

Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

Showing His Power: 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 Two, 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.

Unit Two, Showing His Power

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