

Main Idea: If we’re going to know the truth about Jesus, especially in light of so many *false* notions about Him, we need to go back to *the book* about Jesus. This morning we’re going to begin a study of the biography of Jesus written by Mark. In the first three verses of his book, Mark gives us three insights that will help us grasp the truth about Jesus.

- I. Mark gives us a gospel (1a).
  - A. He wrote a special kind of biography.
    1. Though historical, it’s very selective.
    2. Though inspired, it’s written for a purpose.
  - B. He wrote one of four inspired accounts.
    1. Matthew presented Jesus as the King for a Jewish audience.
    2. Mark presented Jesus as the Servant for a Roman audience.
    3. Luke presented Jesus as the Son of Man for a Greek audience.
    4. John presented Jesus as the Son of God for a worldwide audience.
  - C. He wrote from the perspective of Peter.
- II. Mark gives us a picture of a unique person (1b).
  - A. We see the humanity of the Messiah in this book.
  - B. We see the deity of the Messiah in this book.
- III. Mark gives us the beginning (2-3).
  - A. This implies the Messiah’s life preceded His birth.
    1. We see Him in the prophets (2-3).
    2. We see Him in the creation account, too.
  - B. This implies there’s more to the story.
    1. Mark tells us what Jesus did.
    2. The rest of the New Testament tells us why He did it.

A Challenge: To get the most out of our journey through Mark...

1. Make sure you believe in the real Jesus.
2. Make sure you can support what you believe by the Scriptures.

There’s no greater subject to explore than the person of Jesus, for there’s no person like Jesus, who holds the credentials Jesus holds, who accomplished what Jesus accomplished, who changes lives as Jesus does to this day. And so, it’s a great privilege to launch a new series in the Gospel of Mark entitled, “*The Servant in Action.*”

*Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-3*

It’s only a novel. Or *is it?* It certainly generated a lot of discussion, even debate. The reason is because this 2003 novel offered a reinterpretation of the life of someone very important to us.

I’m talking about Dan Brown’s best-seller, *The Da Vinci Code*. It was on the New York Times Best Seller list for the first 11 weeks after its release, and eventually sold over 80 million copies in 45 languages.

The book’s plot revolves around a conspiracy theory supposedly once held by Leonardo Da Vinci, that says the Jesus of the Bible is a fictitious character and that there’s manuscript evidence for a very different kind of Jesus. The church has squelched this evidence, says Brown, for centuries.

In his book review of *The Da Vinci Code*, entitled, “Why the Mona Lisa Smirks,” Marty Fields sums up this “new” Jesus:

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

The members of the Priory of Sion have been the keepers of a number of manuscripts that were found beneath the remains of the old Jewish temple in Jerusalem towards the latter part of the first millennium. These manuscripts (some ascribed to Jesus) contain essential pagan teachings that say Jesus was not divine, that he was married to Mary Magdalene, that he produced a bloodline, and that the "true" religion he embraced was that of the worship of both god (father of the heavens) and goddess (mother of the earth). His marriage to Magdalene, and the subsequent offspring, is the most sacred part of the secret because she is the one to produce the bloodline. According to the manuscripts (protected by The Priory of Sion) the Holy Grail is not a cup that held Jesus' blood at his crucifixion; rather, it is the one who procures the bloodline. In other words the Holy Grail is Mary Magdalene; she is the chalice that carries the blood (line) of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Granted, *The Da Vinci Code* presents itself as a novel, but its version of Christian history is where the problem enters. Again, Brown claims that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, had children, and ended up in the south of France. Again, to summarize, Brown suggests that the church suppressed this knowledge because it would undercut Jesus' divinity. It was the Council of Nicea who's responsible for making official the doctrine of Jesus' divinity, and that by a very close vote. Furthermore, Brown claims there were more than 80 gospels and the church picked four for the Bible in a power play around the time of the council.<sup>3</sup>

That's just the book. In 2006, *The Da Vinci Code* became a movie, with Tom Hanks, and grossed over \$760 million. On May 17, 2006, in an interview on The Today Show, Matt Lauer posed a question to the cast and director about how they would have felt if the film had borne a prominent disclaimer that it is a work of fiction, as some religious groups wanted. Ian McKellen (who played the part of Sir Leigh Teabing) responded, "I've often thought the Bible should have a disclaimer in the front saying 'This is fiction.' I mean, walking on water? It takes... an act of faith. And I have faith in this film—not that it's true, not that it's factual, but that it's a jolly good story... And I think audiences are clever enough and bright enough to separate out fact and fiction, and discuss the thing when they've seen it."<sup>4</sup>

Please realize that erroneous notions about Jesus aren't anything new. The church faced them in the first century, just one generation after Jesus died, rose again, and returned to heaven. In the 60's, false teachers were circulating heretical ideas about Jesus in the capital city of Rome. How did the church respond? As long as the apostles were around, the churches could ask the Twelve, "Is what they're saying about Jesus true?" And as eye witnesses, the apostles could say, "No, absolutely not. We saw Him. We heard Him. We lived with Him for three years. These men are teaching lies. *This* is the truth about Jesus."

Yet by the 60's the apostles were dying off. Herod had killed James nearly twenty years prior. By 70 AD Peter will be dead, so will Paul, both as martyrs. How would the church protect the reputation of Jesus once the apostles were gone? The answer came when the Spirit of God graciously gave the church four biographical accounts of the life of Jesus, two written by apostles (Matthew and John) and two written by apostolic

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<sup>2</sup> From the February 2004 edition of *Biblical Worldview*

<sup>3</sup> Observations by Darrell Bock in *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2004, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Da\\_Vinci\\_Code\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Da_Vinci_Code_(film))

associates (Mark and Luke). Three of these, known as the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), were written between the 50's and 70's, while John wrote last in the 90's. Thereafter, when questions concerning Jesus arose, the church could go *to the Book*.

And here's where we often get into trouble, my friend. We fail to go to the Book! It's why so many church-goers were enamored with *The Da Vinci Code*, not to mention why families and personal lives are crumbling at an alarming rate. We are a generation who don't know *the Book* very well, especially what the Book says about *Jesus*.

It's true. Many who claim to believe in Jesus don't really know who He is. By the grace of God, we're going to change that beginning today.

This morning we are going to begin to look at "*the Servant in Action*" through the eyes of Mark. In this expository study of the gospel of Mark, we're going to allow Mark to help us get to know the real Jesus better, examining the record paragraph by paragraph.

To begin, we begin where Mark began. In the first three verses of his book, Mark gives us three insights that will help us grasp the truth about Jesus.

### I. Mark gives us a gospel (1a).

Notice the first verse, "The beginning of the gospel of [NIV says 'about'] Jesus Christ, the Son of God." In introducing his book Mark used a very important term. He said he was writing a *gospel*.

The term "gospel" comes from the Old English *godspel*, meaning "good story." The Greek word *euangelion* means "good news." Mark says he wrote the good news about Jesus Christ.

That's interesting. Prior to this, the gospel was *spoken*. In AD 30 Jesus told the Twelve to go and preach the gospel to the world. And they did, for thirty-some years. But Mark, guided by the Holy Spirit, took it a step further. He *wrote* the gospel.

What exactly does that mean? Consider three features about Mark's book.

**A. He wrote a special kind of biography.** Typically, a biography begins where? At the beginning of a person's life. It starts with his birth, says a few words about his childhood, then perhaps zeros in on his adult life, with the final pages giving the details of his death. That pattern certainly doesn't fit Mark's account. This biography is special in two ways...

1. *Though historical, it's very selective.* Unlike Matthew and Luke who give us information about Jesus' birth, Mark doesn't even mention His birth, nor His childhood or early adult life. He starts with Jesus' baptism in chapter 1 and concludes with His resurrection in chapter 16.

Don't miss this. Mark begins with Jesus at the age of thirty and devotes his entire book to the three-year period of our Lord's public ministry.

But his selectivity goes even further. Of the sixteen chapters, the final six deal with the last week in Jesus' life. Mark 1-10 takes us in rapid fashion from Jesus' baptism all the way to His healing of blind Bartimaeus, but then the pace of the narrative slows way down as we walk with Jesus through the events of His passion week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday in Mark 11-16.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As some have said, we might think of Mark's gospel as a "passion narrative with a really long introduction." <https://jesusmemoirs.wordpress.com/2017/04/12/the-gospel-as-a-passion-narrative-with-an-extended-introduction/>

What Mark wrote is historical, without question, but it's selective history. John did the same thing in his biography which he concluded by saying in John 21:25, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

You say, "Well, how did Mark decide what to include?" The answer points us to a second very special feature of this book (which is true of every book in the Bible).

2. *Though inspired, it's written for a purpose.* In other words, Mark had a reason for picking these particulars from Jesus' life. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, he was writing at specific time to meet the specific needs of a particular audience. Authorial intent is more apparent when we study a book like Ephesians and we tend to forget it when we come to the gospels, but it's true nonetheless.

Take Luke, for instance. Why did he write what he wrote? He tells us in his opening in Luke 1:1-4: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, *so that* [here's the purpose] *you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*" The final phrase gives Luke's purpose, to help his friend Theophilus (apparently a seeker), come to know the truth about Jesus.

How about John? John shares his purpose in John 20:30-31, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written *that* [here's the purpose clause] *you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" John wrote an evangelistic presentation of Jesus' life, so that non-believers might become believers.

What about Mark? What was his purpose for writing? We'll address that in a moment, but first allow me to pull together the relationship between the first four books of the New Testament. We need to keep this in mind about Mark...

**B. He wrote one of four inspired accounts.** The Holy Spirit guided Matthew, Luke, and John to record the others. All are true, yet all are different. The first three are quite similar—which is why they're called the "synoptic gospels" (from the Greek terms *syn* which means "together with" and *optic* meaning "seeing," hence "seeing together"). John's account fills in the gaps, as it were, written by the Beloved apostle thirty years or so after the others.

As I indicated, each gospel writer had a purpose with a particular audience in mind. Of course, ultimately the Spirit intended them for a broader audience which is why they were later included in the biblical canon and we're studying them today.<sup>6</sup>

1. *Matthew presented Jesus as the King for a Jewish audience.* That's why, for instance, he includes the account about paranoid King Herod trying to kill baby Jesus. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus is *THE* King, a feature very critical to reaching Jews.

2. *Mark presented Jesus as the Servant for a Roman audience.* As you read Mark, you'll notice several things that indicate he was writing for non-Jewish readers. He explains Jewish customs. He quotes few Old Testament texts. His style is brief and blunt. In fact, it seems that Mark is writing, not for the rabbi in the library but for the man on the street, particularly the streets of Rome.

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<sup>6</sup> I'd indebted to Warren Wiersbe and others who have summarized this relationship between the gospels.

Most feel Mark was writing to encourage Roman Christians who were facing two great challenges: one was the danger of teachers who were spreading false notions about Jesus; the other was persecution by the Roman government.

And what was his message? He told the truth about Jesus. He reminded them that Jesus suffered, too. The theme verse could well be Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

3. *Luke presented Jesus as the Son of Man for a Greek audience.* By occupation Luke was a physician. It’s not surprising, then, to see His emphasis on Jesus’ humanity. He begins his gospel with detailed information about the birth of two babies, John the Baptist and Jesus. Throughout his account he points out Jesus’ compassion for hurting people. As mentioned earlier, he wrote this for a Greek-thinking friend, Theophilus.<sup>7</sup>

4. *John presented Jesus as the Son of God for a worldwide audience.* By the end of the first century when John wrote, Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire. John writes not merely for Jew or Gentile, but so the whole world will know the truth about the *Logos*, the Word who became flesh, the Son of God who gives eternal life to all who believe.

As Warren Wiersbe explains, “No one Gospel is able to tell the whole story as God wants us to see it. But when we put these four Gospel accounts together, we have a composite picture of the person and work of our Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

A word of application. People are not the same. Lost people are not the same. When we present Jesus to someone, we must consider what that person already knows (and doesn’t know) about God, the Scriptures, sin, Christ, and so forth. And this is why we need the Book, the whole Book.

Thirdly, as we zero in on Mark’s gospel, we need to keep this in mind.

**C. He wrote from the perspective of Peter.** Mark himself was not an apostle. His full name was John Mark, *John* being his Jewish name, *Mark* his Latin surname. His mother was named Mary, a well to do woman who lived in Jerusalem and who allowed the church to use her home a meeting place (Acts 12:12). That would indicate that Mark knew all the apostles well and was personally familiar with the beginnings of Christianity.

Mark was actually a cousin to Barnabas (Col 4:10). When Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary trip, they took Mark. Unfortunately, Mark left the team early on and went home (Acts 13:13). Later, Barnabas restored Mark to active ministry.

Mark was also close to Peter, so close in fact that Peter called him “my son Mark” in 1 Peter 5:13. Toward the end of the second century a man named Papias said that Mark actually used the preaching material of Peter to form the basis of his gospel.<sup>9</sup> That makes sense if you consider that that Mark wrote this gospel while in Rome for a Roman audience and that Peter was in Rome in the 60’s (where he was eventually executed). It’s been said that Mark got the facts for his gospel from Peter, but the explanation of his gospel from Paul.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Luke’s theme verse could be Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

<sup>8</sup> W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol 1, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Papias wrote: “Mark, who was Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, all that he collected of what Christ had said or done...” (Barclay, p. 4)

<sup>10</sup> J. Vernon McGee, p. viii.

So Mark gives us a *gospel*. People often refer to this book as “The Gospel of Mark,” but that’s sort of misleading. This book isn’t about Mark. It’s about Jesus, the *gospel* of Jesus Christ.

My friend, if there’s anything we need these days, it’s good news. And that’s why we need this series from this book which gives us the good news of Jesus Christ.

Several years ago Sherry and I met in a home with about five other couples, several in the group non-believers. The couples shared that they wanted to meet and discuss something that could help their marriages. We began to investigate the teachings of Jesus for there is no subject more life-changing and hope-giving. It’s true, as evidenced by the fact that month after month the couples kept coming back. God did some amazing things in those folks’ lives in the following months. It can happen in your life, too.

If you’re facing struggles today, whether in marriage or parenting or wherever, I encourage you to spend time digesting what Mark wrote, for he gives us the good news, the *gospel*. In addition...

## II. Mark gives us a picture of a unique person (1b).

In the *Da Vinci Code* Dan Brown says that original Christianity believed merely in a human Jesus and that the idea of His divinity came later. What does Mark say? Verse 1 again, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ [i.e. Messiah], the Son of God.” With that simple statement Mark sets the tone for what follows, for in this book Mark enables us to make two discoveries about Jesus the Messiah.

**A. We see the humanity of the Messiah in this book.** Mark gives His name. *Jesus*. It’s a significant name, derived from the Jewish form “Joshua” meaning “Yahweh is salvation.”

Throughout this biography, Mark emphasizes that Messiah Jesus, though indeed God, was also indeed a *man*. In fact, Mark’s emphasis on Messiah’s humanity almost shocks us at times. For example, though Matthew referred to Jesus as “the carpenter’s son,” Mark refers to Jesus Himself simply as “the carpenter” (6:3). And none of the gospel writers tells us about Jesus’ emotions as much as Mark does:

--Jesus sighed deeply in 7:34 & 8:12.

--He was moved with compassion in 6:34.

--He was amazed at their lack of faith in 6:6.

--He was moved with righteous anger in 3:5 & 10:14.

--He was deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts in 3:5.

--Only Mark tells us that when Jesus looked at the rich young ruler, He *loved* him (10:21).<sup>11</sup>

In addition, Mark emphasizes that Jesus felt hunger pangs (11:12) and could be tired and in need of rest (6:31). Yes, we see the humanity of the Messiah in this book. That’s good news, my friend, as the writer of Hebrews explains (Hebrews 2:17–18), “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”<sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

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<sup>11</sup> Barclay, pp. 6-7.

**B. We see the deity of the Messiah in this book.** “The...gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*.” From the outset Mark makes it clear that though a man, Jesus was not just a man. He was God among men, indeed, the God-man.

Yet one of Jesus’ most repeated statements in Mark’s account seems to downplay His deity. For instance, after healing a leper Jesus told the man, “Don’t tell anyone (1:43).” He did the same after healing the deaf mute in 7:36. Similarly, after raising Jairus’s daughter from the dead Jesus “gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this (5:43).” Likewise, when exorcised demons cried out, “You are the Son of God,” Jesus silenced them with “strict orders not to tell who he was (3:12).” After Peter correctly confessed, “You are the Christ” in 8:29, Mark records, “Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him (8:30).”

Why all the secrecy? If Jesus was God, why did He keep it so low key? The answer has to do with His reason for coming. He who indeed is deity came as a servant, and He came as a servant in order to die for sinners. That was His mission.

In fact, this too is a great theme in Mark’s gospel. At least five times Jesus revealed ahead of time what He was going to do, namely suffer, die, and then rise again:

--8:31 “He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again (NIV).”

--9:31 “He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.’” (also in 10:33-34, 45; 12:12; and 14:24)

So was Jesus a man? Absolutely. Was He God? Again, absolutely. As we journey through Mark’s account, we will see both the humanity and the deity of Messiah Jesus.

And we need to see both, for Satan attacks both. He did so in Mark’s day, as in ours. Satan doesn’t care if people believe in a fictitious Jesus. Frankly, he encourages it.

A friendly couple knocks on your door one Saturday morning and offers you some literature. They want to talk about Jesus, they say. You see the words “Watch Tower” on their materials. They’re friendly folks, quite sincere. You ponder that their devotion exceeds yours since you can’t recall the last time you got up early on a Saturday morning to go talk with another person about their spiritual condition. Are these visitors true Christians, as they claim? The answer is *no*. Why not? It’s because they believe in a *different Christ* than the One presented in *The Book*. They deny the trinity, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the visible return of Christ, and more. They are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Dear friend, what a person believes about Jesus matters. Islam teaches that Jesus was a messenger of God, not the Son of God. Mormons teach that Jesus is the first-born spirit child of God.<sup>12</sup> New-agers assert that Jesus was an enlightened guru who never suffered or died for anyone. The Bahais say that Jesus is one of nine great world manifestations, that it doesn’t matter what religion you believe in since all religions are basically the same. Mary Baker Eddy taught in Christian Science that Jesus was just a pleasant divine idea. Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church say that Jesus was a man who failed, and that Sun Myung Moon is the second coming of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/who-do-you-say-i-am-a-mormon-and-an-evangelical-discuss-jesus/>

<sup>13</sup> Ron Carlson, Ed Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teachings*, pp. 143-4.

It matters what you believe, my friend. According to God's Word, to be saved from your sins you must believe in *the* Messiah that God sent into the world, the One who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me (John 14:6)." And who is this God-sent Messiah? He is Jesus the Christ, the God-man. And where do we find the truth about Him? We must go to *The Book*.

In addition to giving us a gospel and a unique picture, Mark gives us a third insight.

### III. Mark gives us the beginning (2-3).

Note the first two words of verse 1, "*The beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What do the words *the beginning* indicate? We can take the words in a couple of ways and I think both are legitimate.

**A. This implies the Messiah's life preceded His birth.** When Mark begins his story about Jesus, he doesn't give a genealogy, as do Matthew and Luke. The beginning, for Mark, precedes Jesus' birth. And to prove the point, he begins his gospel by quoting from what we call the Old Testament.

Notice verses 2-3, "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way,<sup>3</sup> the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,<sup>14</sup>'"

So what does that teach us about Jesus?

1. *We see Him in the prophets (2-3).* That's critical. The One who walked the shores of Galilee existed long before He walked the shores of Galilee. Mark actually includes two OT quotations in his introduction.

The first quotation, the one in verse 2, actually comes from Malachi 3:1, "I will send my messenger ahead of you." So four hundred years before Jesus came to earth, the prophet Malachi revealed that a special messenger would actually precede the Messiah and prepare people for His arrival.

In verse 3, Mark cites another prophecy, this one from Isaiah 40:3 which predicts that the messenger of preparation would minister in the desert, calling out, "Prepare the way for the Lord."

And this messenger came as predicted. Who was he? As we'll see next time, the Lord willing, he was John the Baptist. Verse 4 says, "John appeared." In the NIV, "And so John came." But for now, let's not miss what these quotations are saying to us about Jesus. According to Mark, to see the beginning of the gospel we must go back further than Mark 1:1. We must go to the Old Testament for we see Jesus there long before we see Him in the New Testament.

But even the Old Testament isn't far enough back. By introducing his gospel with the words, "The beginning," Mark wants us to see another connection regarding Jesus.

2. *We see Him in the creation account, too.* Matthew and Luke begin with Jesus' birth. John takes us back before time, saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:1-3)." Mark too makes the connection between Jesus and eternity past.

According to Wessel, "Mark is imitating the opening verse of the LXX (*en archē*, "in the beginning," Gen 1:1) and wants his readers to realize that his book is a new beginning

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<sup>14</sup> A question...why does the ESV conclude this OT quotation with a comma (at the end of verse 3)?



in which God reveals the Good News of Jesus Christ. Taken in this way, the first verse is not only a title for the entire book but a claim to its divine origin.”<sup>15</sup>

But there’s more. I see something else implied in Mark’s introduction. By saying that this is *the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ*...

**B. This implies there’s more to the story.** In other words, the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection—all of which we’ll see in the next 16 chapters—are just the *beginning* of the good news about Jesus. The story of Jesus didn’t end with His ascension to heaven. His work continued on. Where? In and through His Body, the church.

Luke actually wrote two books, his gospel which tells the story of Jesus’ ministry while on earth, and the book of Acts which tells the story of what Jesus did in the first generation of His church. To put it another way...

1. *Mark tells us what Jesus did.* And with a fast pace, too. Perhaps the key word in the book is the Greek term translated “immediately” (and sometimes “at once” or “quickly”). It appears 47 times (9 times in chapter one). It’s also interesting to note the frequent use of the term “and” (1,331 times according to J. Vernon McGee who concludes, “It is a potent word...a word of action, and it means something must follow.”<sup>16</sup>).<sup>17</sup>

You might say, with Jesus, there’s always more. And that’s good news for needy sinners like us.

When you read Mark, you don’t see a lot of teaching. You do see a lot of action, for Mark tells us what Jesus did.

2. *The rest of the New Testament tells us why He did it.* Mark gives the facts. If we want to see the significance of those facts, we must go to Acts and the epistles, for again, in Mark we merely see the *beginning* of the good news.

In the weeks and months ahead, as the Lord allows, we’re going to see some amazing accounts of lives Jesus changed. A demon-possessed man liberated. A tax-collector set free from his greed. And so many more.

But let me say this at the outset. It’s still happening. What we see in Mark is just the beginning. Jesus is still setting people free. He will set you free, my friend, if you’ll believe the truth about Him, if you’ll believe *in* Him, and surrender your life to Him.

A Challenge: To get the most out of our journey through Mark...I offer two challenges.

1. *Make sure you believe in the real Jesus.* Before He left the earth, Jesus warned of false Christs, and they have come. There’s only one Messiah. He is the One who lived a perfect life, then died on a cross in the place of sinners, then left His tomb alive, returned to heaven, with the promise that He’s coming again. Make sure you believe in Him.

2. *Make sure you can support what you believe by the Scriptures.* So many claim to believe in a Jesus they don’t know very well. It’s time to start digging into *the Book*.

**Closing Song:** #117 “*We Come, O Christ, to You*” (verses 1, 2, 4, 5)

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<sup>15</sup> Wessel, W. W. (1984). [Mark](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 618). Zondervan Publishing House.

<sup>16</sup> J. McGee, p. xi.

<sup>17</sup> Back in 2004, when I mentioned this fact, a member of our church, Lou Imes actually brought me a hand-written piece of paper, and showed me the numbers that he himself counted! According to his count, there are 1,256 “ands” in Mark.