

Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

Introduction

Who is Jesus, and how shall we respond to him? That question faced the people of Jesus' day who came in contact with him or heard about him. Wherever Jesus went, people had to decide how to respond. Neutrality was impossible. Choices were made beside fishing boats, inside synagogues and private homes, and within the judgment halls of the chief priests and Pilate. Decisions about Jesus continued to confront people even after Jesus' death. His followers said he had risen from the dead. What could one make of that?

This same question—Who is Jesus, and how shall we respond to him?—confronted the first readers of the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark likely is the first written gospel, probably appearing some thirty-five or so years after Jesus' death and resurrection. The early Christian preachers had preached the gospel, and now Mark wrote down the message that had been proclaimed about Jesus through the decades, perhaps especially as Peter preached it.

Mark's first readers may have been facing persecution in Rome during the middle of the 60s. In such a situation, a decision had to be made about Jesus. Christians themselves had to know what kind of person and message could demand their devotion even to the point of giving their lives. As the eyewitnesses to Jesus' earthly life began to pass away, these early Christians also needed information they could share with others and so lead them to commitment to Jesus.

The question continues to face people in our own day. Who is Jesus, and how shall we respond to him? In sixteen swiftly-moving chapters, the Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus in a way that calls for a decision by every person. Mark's message about Jesus also provides hope and assurance that commitment—the kind of commitment that means taking up our own cross and following him—is indeed worthwhile. Mark's account of Jesus also is such that reading and studying it can equip Christians to share the message with others.

Perhaps you will see Jesus in a new way as you study Mark's message about him. Perhaps you will even decide to follow Jesus more closely or for the first time when you learn more about him.

Unit 4, Beginning His Ministry, consists of four sessions that focus on the early portion of Jesus' ministry according to the Gospel of Mark. The Scripture selections are from Mark 1:1—4:34. The sessions show Jesus proclaiming and living the good news of the kingdom of God, facing conflict with the religious leaders, receiving varying responses from people who heard of him, and interpreting his ministry through parables.

02-04-01-en	<i>Jesus Proclaims and Lives the Good News</i>	Mark 1:9-15, 29-39
02-04-02-en	<i>Jesus Faces Conflict</i>	Mark 2:1-17; 3:1-6
02-04-03-en	<i>Jesus Encounters Varying Responses</i>	Mark 3:7-35
02-04-04-en	<i>Jesus Interprets His Ministry</i>	Mark 4:1-20

Unit 5, Showing His Power, focuses on Jesus' actions as recorded in Mark 4:35—8:38. These actions of Jesus further demonstrated his identity and culminated in Mark 8:27-38 with Jesus' call for personal decision from people, beginning with his followers, about who Jesus is. The emphasis in the first half of Mark's Gospel on Jesus' power clarifies Jesus' identity and the nature of his ministry. This emphasis on Jesus' power also sets the context for Jesus' beginning to teach in Mark 8:31 about his suffering.

02-05-05-en	<i>Jesus Demonstrates His Power</i>	Mark 4:35-41; 5:21-43
02-05-06-en	<i>Jesus Shows Compassion for People</i>	Mark 6:30-52
02-05-07-en	<i>Jesus Broadens His Ministry</i>	Mark 7:1-8; 14-30
02-05-08-en	<i>Jesus Calls for Personal Decision</i>	Mark 8:27-38

Unit 6, Suffering for Us, consists of six sessions from Mark 9—16. Session Nine shows Jesus' teaching his disciples about service as they move nearer to Jerusalem and the cross that awaited him there. In Session Ten, Jesus is in the temple itself, asserting his authority. Sessions Eleven to Fourteen deal with Jesus' giving his life, being condemned, dying, and being resurrected.

02-06-09-en	<i>Jesus Teaches About Service</i>	Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45
02-06-10-en	<i>Jesus Asserts His Authority</i>	Mark 11:15-18, 27—12:12
02-06-11-en	<i>Jesus Teaches About the Future</i>	Mark 13:1-37
02-06-12-en	<i>Jesus Gives His Life</i>	Mark 14:12-26, 32-42
02-06-13-en	<i>Jesus Is Condemned</i>	Mark 14:53—15:20
02-06-14-en	<i>Jesus Dies and Lives Again!</i>	Mark 15:21-41; 16:1-8