have Jesus touch him rather than just speak to him?

21. How does the man's disobedience to Jesus' strict order interfere with Jesus' plan?

*Note: The term **leprosy** included some other skin diseases as well as leprosy itself. Under Jewish law anyone who recovered from such a skin disease had to be examined by a priest and go through a ceremony of restoration (Leviticus 14). After receiving a certificate that he was clean, he could return to live in society.*

SUMMARY

1. How does Mark begin to prove his thesis that Jesus is ***the Messiah, the Son of God?***
2. What indications are there that Jesus is also truly human?
3. What impressions do you get of Jesus thus far?

CONCLUSION

Mark begins his record of the life of Jesus Christ with Jesus' public ministry rather than with his birth as Matthew and Luke do. Mark links Jesus to the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah by including the purpose and effect of John the Baptist's ministry. He begins to reveal who Jesus is by describing Jesus' baptism, temptation, and early preaching and healing ministry in Galilee.