



Jesus began His ministry

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 1:14-42**.

Last time

After Jesus' baptism, God's Spirit led Him into the uninhabited wilderness where He went without food for 40 days. Satan came and tested Jesus' relationship with God His Father, trying from a few different angles to tempt Him to sin. First he tried to entice Him into prioritising His own personal concerns and needs, then to doubt and test God's faithfulness, and finally, to pursue power for its own sake. Each time Jesus was unmoved and responded by quoting from God's Word. Eventually He dismissed Satan who left, defeated.

John's work finished as Jesus' began

We now hear from Mark, another of Jesus' four contemporaries who recorded accounts that God included in the Bible, His written Narrative. Their inclusion was, of course, not based on popularity or random choice. The authors were specially equipped and positioned by God's Spirit for the task, and the things they wrote were exactly what He wanted them to say. Each of these 4 narratives, or books, was directed at a slightly different audience and has unique elements of style and focus. Together they form a composite and cohesive picture of the life and work of Jesus Christ, the Deliverer of mankind.

Mark records (Mark 1:14,15) that Jesus now starts to preach God's good news, which is that He is the long-awaited Messiah. Mark notes that this begins after the arrest of John...the one who prepared the way for Jesus and baptised Him. As we've heard, John is not someone to hold back the truth about someone's actions or attitudes, no matter who they are. He's arrested after a very open and scathing critique of the morals of King Herod (son of Herod the Great). He's imprisoned for a time, and then Herod has him executed – beheaded.

Given that John's mandate from God was to prepare the way for the Messiah, it is appropriate that it concludes as Jesus - now about 30 years old - begins to

emerge as a Teacher; initially in the northern Palestine region of Galilee. His message picks up on John's theme that people should repent: should recognise the reality that they cannot do anything to escape their sin or to deal with the debt it has incurred before God. But Jesus is able to add good news to the bad – a way of escape and the possibility of their debt being permanently dealt with is now here. Satan has ruled the earth since the human race turned from God, but his hold is to be broken. What God promised back then and repeatedly down through history has now become a reality. No longer do humans have to be God's enemies, helpless captives of Satan and sin and death. A new day in history has dawned in which it's possible for God to have the relationship with humans He's always intended...for Him be their Leader, their King, and for them to know the joy and privilege of freely following Him. And all of this is possible because Jesus has come. He urges them to accept and believe His message, to believe in Him. The essence of the message that Jesus preached remains unchanged today, some 2000 years later. The only way for people to escape Satan's control and to have their sin dealt with is to believe in Him: God's Son, Jesus the Christ, the Messiah.

Jesus began to choose some men to follow and help Him

Mark next records how Jesus invites some men to follow Him, to be His disciples. (Mark 1:16-20) This term is applied broadly at times to anyone who responds positively to His teaching. But more commonly, of course, it is a designation for the handful of individuals who accept Him as the Messiah, and who are His constant travelling companions and pupils.

The first men He approaches are brothers, Simon (or Peter) and Andrew. They are busy making an honest living as fisherman. But His invitation is compelling: He'll teach them, He says, how to "fish for people"; in other words, how to capture people's hearts with Truth, how to bring people to God, to him, the Deliverer. Of course they cannot see at that moment the scope of His purposes and the pivotal roles He plans for them, but the invitation does what He intends. It draws them to Him and to what He's about. They leave their work and follow Him.

Further along the shore, another two brothers, James and John are repairing nets, a never-ending job for fishermen. When He approaches them their response is also immediate – they follow Him as well. Part of the Jesus' work for the next three years or so will be to teach and mould these men and a few other companions into the kind of individuals to whom He can entrust the huge task that He has now begun.

Jesus demonstrates the authority of what He says

Jesus begins to demonstrate His authority as God's Son, the promised Messiah. (Mark 1:21-39) In Capernaum, a fishing village on the northern shore of the sea of Galilee, and home to Peter, Andrew, James and John, Jesus teaches in the Jewish meeting house – the synagogue. The Sabbath congregation are amazed at how confidently He explains what Moses and the other prophets had written...how he ties things together and makes them relevant to their lives. This is in stark contrast to those who usually teach – the so-called experts in religious law. They are always rambling and ranting on, but it's clearly just their own opinions and most of it is about the religious traditions, not what God's Word itself says. Whereas this young man speaks humbly and sincerely, but with incredible authority and clarity. Where is He from? How did He gain this kind of wisdom? Who is He? But He *has* been recognised - by an evil spirit, one of Satan's fallen angel followers. And this one is living in or "possessing" a man who's in the synagogue that day.

From the Narrative we know that since the Fall, Satan has usurped God's place on the earth and has dominated the human race with his deception. He also very successfully traps whole communities, societies, cultures, entire people groups and nations, in his web of deceit. It is also clear that under certain circumstances when individuals make themselves vulnerable, one or even more of the evil spirit beings can take possession of them, so that the person is no longer in control of what they think or do or say. Now, one of these demons who has been controlling a man there is obviously terrified of Jesus. No doubt wondering if the time has come for them all to be sent to eternal punishment he asks, "Have you come to destroy us?" and He identifies Jesus as "the Holy One of God". But Jesus won't have his identity made public by an evil spirit. He'll demonstrate that he's the Messiah in God's time and in the way He intends. He orders the spirit to be quiet and to leave the man. This happens immediately with some obvious physical trauma to the man.

The people are even more amazed now. They've never come across anyone whose words carry such authority: in teaching Scriptures and even over the forces of darkness! And the news about Jesus quickly spreads.

Jesus has authority over sickness

Mark continues in his Narrative to record different incidents that highlight Jesus' compassion for people along with His authority as God's Son. He is showing that He is more powerful than any of the results of the Fall. He travels with His disciples from one community to another, at times speaking to crowds and at others interacting with individuals.

And His heart goes out to these people he encounters...He heals many of different sicknesses, and he cast out demons – orders them to leave the people who they control. Mark relates one incident where Jesus heals a leper (Mark 1:40 – 42) To contract leprosy is a terrible thing in these days, and in this society. Fearing contagion and with no cure available, lepers are shunned,

outcast and despised by the community, forced to live in caves or wherever they can find outside the towns. But when a man with leprosy comes and begs to be healed, Jesus is “moved with compassion” the text says. Against all the conventions of the society He reaches out and touches this diseased man...and immediately he is healed. While Jesus is moved by the physical needs of people, His greater concern, as we’ll see in the Narrative, is always for their deeper, spiritual need.

Leprosy is a powerful analogy of the human state that results from sin. With no cure then, the victim has no escape from this condition which gradually disfigures, cripples and eventually kills them. As Jesus spends time with people, He observes up close how sin has deformed and corrupted His image-bearing race, almost beyond recognition. Like being a leper then, their sin defines them. It is an identity they cannot escape, and a curse they cannot remove.

This is the great Cause that has brought Him to the world...to provide a way of escape for those who will come to Him, like the leper in Galilee, knowing their condition and turning to Him as their only possible answer.

His compassion today is no less than it was then. He is still seeking those who know they are lost and drawing them to Himself to find salvation.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Jesus began His ministry

1. What has been your understanding of “spiritual warfare”? Describe any systematic teaching or doctrinal standpoint that you’ve been exposed to. Are you seeing this line up, or contrast in any way, with what you’re seeing from the Biblical Narrative as we trace it together? What are the primary weapons that you believe God’s Enemy uses in his attempts to fight against God? How should we think about demon possession? Do you feel it is likely that there are people in our community who are demon possessed in the same way they were in Jesus’ time?
2. Based on what we’ve seen in the Narrative so far about God’s character and purposes, why do you believe that Jesus healed people during His time on earth? As a living embodiment of God’s Narrative, what was God

communicating then and now through Jesus healing the sick, casting out demons etc.?



ACTIVITIES

Jesus began His ministry

1. Review the Narrative we've covered so far and list as many of the embedded metaphors and analogies you can identify for the helpless situation of the human race because of sin.
2. Come up with 2 other possible illustrations from "modern" culture that would resonate with someone from our society. Include the explanation and application you would use when talking to them.