

# MARK 1:1 – 15

This "sentence" has no verb.  
It acts like a title for the book.

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>12</sup> As it is written  
(*Genesis 1:1*)

in Isaiah the prophet, **Behold!** I send my messenger before your face, who  
(*Malachi 3:1*)  
(*Exodus 23:20*)  
will prepare your way. <sup>3</sup> the voice of one *crying* in the wilderness: 'Prepare the  
(*Isaiah 40:3*)  
way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' <sup>4</sup> John appeared, baptizing in the

wilderness and *proclaiming* a baptism of repentance for the **forgiveness** of  
sins. <sup>5</sup> And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him  
and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, *confessing* their sins. <sup>6</sup>

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his  
(*2 Kings 1:8*)

waist and ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And he *preached*, *saying*, "After me  
comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy  
to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize

you with the Holy Spirit." <sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of  
(*Ezekiel 36:26-27, 39:29*)

Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And when he came up out  
of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit  
(*Isaiah 64:1*)  
descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my  
beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." <sup>12</sup> The Spirit immediately drove  
---> *Mark 9:7* (*Isaiah 42:1*)

Mark tells us that Jesus is the one to see and hear. The message is directed to Him ("YOU are my ... with YOU..."). This is for the sake of Jesus. Compare this with Mark 9:7.

The passages from the prophets speak of preparing the way of God, the king! They reference a new Exodus.

8 The prophets prepare the way for John's ministry.

Repentance is an action of turning 180° - leaving old ways/kingdom to be aligned with God's way/kingdom

John fulfills the Isaiah prophesy as he:  
\* is a prophetic messenger that looks like Elijah;  
\* calls out in the wilderness;  
\* prepares people for king Jesus through repentance and baptism and the teaching about His ministry.

8 John prepares for Jesus' coming.

General to specific: all being baptized by John and then the specific and unique baptism of Jesus.

Jesus fulfills the teaching of John - He is mightier, and He is filled with the Spirit (and so can freely give the Spirit).

The voice from heaven has combined two Old Testament passages. Jesus is the beloved Son - the king of Psalm 2. He is also the suffering servant of Isaiah. This is what it will mean for Him to be the true Messiah.

him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And he was in the wilderness forty **40** days being

tempted by **Satan**. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were

(Isaiah 65:25, Genesis 2)

ministering to him. <sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee,

lit. "was handed over" or "betrayed"  
---> Mark 3:19, 9:31, 15:1

**proclaiming** the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and **saying**, "The time is fulfilled, and the

**kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.**"

(Isaiah 61:1)

John and the  
Spirit prepare  
Jesus for His  
ministry.

Culmination:  
everything has  
been working  
towards this  
moment.

The time the prophets  
and John spoke of is  
now here. The Mighty  
One has come; the  
kingdom of God is here!

The  
Kingdom  
of God is  
Here!

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## NOTES:

1:1

The term "**beginning**" is often associated with the commencement of a king's rule. (For an example, see Jeremiah 26:1.) There is also an allusion here to Genesis 1 and the very beginning of history, where God creates the earth and His kingdom. Mark is describing a new work of creation in the ministry of Jesus.

"**Gospel**" is a Greek term meaning "good news." It often referred to the message a herald delivered about a victory on the battlefield, the birth of an emperor, or the accession of an emperor to the throne. In the Old Testament, the prophets used the term to describe God's end-time deliverance (e.g., Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; Nahum 1:15).

The name "**Jesus**" is the Greek translation for the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning "Yahweh is salvation".

"**Christ**" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah", meaning "Anointed One." In the Old Testament the two main groups of people who are anointed for service are kings and priests. The dominant expectation, reflected in the psalms and prophets, was that one of David's royal descendants would take the throne again when God restored His kingdom to Israel. The Old Testament describes the expected Messiah as one chosen and empowered by God, appointed for the redemption of God's people, who would judge His enemies and be given dominion over the nations. In Jesus' time, many believed the Messiah would be a warrior who would overthrow Roman authority and establish a political kingdom for Israel. Various messianic figures arose in first-century Palestine, promising divine intervention, but all were ultimately crushed by the Romans. (See Isaiah 7–11; the Servant Songs in Isaiah 40–55; and the royal psalms: 2, 45, 72, 89, 110.)

"**Son of God**" is an image rooted in God's description of His special relationship with Israel (Exodus 4:22–23; Hosea 11:1). God is portrayed as Israel's creator, provider, leader, and protector. Later in Israel's story, David and his descendants were given a unique status of sonship by God (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2). In the ancient Near East, kings and emperors often referred to themselves as sons of the

gods, claiming a special role as representatives or mouthpieces of the divine. Jesus as the Son of God is the true Israel and the promised King of God's people, destined to reign forever. While Israel and David, as sons of God, were prone to sin and rebellion, Jesus, the Son, is God's perfect representative and leader in the world.

### 1:2 – 3

Mark begins by writing, "***as it is written in Isaiah***," but then combines passages from Isaiah, Malachi, and Exodus. This reflects an accepted rabbinic literary technique called *conflation*, where texts with a common theme are cited together. Isaiah is specifically credited because his prophetic ministry plays a significant role in interpreting the ministry of Jesus throughout the Mark's gospel. Additionally, the passage from Isaiah is the longer and more prominent quotation in the introduction.

The first citation is drawn from Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1. In both passages, God promises to send a messenger to prepare His people. In Exodus 23:20, God's messenger will lead His people into the promised land, securing their entrance and driving away all their enemies. The people are instructed to listen to Him carefully and obey His guidance in order to arrive safely. In Malachi 3:1, the messenger prepares the people for the Lord's return to His holy temple in the promised land. This promise is especially significant because, although God's presence left the temple when His people went into exile, the prophets foretold a day when He would return (e.g., Ezekiel 43:2–4). The messenger in Malachi calls the people back to covenant faithfulness, urging them to repent and prepare for the Lord's coming. Later in Malachi (4:5–6), this messenger is identified as an Elijah-like prophet. The coming of the Lord is described as a time of judgment and purification for His people, preparing them so that God can once again dwell among them.

Mark then cites Isaiah 40:3. This verse appears in the context of a passage offering comfort and good news to God's people. Isaiah uses figurative language to describe God's coming to His people. He portrays God traveling to Jerusalem on a road through the desert wilderness in the east. The listeners are called to respond by preparing the way for Him, just as they would prepare a road for a coming king—removing obstacles and making the path straight and even. When God comes to His people, Isaiah declares, all the people of the earth will witness His splendor and glory. It will be like a second Exodus as the land will once again be transformed into a promised land.

In Scripture, the words translated as "**wilderness**" or "lonely place" encompass more than barren deserts of sand dunes or rock; they also include pasturelands suitable for grazing livestock. The wilderness holds deep significance in Israel's history, evoking key moments of salvation and covenant. It was in the wilderness that God revealed His law and established His covenant with Israel during the Exodus. It was also a place of testing, where Israel spent 40 years before entering the promised land. Because of these formative events, the wilderness became symbolically associated with God's preparation of His people for His purposes. The wilderness came to be seen as the staging ground for Yahweh's future victory over the powers of evil. Many prophets envisioned a new Exodus and a day of salvation emerging from the desert. (See Exodus 16; Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 1, 2, and 8; Isaiah 40:1–5; Ezekiel 20:35–38.)

### 1:4 – 8

The practice of **baptism** was rooted in the ceremonial washings of the Old Testament and the ancient world, which symbolized the removal of impurity to become clean in a sacred space. By Jesus' time, Judaism had developed extensive customs around these rituals, with some groups, like the Pharisees, being particularly meticulous. Baptism, however, was distinct from these washings. Unlike repeated ceremonial cleansings, baptism was a one-time act involving full immersion. In John's era, it was primarily associated with non-Jews converting to Judaism, symbolizing a complete break from their old life and entry into God's people. This act carried profound symbolic weight, recalling how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and later the Jordan River—leaving behind slavery and wilderness to enter the promised land. For Jewish individuals to be called to baptism was shocking, even offensive—it implied they, too, were defiled like Gentiles and needed to be re-initiated into God's covenant

community. This directly challenged the prevailing belief that salvation was guaranteed simply by being descendants of Abraham.

**Repentance** in Scripture goes beyond a simple “change of mind.” It embodies the Old Testament and Jewish concept of “turning around” or “turning away” from sin. This call to repentance invites individuals to return to a posture of complete dependence on, trust in, and obedience to God. (See 1 Kings 8:47; Isaiah 30:15; 59:20; Jeremiah 15:19; Ezekiel 14:6; 18:32.) Repentance can also be understood as leaving behind allegiance to the kingdom of this world and stepping into God’s kingdom.

The term for **sin** conveys the idea of “missing the mark,” straying from the correct path, or failing to achieve the intended purpose. It can also signify a breach in relationship, rebellion, or even outright revolt. In the Old Testament, sins were atoned for through offerings in the temple, as only God could forgive sins. (See Leviticus 26:40–42; Deuteronomy 30:11–20; Psalm 51; Isaiah 59:1–2.)

In the Old Testament, **forgiveness** is deeply connected to the concept of atonement and is often linked with sacrificial practices. The Hebrew word for forgiveness, which means “to lift” or “to carry,” conveys the idea of sin being lifted off the sinner and removed. The Day of Atonement, the center of the Law, was the day that Israel celebrated and took notice of God’s forgiveness and mercy which enabled Him to dwell among them. According to the law, priests could pronounce forgiveness of sins based on repentance, restitution, and sacrifice. (See Exodus 34:6–7; Leviticus 17:11; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 31:34; Daniel 9:9; Micah 7:18–19.)

The **Jordan River** is a slow, winding river approximately 13 meters wide and 325 kilometers long. Situated below sea level, it cannot be used for irrigation like the Nile in Egypt, leaving Israel entirely reliant on rainfall. Yet, for the Jews, the Jordan River was far more than a physical water source. It held deep symbolic significance in their history of salvation. This was the river through which God’s people crossed to enter the Promised Land, marking the boundary between the wilderness and God’s promise. It was also a place of prophetic ministry, notably associated with Elijah. (See Joshua 3–4; 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 2; 2 Kings 5.)

**Jerusalem** is one of the world’s most renowned cities, with its history tracing back to at least the 3rd millennium BC. Nestled in the hills of Judah, it lies about 50 kilometers from the Mediterranean Sea and 30 kilometers from the Dead Sea. For Judaism, Jerusalem was the holy city of unparalleled significance, as it was home to the temple—the sacred place where God chose to dwell and meet with His people. During Jesus’ time, the city had a population of around 30,000 and served as the heart of Israel’s religious and cultural life.

John the Baptist’s attire of **camel’s** hair clothing and a leather belt was reminiscent of the typical dress of Hebrew prophets, particularly Elijah. This style is referenced in 2 Kings 1:8 and Zechariah 13:4, where Elijah is described as wearing a garment of hair and a leather belt. By adopting this distinctive look, John not only identified with the prophetic tradition but also symbolized his role as the forerunner of the Messiah, continuing the line of prophets who called the people to repentance and preparation for God’s coming kingdom. John’s diet of **locusts and honey** was significant both ritually and practically. According to Jewish law, locusts were considered ritually clean (Leviticus 11:22), making them permissible to eat, while honey was a simple, natural food source. This diet also reflected the austere and humble lifestyle of someone living in the desert, far from the comforts of urban life. It highlighted John’s separation from worldly luxuries and his focus on spiritual matters, embodying the simplicity and repentance he preached.

In the cultural context of Jesus’ time, removing someone’s **sandals** was a task usually assigned to a slave. However, some rabbis taught that this was too menial even for a Hebrew slave, who was expected to perform every duty for their master except the lowly task of removing sandals. John’s reference to being unworthy to untie the sandals of the Messiah (Mark 1:7) emphasized his humility and recognition of Jesus’ divine authority as well as the superiority and the greatness of His mission.

The prophets foretold a day when God would pour out His ***Spirit*** on His people, as seen in passages like Ezekiel 36:26-27, 39:29, and Joel 2:28-32. This outpouring was associated with a transformative renewal, where God would give His people new hearts, enabling them to fully obey His commands. The Spirit's work would empower them to live in obedience and fellowship with God, fulfilling His promises for their lives in the Promised Land. John's teaching about the Spirit placed him in line with the Old Testament prophets who foretold this great event, which was closely connected with the coming of God's kingdom.

1:9 – 13

**Nazareth** was a small, insignificant town in the region of Galilee. It is never mentioned in the Old Testament, the Jewish Talmud, or the writings of Josephus. It's likely that many people in Jerusalem had never even heard of Nazareth. Scholars believe that at the time of Jesus there may have been about 200 people who lived in this small town.

The "***tearing of the heavens***" alludes to Isaiah 64:1, where the prophet cries out for God to come in power, bring salvation, and reveal Himself to His people. Though God's people had returned to the promised land, they still longed for revival, renewal, and a tangible experience of God's presence and deliverance. Jesus fulfills this great hope. Interestingly, the word "tear" appears in Mark only twice: here at the beginning, and at the end when the temple veil is torn in two. Mark likely draws a deliberate parallel between these events, as the temple was seen as a symbolic model of the heavens and God's dwelling place. God kingdom is breaking into the world and made available to all.

The ***voice from heaven*** delivers a message that echoes two significant Old Testament passages. The first is Psalm 2:7: "You are my son." This coronation psalm was spoken over God's anointed kings, declaring His support and help for the ruler of His people. It also reflects God's covenant with David, in which He promised that David's kingly descendants would be like sons to Him. The second reference is Isaiah 42:1: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him..." This passage describes God's chosen Messiah, the faithful and suffering servant who will fulfill God's purposes. This servant will bring justice to the nations and salvation to His people. The voice glues these two images into one giving definition to the Messiah – an anointed king who suffers for his people to bring righteousness and salvation.

The number **40** often signifies a transformative event that ushers in a new stage in God's plan of salvation. For example, the 40 days of rain in the flood led to a new creation; the 40 days Moses spent with God on the mountain culminated in the construction of the tabernacle; and the 40 years in the wilderness prepared God's people to enter the promised land.

1:14 – 15

The word "***time***" in Jesus' message does not merely refer to chronological time but signifies a new era in God's creation and salvation plan. Jesus is announcing the arrival of this new era, the one anticipated by God's people, foretold throughout the Old Testament, and proclaimed by the prophets. God is now moving among His people in a new way. The Day of the Lord has arrived, and the time has come for the fulfillment and revelation of the prophets' promises.

The phrase "***kingdom of God***" does not appear in the Old Testament, yet it is a significant theme throughout the text. It signifies the realm where God reigns and resides, and where people live in submission and communion with Him. The concept of God's kingdom is established in the early chapters of Genesis but is subsequently lost to humanity due to sin. Throughout the Old Testament, there are glimpses of the restoration of this kingdom. These glimpses are seen particularly through the promised land and the temple, which serve as foreshadowings of the complete return of God's kingdom. The prophets foretold a future when God would reign without opposition from idolatry and disobedience, and when all nations would come to know and worship Him in a renewed creation. They connected the kingdom of God with the coming Messiah, who would guide God's people into this kingdom, much like Moses led the Israelites into the promised land.

## COMMENTARY:

### ¶1: TITLE (1:1)

The first verse of Mark serves as the title for the book. It introduces us to its central focus: the gospel of Jesus. This gospel is both Jesus' gospel and a gospel about Jesus. The term "gospel" comes from the Greek word meaning "good news," often associated with the proclamation of victory in battle or the expansion of an emperor's kingdom. In this context, Mark's gospel is the announcement of Christ's victory in the world and the expansion of His kingdom.

Mark describes this as "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus." This phrase echoes the opening of Genesis, where God created the world to be His dwelling place and kingdom. Similarly, Mark's gospel marks a new beginning—God's active work of re-creating the world through the return of His kingdom in Jesus. It also points forward, as this is *only* the beginning of the gospel. God's creative work and kingdom continue to unfold through the lives of Christ's Spirit-filled followers (which explains the abrupt ending of the gospel). Most significantly, this gospel is not merely a set of beliefs or practices; it is a person—Jesus Himself.

From the title, we learn two significant truths about Jesus. First, He is the Christ. Jesus is the anointed one of God, fulfilling God's promises of a King-Savior in the line of David, who would establish an everlasting kingdom and bring God's rule to Israel. At the time of Jesus, there were many conflicting ideas about the Messiah's identity and role. For this reason, the term "Christ" is not used again in Mark until chapter 8, giving Jesus time to redefine for his followers what it means to be the Christ. Second, Jesus is the Son of God. This title reveals His unique relationship with God and His role as God's representative. More importantly, in the cultural context of Mark's audience, the title "Son of God" would have directly challenged the Roman emperor's claim to divinity, as emperors often referred to themselves as "sons of the gods." Jesus, not Caesar, is the true ruling King, fulfilling God's promise to David. These two titles—Christ and Son of God—form the structure of Mark's gospel. In the first half, the disciples declare that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8:27) while the second half ends with a Roman centurion at the cross proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 15:39).

In summary, the title of Mark's gospel announces the beginning of the victory proclamation of Jesus, the anointed King and Savior. As this title sets the theme for the entire book, we should pay close attention to these key questions: What is revealed about the person of Jesus? What does it mean for Him to be the Christ and the Son of God? What is the nature of His kingdom? And how is this message good news for each of us?

### ¶2: THE PROPHETS (1:2 – 3)

The beginning of the gospel of Mark begins with a mixture of quotes from the Old Testament. In their original context, these quotes speak to God's provision of servants who prepare and lead God's people – both for Israel's entrance into the promised land in the past and for God's future meeting with His people in the promised land.

This beginning of the "beginning of the gospel" through these Scriptural citations makes a few important points. The beginning is connected to God's work of salvation throughout history and is bound to all of His promises of salvation for His people. The fact that Mark quotes three sections of the Scriptures – Torah, Major Prophet and Minor Prophet – highlights that all Scripture gives testimony to the gospel of Jesus. Jesus is indeed the fulfillment of all of God's promises to his people. What is more, Christ's ministry was not an afterthought or happenstance but the culmination of all of God's previous dealings with Israel and the very thing God has been leading them to and preparing them for all along. These three citations have the Exodus – the great salvation moment in history – as one of their common themes. Jesus' work is the second Exodus and is even greater than the first. Jesus will lead the people into the promised land of His kingdom, where people will know God.

These quotes not only speak of God's preparation through these servants but in a way also prepare the reader for God's coming and work. These quotes signify the importance of being prepared for the work of God in our lives and in the world. He is coming and bringing salvation with Him but to experience His gospel and to see His glory we must be prepared (through awareness and repentance). It is clear that Mark sees the fulfilment of these prophesies in the person of John the Baptist and Jesus so that we can understand or define their lives and ministries in connection with these verses. John the Baptist is the second Elijah figure who would proceed the coming of God's kingdom on Day of the Lord. He is one who calls in the wilderness and prepares the way for the Lord as he prepares the people for His coming and this great salvation event. Jesus is the Lord and king who is coming into His temple and whose glory will be made known to all. The pronouns in the quotes which once referred to God, now find meaning in the Christ, the Son of God. His coming is so great that it requires preparation!

The significance of Mark highlighting Isaiah is that, throughout the gospel, we see how Jesus perfectly fulfills the longings and hopes expressed in Isaiah's writings. Therefore, it will be important to draw connections between the gospel's message and Isaiah's prophecy throughout the book of Mark, as these connections will help us interpret the message more fully

### **¶3: JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:4 – 8)**

John prepares the people by calling them to be baptized in the Jordan River as an act of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. At the time, baptism was a cleansing ritual typically practiced by non-Jews who wanted to convert to Judaism. However, John makes the radical claim that all people, regardless of their heritage, are spiritually unclean and need to start fresh with God. This renewal requires repentance—a decisive turning away from their old lives—and is symbolized through baptism, marking their commitment to follow God completely. As a result, they would be in a condition to know and receive God's forgiveness.

The location of John's ministry is deeply significant. The Jordan River and the wilderness are places where God had previously saved His people and promised to save them again. Additionally, John's clothing evokes the memory of Elijah, the prophet who was foretold to come before the Day of the Lord. This connection explains why so many people came to him for baptism. The arrival of the long-expected Elijah signaled that God's kingdom and judgment were imminent, and the people wanted to be spiritually clean and ready for this moment. John's simple clothing and diet also reflected his total dedication to God's purposes and his reliance on God's provision.

John's message, which complemented his baptism, was that a Stronger One—the Messiah—was coming. His role was to prepare the way for Him through this baptism of repentance. The Messiah's greatness was such that John did not consider himself worthy even to perform the lowest task of a servant for Him. While John's baptism symbolized an outward cleansing (a preparation for the Messiah), the Messiah's ministry would bring an inward transformation. He would baptize with the Holy Spirit, fulfilling God's promises of the new covenant. Through the outpouring of the Spirit, God's people would receive new hearts, enabling them to obey Him fully and to live with Him in His promised land.

### **¶4: JESUS' BAPTISM (1:9 – 13)**

Jesus comes from the obscure town of Nazareth in the small, uninfluential region of Galilee. By being baptized by John, Jesus publicly aligns Himself with God's work and identifies with His people. He is stating that he wants to be a part of what God is doing in the world and this new Exodus – that John and the prophets have spoken about. This baptism also will come to signify His death, burial, and resurrection, which He undergoes for our salvation and which His followers participate in when they are baptized. Though Jesus is the Mighty One John foretold and the one who will lead this new act of salvation, He humbly chooses to associate with the people rather than remain distant or detached. This moment marks the beginning of His ministry, as He is filled with the Holy Spirit, confirming His identity as the anointed one—the Christ.

The heavens being torn open is a dramatic image, signifying a permanent opening between God and humanity—just as the temple curtain, symbolizing the heavens, will be torn at the end of the gospel. Jesus' ministry inaugurates a cosmic shift, revealing God's unique plan for salvation (see Ezekiel 1:1). At this pivotal moment, God's Spirit descends on Jesus, affirming Him as the true Israel, the anointed one, and the Son of God.

The Spirit comes upon Jesus like a dove, symbolizing peace and the dawn of a new creation. Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters in Genesis and the dove signaled new life after the flood, the new creation begins with Jesus. He is the second and greater Adam, bringing restoration and renewal, and the second and greater Noah, ushering in salvation. Empowered by the Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-5), Jesus embarks on His mission of re-creation, forgiveness, and proclaiming God's kingdom. He is also the second and greater Moses, who brings his people out of slavery through the waters and into the new land of salvation.

God's voice affirms Jesus' identity and mission, declaring Him the Son of God in the line of David, the one who will fulfill God's promises of an everlasting kingdom. These words also echo Isaiah's suffering servant, who will bring salvation and justice to the nations. This baptismal and anointing event serves as both a coronation and a commissioning, affirming that Jesus' mission originates from God, not humanity, and that God's presence and provision will sustain Him.

Immediately, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, showing that being Spirit-led does not exempt one from trials. Instead, it propels Him into a life of mission, obedience and sacrifice. In the wilderness, Jesus confronts Satan and triumphs, succeeding where all others—including Israel—had failed. While Israel's wilderness experience was marked by rebellion and failure, Jesus remains faithful, overcoming every temptation.

The mention of wild beasts highlights the danger of the wilderness, a reality familiar to Mark's original audience, many of whom faced persecution and death in Roman arenas. Yet even in this peril, God's presence sustains and empowers Jesus. The wilderness imagery also recalls Adam in Eden. In this new creation event, Jesus, the new Adam, defeats the enemy in the wilderness to restore humanity and lead them back to God's presence. Where Adam failed in the garden exiling all into the wilderness, Jesus was true and faithful in the wilderness that he might bring all back into the garden home.

The wilderness becomes the setting for the second Exodus foretold in Isaiah 40:3. Jesus emerges as the leader who will guide His people out of the wilderness and into God's kingdom. After forty days—a number symbolizing preparation and transformation—Jesus returns victorious, ready to begin His public ministry, having overcome Satan and set the stage for the restoration of God's reign.

## ¶5: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS HERE (1:14 – 15)

In this final paragraph of the first section and introduction, Jesus' ministry begins and we are given a summary statement of the message that He preached wherever he went.

John the Baptist has faithfully carried out the ministry God has given to him. He has prepared the people for the coming of Jesus and His message. John is mentioned here for a number of reasons. First, this marks the ending of one time period in God's creation and salvation project. With the end of John's ministry, the beginning of a new period of eschatological time, which John had been preparing has come ("the time has come"). Second, John's life and imprisonment (and eventual death) prepare us for what will happen with Jesus. If they treated this great prophet who preached repentance, what will they do with Jesus who also preached repentance. Third, and probably most significantly, it is for us to draw a comparison between the messages of John and Jesus. Whereas the message of John pointed to a future moment, when the Spirit would be given by the Messiah, Jesus' message is in effect that this has now come.

The kingdom of God is the place where God and humanity live in unity and community under God's Lordship and Wisdom. It is the place where he reigns unencumbered by sin and death. In essence it is the "Garden of Eden" that God had created humanity to know and enjoy but that had been lost through

sin. Jesus' message is that the time has come for humanity to be led back into the garden (the new creation) and to live in unity with God and one another. This is truly good news that Jesus proclaims. Jesus' simple message is that our response to this message is to repent and to believe. We must leave behind our old lives (and the kingdoms of the world) and to trust God's words and purposes (and enter His kingdom which has come). But this is all that is required to know and experience His kingdom.

As this is a summary statement of Jesus' message, we can expect in the rest of Mark to see what it means that the kingdom of God has come and what it means to be people to live in repentance and belief.

## SUMMARY: MARK 1:1-15

The gospel of Mark is about the beginning of a new era – the era of Christ's victory in the world. Jesus is the long-hoped-for Messiah and King, who was spoken about by the prophets. God spoke to them and through them about a day when He would lead His people in a second Exodus into a new and better salvation and into a new creation. God has now brought about this promise for His people. He has sent His anointed one, His Son. Jesus is the great and powerful One who will give the promised Holy Spirit of the new covenant.

This passage is the beginning of “the beginning of the gospel.” And it is a passage about preparation. Each paragraph connects with the next as we see God prepare and fulfill His promises again and again. The prophets prepared the people for the coming of the one who would make straight paths for the Messiah. Through the faithful and Elijah-like ministry of John the Baptist, God prepared the way for Jesus' new ministry, as people were called to prepare their hearts in repentance. God also prepared His Son for this great ministry through His declaration and affirmation, through His anointing and empowering by the Spirit, and through wilderness experiences.

The message of the Son is that the time is here and that we must now repent and believe in the good news so that we can experience the long-awaited kingdom of God. This will lead to our forgiveness and life; this will lead to fellowship with God!

This message continues to be good news today. We live in the era of Christ's victory over sin and death and we are now invited to live in the kingdom of God. We continue the gospel story that was begun then as we carry this good message to the world. Today Jesus still calls us to repent and believe so that we might find life in His kingdom. We are to turn from the kingdoms of this world and from rebellion against God and to turn to Jesus and to follow Him as He leads us. We are called to believe and trust that in Him we can find life. We can also learn from this passage that when God begins a new ministry, He prepares His servants for it through His word, presence, and often through times of testing.

## APPLICATION – IDEAS ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP AND SERVICE

- This message continues to be good news today. We live in the era of Christ's victory over sin and death and we are now invited to live in the kingdom of God. We continue the gospel story that was begun then as we carry this good message to the world. We are called to boldly share this message with others. We can learn a lot from John the Baptist in this. He pointed to Jesus and nothing else and helped people look to Him. He was faithful in the time given to him to preach. He did not let anything from this world distract him. We can also learn from him that he sought to prepare people's hearts (through repentance, through preaching, and through a life that spoke to the hearts of his contemporaries) for the ministry of Jesus. We too must be people who point others to Jesus and help prepare the soil for His work in their hearts. How has your life been transformed by this good news? How can you actively participate in sharing it with others?
- Today Jesus still calls us to repent and believe so that we might find life in His kingdom. We are to turn from the kingdoms of this world and from rebellion against God and to turn to Jesus and to follow Him as He leads us. We are called to believe and trust that in Him we can find life. Why

is the kingdom of God good news to you personally? In what practical ways can you live out repentance and belief in your daily life?

- We can also learn from this passage that when God begins a new ministry, He prepares His servants for it through His word, presence, and often through times of testing. Times of testing do not point to the absence of God but to His “perfecting” us (see Hebrews 2:8-9, for example) for service. How is God preparing you for His work and message—through His Word, times of repentance, wilderness experiences, or other means? How can you be more attentive and responsive to God's preparation in your life?