

The Jesus of the Gospel

Mark 1:1-13

Pastor Bryan Clark

Without a doubt, the most significant question anyone will ever wrestle with is that question: *Who is Jesus?* It not only will determine the experience of this life but it will determine our eternal destiny. It is sobering to realize that every single person who does not get that answer figured out has no hope. *Who is Jesus?* That is the question we are going to wrestle with for the next eight months as we work our way through the gospel of Mark.

There are a couple of things I want to talk about as we get started on this series. One is that we are going to approach the Gospel of Mark as part of the authoritative inspired Scripture. What I mean by that is we are going to approach it assuming everything recorded in the Gospel is true and accurate. I am not going to try and prove that. We are just going to believe it. There may be some of you who have some questions such as: How do we know that the Gospels are accurate? How do we know that this historical record is reliable? Those are valid questions. All through this study we are going to have a book available at the Publications Center called *The Case for Christ*. We will have those books available in a couple weeks and we will keep them there throughout the series. This book will be a good resource for answering the questions: How do we know that the Gospels are accurate? How do we know they are reliable? How do we know this information is true? We are just going to assume it is true and learn what it is that Mark has for us to learn.

Mark is often referred to as John Mark. John was his Jewish name; Mark was his Gentile name. I think rarely (if ever) he was actually called John Mark; it would have been one or the other. We know that he grew up in a wealthy home. We know that his home was used as a meeting place for the church in Jerusalem. We know that he was well-educated. We know that he spoke multiple languages. History tells us that Mark was actually the interpreter for Peter, as Peter went to many places where he did not speak the language and Mark served as his interpreter. What we know is that Mark over and over and over again told the story of Jesus as he interpreted the message for Peter.

One of the interesting things that is characteristic of his Gospel is that Mark reached a point where it was as if he were an eyewitness to the events that he records. You remember that Mark was not one of the twelve apostles. Matthew and John were eyewitnesses, but Luke was not, and neither was Mark. Mark got all of his information from Peter. What is interesting is that Mark uses what is called the historical present verb tense, which simply means that you are recording something that happened in the past. In Mark's case, this was about 35 years before his writing, but he is writing it as if it is happening at that very moment and he is an eyewitness to it. That is the historical present tense, and Mark uses that verb tense 151 times. Now, to put that in some perspective, the next closest Gospel writer would have been Matthew. He only used it 78 times and he *was* an eyewitness. Luke only uses it six times. It is a very unique thing in Mark's recording, and I think it is because he told the story so many times as he interpreted it for Peter that it was as if he were there himself.

There is some background information about Mark that might be helpful. One of the stories that I think is insightful is in Acts 12. We are told that Herod was on a rampage putting Christians to death. That chapter opens with a statement that he had just put to death James as in Peter, James and John. Now he had arrested Peter and thrown him in prison. We can assume from that that Peter was about to be executed.

Meanwhile, back in Mary's home (which would have been Mark's mother) they are having a prayer meeting that Peter would be released from prison. While they are having this prayer meeting across town, an angel actually goes into the prison and takes Peter by the hand. The angel literally walks him out through the prison, into the streets, and turns him loose. Peter, of course, goes to the only place he knows is safe. He goes to Mary's house, which was Mark's house. He knocks on the gate and a servant girl by the name of Rhoda comes and peeks out at the gate. Low and behold, there is Peter; he is supposed to be in prison! She is so shocked that, instead of letting him in, she runs and tells the people at the prayer meeting, "You are not going to believe who is out there knocking at the gate! It is Peter!" These people (having such great faith) answered, "You are out of your mind. You are crazy. We may be praying for that, but it isn't going to happen." She finally convinces them to come look. They peer out, and sure enough there is Peter at the gate. He has been standing out there at great danger this whole time and they finally invite him in. Just imagine Mark as a young man, probably a teenager, witnessing that. He witnessed the power of prayer and the answer of prayer. It must have had a great impact on his life. That is Acts 12.

In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas are headed on their first missionary journey. Barnabas says, "I have a cousin by the name of Mark. I wonder if we could take him with us. I think he would be useful." So they agree and they head out on the first missionary journey. But partway through the journey, Mark bails out. In Paul's words, he deserted them and he went back home. We are not really told why.

In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas are ready to head out on their second missionary journey. Barnabas brings along his cousin Mark and he says, "I know Mark bailed out the first time, but I think he will do better this time." And Paul disagreed and said, "This guy deserted us. He is not coming." They got into such an argument that Paul and Barnabas actually split company. Barnabas went his way with Mark, and Paul joined up with Silas and went on the second missionary journey. From that point on, we know a lot about Paul and Silas; we know very little about Barnabas and Mark. What we do know is that somewhere in there, Mark was restored back to ministry. He once again became useful, because in 2 Timothy, which is the last letter Paul wrote before he was executed, he says, "Send Mark to me for he is useful to me in ministry."

One of the things we want to keep in mind as we go through this Gospel is that Mark had experienced a state of failure. He had bailed out, but somewhere along the way experienced the grace, mercy and restoration of Jesus and was once again useful in ministry. Paul recognized that. I think as we go through the Gospel you see these little glimpses of Jesus that are filtered through that. You see some of what Mark experienced and what he found in Jesus. He records that.

Mark's audience would be the Christians in Rome, who were going through tremendous persecution. One of the ways it is obvious that his audience is Gentile is that many of the Jewish things that would have needed no explanation to a Jewish audience are explained in Mark—because he knows this is not going to a Jewish audience; it is going to the believers in Rome. You remember from history that in A.D. 64 Nero, who was the crazy emperor, lit Rome on fire and watched it burn. This outraged the people, and Nero suddenly realized, *I've got to figure out somebody to blame this on because people are mad at me.* So he blamed it on the Christians: *Those crazy Christians did this.* He began to persecute them and torture them. He imprisoned Christians and murdered them. The Christians were fleeing into the caves and into the catacombs. They were surviving, but many of them were being tortured and put to death. Those are the people Mark is writing to.

In the Gospel of Mark there is a sense of urgency. There is a sense of cutting through details and getting right to the point, because he knows these people are suffering. These people are dying and there is a sense of tension and urgency. As a matter of fact, one of the favorite terms of Mark is the word “immediately.” He just keeps saying that: “Immediately”... “and immediately” and “immediately.” You find yourself exhausted and you have to hold back and take a deep breath. He is wearing us out. That is the tension that goes throughout this Gospel.

With all of that in mind, I invite you to turn with me to the Gospel of Mark. When you read the Gospel of Matthew, it opens up with the genealogy that identifies Jesus as the rightful heir to the throne through the line of David. It talks a little bit about the magi and introductory things about the life of Jesus. When you open the Gospel of Luke it starts with the birth of John the Baptist, and then the birth of Jesus, and you have the whole Christmas story. But Mark really skips all that. He gets right to the point. He skips the first 30 years of Jesus’ life and boom, he starts with the mission. You get this sense of urgency that for his purpose, *Let’s get right at it.* That is the way it goes.

The beginning of the Gospel of Mark says:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (v. 1, *NASB)

A lot of people believe that is actually the title of the book, not just the opening line, and I think that is probably correct. When he says the “beginning” he does not mean this is the beginning of his Gospel. He means the gospel is the beginning of the life of Christ. The way the Gospel of Mark ends is very abrupt as if the story is not over. It just ends there because the story of Christ continues on to this day. The story of Jesus is ongoing; it is not over. The word “beginning” actually means the basis or the foundation. What Mark is saying is that this gospel record is the foundation or the core theology of our belief about Jesus that we have to understand. The “gospel” means good news.

“Jesus” was his first name and it was actually quite a common name in the first century. It is taken from the Hebrew, “Joshua.” It means the Lord or Yahweh is our salvation. It is identifying Jesus as the salvation of the Lord. You remember it was the angel himself who named Jesus. The angel came to Joseph and said, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin.”

Jesus Christ. “Christ” is not his last name; Christ is his title. It means anointed one. It means Messiah. It means this is the long-awaited Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

The Son of God. It is not *a* son of God. Paul, in his letters, refers to us as children of God and sons of God, but this is *the* son of God. This is the member of the Trinity. This is God Himself walking among us in the flesh.

From this point, Mark draws upon several witnesses as to the identity of Christ and the purpose of His coming. The first witness is the witness of the Old Testament. He says:

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet; “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’ ” (vs. 2-3)

He is going back to the Old Testament Scriptures and reminding us that there would be a messenger and the messenger would announce the coming of the Messiah. Now, it is very common (in fact, it is done multiple times in all the Gospels) that when a writer would cite multiple Old Testament passages, he would just reference it with one citation. In other words, he says, “from Isaiah” but actually these quotes come from Exodus 23, Malachi 3 and Isaiah 40:3. That is the way they recorded their citations; they just included one of the authors.

What is important about that is to realize he is quoting from Exodus, which was part of the Torah, or the Law. He has quoted from Malachi, who was a minor prophet, and he has quoted from Isaiah, who was a major prophet. What he is saying is that this is the person who was talked about in the Law and the Prophets. In other words, Jesus is not someone who just appeared on the scene and gathered a following and it went from there. This is the fulfillment of God’s plan that He has been talking about for hundreds of years. After Jesus was resurrected and was walking with His disciples down the road of Emmaus, He said to them, “You should have known what was going to happen. It was recorded in the Law and the Prophets.” That is exactly where Mark starts. He says, “This is the One who was talked about in the Law and the Prophets.”

It was very common in the first century that when a king was going somewhere to visit, if he was coming to your town he would be preceded by a herald or a messenger. That messenger would say, “Prepare the way. Make straight the path.” That meant the king was coming. The roads were so poor that immediately that town would have to get busy and repair the road so that the king could travel through. That is the imagery that’s used here, with John the Baptist as the messenger saying, “The King is right behind me, so get your road straight. Get your path prepared. He is coming.”

One of the things in verse 3 that I want to highlight is that there are two significant names for God that are attached to Jesus. I think that is very important. If you were to read verse 3, which is the quote from Isaiah 40:3 in the Hebrew language that Isaiah was written in, it would read like this: “Make ready the way of Yahweh. Make Elohim’s paths straight.” Now, the significance of that is there’s no question that what Mark is saying is that Jesus is *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. Jesus is *Elohim* of the Old Testament. Those names for God are now being attached to Jesus to say, “This is that God in the flesh.”

Yahweh was the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. It is the God who entered into the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the God who entered into the covenant with Moses with the Law. This was the personal God of Israel. This was their intimate, personal God. Elohim is the God of Genesis 1, the Creator God of the universe.

There is a movement today with so-called religious scholars that talks about Jesus. One of the things they like to say is that there is nowhere in the New Testament where Jesus is actually referred to as God. For the life of me, I cannot figure out what Bible they read. We are just three verses into this book of Mark and already he has called Jesus the Savior and the Christ. He has called him Yahweh, Elohim, and a member of the Trinity; He is the Son of God. Five times in three verses! There is no question that Mark is establishing this is God in the flesh.

He talked about the messenger and now that is where he goes in verse 4:

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. (vs. 4-5)

John the Baptist was preaching a message of repentance and baptizing people as they identified with repentance and confession of their sin. Repentance means to change your mind, but it is really more than that. It is to change your mind and *to go a different direction*.

The idea that this was happening in the wilderness is very significant, because throughout the life of the Hebrew people, significant things happened for them in the wilderness. Perhaps the one most relevant to what Mark is talking about here is remembering that when the nation of Israel was ready to enter into the Promised Land, they had to cross the Jordan and go into the land of promise. But the spies came back and said, “The giants are too big. We can’t take these guys.” They did not have the faith to believe, so that entire generation had to die in the wilderness and God raised up another generation who believed in Him and trusted Him.

Under the leadership of Joshua, they crossed through the Jordan River, went into Jericho and conquered the land of promise. Now years have passed, and John is calling them back out to the same wilderness by the Jordan as a way of saying, “We have got to start over. We need to go back out into the wilderness because our lives and our religious world have become so corrupted and so off track that we really need to go all the way back to the wilderness. We need to repent of that sin and we need to start over.” Baptism in the Jordan, the very river they passed through to enter into the land of promise, was all symbolic of this idea that it was a time for starting over. It was symbolizing, *The Messiah is coming and we need to walk away from that and we need a new fresh start. We need to prepare our hearts to listen to the Messiah and to follow Him.*

Even the way John is dressed is significant. Verse 6:

John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

It is hard to imagine a preacher without a tie on. (It sounds comfortable to me.) This was not just a wild man living in the caves dressed like this; there was a reason he was dressed this way. The religious leaders of his time dressed in very expensive and very impressive garments. Not only did he call the people out to the wilderness, but even his dress was a way of saying, “I am rejecting that religious establishment. I am rejecting what that has become.” It was a way of setting himself apart from that and saying, “This is all going to be completely different. We are starting over here.”

His diet may not seem very appetizing to us, but it was not all that unusual to these people in the first century. The Jewish people were familiar with baptism. As a matter of fact, it was relatively common, but it was common among the Gentiles. Whenever a Gentile determined to convert to Judaism, that Gentile had to be baptized. It was symbolic of the fact that, *You have to be cleansed from your Gentileness to become one of us.* What was radically new was what John the Baptist was saying to these Jews: “No, you need to be baptized.” This was radical. “You need to be cleansed; you need to be cleaned up. You need to start over.” It was so radical that they named him John the Baptizer because it made such an impact.

It is very important that you don’t get in your mind this picture of John the Baptist down at the Jordan River with 20 people standing around at this little baptismal service. The verbs actually mean that people were coming out continually. We would say waves of people. All Judea and all Jerusalem were coming out to be baptized. Some historians put it at 300,000 people who came to be baptized. This was a big, big deal.

You have to understand, too, that the trip from Jerusalem to the Jordan River was not just a little hike out the back door, *Let's go down to the river and see what is happening*. It was 20 miles from Jerusalem to the Jordan and it was a 4,000 foot drop. Imagine a 20-mile, 4,000 foot drop trip down to the river. As hard as that was, the trip back was doubly hard. This mass of people was making this incredible journey to identify with the message of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the coming of the Christ.

And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of this sandals. I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (vs. 7-8)

John understood that it was very possible that these people could start to think of him as the Christ. They could start to follow him instead of Jesus. He was determined not to let that happen. He was telling them, "I am not the Christ. There is One coming after me who is much greater."

This idea of untying the thongs is very important to understand. It was very common in the first century for masters to have their disciples. It was agreed among disciples that they must be willing to do absolutely anything the master asked of them...except untie their sandals. That was even beneath a disciple. That was a duty reserved for slaves alone. That's the background of John's comment. He is saying, "I am not even worthy to untie the sandal"—meaning there is this huge gap between how mighty He is and who I am. He says, "I baptized you with water and this is a symbolic cleansing, but He is going to baptize you with His spirit, meaning He is the one who is actually going to transform you. He is going to radically cleanse you. He is going to redeem you. He is going to do what we can only symbolize with this water."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." (vs. 9-11)

We know that when John was baptizing in the Jordan, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, made the journey all the way down to the river and got in some fairly heated discussions with John. But Mark does not record that; it is not relevant to his point. Now we get into the baptism of Jesus and we know from the other Gospels that there was a discussion between John and Jesus as to Jesus' baptism. Mark does not record that. It is not relevant to his point.

We would certainly ask the question: Why is Jesus being baptized in a baptism of repentance? Jesus had no sin. The answer is because Jesus came to this earth to become sin for us. That is what Paul says in Corinthians. This marked the beginning of His public mission. His mission was to identify with our sin and to take it upon Himself, that He might provide our redemption. He identified with the baptism of John as a way of identifying with us and our sin.

When Mark records this, he says that the heavens were opened up. It is unfortunate that the translators used the word "opened up" here. When you read the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, it says that the heavens were opened up and that is a very accurate translation of the Greek word. But Mark does not use that word; Mark uses a completely different word. He uses a word that is much more dramatic; it's much more graphic. It is a word that means

the heavens were ripped open; the heavens were torn in two. It is much more dramatic because it is relevant to the point he is trying to make, as he establishes the wonder of this mission that Jesus was on. He says, “When Jesus was baptized, the heavens were ripped in two”—indicating that the mission of Jesus would rip open the heavens and make it possible for a holy God to have a relationship with sinful men and women and that Jesus’ mission would literally rip open the heavens to give us access. It was so magnificent that God the Holy Spirit actually came from the heavens and landed upon Jesus. There was this voice from heaven, God the Father saying, “You are My Son and with You I am well-pleased.”

One of the things to note is that according to Mark, it was Jesus who saw the heavens ripped open. It was Jesus who saw the Spirit descending as a dove. It was Jesus who heard the voice of the Father. The voice of the Father did not say, “This is My Son.” It said, “*You* are my Son.” As far as we know, nobody else except John the Baptist actually saw this or heard this. We know John the Baptist did because he tells us that in John 1. The relevant point that Mark is making here is that this was an event that was so spectacular and so earth-shattering that when Jesus began His mission, the heavens were literally ripped open. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit—the holy Trinity of God—were all involved in the launching of this eternity-changing mission.

Verse 12 says “*Immediately* the Spirit impelled Him.” He doesn’t allow us to linger there and think about this for a while.

Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. (vs. 12-13)

Jesus’ baptism was the launching of His mission. From this point on, Mark is going to keep saying “immediately” because there is a sense of urgency now. There is no time to wait. He did not linger at His baptism. The Spirit immediately moved Him to the wilderness: *Let’s get on with this thing*—that’s the sense you get.

Mark tells us *not* a lot of details. If you read the Gospel of Matthew, for example, there is quite a lengthy discussion about everything that happened in Jesus’ temptation. Mark tells us none of that. It is not relevant to his point. What is relevant to his point is the fact that Satan showed up in the wilderness to try to divert Jesus from His mission.

This is highly significant. Satan is not like God. He is not everywhere present; he is limited to one place at a time. Oftentimes we find ourselves saying, “I am being tempted by the devil.” Chances are there isn’t a person in this room who has ever actually been tempted directly by Satan. I would imagine Satan goes after the most significant Christians on the face of the planet, and that probably isn’t us. He sends his demons and he sends his army. But what Mark is saying is that when Jesus launched His public ministry, He was immediately taken out in the wilderness and it was Satan himself—the prince of darkness, Lucifer himself—that went toe to toe with Jesus to stop Him, because he knew the mission He was on was that important.

One of the details that Mark gives us that none of the other Gospel writers give us is that Jesus was also among the wild beasts. Mark mentions that and none of the others do. It is as if he is saying, “Even creation, even the wild beasts, gathered around to watch this glorious event.” Then he tells us that the angels of heaven came down and ministered to Jesus, as a way of

saying, “The entire universe was now aware of this absolutely spectacular mission that would change eternity.”

What is Mark saying? Mark is saying that we need to understand that this is Jesus the Savior, the long-awaited Christ, the Messiah. This is Yahweh; this is Elohim. This is the Son of God in the flesh who has come to be identified with us and our sin. In launching that mission, it was so spectacular that literally the heavens were ripped apart. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit all came together for the launching of this eternity-changing mission. It was so spectacular that Satan himself went toe to toe with Jesus to try to stop Him. It was so spectacular that the beasts of the field gathered around to watch, and so spectacular that the angels of heaven came and were part of this in order to accomplish that which would change forever.

That is his introduction to the ministry of Jesus. That is pretty spectacular. All throughout the Gospel of Mark, the first century people will struggle to try and figure out who this Jesus is. But we as the readers will not struggle. Mark has told us in the very opening paragraph, “You need to know exactly who this is and realize what is to follow is absolutely spectacular. It will change forever.”

Every once in a while we start to think that the things we are involved in are really something. We can start to think we are pretty impressive with that last business deal we just closed. And we went to this athletic event and everyone was cheering. But then you read the opening to the Gospel of Mark and you realize *this* is spectacular. This is spectacular! The entire universe suddenly was focused on what Jesus was about to accomplish.

That raises the question: What do we do with this? I think there are probably three groups of people who need to process this introduction. There are some of you who have never trusted Jesus as Savior. You may have heard about Him but you just don’t understand who He is and what He did. My prayer for you would be that God would open up your mind and open up your heart to understand and respond to it. With Mark, we do feel that sense of urgency. The Bible says *today* is the day of salvation. We are not just talking about some religious thing here. We are talking about where you will spend forever. I grant you, you have the rest of your life to answer that question... but the rest of your life may be today. My prayer for you is that as quickly as possible you will understand who Jesus is and what He did for you and you will respond to that.

There is a second group of people and that would be those who have trusted Jesus as Savior. You understand who He is and what He has done for you. You have trusted Him, but you have never taken that next step of obedience of publicly identifying yourself as a follower of Jesus. Several years ago after one of the services, somebody came down and asked why we don’t have an altar call after every service. I explained that and he was fine with that, but he followed it with the statement, “At some point every person needs to publicly make a statement that they are a follower of Jesus Christ.” I said, “I can’t agree with you more. According to the New Testament, that is baptism. It is not an altar call; it is baptism.”

There are many of you who have trusted Jesus as Savior but you have never been baptized, which is publicly standing up and saying, “I want you to know that I am identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I am a follower of His.” That just seems to me to be a great way to start this series—to take that step of obedience as you prepare your heart to learn more of who Jesus is and what He has done for you.

On Sunday night, October 17, we are setting aside an evening for baptism, communion and prayer. It should be a great time for us to come together as a family and celebrate what God is doing. It would be a great time for you to prayerfully consider taking this next step of faith in baptism, as a way of getting your heart where it needs to be as we move through this series. If you are interested in that, you need to talk to somebody at the Worship and Arts booth. They can tell you about a class that is coming up that will help inform you as to what baptism is. It will answer your question, whatever it might be. I would strongly encourage you to think about that as we begin this study.

Thirdly, what all of us need to consider is: Are our hearts prepared to respond to what we are about to learn? The whole idea of John the Baptist was to pave the way to prepare their hearts for the coming Messiah. In this study we are going to learn more about who Jesus is, what Jesus has done for us, and how we should respond to that. We each need to ask ourselves, *Am I ready for that? Am I ready to give up whatever He calls me to give up? Am I ready to sacrifice whatever He calls me to sacrifice? Am I ready to confess whatever I need to confess? Am I ready to go out into the wilderness and start over if I am off track?*

Do you have a heart that is ready to receive what God wants to teach you about Jesus through His Spirit in the weeks to come? It will be the “Good News About Jesus According to Mark.”

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Study Questions
The Good News About Jesus According to Mark
The Jesus of the Gospel
Mark 1:1-13
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Opening Discussion

1. Who is Jesus according to the average person on the street?
2. Do there seem to be some inconsistencies between who people say Jesus is and how they live their daily lives? Why is this?
3. Who do *you* say Jesus is? In what ways does your definition of Jesus affect how you live your life each day?

Bible Study

1. Read Acts 12:1-17.

How might this incident have influenced Mark's commitment to Christ?

Compare 1 Peter 5:13, which seems to indicate Mark was led to Christ by Peter.

2. Read Acts 13:5,13; 15:36-41; 2 Tim. 4:11. In what way might we draw encouragement from Mark's story? Is failure final?

How might this experience have affected Mark's purpose or focus in writing this Gospel?

3. Remember, Mark was the first Gospel written. It was written during the time of Nero's persecution of Christians. He was writing to Gentile believers to encourage them in the midst of their suffering. As we go through the Gospel of Mark keep this audience in mind. We need to keep asking, "What picture of Jesus did these suffering Christians need?"
4. Read Mark 1:1-13. List everything we learn about Jesus from these verses. Who is He?
5. Throughout the Gospel people will struggle to determine exactly who Jesus is. However, for readers the issue is resolved in the opening paragraphs. Why did these suffering Christians, many of whom would be martyred for their faith, need to know who Jesus is?

What difference does it make to us today?

6. Why was Jesus baptized by John?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. How does this line up with Mark 10:45, which many consider to be the theme verse?

7. Both Luke and Matthew give many more details concerning Jesus' genealogy, birth, John's baptisms, Jesus' baptism and temptation. Mark's purpose is such that he does not feel those details are necessary. What is Mark's purpose in this opening passage?

Why is this important as he establishes the "gospel of Jesus Christ" (v. 1)?

Application

1. If you believe Jesus is who Mark says He is, how should this belief affect your daily life? List three specific ways.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
2. Why is this true picture of Jesus especially important in times of suffering and trials?
3. John called people into the wilderness to symbolize a new beginning as a people. He preached a message of repentance and forgiveness to prepare the way for Jesus. What should we do to prepare our hearts for this study of Jesus in Mark's Gospel?
4. Pray that our hearts will be open to see Jesus and respond to who He is in a new and fresh way.