

Explore the Bible: Introduced

August 21, 2023

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Sept. 3 focuses on Mark 1:1-13.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Bible lessons like this one have been an important part of the*

*Baptist Standard for many years. Each normally has a cost of at least **\$50** to produce. To ensure these lessons continue to be provided the rest of 2023 and into 2024, you can **make a donation** in any amount by visiting [our donation page](#). In the comments field, note your donation is toward the cost of Bible studies.*

How Mark begins (Mark 1:1)

Mark 1:1 was the first verse of God's word written after the birth of Jesus.

Peter, chosen by Jesus to be leader of the church, knew the good news about Jesus also must be in written form to be shared with others. The apostles were aging. A day was coming when they could neither go nor speak. There was no written account of Jesus, though decades had passed since Jesus returned to heaven.

Peter's longtime scribe was Mark. He describes Mark as "my son" in 1 Peter 5:13. We might wonder if the Holy Spirit led Peter to assign Mark the task of writing an account of what Peter had witnessed. These two men labored together to produce a document containing more spiritual impact than Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah, with Jesus alive in the account.

We see these elements of Peter and Mark's writing:

- It was Holy Spirit-inspired.

- It is concise, fitting on a scroll, sustained like the Old Testament model with holy scribes copying it for locations and generations into the future.
- It is so descriptive of Jesus that he can become our Lord from just reading the words.
- It is full of Jesus' words and deeds.
- It gives insight into Jesus' vision for the church.
- It is accepted as the word of God by apostles, believers and new converts.
- It is useful for worship, teaching and fighting evil.
- It can be shared with anyone.

Mark's scroll probably was finished between A.D. 60 and 70. Jesus lived on Earth between 4 B.C. and A.D. 29.

Mark's mother was named Mary. She lived in Jerusalem where she often hosted believers in her large home. Early Christians wrote that Mary's home was used for the Last Supper and was the site of the Holy Spirit's coming on Pentecost Sunday. Acts 12:1-17 tells us believers prayed in Mary's home for jailed Peter. As a young man, Mark likely met Jesus as he visited Jerusalem. Mark knew all the disciples.

Peter and Mark needed to select material from all Jesus' words and deeds for just one scroll. How? The Holy Spirit's answer seems to have been: "Peter knows Jesus. He remembers stories and actions of Jesus helping people. Write what Peter talks about in his sermons." That is what Mark wrote.

Mark's Gospel was soon followed by accounts of Luke, Matthew and John, each of which also was accepted by churches as sacred writings. The "good news" could now be heard from four different narrators as different collections of stories all inspired by Holy Spirit. These Gospels now have been read for almost 2,000 years. We cannot imagine our faith without

these wonderful eyewitness accounts of Jesus.

John the Baptist prepares the way (Mark 1:2-8)

Prophet Isaiah wrote vivid descriptions of the future Messiah. His prophetic voice was heard and remembered even as his people suffered under 700 hard years of foolish kings, military defeats, loss of their country, exile into other lands, remnants rebuilding their homeland, foreign kings in control, revolts, and now Roman control.

Prophet Isaiah told of a messenger from God, having a clear voice in a wild place, sent to help the people of Judah prepare to be ready for the Messiah.

Prophet Isaiah's foreseen messenger was John the Baptist, a miracle child of old Priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. John wore camel's hair clothing and a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild honey. No one in Jerusalem would have dressed, eaten or smelled like him. John's message was clear: "Change how you are living. Change now to get ready for the Messiah's coming."

People in town talked: "You have to go out there and see and hear this." People went.

People understood John as he said: "Your life now is not what you will want when the Messiah comes."

John asked them, "What do you regret?"

People had things they wanted to change about themselves.

At the Jordan River, John asked people to submit to a "baptism of repentance." Repent, or change means: "Remember God, pray, worship,

sing psalms, obey God's law, and teach your children to be godly. Get ready for the Messiah."

A waiting line formed. John helped each person to "fully dip into the water" to show they were a changed person, risen to live for God.

Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11)

When Jesus appeared at the Jordan in line with the others awaiting John's baptism, Matthew tells us John did not feel worthy to baptize Jesus. Nor did Jesus need to repent.

Jesus could expect to experience what others in line did: worshipping God, living by God's law, giving, loving others, praying, facing temptations, deprivation, pain and fatigue. Jesus had come to identify with people, to "fulfill all righteousness" as we would expect of the Perfect Lamb who would be offered in payment for the sins of the world.

Jesus insisted John baptize him, and John did.

The Trinity of God is present at the end of the baptism—the voice of our Father, the Son in flesh starting his ministry, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Three in One.

Testing of Jesus (Mark 1:12-13)

The Holy Spirit sent Jesus into the empty wilderness for 40 days to be tested. Jesus was hungry, thirsty and needed people. He was tempted by Satan to take shortcuts to meet his needs.

A person faced with a situation he or she doesn't like will look for a way out. Satan helps with creative suggestions. It may be OK to flee, unless we are in a situation where God wants us to be or we would sin in the process

of fleeing. Fleeing, as a habit, is risky.

Jesus said “no” to the temptations. Angels attended him, and Jesus came out of the wilderness having no sin.

Why would angels attend Jesus and not attend us?

Glen Funderburk has taught children’s Sunday school for many years. These lessons on the Gospel of Mark are written from the perspective of children.