

ENCOUNTER.

Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

Encounter the Good News - Mark 1

Mark jumps right in and drags us (in the nicest way) into a flurry of activity, recounting the encounters people have with Jesus. So as you read Mark, “step into” their stories. God wrote their stories and He is still writing ours. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

I. An Encounter between Jesus and John the Baptist (Mark 1:1-13)

Remember that Mark was not one of the disciples, so he is writing about events he did not witness. Bible scholars believe it was Simon Peter who helped fill in the details for the Gospel of Mark. What an unlikely pairing! Mark came from a wealthy, influential family. He was well-educated and trained in good manners and social skills expected of a man of his standing. Then there was Peter, a fisherman by trade. He was uneducated, uncouth, plain spoken, and impulsive. Yet, in God’s sovereign purpose and plan, He placed these two polar opposites together in Kingdom work. In this Gospel, the thoughts were from Peter; the words from Mark.

Mark begins by telling us the theme of his book: the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Jews needed some good news. God had not spoken to them for 400 years.

John Phillips explains,

Rabbinical tradition had largely replaced the Bible. John the Baptist knew all about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the skepticism of the Sadducees, the materialism and opportunism of the Herodians, and the fanaticism of the Zealots. The faith of the fathers, applauded in Hebrews 11, had now become “the Jews’ religion” (Galatians 1:13).¹

Mark initially introduces us to John the Baptist. Preaching in the wilderness, dressed in camel’s hair cinched with a leather belt, surviving on locusts (either the bug or possibly a pod that was the food of the poorest of the poor which tasted like chocolate) and wild honey, John made it clear that he was the servant of the coming Servant, the Lord Jesus. His calling was to prepare the way and then get out of the way. He came “preaching a baptism of repentance.” John’s baptism was only preparatory, symbolic, and temporary. It symbolized a moral cleansing for the Jews and signified their desire to break away from sin.

John was clear that baptism could not wash away sin. But his preaching could produce conviction of sin, thus preparing hearts to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. John baptized with water; Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit!

Jesus was baptized by John, but not for repentance. The Lord was free of sin's stain and had no reason to repent. He was baptized to publicly identify with the ruined human race that He had come to save and to put His stamp of approval on John's ministry. God, the Father, and the Spirit of God testified to Jesus Christ, the Son.

Immediately, after the Spirit impelled Him to go into the wilderness where He would be tempted by the devil and ministered to by angels. Amazingly, Mark condenses this story into one verse, Mark 1:13. (See Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 for more details). Jesus was – Impelled by the Spirit. Tempted by Satan, the adversary. Threatened by wild beasts. Ministered to by angels. What a snapshot of what happens to the believer after conversion and public identification with Jesus Christ!

II. An Encounter with Simon, Andrew, James, and John (Mark 1:14-20)

Mark writes, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15, CSB).

Rodney Cooper gives us helpful commentary:

The kingdom “is near” because Jesus, the ruler of that kingdom, has now arrived. Yet, the only way into that kingdom is to **repent and believe**. John had already been preaching for the people to **repent**, but Jesus added the word **believe**. Only through “repentance” from their sinfulness and “belief” in the **good news** (i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ) would they enter the kingdom. Jesus was presenting an urgency about the nearness of God's kingdom and the need to act decisively. ²

Jesus saw Andrew and Simon, fishermen by trade. This was not their first encounter with Jesus. They had already met Him and believed He was the Messiah (see John 1:35-41), but this encounter would prove to be life-changing. “Follow Me,” was His invitation that still stands for all who recognize their sinfulness and turn to Him in repentance and faith.

Immediately, Andrew and Simon left their nets and followed Jesus. Then, another encounter occurred just a bit farther down the shoreline,

as James and John were mending nets. Just like Andrews and Peter, they immediately responded to Jesus' invitation. One moment, these men were fishermen; the next, they were Christ-followers.

Baptism is not a means to salvation. Consider the thief on the cross who was saved without baptism, a church affiliation, or even the ability to defend doctrine. Repentance and faith in Jesus is what he had and the Lord confirmed he would be with Him in Paradise. Baptism is a public declaration of a personal decision to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Jesus paid our sin debt and opened the way to glory. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

III. An Encounter with the Scribes and a Demonic Spirit (Mark 1:21-28)

Jesus went into the synagogue of Capernaum and began to teach "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). The scribes were well-educated scholars who applied and interpreted the Law. A Jewish custom permitted visiting teachers, like Jesus, to preach in a synagogue. Jesus' encounter with the scribes and the audience revealed that the scribes were teaching a dead, lifeless religion having added man-made rituals and restrictions. The people were amazed and recognized Jesus was One speaking with authority.

It seems Jesus' teaching provoked a demonic spirit that possessed a man in the synagogue. When the unclean spirit encountered Jesus he recognized that Jesus was "the Holy One of God." Satan and his minions know Jesus is Lord. Mark records that Jesus was casting out many demons, but "He was not permitting the demons to speak, because *they knew who He was*" (Mark 1:34). This is just one of many recorded evidences when Jesus has power over Satan and his kingdom of darkness. So fear not, little flock, the King is greater than the devil or any demon. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

IV. An Encounter with Peter's Mother-in-Law (Mark 1:29-31)

Immediately, Jesus and His four new disciples went to Peter's mom. His mother-in-law was very sick, but she was about to have an encounter with Jesus. Having demonstrated His authority over demons, Jesus now demonstrated His authority over disease. He raised her up, touching her hand, and healed her. Her recovery was so complete that she began to minister to them, which is the natural response of a heart that has been transformed by the touch of the Lord. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

V. An Encounter with a Leper (Mark 1:32-45)

In Bible times, leprosy was often viewed as a type and picture of sin. With no treatment or cure, it was a death sentence and those stricken with it were considered a walking corpse. Lepers were ostracized and segregated from society, limited to living among those suffering the same horrible condition. They were excommunicated from religious life and unable to participate in functions or feasts. If anyway wandered into the vicinity of a leper, he/she were required to shout “unclean, unclean” as a warning. But this leper is about to encounter with Jesus and be everlastingly changed.

Cooper writes,

Instead of the leper keeping his distance from Jesus, as the law directed, he came directly to Jesus, fell on his knees, and cried out for Jesus to make him clean. This man was full of faith. He did not doubt Jesus’ *ability* to heal him, but he was not sure of Jesus’ *desire* to heal him. But he was willing to take the risk.³

This whole scene is a snapshot of the plan of salvation. The leper acknowledged his inadequacy and hopeless condition and came to Jesus to be saved. Jesus touched the man. The leper had not experienced human touch since his deadly skin condition first appeared. The Lord spoke, “Be cleansed” (Mark 1:41). Immediately, the dreaded disease left him.

What a picture of redemption. In Ephesians 2:1-5 Paul writes, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Beloved, when we realize, by the wooing of the Holy Spirit, that we are sinners in need of Savior and come to the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith, we are gloriously redeemed, reconciled, and regenerated. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

¹ Phillips, J. (2009). *Exploring the Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary* (Mark 1:3-4), p. 18. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp.

² Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark* (Vol. 2), pp. 11-12). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³ Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark* (Vol. 2), pp. 15-16. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.