

Mark chapter 1

1. Prologue: Events preceding the ministry of Jesus, 1:1-13

The prologue is an introduction to the entire gospel, setting the stage for the story Mark is telling. It names the hero of the story, Jesus. It identifies who Jesus is and why he is important. It tells us what Jesus has been sent to do.

The prologue uses a composite Old Testament reference combining prophecy from Malachi and Isaiah.

These verses emphasize three elements – expectancy, repentance, and the coming one.

1. John the Baptist prepares the way for the ministry of Jesus by preaching in the wilderness, 1:1-8

John is baptizing masses of people who are coming out from Jerusalem and all Judea and is successful in his own right. But he understands that his calling is not to lift himself up but to point to Jesus.

He is dressed in prophet-like garment. The leather belt may refer to Elijah's belt.

Stooping to untie sandals is a slave's work.

The bestowing of the Holy Spirit was considered by the early church as a sign of the end times and considered necessary for the community of the church.

2. Jesus comes to John for baptism, 1:9-11

Unlike Matthew and Luke, here John does not seem to know who Jesus is and only Jesus hears the words of God.

“heavens torn apart” is another sign of the end times. The Greek verb used here is used only one other time – in the description of the temple veil torn apart at Jesus' crucifixion. (schizo)

3. Jesus is tempted by Satan, 1:12, 13

The Spirit drives (casts out) Jesus into the wilderness where he is tempted by Satan. Mark does not elaborate on the tests for Jesus in the wilderness.

So in the first 13 verses of Mark, Jesus is called by God, armed with the Holy Spirit, and tested by Satan. Only now is Jesus ready to begin his public ministry.

2. The early stages of the Galilean ministry, 1:14-3:6

1. Jesus begins his ministry by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, 1:14, 15.

His message is essentially – God's kingdom is here in me. It's time to repent and believe. The Greek verbs “is fulfilled” and “has come near” are perfect tense and so understood as action beginning in the past and continuing into the present

2. Jesus calls four fishermen to become fishers of men, 1:16-20

The first half of the gospel is about Jesus who is powerful in word and deed. Mark shows us what that means as Jesus calls his first disciples. He doesn't introduce himself. He simply says follow me and immediately they did.

3. Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit, 1:21-28

Jesus power is also demonstrated as he casts out demons. In fact it is the demons who first recognize exactly who Jesus is. But Jesus admonishes them to be silent. This is the first of several times Jesus will heal and then command the healed one to be silent.

Scholars refer to this as the messianic secret.

4. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, 1:29-31

5. Jesus heals many after sunset, 1:32-34

6. Jesus prays before day and then departs on a preaching tour, 1:35-39

7. Jesus heals a leper, 1:40-45