



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark

Part 3

Mark 1:29-45

A Living Word Independent Bible Study

REVIEW of Mark 1:1-28

Events of Jesus' ministry must have numbered into the thousands of incidents, teachings, and encounters.

Scholars believe that Peter's trusted disciple, Mark, compiled elements of what Peter preached and taught from his memory of Jesus into what had never existed before – a story ABOUT Jesus!

In crafting this story, Mark selected the relatively FEW items that would be the story of his Gospel. Later, other Gospels were written that included other memories of Jesus.

REVIEW of Mark 1:1-28

Mark's story was put together as a sort of mystery story, with the mystery being "Who is Jesus?"

We saw that in 1:1, the solution to the mystery is shared right away, and we will see it again in 15:39, where there is a public affirmation of Jesus' identity.

But the question of Jesus' identity is acknowledged at three different levels in the story:

First is general humanity, with ignorance of Jesus' real identity

Second are God, Satan, and demons, who know Jesus' real identity.

Third are the disciples, who are largely ignorant of it, but who at times seem to have a sense of it.

That identity is "THE SON OF GOD"

REVIEW of Mark 1:1-28

In the ancient Near East, the realm of the gods, the heavens, was also the realm of life and fertility.

The realm of the earth was constantly threatened by death.

A driving force of ancient religions was “how do we find life/vitality/abundance in the face of death, which constantly seeks to destroy us?”

In addition, the KING was viewed not only as the supreme authority on earth, but also as the conduit for life and blessings to flow from heaven to earth.

In the Old Testament, Solomon, son of David, is called a “son of God” – he will BE this conduit!

2 Samuel 7:14 “I will be his father and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.”

Now, Mark identifies JESUS as Son of God – that is, God’s King.

Even at Jesus’ baptism, God says “You are my son.”

In other words, Jesus will be the conduit of God’s blessing, and of LIFE. This is GOOD NEWS – God has sent a king to bestow life and blessing.

REVIEW of Mark 1:1-28

Death, though, still seeks to destroy us in the earthly realm, by:

- Satan and demons
- Human structures of violence and oppression
- Human sin
- Sickness
- Human ignorance and confusion
- Natural dangers

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus will be seen doing battle with ALL of these!

DEATH is the last, worst, supreme enemy that God will defeat!

At the end of our last session, we saw Jesus take on an evil spirit (demon), who acknowledged Jesus' authority.

Next we will see Jesus take on sickness.

Mark 1:29 (NIV)

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.

“As soon as”

The Greek word here translated “as soon as” is often translated “Immediately”.

It is a characteristic word in Mark’s Gospel

This word has actually already been used in 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:20, 1:21, 1:29, 1:30 and 1:31!

English translations “mix it up” because, as modern readers, we don’t stylistically like reading the same word again and again!

“they went ... to the home of Simon and Andrew”

They are still in Capernaum

But John 1:44 says Peter and Andrew are from Bethsaida!

John 1:44 – “Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.”

This has caused great consternation among some scholars.

The two towns are close to each other on the north shore of Galilee, but are NOT the same town.



Mark 1:30 (NIV)

Simon's mother-in-law
was in bed with a fever,
and they told Jesus
about her.

“Simon's mother-in-law”

Peter is married.

1 Corinthians 9:5 corroborates that many apostles were married.

1 Corinthians 9:5 – “Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?”

“fever”

Fever was perceived as an illness itself, not a symptom. Sometimes, it was viewed as, or even called, “fire from heaven” – perhaps viewed as divine punishment for sin.

ANY sickness in ancient times pointed toward death.

Mark 1:31 (NIV)

So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

“took her hand”

Jesus heals without uttering a single word – a touch is enough.

Touching a woman broke through social norms for physical contact.

Jesus often used touch to demonstrate compassion and acceptance.

“wait on them”

This implies she served them a meal. That is – she was REALLY healed if she was able to serve them a meal!

This is the same Greek verb used in 1:13 with regard to angels serving Jesus in the wilderness.

Peter’s mother-in-law shares in the privilege of serving and caring for Jesus.

This entire story supports the idea that Mark preserves Peter’s preaching and memories, since it recalls an event important to Peter.

It is significant that the first HEALING in Mark is of a woman.

Also – HEALING is distinguished from EXORCISM in Mark, as in the culture of the day. Exorcisms directly involve Satan/demons, sickness stems from natural, not supernatural, causes – unless as a punishment from God for sin).

Mark 1:32-33 (NIV)

That evening after sunset
the people brought to
Jesus all the sick and
demon-possessed. The
whole town gathered at
the door,

“after sunset”

This marks the shift from Sabbath to the first day of the week.

It implies people waited until the Sabbath was over to bring the sick and demon-possessed to Jesus.

“all the sick”

Mark uses hyperbole (exaggeration for effect) frequently. It is not meant to be taken literally.

“sick and demon-possessed”

Notice again how these two problems are classified separately.

Sickness is healed, while demons are exorcised.

“whole town”

Hyperbole again!

“at the door”

They are gathered around Peter’s mother-in-law’s house

Mark 1:34 (NIV)

and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

“various diseases”

Jesus is not a typical “healer” of the day, who specialized in a few diseases.

His power is demonstrated by healing “various diseases”.

“drove out many demons”

Mark has 10 occurrences of “casting out demons” throughout the Gospel

“he would not let the demons speak”

Here, because “they knew who he was”.

There is a continuing theme in Mark referred to as the “Messianic secret”. There is much debate about WHY. Here are some possibilities:

Pragmatic: Too much attention to Jesus would impair his actual ministry.

Inappropriate: Not appropriate for a demon to proclaim the Good News

Bad Timing: The full significance of Jesus’ identity cannot be understood apart from his death and resurrection. We will see that after that, the demand for secrecy is completely lifted.

Mark 1:35 (NIV)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

“very early in the morning”

Jesus healed many people AFTER SUNSET. Has he slept? Is he exhausted?

“a solitary place”

Clearly, trying to avoid crowds

“where he prayed”

This will happen again in 6:46.

What Jesus actually prayed is not specified. Could it have been for guidance?

Look ahead at 1:38, where there is a sense of “resolve” in Jesus in the aftermath of this prayer:

Mark 1:38 – “Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’”

Mark 1:36-37

(NIV)

Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed, “Everyone is looking for you!”

“to look for him”

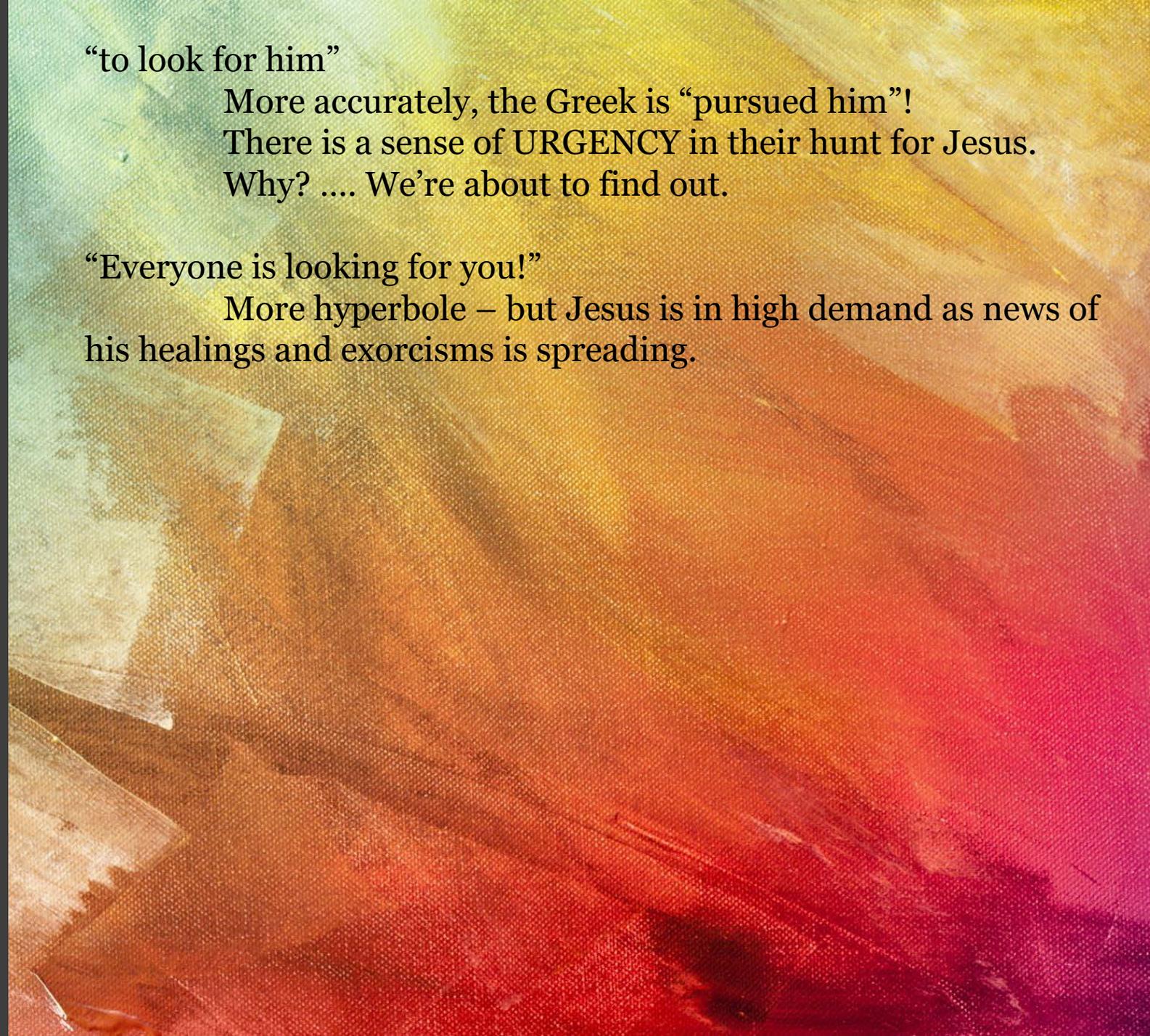
More accurately, the Greek is “pursued him”!

There is a sense of URGENCY in their hunt for Jesus.

Why? We’re about to find out.

“Everyone is looking for you!”

More hyperbole – but Jesus is in high demand as news of his healings and exorcisms is spreading.



Mark 1:38 (NIV)

Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

“Let us go somewhere else”

Think about this – Jesus has healed a lot of people, and more want him, right here, where he is. Why would he want to go somewhere else, now?

Perhaps it is the demands of the crowd. Perhaps it is to avoid the clamor. Perhaps it is to defy the temptation to stay in one place where he is popular and successful. OR ... could it be because his prayer led him to this decision?

In any event, Jesus invites his disciples along with him.

Later – not yet – the disciples will be sent out to do what Jesus has been doing.

“so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

Jesus says here that **PREACHING** is his purpose.

Remember 1:14, and Jesus’ initial activity after the wilderness:

Mark 1:14 – “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God.”

Mark 1:39 (NIV)

So he traveled
throughout Galilee,
preaching in their
synagogues and driving
out demons.

“preaching ... and driving out demons”

That is, fighting a battle against evil.

Preaching defeats ignorance of God and of God’s
truth/God’s will.

This seems to be Jesus’ preferred entry point for
penetrating the darkness.

Exorcisms defeat the active presence of evil.

Healings defeat sicknesses that lead to death.

Mark 1:40 (NIV)

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

“leprosy”

This was a disease that created deep shame, dishonor, and rejection.

It seems different from what we call “leprosy” today.

Hansen’s disease involves the deadening of nerves in the extremities, leading to unnoticed injury, bleeding, and infection.

In the Bible, “leprosy” seems to be a skin disorder with white scabs or scales over the entire body.

The regulations in Leviticus 13-14 suggest the disease could run its course, and the person then re-integrated into society.

But in the meantime, the sufferer must be excluded from community and kept at a distance.

Numbers 12:9-16 gives some context – a corpse-like, stillborn appearance suggesting death. And remember, death is the ultimate enemy of God and the people.

“If you are willing, you can make me clean”

The man has confidence in Jesus’ ability to heal him.

“make me clean”

The words COULD mean “declare me clean” but the context suggests he means “heal me”. Leviticus laws required a priest to declare one cleansed of leprosy.

Mark 1:41 (NIV)

Filled with compassion,
Jesus reached out his
hand and touched the
man. “I am willing,” he
said. “Be clean!”

“with compassion”

There is a textual controversy here.

Many ancient manuscripts read “being angered”, not “filled with compassion”.

The text may have been softened to avoid confusion – but clearly, Jesus was angered by the CONDITION, not by the man’s request.

“touched the man”

As in 1:31, this healing involves touch.

But touching a leper has larger social implications than touching a woman.

“Be clean!”

These are words of healing, not just a declaration of his cleanness.

Look also at Matthew 11:3-4. Healing lepers was characteristic of the expected day of salvation.

Matthew 11:3-4 – “When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’ Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured.’”

Judaism held that only GOD could HEAL a leper – implying, Jesus’ action with this leper confirms the Kingdom’s presence!

Mark 1:42 (NIV)

Immediately the leprosy
left him and he was
cured.

“Immediately”

We see this word once again – and the man is cured!

In Judaism, the focus was on a COMMUNITY-LEVEL cleansing – removing the leper from the community in order to keep the community clean.

With Jesus, in the day of salvation, the focus shifts to INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL cleansing – remove the leprosy from the leper, making the individual clean.

It is also a defeat of death/isolation from life/community for the individual.

In Judaism, the danger of death was banished, so that the community could have life.

Mark 1:43-44 (NIV)

Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

“don’t tell this”

Here we have the Messianic secret again.

“show yourself to the priest”

Leviticus required a declaration of cleanness to come from a priest.

Jesus acknowledges this law.

“as a testimony”

Of what, we might wonder?

Of the fact that Jesus upholds the law? (He was charged later with not doing that.)

Or, to the validity of Jesus’ healing ministry?

Mark 1:45 (NIV)

Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

“to talk freely”

The Greek here is actually “to proclaim” – the same language used in the early church for the spread of the gospel.

It is the same word used in 1:14, regarding Jesus’ own ministry of “proclaiming the good news”.

“As a result”

Now, Jesus can’t even enter a city in Galilee without being mobbed.

“from everywhere”

News/word about Jesus had filled Capernaum. Now, it has spread throughout Galilee!



Bibliography

The following materials have been used as sources for this Bible study:

Dongell, Joseph R., *The Gospel of Mark: The Biblical Journey, One Book*, Seedbed Publishing, 2015.
Guelich, Robert A., *Mark 1-8:26*, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 34A, Zondervan Publishing, 1989.
Keck, Leander E., *Jesus in the Gospels*, Disciple Second Generation Studies, Abingdon Press, 2003.
The Quest Study Bible – New International Version, Zondervan Publishing, 1978.

The Gospel of Mark, Part 3, Mark 1:29-45
A Living Word Independent Bible Study