

Introducing Jesus, the Son of God



SABBATH—MARCH 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 1:1-20.

MEMORY VERSE: “A voice spoke to him [Jesus] from heaven. It said, ‘You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you’ ” (Mark 1:11, NlrV).

FOUR GOSPELS,¹ ONE LORD. Led by the Holy Spirit, each of the four Gospel writers has something special to say about Jesus' life and ministry (work). Each Gospel begins in a way that hints at the picture it will develop. Matthew's first words are: “This is a record of the family line of Jesus Christ. He is the Son of David. He is also the Son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1, NlrV). Matthew writes his Gospel especially for Jewish readers. He wishes to show that Jesus was Israel's true King. Luke writes his story of Jesus to the “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:1-4). Luke has Gentile² readers in mind. He uses an introduction Gentiles will understand. John writes, “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Throughout John's Gospel, we see Jesus as the Word made flesh (God in human form), “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

This week, we will look at Mark's inspired opening, and the special point he makes.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What do Mark's opening words suggest? What kind of start did Mark have in his work with Jesus? What did Mark mean by the word *gospel*? Why does Mark make a special point to say that Jesus is the Son of God?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 2.

¹Gospels—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

²Gentile—a person who is not a Jew.

SUNDAY—MARCH 27

**THE WRITER, JOHN MARK
(Acts 15:36-40; 2 Timothy 4:11).**

The Gospel of Mark does not say who wrote it. But Mark received credit for writing it. Mark was not an important person in the early church. So he would not be receiving credit if he had not deserved it. That is one of the great things about what our God can do. He can take even the lowliest of people and put them in important positions (Genesis 40, Genesis 41).



**Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of Egypt
(Genesis 41).**

Mark also did not have a good start in working with Jesus. He proved himself unworthy of this important work early in his career.

Why was Paul so determined not to let Mark come with them? Acts 15:36-40.

“Afraid and discouraged, Mark weakened for a time in his purpose to

dedicate himself to God’s work. He became discouraged by dangers and hardships. Mark had worked with success under good conditions. But now, because of the danger that so often comes to people in a new work, Mark failed to accept the difficulties a good soldier of the cross must sometimes go through. He had to learn to face danger and hardships with a brave heart. As the apostles³ advanced, more hardships came. Mark became discouraged and lost all courage. He refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 169, 170.

How did Paul’s attitude (feeling) toward Mark later change? 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24.

What a surprising change on Paul’s part toward Mark. Do you think Paul simply became more patient toward Mark? Or, perhaps, Mark had changed into someone Paul could trust.

Have you ever been a quitter? Were you given a second chance? How much did that second chance mean to you? How did that second chance show God’s grace and forgiveness? Maybe there is someone you know who needs you to give her or him a second chance.

³apostles—the disciples of Jesus whom He chose to preach the gospel after He returned to heaven.

MONDAY—MARCH 28

**THE GOSPEL OF MARK BEGINS
(Mark 1:1).**

How is the beginning of Mark different from the beginning of all the other Gospels? Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:1; John 1:1; Mark 1:1.

The beginning of Mark seems sudden. Mark passes over Jesus' family history, His miraculous conception,⁴ and His dramatic birth. Mark does not tell about the wise men, the angels, the shepherds, or King Herod's plan to kill Baby Jesus. We hear nothing about Jesus' escape to Egypt, or His early years as a carpenter in Nazareth. These things are important. But for Mark, and for us, they are not the most important. What Mark wants us to understand right away is that Jesus is the Son of God.

Study other Bible verses to learn what "Son of God" means. Luke 1:34, 35; John 10:30; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-19; Hebrews 1:1-3.

The special work of the Holy Spirit in Mary's pregnancy shows us that the Man Jesus was also the Son of God. But the words *Son of God* have a much greater meaning. They tell us that He shares the very (identical; exact)

nature of God. He is truly God. He always has been God. He always will be God. The fundamental (basic) beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists say that "God the Eternal⁵ Son became incarnate (human) in Jesus. . . . Forever truly God, He became also truly man." —*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition⁶ of 27 Fundamental Doctrines,⁷ p. 36.*



Jesus is the Son of God.

Mark does not point to the virgin birth. This is probably because he wants to focus on the eternal sonship of Jesus. He calls the eternal sonship of God the gospel. Gospel is an old Greek word (*euaggelion*). At first, this word meant news of victory in war. For the followers of Jesus, that word meant the good news that centers in Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus is the good news. He is the gospel! Use the idea of the gospel as news of

⁴conception—when a baby is first started in the mother's womb.

⁵eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

⁶exposition—a detailed explanation.

⁷doctrines—church beliefs.

victory to answer the following questions: What is the victory you have in your life now because of Jesus? What war has Jesus won for you? What enemy did He defeat? What difference does this victory mean for you?

TUESDAY—MARCH 29

THE MESSENGER (Mark 1:2-8).

Before all the great acts of God in history, He sends a message to prepare the people. “The Lord and King never does anything without telling his servants the prophets about it” (Amos 3:7, NIV). So before Jesus came, God raised up a messenger. That messenger was John the Baptist. Bible prophecy told about Jesus’ coming. Bible prophecy also told about the coming of John the Baptist. Mark quotes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. But Mark gives credit to only Isaiah.

What was John the Baptist’s work and message? Mark 1:2-4, 7.



John’s work pointed to Jesus.

John’s mission pointed beyond himself. He was a forerunner.⁸ John was to announce that One far greater than he would appear. John was to get the people ready to meet that person.

Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 talk about preparing the way. The picture is one of road building. Today’s engineers involved in constructing highways cut through mountains, fill in holes, and try to straighten out curves. In the same way, John was a road builder for Jesus, the Son of God. John carried out his mission in three ways: (1) by announcing that Jesus was about to come; (2) by calling the people to get ready by turning from their sins; and (3) by baptizing them as a public example that they had accepted the message that Jesus was coming.

John never tried to pull people’s attention to himself. He was not influenced by the crowds that came to hear him. John could say from the heart: “He [Jesus] must become more important. I must become less important” (John 3:30, NIV).

John the Baptist was to preach about the first coming of Jesus. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is to preach about the second coming of Jesus. What can we learn from John the Baptist that will help us tell other people about the Second Coming? How is our work the same as John’s work? How is our work different from his work? What must you change in your own

⁸forerunner—a person sent to open the way for another person.

life to be better qualified (prepared) for sharing with other people the news about the Second Coming?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 30
CALLED WITH SERVICE
(Mark 1:4-11).

Compare⁹ Mark's story of John the Baptist's ministry (work) with the other Gospels. Matthew 3; Mark 1:4-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:6-8, 19-35. Why is it good to have different records (stories) about John the Baptist?

Mark's description of John the Baptist is the shortest description of the four Gospels. Mark focuses on Jesus, the Son of God. He cuts through all the information about John the Baptist to get to Jesus. John is the forerunner of Jesus. John is to baptize Jesus. Mark tells us nothing about John's birth, as Luke does. Mark says nothing about John's later work, as Matthew and John do. The only other story about John the Baptist after Mark 1:9-11 is a description of his death. This description is part of the story of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (Mark 6:14-29).

How does the event¹⁰ in Mark 1:10, 11 fit in with Mark 1:1? What important point do these verses make?



God sent the Holy Spirit and the voice from heaven. In this way, God showed the world that Jesus was not just another human. He was truly human, but He was truly God. Under the Holy Spirit's leading, Mark teaches this important point of the Christian faith.

Suppose you believed Jesus was just a great man, rather than God's Son. How would that belief influence your faith, your actions, your whole Christian life in general? What difference does it make that He also is God's Son?

THURSDAY—MARCH 31
JESUS' MINISTRY (WORK)
BEGINS (Mark 1:14-20).

What did Jesus think of when He began His public ministry? Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:4, 15.

⁹compare—show how things are the same.

¹⁰event—thing that happens.

Jesus' first message was the same as John the Baptist's message: "Repent,¹¹ for the kingdom of heaven is near." But Jesus added something new. John preached that the long-awaited Jesus was about to come. Jesus announced: "The time has come!"

Seventh-day Adventists know how important time is in God's plan. In Jesus' special announcement, "The time has come!" we see a general announcement that the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Jesus were being fulfilled. But we also see that Jesus' words point to the time prophecies of Daniel. In Daniel's 70 weeks of years prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27), Daniel told the exact time of Jesus' coming. Jesus came right on time at His first coming. So we believe He will come again right on God's time. The apostle Paul wrote: "But then the right time came. God sent his Son" (Galatians 4:4, NIV). That was true at the First Coming. It will be true again for the Second Coming.

Study the story about the call of the first disciples in Mark 1:16-20. Put yourself in the scene by the lake. Join Peter, Andrew, James, and John as they throw out nets for fish. Then Jesus walks by and calls, "Come! Follow Me!" And without wasting any time, they drop their nets and follow Him. Why should you find it surprising

that they would leave everything so quickly? Would you answer as quickly? Why or why not?

The fishermen left their nets and boats to follow Jesus. They were not looking for money or reward. Fishing was hard work. But they knew how to fish. Jesus did not have riches, fame, or an organized group. Following Jesus meant doing things they had never done before. Only one fact can explain why they went with Jesus. They saw something in Jesus that touched their souls. So they made a decision that would change their lives.

What have you had to give up to follow Jesus? If your answer is "Nothing," what might 2 Corinthians 13:5 say to you?

FRIDAY—APRIL 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Compare Mark 1:1-20 with Matthew 3:1-4:22; Luke 3:1-22; and Luke 5:1-11. Read Ellen G. White, "Misrepresentations¹² of the Godhead," in *Evangelism*,¹³ pp. 613-617; "The Baptism" and "The Call by the Sea," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 109-113, pp. 244-251.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why could an angel not be our Savior? What if Jesus were not

¹¹repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins.

¹²misrepresentations—lies about something.

¹³evangelism—the spreading of the gospel (the good news of salvation) to the world.

eternally God but a god created by God? What difference would that make? Think of the wonderful confidence (trust) we can have in Jesus—our Savior, Lord, and High Priest. Discuss in class what it means for Jesus to be God.

2. Suppose you were there at Jesus' baptism. You saw the Holy Spirit coming down. You heard the voice from heaven. What kind of excuses could you make that would cause you to doubt that these were from God? How do people today doubt proof that God is real, powerful, and caring? In what

ways do we have to be careful of doubting proof that God is real, powerful, and caring?

SUMMARY: In the first words of his Gospel, Mark introduces Jesus as the Son of God. This introduction points to Jesus as being equal with God. This will be the theme of the entire Gospel of Mark. In the opening verses of Mark, we learn right away why Jesus is God's Son: (1) Jesus' first coming fulfilled prophecy. (2) He came right on God's time. (3) At Jesus' baptism, God said Jesus was His (God's) beloved Son.