

ON THE MOVE WITH JESUS

IN MARK

(DAY 1)

*A unique, verse-by-verse,
life-application commentary
by Terran Williams*

YOU MAY OWN A BIBLE, BUT DOES YOUR BIBLE OWN YOU?

- It's not enough to own a Bible. Our Bible should own us. After all, it is the main way God speaks to us.
- Did you know that God put every verse in the Bible so that your mind could be totally renewed, so that your life could be deeply changed, and so that your calling could be fulfilled? (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17 if you're not persuaded.)
- That's why reading the whole Bible again and again is one of the most important things we can do.
- Sometimes, however, the Bible is hard to understand. That's why commentaries are so useful. Most commentaries help you understand the technical meaning of each verse. These commentaries do a little of that too, but more than that, they focus on the meaning of each verse for our lives now.

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THIS COMMENTARY?

- Most importantly, it helps you to find *the meaning for your life now* in every single verse of the Gospel of Mark.
- It is written with 21st century everyday people in mind.
- It builds on the scholarship of brilliant theologians and commentaries, but doesn't focus on the exhausting technicalities that fill most commentaries.
- It comes with a Group Guide so that you can explore Mark along with others.

A SUGGESTED APPROACH TO GOING THROUGH MARK

- Make time every day. Allocate as much time as you need to really hear from God for your life. Read until you are full – don't just snack on the Bible, rather enjoy a solid meal.
- Take your time as you go through Mark, starting at chapter one. It doesn't matter if you do the whole Bible in a year, or in five years, just as long as you're steadily moving through it.
- Trust God to speak to you every time you read the Bible. Expect to receive just what you need for each day. Invite the Holy Spirit to be your primary teacher as you read.
- Keep two questions in your mind as you read: 1) What do these verses mean? 2) What do they mean for my life now? If you can't find solid answers to either of these two important questions then refer to this commentary.
- Carry into your day what you sense God saying to you. Perhaps write down the main things you sense God telling you each day. Pray to God about what he has just said to you. Make any needed adjustments in your heart and life as God reveals more and more of his Word, will and ways to you.

MAIN SOURCES USED: SPECIAL THANKS TO (AND WARM COMMENDATIONS OF):

The 'Today's New International Version' Bible (which is the updated version of the NIV)
Michael Eaton's Preaching through the Bible: Mark
Tom Wright's Mark for Everyone
Donald Guthrie's New Bible Commentary: Third Edition
David Guzik's online commentary (www.enduringword.com)

ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF MARK

God has given us four windows into the earthly life of Jesus. They are the Gospels. Each author captures a different aspect of Jesus. Mark's Gospel is the shortest, and was also the one written first. It appears that the Gospels of Luke and Matthew used Mark as a major source in the writing of their own Gospels.

“Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). That means that though Mark describes the life of Jesus 2000 years ago, his character and wisdom and power are still available to us. His earthly disciples knew him physically, but we get to know Jesus with the help of the Spirit. Though we don't know everything we'd like to know about Jesus' life on earth, God made sure we'd know enough for the Holy Spirit to give us insight into, so that we too can say that we “know” Jesus.

The Gospel is written by Mark. Mark was the son of a widow named Mary whose home was used by the earliest Christians (see Acts 12:12). Mark was friends with the apostle Peter, from whom he no doubt drew most of his information. He wrote it fairly soon after the events described, probably in the AD50s.

One thing that sticks out in the Gospel of Mark is its pace. Again and again, the word “immediately” is used. We see Jesus packing a whole bunch of travel, ministry and teaching into short periods of time. Jesus is a man on the move. That's why this commentary is titled, On the move with Jesus in Mark.

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK:

1:1-20 – The beginning of Jesus' ministry

1:21-3:6 – Jesus' authority begins to arouse opposition

3:7-6:13 – Jesus withdraws to teach his disciples

6:14-8:26 – A further outreach with even greater rejection

8:27-10:52 – Jesus teaches his disciples while travelling to Jerusalem

11:1-15:47 – Entry into Jerusalem and the events that lead to his death

16:1-8 – Jesus rises from the dead

16:9-20 – A later addition to the Gospel

EXPERIENCING JESUS IN BLUE, GREEN, RED AND ORANGE

There are four main ways that God seems to speak to us through the Gospels.

1) In some parts of Mark, God highlights to us the wonderful and awesome uniqueness of Christ as Lord and Saviour. When we read these sections, we realize that we certainly can't imitate him in these regards. All we can do is bow down in humility, trust and surrender. Insights based on these parts are colour-coded blue.

2) In other parts of this Gospel, God reveals aspects of Jesus' character and ministry that we can imitate. We can literally be inspired to follow his example. And amazingly, we have the Spirit of Christ in us making it possible to actually do just that. Insights based on these parts are colour-coded green.

3) In yet other parts of this book, God reveals to us pure wisdom through the recorded teachings of Jesus to his disciples, and to the crowds, and to us. Insights based on these parts are colour-coded red.

4) Lastly, the Gospels at times allow us to see Christ through the eyes of people, whether friends or foes. By looking at how these people responded to Christ, we can learn both how and how not to respond to Jesus ourselves. Insights based on these parts are colour-coded orange.

COLOUR-CODE SUMMARY (THE FOUR MAIN WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE GOSPELS):

- **Blue** - something about Jesus' uniqueness and Lordship that shows he is worthy of our devotion, trust and surrender
- **Green** - something about Jesus' character or ministry that we can imitate
- **Red** - something Jesus taught that we can understand or apply to our lives
- **Orange** - insights we can apply based on the way various people responded to him

MARK CHAPTER ONE

DAY 1 – JESUS PREPARES FOR MINISTRY (1:1-9)

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John the Baptist prepares the way

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,

A new day dawned on this planet when Jesus arrived.

This verse tells us where the story begins (and in the verses to come we will see it begins with John the Baptist's prophetic preparation of the people for his soon-to-come arrival.

The phrase "the good news" can also be translated "the Gospel". The Gospel essentially is that Jesus is the Messiah! It's the news that God has acted decisively in the coming of Jesus, and that since his coming everything is different.

That's where it begins for all of us: we hear the "good news" that God has done something to change the world, and to change us in unimaginable ways. It already has been done. All we need to do is believe it. It's not a philosophy, which we have to study. It's not a challenge, which we have to strive to do. It's not an experience, which we have to feel. It's news – great news – and all we have to do is believe it.

2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way" [Malachi 3:1]—

3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness,

'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him'." [Isaiah 40:3]

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

God woke the world up to the anticipation of the soon-to-come Messiah.

- Sometimes a new day starts very gently. Other times, a striking shaft of light or a frightening alarm clock wake us up. That captures John the Baptist's ministry – he “woke people up” to the reality that the Messiah was coming soon, and that they'd better get ready.
- Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 are two verses that prophesied that a special prophet would usher in the Messiah. It turns out that Jesus' own cousin, John, was that man.
- For centuries the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah to come. They didn't really know what to expect, although the majority of them assumed that the Messiah would be a political one, who would deliver them from their long history of political oppression at the hands of the Romans. There was much curiosity about the Messiah – would he be an ordinary person, or would it be God himself coming (see v3)? John the Baptist was not totally sure either, but one thing he knew for sure: the Messiah was interested in changing their hearts and lifestyles. In other words, he was going to be a spiritual Messiah. John called Jewish people to be baptized as a way of turning their lives away from sin and towards God. But why was John telling them to be baptized? The probable answer is that, in the mind of Jews at that time, baptism was a symbol of how the Jews historically had fled from Egypt and had crossed through the Red Sea and, in so doing, had turned toward God and the Promised Land. As they got baptized they would turn their backs on all the competing attractions in life, and would turn toward God and the promised Messiah with fresh devotion.

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- In verse 6 we see that John was an eccentric prophet – much like the travelling Elijah of old. His life was totally devoted to calling people to get ready for the coming Messiah. Jesus was soon to come – first to the Jews – and then to the whole world. God was getting them ready, waking them up. As John preached his message, it “rang true” in their hearts. They sensed he was telling the truth, and they freshly turned away from their sins, and turned towards God in anticipation. A revival seemed to break out in the countryside (v5). The “red carpet” was being laid in the hearts of people, so that when Jesus came, they would be ready.
- To this day, God is often at work in individual people, and in groups of people, to get them ready for his coming – so that when the message about Jesus is preached they respond wholeheartedly.

- To this day, we also get to be like John the Baptist, pointing them toward Christ who is ready to come into their lives.

7 And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with [or ‘in’] water, but he will baptize you with [or ‘in’] the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus desires to plunge you into the Spirit’s presence and power.

John was an impressive figure who spoke powerfully in the Spirit and was able to cut people to the heart with his words, turning lives around. But he emphasized that he was nothing compared to the one who was far more powerful than him, the one who was deserving of far more honour and respect than himself.

As John plunged people into water it symbolized two things – one in the past, and one in the future. In the past, it spoke of the leaving of Egypt for the Promised Land. In the future, it spoke of how the Messiah would plunge people, not just in water, but in his Holy Spirit.

The fascinating thing is that Jesus never baptized (or plunged) anyone in the Spirit during his earthly life. It was only when he was exalted to the right hand of God that he began to pour out his Spirit, plunging believers into an experience of the Spirit’s presence and power. This happened at Pentecost first (see Acts 2:1-4). Although the audience who heard John promise this plunging of the Spirit would have to wait for years to experience this for themselves, we – in the 21st century – have the amazing privilege of experiencing the Holy Spirit’s immediate, empowering presence.