

So, when the Good News of the kingdom of God was announced it challenged Roman authority and the deity of Caesar, and it brought hope to those oppressed by the ruling empire. It was not Caesar who offered a bridge between heaven and earth, but Jesus.

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, - Isaiah 61:1 NIV

King Jesus will always threaten the kings of this world and the kings of your life. But those other kings won't release you easily. Maybe you have already experienced the freedom from tyrants that Jesus offers. Is there an area where you once placed your faith in "another king" but God has freed you? What groups or individuals can you name who need to hear the good news of the kingdom and experience the freedom Jesus offers? Take a moment to pray for them now.

WRAP-UP

If you have been in the church for a while you may have heard the Gospel message many times. But we shouldn't let ourselves lose the awe and fascination of the Good News that Mark brings. Jesus is the Messiah. His kingdom has come to earth, and we need to repent, recognize and trust Him as king of our lives. As we examine Mark's account let's take time to reflect on what it means that the Son of God came to earth to rescue us and set us free.

MEMORY VERSE

15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" - Mark 1:15 NIV

Challenge-

Has the Gospel become so familiar that you have lost your sense of awe as you read the account of Jesus in Mark? Read through this Gospel again this week and pause as you recognize the weight of the truth that God became flesh, walked the earth, died and rose for your salvation. Because the Creator of the Universe loves you that much.

The Good News **The Gospel of Mark - Week 1**

INTRODUCTION

This week we begin an extended series in the Gospel of Mark. Mark (aka John Mark) draws his Gospel largely from Peter, who Mark traveled with as interpreter and faithfully recorded his stories of Jesus' life and ministry. Mark begins his account by declaring it to be "good news", which is the very definition of the word Gospel. In his book we find out that Jesus is the Messiah and how He became the Messianic King. In this Gospel Mark addresses the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, but also challenges the Roman authority under which his contemporaries lived. So, let's begin with an overview of the Gospel of Mark.

Ice Breaker

If you were going to have someone else tell your life's story, who would you trust to record all the details and represent you well?

Key Passage

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, - Mark 1:1 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Jesus in the Beginning – creation and re-creation

Mark's first statement in Mark 1:1 sets the tone. This account is incredibly significant! His readers would perk up at two things; Mark starts with the same wording as Genesis, he starts at "the beginning. And the second thing his readers would notice is the declaration of Jesus as Messiah. *In his letter to the Colossians, Paul draws our attention to Jesus' role in creation. How does Colossians 1:15-17 help to reveal the significance of Mark's opening sentence?*

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. - Colossians 1:15-17 NIV

God's original intent and design which we saw in Eden were marred by sin and rebellion. Mark not only draws our attention to Jesus' presence and role in creation, but he also invites us into God's promise of re-creation through a new life in Christ.

Isaiah 43:18;19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

In the passages above we are challenged not to dwell on the past but to recognize that the "new you" is here and the re-creation of all things will be complete in the future as Jesus assumes His rightful place on the throne.

Do you have some "former things" that you need to let go of? Are there parts of your story you need to surrender to God? What is one thing that went wrong, remained unfinished or somehow has causes you to dwell in the past that you would like to surrender to God? Pause for a moment to silently reflect and pray. If you feel comfortable, share your request with your group so they can support you in prayer this week.

2. Jesus- Israel's Messiah

In his first sentence Mark declares that Jesus is the Messiah. Who was this Messiah to the Jews of that time? They had been anticipating his arrival for hundreds of years. From the prophecies in Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Micah and many more, the puzzle pieces of the Messiah come together in Mark's Gospel to describe both a suffering servant and victorious king. His purpose was to save God's people, and His people longed to be saved.

2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"-- 3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" 4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. - Mark 1:2-4 NIV

Mark takes Isaiah's prophesy regarding the messenger of the Lord and identifies the messenger as John the Baptist. He is making the case that Jesus isn't just an anointed one, He is The Anointed One, whose way is prepared by John the Baptist's call for repentance.

Throughout the years many had claimed to be Israel's Messiah. After so many counterfeits it would be easy to become skeptical. Overcoming that skepticism takes discernment and trust. We might not hear many claiming to be our Messiah (although there are some) but there are many voices that tell us to put our trust in them for a better life and the solution to our problems. What are some of the competing voices we hear in our day that tempt us to trust in another "savior" other than Jesus?

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. - 1 John 1:9 NIV

21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. - Acts 20:21 NIV

Repentance means admitting you are wrong and changing your mind and your actions regarding sin. Can you explain how that prepares the way of the Lord?

3. Jesus, Not Caesar, is King

In addition to Mark catching the attention of his Jewish audience, a more subtle point was understood by the Romans when Mark made the announcement that there was "Good News".

If you received a message titled "Good news" in your inbox today, what would you expect to find when you opened it? Good news from your family, advertisements, an invitation to a church service....?

Before the birth of Jesus, both Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus claimed to be the "son of god" and even stamped that title on Roman coinage. And the good news of Caesar Augustus' birthday was celebrated with great fanfare, as were battlefield victories in the Greco-Roman era.

15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" - Mark 1:15 NIV

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. - Matthew 4:23 NIV