

What Is the Good News?

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Jack Eastham has been teaching the Gospel of Mark in the adult class. This Gospel is an exciting read. Mark presents action-packed vignettes of the busy ministry of Jesus.

In the introduction, Mark writes, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). He documents when the good news of Jesus first began to be publicly broadcast. As we read this account of Jesus, we need to ask, “What is the good news?”

Sometimes we read the Gospels as if they are a diary of the author or travel log of Jesus. Maybe we are left with the impression that the Gospels are a random collection of disjointed events. Or maybe we try to piece the different accounts together like some kind of ancient puzzle. The Gospels were never intended to be treated like this. Each author had a specific purpose in mind for his readers.

Mark’s purpose in his Gospel is to declare the good news of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, in each scene, we must ask, “What is the good news about Jesus?” Notice how this works in the opening chapters.

The Good News

1). Good news is in the wilderness. The opening scenes of Mark take place in the wilderness. This is the setting in which Mark introduces Jesus. This is significant.

The wilderness was a harsh, desolate place. This is where Israel was punished for forty years. Thousands of Israelites died in the wilderness. When Israel made annual atonement for their sins, their sins were transferred to a goat. This goat was sent into the wilderness for Azazel (Lev. 16:6-10). The goat would inevitably be killed and eaten by wild animals in the wilderness.

Surprisingly, there is good news in the wilderness. But what is the good news? Mark begins his Gospel by writing about a voice in the wilderness. There is a man in the wilderness proclaiming good news. John is preparing the people for the Savior (Mark 1:2-8). The Savior is coming soon!

Next, Jesus comes to the wilderness. He is baptized by John (Mark 1:9-11). Mark identifies the river in which Jesus was baptized: the Jordan River. This river had a significant history for Israel. They crossed over the Jordan River when they came out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. Now, this is the river where Jesus is baptized as a prelude to His ministry.

What is the good news? The good news is that Jesus is going to lead Israel and the world out of the wilderness of sin and into a new life. The baptism of Jesus marks a transition in the spiritual journey of humanity. This is the beginning of a new, hopeful spiritual restoration.

Lastly, Jesus is tempted in the wilderness (Mark 1:12-13). He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He had been fasting for forty days and nights. In this harsh place of death, Jesus is confronted by Satan. After three futile attempts, Satan is unsuccessful in destroying Jesus.

What is the good news? Satan was unable to stop Jesus. Jesus is going to reveal Himself to the world. This is most certainly good news. Yet, even better news is coming. Keep reading!

2). Good news about victory. After the wilderness events, Jesus began to publicly reveal Himself. He taught about the kingdom of God and performed miracles. He called specific men to become disciples. He would teach and train them for further work (Mark 1:14-20).

Then, Mark records Jesus performing a miracle. The first miracle Mark records is Jesus casting out a demon from a man (Mark 1:21-28). The demon knew Jesus and spoke to Him. The demon asked if Jesus had come to destroy them. Then, Jesus commanded the demon to be silent. Jesus cast the demon out and forbade him from speaking His name.

What is the good news? The good news is that Jesus has power over demons and evil. He has come to destroy the demons and evil. The demons have no power over Jesus. Even more, Jesus has come to reclaim the human family from Satan and his minions.

3). Good news concerning forgiveness. Lastly, consider the miracle that Mark records in the second chapter. Jesus heals a paraplegic (Mark 2:1-12). Before He did, however, Jesus declared the man's sins forgiven. This is the first time in Mark's gospel that he records Jesus forgiving sins.

What is the good news? By now, the good news should be obvious. Jesus alone has the power to forgive our sins. In days gone by, Israel had prophets who performed miracles. Elijah worked miracles. None of the prophets, however, declared forgiveness of sins. Only God could forgive sins. The good news is that Jesus is God come to earth to save us from our sins.

Conclusion

Each vignette in Mark's gospel gives us pieces of good news about Jesus. So, do not read Mark's gospel as a travel log or a collection of disjointed events in the life of Jesus. Like all Gospel authors, Mark was thoughtful and methodical in his composition of the life of Jesus.

Ultimately, Mark created a compelling case about why his readers must believe in Jesus and obey Him. If we want to be liberated from the grip of Satan, we must have faith in Jesus. If we want to leave the wilderness of decay and receive new life, we must have faith in Jesus. If we want to receive forgiveness for our sins, we must have faith in Jesus.

The closing vignette of Mark's gospel is of the resurrected Jesus with the apostles. The resurrected Lord gives the gospel to the apostles to preach throughout the world. The Gospel is

a call to believe and obey Jesus: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

What is the good news?

We can be saved!