

The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ
According to St. Mark
Chapter One

- A. Navarre Intro
- B. OBS Intro
- C. OSB Intro (Major Theme & Outline)

I. Prologue: Preparation for the Ministry

Read 1:1

OSB Note 1:1

OBS: St Mark intends to share with the world the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ - that is, how this Gospel preached by the Church all began, and what happened when their Christ was first revealed to the world. -p.17

Read 1:2-4

OBS: v. 2-3 In ancient days, roads were not kept up as they are now. If a king was intending to travel down a given road, the local people were required to build it up again, clearing debris, filling in potholes, leveling out bumps. Only then, when it was suitably prepared, could the king come. That is how the Church viewed these ancient prophecies -as speaking of the preparatory work of John. -p.18

OSB Note Mt 3:1-3 ref. the wilderness v. 4

OBS: v.4 John came as the head of a revival movement in Israel, announcing the imminent arrival of the longed for Kingdom of God and calling Israel to repentance. Israel, he announced, was in no shape to receive the messianic King. If he came now, when they were in their sins, they would not survive His judgment. -p.18

Read 1:5-6

OSB Note Mt 3:6 confessing their sins v. 5

OBS: v. 5 Here was not a quiet pastoral and private confession (like we have today in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches). It was a public acknowledgement of sin, a public acceptance of being a "sinner," and a public cry for God's mercy.

OSB Note: 1:6

OBS v.6 living in the desert from his youth and eating food of the desert, locusts and wild honey: In other words St. John depended on God and His Word for his very survival and not on man (Deut 8:3).

This desert location for the Baptist is no accident, but a sign that God was once again moving among His people to restore them. Even the choice of the Jordan River for baptism was significant because it was in the waters of the

Jordan that the power and Presence of God was made known as he parted the waters to bring His people home (Josh 3-4). Here at the Jordan at the Baptism of Christ, He would again bring Israel home into their promised land.

ARTICLE: On John the Forerunner

Read 1:7-8

OBS v.7 loosening sandals: So mighty is His Kingdom and so great is Christ that John is not sufficient to stoop down and loose the strap of His sandals. This is greatness indeed because it was commonly allowed that a Jewish slave could do all manner of lowly tasks for his master, but a line was drawn at loosing the straps of his sandals and taking of his shoes. Such work was even too menial for a slave. Yet, John says that he is not fit to do even that for the Messiah, so great is His coming Kingdom!

Read 1:9-11

OSB Note Mt 3:16 coming up from the water v.10

OSB Note Lk 3:21

OBS: v.10: Why a dove? Perhaps it hearkens back to the original creation, where the Spirit of God was hovering (like a bird) over the face of the waters (Gen 1:2). Here the Spirit is hovering over the waters of the new creation [as Christ establishes Holy Baptism as the means of restoring

our human nature through its participation with His Divine energies or grace]. The dove is also a symbol of purity, harmless and innocent (see Matt 10:16). The One who is singled out by such an innocent Dove is Himself innocent - not a guilty sinner like the others, but the Messiah in whom God is well-pleased - His Chosen One. p. 22

OSB Note Mt 3:17 You are my beloved Son v.11

OSB Note Lk 3:22

OBS: Mark means us to see this as a fulfillment of John's words ("a greater one is coming"). In humility, Christ came to John after the pattern of all the other sinners and penitents, identifying Himself with the race of men He had come to save. However, unlike those men, He did not come "confessing His sins" (v.5), for He had none to confess. Mark means to show us that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan to reveal to John His identity as the designated Messiah.

Read 1:12-13

OBS: Immediately after His Baptism, the Spirit now casts Him out into the wilderness (the Greek verb *ekballo* is very strong, the same word used for Christ casting out demons (e.g. in v. 34). It is used here to show the divine inner compulsion of the Son of God in combating Satan - He did not casually wander into the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry & His warfare, rather He rushed to the front line to meet the adversary. p. 23

OSB Note Lk 4:1 wilderness

OSB Note Mt 4:1 tempted

OBS: Mark stresses that Christ instantly and strenuously takes up the challenge. The wilderness here is a place of testing. Just as Israel was tested in the wilderness for forty years (Deut 1:1-3) now Christ is tested forty days. In other words, Christ is the embodiment of Israel as her true King. Wild beasts: Because Christ has to contend with wild beasts, He has the angels there to minister to Him.

Read 1:14-15

OSB NOTE 1:14:15a

OBS: Mark's aim is not to imply Jesus worked and preached before John's arrest, but to emphasize that Jesus emerged from the shadows of the Forerunner's ministry coming into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God. This Gospel (or Good News, Gr. *Evaggelion*) is that the appointed time [for the Messiah] (Gr. *Kairos*) has been fulfilled. What is required of the people now is simple: they must repent and believe this message! P. 25-26

OSB NOTE 1:14:15b

OBS: Those who heeded John's call for repentance expressed their faith by receiving baptism. It appears the same was true for those who accepted Christ's message: they expressed their faith by being baptized. St. John

speaks of Christ "making and baptizing more disciples than John (Jn 4:1). P. 26

Read 1:16-20

OBS: Jesus had know Simon and Andrew before (see Jn 1:35-42 - When John said, "Behold the Lamb of God..." they followed and asked Jesus, "Where are you staying?" and Jesus said, "Come and see.") Mark concentrates on the abruptness of their call and the completeness of their break with the [cares of the] world.

OSB NOTE 1:16-20: See Note Mt 4:18-22

OBS: The concept of becoming "fishers of men" v. 17 now has a warm evangelistic feel. But the image originally probably had a more eschatological feel to it (based on Jeremiah 16:16-18 & Ezekiel 29:4-5, which equate fishers with those who bring about the final judgment). Christ's image of becoming fishers of men meant that the disciples, by their proclamation, were to be conveyors of judgment as well as salvation in Israel -salvation if one accepted the Gospel, and judgment if one did not. P. 27

OBS: V. 20 immediately... they went away after Him: For James and John, Simon & and Andrew, the break with their old life was complete. Mark relates their call in this way as an example for all Christ's disciples, for ALL Christians. tough all are not necessarily required to leave their jobs and families behind as these apostles did, all of His followers are required to make that inner break with

the world. After baptism, they now no longer belong to the world. Their heart's first loyalty and their destiny now lie with Christ. -P. 27

Read 1:21-28 Healings in Capernaum

SPECIAL NOTE / EXCURSUS: On Action & Astonishment

A. One of the characteristics of ST. Mark's Gospel is that Jesus is presented as a man of action. Mark uses the word immediately (*Gr euthus*, pronounced yoo-thoos') ^{nine} times in the first chapter alone) to indicate the speed and energy which accompanied Christ's ministry. It is as if when Jesus appeared, things happened at an accelerated pace as the Kingdom of God was being ushered in.

B. Also characteristic of St. Mark's Gospel is his emphasis on how astonishing the power of Christ was to those who saw Him. Mark uses many synonyms to describe the effect that Jesus had on people: They were "thunderstruck" (1:22; 6:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:1) they "marveled" (5:20; 15:5, 44); they "marveled greatly" (12:17); they were "astonished" (1:27; 10:24, 32); etc. Mark does this to show how greatly amazed these people were with the demonstrations of divine power shown by Christ. [p. 30](#)

OSB NOTE 1:21

"Healing on the Sabbath" v.21 cf. OSB Note Lk 4:31

"With authority" v. 22 cf. OSB Note Lk 4:32

OBS: Those in the synagogue are thunderstruck (or astonished) as His teaching (v. 22) because he was not like the scribes (scribes were a body of men trained in

interpreting the Law, mostly Pharisees, who functioned as the authoritative teachers of the people.) Jesus teaches as one having authority (for examples see Mt 5:21-22).

"Be quiet" v.25 cf. OSB Note Mt. 12:16-21

OBS: This first miracle in Mark is exorcism. This is significant because Christ's ministry in general is seen as one great exorcism -the overthrow of Satan, prince of this world (cf. Jn 12:31), and the liberation of mankind from his fatal grasp. P. 28

OBS: What proof could He offer for claiming such authority? Jesus performs a powerful sign by an exorcism. The demon upon seeing Christ who is Judge of the living and the dead, fears its immediate destruction. Therefore it vainly tries to wield the knowledge of His Name (v.24) to fend Him off (knowledge of someone's name was believed to give one power over a person -but not THIS PERSON!).

OBS: The Jews were used to exorcisms. Exorcism was well-known trade (cf. Mt 12:27; Acts 19:13). In attempting to cast out a demon, the exorcist would pray and use incantations, invoking other spirits and using magical texts. But here was exorcism with a simple word of command: a mere five words in the original Greek, two verbs that ring out like cracks from a whip: "Shut up and get out!" They had never seen any thing as powerfully authoritative as this! -p.29

Read 1:29-31 The Healing of Simon-Peter's Mother in Law

"Simon-Peter's wife's mother" v.30 cf. OSB Note Mt. 8:14-17

OSB: Having left the synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples returned to Simon's and Andrew's home (their new base of operation). The womenfolk present would have provided the hospitality of the Sabbath meal. Simon's mother in law, however was not there because she was lying down with a fever. So they brought this request to Jesus and Mark relates what happened next quite simply: Christ seized her by the hand (the word translated seized, Gr. *Krateo*, is a strong word, used also for placing someone under arrest). In other words, the divine strength and power flowed into her instantly, and the fever left her. She was so completely recovered that she jointed in the others in serving them the Sabbath meal. Jesus only has to speak and take hold and the powers of death give way.

Read 1:32-34 More Healings

OBS: The people wait until the Sabbath to end and go to Him in droves, hundreds and hundreds coming to Peter's home seeking healing and receiving it.

OBS: Jesus silences demons again because He did not want to be hailed the Messiah yet. The popular understanding of the Messiah was then too military and carnal. The people saw the Messiah as a military leader, one who was to raise an army and declare war on the

Romans. But this was not the way to bring in the Kingdom of God. Thus the Lord resets this messianic enthusiasm lest the people try by force to make Him an earthly King (see John 6:15).

OSB Note 1:34

Read 1:35-39 Tour of Galilee

OSB Note 1:35

OBS: Our Lord's popularity at Capernaum is overflowing. As it say in v. 36, "Everyone is looking for You." Rather than basking in the glow and seeking the approval of men, He seeks time for communion with God His Father. Simon-Peter and his companion cannot understand this and so they urge the Lord to go out to them. Rejecting the path of popularity, the Lord goes to the synagogues throughout Galilee, intent on establishing the Father's Kingdom and casting out demons (continuing His exorcism of Satan's hold on man). -P.33

Read 1:40-45 Cleansing a Leper

OBS: In summarizing this opening part of Jesus' Galilean ministry, Mark concludes with a story of the healing of a leper. The term "leprosy" included any number of infectious skin diseases, but all of them meant disaster for the sufferer. Having been labeled as a leper, one was doomed to be driven from common society, to face a life of isolation and poverty, far from human warmth and family, cut off from the worship of temple and synagogue. It was,

in fact, a kind of living death - and a fitting image for sin that afflicts all of us. p. 34

OBS: The leper's whole life and his only hope lay in the compassion of Christ (a safe place for anyone to put his hope!) The Lord was moved with heartfelt love or "compassion" (literally the Gr. word is *splanxnozomai* pronounced splangkh-nid'-zom-ahee meaning one's inmost and strongest emotions). To love with *splagxna* is to love with a love so intense it is felt in the "guts." p. 34-35

OSB: We must not miss the significance of this touch v. 41, because people did not touch lepers. If one did he would be made ceremonially unclean and risked physical contamination alsos. The Lord's compassion and power are stronger than that living death. His power drives out the leprosy with a mere two words θέλω καθάρισθητι (Gr. *thelo, katharistheti*): I will, be cleansed! -Just as his words had driven out the demons.

OSB: Why the scolding in v.43? -The Lord no doubt told the man to simply to show himself ot the priests so that the preist could pronounce him clean and restor him to society (as prescribed in Lev 14:2). The man, however, seems to have resisted this command to keep things quiet. He insisted on staying there in town, telling others the whole story! The Lord no doubt repeated His order; the man gain resisted. The Lord there fore had to scold him into being quiet. The word used is the Greek *embrimaomai* - the same word used in 14:5 for the scolding of the woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany. That is, the Lord sternly

warned him to do as he was told -and cast him out (Gr. *ekballo*, the same word used in v. 34 for the casting out of the demons).

OBS: Of course, it was to no avail. As soon as he left Christ, "he began to proclaim it freely and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city..." (v. 45). Christ's popularity swelled even more and the crowds were so overwhelming that He could no longer enter into a city, but stayed outside in deserted places - the very situation He wished to avoid. Still they came to Him from every direction!

OSB Note 1:40-45 cf. Note Mt 8:1-4

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Sub-Dn. Lazarus Der-Ghazarian