The Good News told by Mark

A Bible teaching commentary
on the Gospel of Mark
in easy-to-read English

Written by Fred Morris

The Birth of Jesus

Mark unit 1 of 12

Chapter 1:1-20

Manna Publications

Bite-size Manna

Unit 1: Introduction and Mark 1:1 to 20

The Good News from God written by Mark is usually known as the Gospel of Mark. It is one of four gospels in the Bible about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. These gospels are the first four books of the New Testament part of the Bible.

A young follower of Jesus named John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. He wrote it several years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Mark was a cousin of Barnabas. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mark went with Paul and Barnabas to tell the Good News of Jesus in Turkey. But then he left them and went back home to Jerusalem. Paul did not want to take Mark on his next preaching trip. Barnabas took Mark with him and they went to Cyprus. Later, Paul and Mark became friends again.

Mark believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Note that Jesus often called Himself the Son of Man. God Himself spoke twice from Heaven to say that Jesus was His Son. The title Son of Man proves that the Son of God lived as a man for 33 years. It also reminded the Jews that an Old Testament prophecy said the Messiah would come as a Son of Man.

What Did Mark Write about Jesus?

These first eight chapters of the Gospel of Mark tell us about the early part of the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus. The Gospel or Good News is that God loves us and He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve for our sins, so that we can be saved. He is our Saviour. All people everywhere who worship the Lord God

Almighty and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can be forgiven. Paul later wrote, 'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved'. They will have everlasting life with God and Jesus in Heaven.

Mark listened much to Peter speak about Jesus and about what He did. The young Mark watched and believed that Jesus was the promised Christ or Messiah. For a very long time, the Jews had been waiting for this great leader promised by God.

In this first part of the Gospel of Mark, we read about the work that Jesus did when he had reached the age of 30. This was the age when a Jewish man was allowed to teach. Jesus came to do the work of God, His Father. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He told demon spirits to leave people. He fed the hungry. These miracles were signs that showed Jesus came from God.

Mark wanted us to know that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the Good News that God will forgive our sins if we repent and believe in His Son and His sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

The Bible says that all people have sinned. We are born full of sin, so God sent His Son to clean us from that sin. The greatest thing that Jesus did was to die for us. We deserve to be punished for our sins. But Jesus was born without sin. He did not deserve to die. The Bible teaches that Jesus came to die for us, in our place. If we are sorry for our sins and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we can be forgiven and live with Him forever. These things were promised in the Old

Testament part of the Bible, hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

The name Jesus means Salvation, or Saviour. The Hebrew name for Christ is Messiah, which means the Anointed One or Messenger of God. God is the Lord God Almighty whom Jews and Christians worship. Christians believe that He is Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ. God sent His Son Jesus as Saviour to the Jews and to the rest of the world.

Jesus, the Son of God, was born into the world through the Holy Spirit. He was born to a Jewish virgin girl called Mary. Her husband was Joseph. This miracle birth happened 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. Jesus, therefore, was born and brought up as a Jewish boy.

The First Days of Jesus on Earth

Matthew, Luke and John also wrote their own books of the Good News about Jesus. Their gospels and the Gospel of Mark are the first books in the New Testament. Matthew and Luke wrote about the birth of Jesus. Mark and John do not tell us about these things in their books.

Roman armies were in control of Israel when Jesus was born. The Roman authorities sent an order to all the Jews to sign their names on a list. They wanted to count how many Jews lived in Israel. To do this the Jews had to travel to the home town of their parents. Joseph and Mary travelled together from Nazareth to Bethlehem to sign their names on the list.

Mary knew from the angel Gabriel that she was pregnant. An angel told Joseph that this baby was a miracle from God.

It was while they were in Bethlehem that Jesus was born. Jesus was not the son of Joseph. He was the Son of God from the Holy Spirit. Jesus, therefore, was born without sin in His life.

Local shepherds were told where to find and worship the baby Jesus. A vision of angels from God told them of this wonderful miracle. God wanted the ordinary people to know about the birth of His Son in Bethlehem. He was the promised Messiah, or Christ.

King Herod Tries to Kill the Baby Jesus

At this time, King Herod ruled over Israel, which was controlled by Rome. He was a very cruel king. Important men from the East went to Herod. They were looking for the new King of the Jews in Israel. They had followed a new star in the sky. Herod asked the religious leaders to tell him where to find the new king. They read a prophecy from the Old Testament which said that the Jewish Christ or Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

The men from the East found the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. But Herod did not want a Jew to become king in his place. So he killed all the babies in Bethlehem who were under two years old.

An angel told Mary and Joseph to escape to Egypt with the baby Jesus. The angel of God later guided them back to Nazareth. This was the town where Jesus lived until He was 30 years old. People who lived there thought He was the son of Joseph, a carpenter and builder.

Jesus became wiser as He grew older but many people could not believe that He was the Son of God. However, the

prophet Simeon said that Jesus came to bring the light of God to non-Jews and Jews. The prophetess Anna said that Jesus was the Saviour and Redeemer that everyone had been waiting for. Many believed that Jesus was their Messiah and would set Israel free from the Roman kings.

📖 Bible Reading: Mark 1:1 to 20

John the Baptiser Prepares the Way for Jesus

In the first 13 verses of the Gospel of Mark, we read about:

- John the Baptiser, the prophet who preached in the desert.
- Jesus, the Son of God, who came from heaven.
- God, the Holy Spirit, who came upon Jesus and guided Him.
- God, the Father, who spoke from heaven.
- Satan, who came to tempt Jesus.
- The angels who helped Jesus.

The book of Luke also tells us about the birth of John the Baptiser. He was born six months earlier than Jesus. His birth was also a miracle of God because his mother was too old to have babies. But he was not the Son of God. He was the son of a human father. Mark tells us all about the plan of God for John.

John the Baptiser dressed like an Old Testament prophet of God. He lived like Elijah and spoke messages from God. He fulfilled the prophecies that had been given 700 years before the birth of Jesus. They spoke about hearing the voice of a messenger calling "Prepare the way for the Lord!".

Mark used the words of these prophets to tell us about John. John was the messenger sent by the Lord God Almighty to prepare the way for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptiser was not a disciple of Jesus. There was another man called John who became a disciple of Jesus.

John the Baptiser prepares the way for the ministry of Jesus, Israel's Messiah

God filled John the Baptiser with His Holy Spirit even before he was born. John came to warn people not to keep on sinning. He prepared the way for Jesus their Messiah. 'John baptised people in the desert. He preached that people should be baptised and turn away from their sins. Then God would forgive them'.

When people said that they were sorry for the wrong things they had done, John baptised them. He put them under the water and brought them up again. This showed everyone

that they had repented. To repent means that we are sorry for our sins. It means that we want to turn from our sins and obey God. Our sins are everything wrong that we think, say or do. We also sin when we fail to obey God and fail to do the good things that He wants. Sin separates us from God. Baptism is a way of showing that God has washed away our old sinful lives and we are making a fresh, clean start with Him.

God had promised to deliver the people of Israel from their enemies and to bless them again. God had promised to send a Saviour, or Messiah. Many prophets in the Old Testament spoke of this. For 400 years there was no special prophet from God. Then John the Baptiser came.

All the people from Jerusalem and the region of Judea came to listen to him. The prophet John was not the Messiah. John told the people about Jesus. He said that someone very important was coming. "I will baptise you with water, but He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit".

© 2000, 2021, by Fred Morris, Manna Publications (USA) Inc.
Bible quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Reader's Version, © 1998 by International Bible Society, and are issued by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Limited. All rights reserved. Read online at: www.biblestudytools.com/nirv/
Pictures are copyright © Global Recordings Network (GRN). Used by permission.

Published by: Manna Publications (UK) www.manna-publications.org.uk
Typeset by: MissionAssist (UK)
Distributed by:

Printed by: