

BAPTISTWAY

Bible Study for Texas



Good News in the New Testament

Duane Brooks
Ebbie Smith
Bill Tillman

BAPTISTWAY PRESS®
Dallas, Texas

Good News in the New Testament—Study Guide

Copyright © 2001 by BAPTISTWAY PRESS®.

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations. For information, contact BAPTISTWAY PRESS, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 North Washington, Dallas, TX 75246-1798.

BAPTISTWAY PRESS® is registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Scripture marked NIV is taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (North American Edition), copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in Unit 1 are from the New International Version.

Scripture marked NRSV is taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in Units 2 and 3 are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible.

Scripture marked NASB is taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.

BAPTISTWAY PRESS® Management Team
Executive Director, Baptist General Convention of Texas: Charles Wade
Coordinator, Church Health and Growth Section: H. Lynn Eckeberger
Director, Bible Study/Discipleship Center: Bernard M. Spooner

Publishing consultant: Ross West, Positive Difference Communications
Cover and Interior Design and Production: Desktop Miracles, Inc.
Front cover photo: David M. Cochran

First edition: September 2001.

ISBN: 1-931060-12-6

How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Look at the table of contents, read the study introduction, and read the unit introduction for the lesson you're about to study. Try to see how each lesson relates to the unit and overall study of which it is a part.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for each unit in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

- A. Do all of the things just mentioned, of course.
- B. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying with your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on page 5 and on the first page of each lesson. You might also find it helpful to make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.

GOOD NEWS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- C. You may want to get the enrichment teaching help that is provided in the *Baptist Standard* and/or on the internet. Call 214-630-4571 to begin your subscription to the *Baptist Standard*. Access the internet information by checking the *Baptist Standard* website at <http://www.baptiststandard.com>. (Other class participants may find this information helpful, too.)
- D. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, which is a companion piece to these lesson comments. It contains additional Bible comments plus teaching suggestions. The teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- E. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- F. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Good News in the New Testament

<i>How to Make the Best Use of This Issue</i>	3
<i>Introducing Good News in the New Testament</i>	7

U N I T 1

The Ministry of Jesus

Date of Study

LESSON 1	_____	<i>It's Time</i> Mark 1:1–15	13
LESSON 2	_____	<i>This Is Really Living</i> Matthew 4:23—5:16	23
LESSON 3	_____	<i>Who Is He?</i> Luke 9:18–27	35
LESSON 4	_____	<i>So That You May Believe</i> John 20:11–18, 26–31	45

U N I T 2

The Ministry of Jesus Continues

LESSON 5	_____	<i>Sharing in Jesus' Continued Ministry</i> Acts 1:1–9; 2:43–47	57
LESSON 6	_____	<i>Telling the Story of Jesus</i> Acts 10:34–48	67
LESSON 7	_____	<i>Good News for Everybody</i> Acts 15:1–21	77

Interpreting the Meaning of Jesus

LESSON 8	_____	<i>New Life in Christ</i> Romans 8:1–17, 31–39	91
LESSON 9	_____	<i>Selfless Ministry for Christ</i> 2 Corinthians 4:7–11; 5:11–21	103
LESSON 10	_____	<i>A Faith That Means Faithfulness</i> Hebrews 11:1–2, 8–28, 32—12:3	113
LESSON 11	_____	<i>Love, the Heart of the Gospel</i> 1 John 4:7–21	125
LESSON 12	_____	<i>The Promise of His Coming</i> 2 Peter 3:3–15a	135
LESSON 13	_____	<i>Worthy Is the Lamb</i> Revelation 5	145
		<i>Our Next New Study</i>	155
		<i>How to Order More Bible Study Materials</i>	157

Good News in the New Testament

This series of thirteen lessons presents the opportunity to overcome a persistent shortcoming that many adults have, including many people who have been studying the Bible “all their lives.” Even long-time Sunday School members may have just a smattering of knowledge about the New Testament—a story here, a teaching there, a half-remembered idea about something Paul wrote. These adults may not see, however, how it all fits together. This series of studies can help adults overcome this inadequacy and develop an understanding of the New Testament as a whole.

These thirteen lessons provide a brief survey of the New Testament. Lessons deal with various New Testament books, and the various kinds of writings in the New Testament are treated in the study. These writings include the gospels, Acts, letters, and the Book of Revelation. The focus of the study is, simply, Jesus, who is the focus of the New Testament itself.

The first unit, “The Ministry of Jesus,” deals with the ministry of Jesus as seen in the four gospels. The first three lessons of this four-session unit are from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The emphasis in these first three lessons is on the dominant theme of Jesus’ ministry—Jesus’ proclamation and embodiment of the kingdom of God. The first lesson, from the Gospel of Mark, deals with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, when he came announcing, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15, NASB). This lesson is placed first because of the widespread consensus among Bible commentators that Mark was the first gospel written. The second lesson, from the Gospel of Matthew, is a study of the kind of life that is lived under God’s reign. The third lesson is a study of Luke 9:18–27 and calls for a decision about who Jesus is. The fourth lesson of the unit considers the climactic event of Jesus’ ministry—his death and resurrection.

The second unit, “The Ministry of Jesus Continues,” consists of three lessons from the Book of Acts. These lessons will lead participants to consider how Jesus continued his ministry in the actions of the early church.

GOOD NEWS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The lessons will also challenge participants to consider how Jesus yet continues his ministry in *our* lives and churches. The first lesson points out that Acts 1:1 refers to an earlier writing, the Gospel of Luke, as being about “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (NIV, NASB). The implication is that Acts shows what Jesus continued to do and teach. This lesson considers Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples and empower them to witness. The second lesson considers also how the early church proclaimed the message of Christ. The third lesson deals with the Jerusalem council, at which the church affirmed that salvation is indeed by grace through faith.

The third unit, “Interpreting the Meaning of Jesus,” treats the remainder of the New Testament—the letters, Hebrews, and the Revelation. This six-session unit deals with six key themes of the New Testament—the meaning of the new life in Christ, our ministry for Christ, the meaning of faith, the necessity of love for one another to demonstrate the genuineness of our relationship to God, the promised coming of Christ, and the wonder of Jesus’ redemptive work on our behalf.

Additional Resources for Studying *Good News in the New Testament* (arranged in canonical order)¹

- Joe Blair. *Introducing the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1994.
- David E. Garland. *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel*. New York: Crossroad, 1995.
- Frank Stagg. *Matthew*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 8. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969.
- James A. Brooks. *Mark*. The New American Commentary. Volume 23. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991.
- David E. Garland. *Mark*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.
- R. Alan Culpepper. *The Gospel of Luke*. The New Interpreter’s Bible. Volume IX. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Malcolm Tolbert. *Luke*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 9. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.
- George R. Beasley-Murray. *John*. Word Biblical Commentary. Volume 36. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987.
- William E. Hull. *John*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 9. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.
- William Barclay. *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Daily Study Bible Series. Revised edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.
-

- J. W. MacGorman. *Acts: The Gospel for All People*. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1990.
- I. Howard Marshall. *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.
- John B. Polhill. *Acts*. The New American Commentary. Volume 26. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992.
- Smith, T. C. *Acts*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 10. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970.
- William Barclay. *The Letter to the Romans*. The Daily Study Bible. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975.
- G. R. Beasley-Murray. *2 Corinthians*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 11. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971.
- Kenneth L. Chafin. *1, 2 Corinthians*. The Communicator's Commentary. Volume 7. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1985.
- David E. Garland. *2 Corinthians*. The New American Commentary. Volume 29. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999.
- Fred B. Craddock. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. The New Interpreter's Bible. Volume XII. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Foy Valentine. *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter*. Layman's Bible Book Commentary. Volume 23. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1981.
- William Barclay. *The Letters of John and Jude*. The Daily Study Bible. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.
- PHEME PERKINS. *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*. Interpretation: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995).
- Ray Summers. *2 Peter*. The Broadman Bible Commentary. Volume 12. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972.
- Herschel H. Hobbs. *The Cosmic Drama: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1971.
- M. Eugene Boring. *Revelation*. Interpretation: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989.
- John P. Newport. *The Lion and the Lamb*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1986.
- Ray Summers. *Worthy Is the Lamb: An Interpretation of Revelation*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1971.

NOTES

1. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.

The Ministry of Jesus

U N I T



This unit provides a brief summary of the ministry of Jesus as seen in the four gospels and consists of one lesson from each gospel. The first three lessons are from the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke.

These lessons focus on the dominant theme of Jesus' ministry—his proclamation and embodiment of the kingdom of God. The final lesson, from the Gospel of John, considers Jesus' resurrection and its meaning. A brief introduction to the gospel being studied is a part of each lesson.¹

UNIT ONE, THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Lesson 1	It's Time	Mark 1:1–15
Lesson 2	This Is Really Living	Matthew 4:23—5:16
Lesson 3	Who Is He?	Luke 9:18–27
Lesson 4	So That You May Believe	John 20:11–18, 26–31

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotes in Unit 1, Lessons 1–4, are from the New International Version.

Focal Text

Mark 1:1–15

Background

Mark 1:1–15

Main Idea

Jesus proclaimed and embodied the kingdom of God.

Question to Explore

How does Jesus' ministry fit into God's purpose in history—and for my life?

Study Aim

To summarize how Jesus' ministry fits into God's purpose in history and for my life

Study and Action Emphases

- Share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all people
- Equip people for ministry in the church and in the world

LESSON ONE

It's Time

Quick Read

At just the right time in history, Jesus came proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God as the fulfillment of prophecy and of John the Baptist's announcement of Jesus' ministry.



Do you ever catch yourself saying, “It’s time”? Those words can mean a lot or a little, depending on the context. How do you know that it is time?

When my wife and I were viewing the sonogram of our first son, the technician took a look at the readout and asked, “When did you say you were due?”

We said, “Early in April.”

He said, “Not according to this measurement. This baby is further along than you think.”

We said, “Really?”

He said, “Yes, he will be born in early March, not in early April.”

That whole conversation wouldn’t have mattered if I hadn’t received a phone call just the next week from a church inviting me to preach a week-long revival in late March. Based on the ultrasound, I now knew the baby would be about a month old. Without asking Melanie, I accepted the church’s gracious invitation. Sure enough, the ultrasound was wrong. It was a long month of waiting, knowing the revival was coming and realizing that Melanie had not had the baby. March didn’t really march. March dragged along, and we still had no baby.

When the time came to preach the revival, Melanie was 9.2 months pregnant. So I went to preach, and we stationed a church member by the phone at the church. I was out in a rural area sixty miles from our home. On Sunday morning, Melanie came with me to the meeting, but on Sunday night she was too tired. So I drove down by myself and preached. When I got home that night, as I walked in the door, she said, “It’s time!”

If you think that pregnancy passes slowly, think about the world’s wait for the awaited one to come. Since the fall of humankind, the world had been waiting, groaning in travail, crying out for redemption. The gestation period had dragged on for hundreds of years since Isaiah had spoken. People were waiting. And, as strange as it may sound, God had been waiting. Then, as Paul said in Galatians 4:4, “When the time had fully come, God sent his Son.” In God’s great plan for the ages, a day came when God looked down from heaven and said, *It’s time*.

Then Jesus was born, his parents fled with him to Egypt, and then they moved to Nazareth. One day, John began to preach. Then Jesus came to be baptized and blessed. Shortly after that, Jesus began to preach. What did he say? *It’s time!*

Who is Jesus? There are so many conflicting opinions about that subject. In the New Testament are four ancient witnesses who answer that question. Mark was likely the first to write. Mark begins with a declaration

Mark 1:1–15

¹The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²It is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”—

³ “a voice of one calling in the desert,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”

⁴And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹²At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

of the timeliness of Jesus’ coming. For 400 years, the prophetic voices had been silent. Then John the Baptist came on the scene saying, *It’s almost time*. Mark 1:9 says, “At that time Jesus came,” and in 1:15, Jesus announced, “The time has come.” The time for what? The time for good news, for the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, for the kingdom to come on earth as it was in heaven!

So exactly what time was it? In God’s plan there was a time when Jesus came, and there is a time when Jesus will come again. So what time is it for those of who live in between those two comings? This is the time for us to come to him. At just the right time, the One who transcends time

took the time to enter our time. How do we get ready? First we recognize that his coming is good news, and then we repent of sin and receive the Savior.

Today it is time for us to make time in our lives for him! Just as there was a time for God's Son to be born into this world, there is a time for us

In God's great plan for the ages, a day came when God looked down from heaven and said, It's time.

to be born into God's kingdom. Mark reminds us that we are living on KST—Kingdom Standard Time. Let's get ready and get right!

In the beginning of his gospel, Mark went directly to the heart of Jesus' ministry. Mark starts by relating Jesus to the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah and John the Baptist. Then Mark shows us Jesus' emphasis on the proclamation of the kingdom of God from the first.

Good News: It's Time to Recognize His Coming (1:1-5, 15)

Are we ready for the good news of Christ's entry into our lives? From the beginning the prophets made it known that preparation would be required (see Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3). Isaiah predicted that a messenger would come to prepare the way for the Lord. John the Baptist embodied the fulfillment of that prophecy. He came to prepare the way by preaching a simple message: *Get ready!*

Dr. George Sweeting, former President of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, told of the day he noticed an unusual combination of bumper

The Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark offers us the earliest and simplest account of Christ. In the famous words of Sergeant Friday on the television show *Dragnet*, Mark provides us "just the facts." Tradition tells us that Mark was written by John Mark, the companion of the Apostle Paul who defected during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 15:36-40). Though Mark's desertion created conflict between Paul and Barnabas, the tension was ultimately resolved when Paul admitted how much he needed him (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark was apparently in Peter's company as Peter wrote his first letter (1 Peter 5:13). Many scholars believe that Mark wrote down the reflections of Peter, one of Jesus' inner circle of disciples. The Gospel of Mark likely was written after the middle of the first century in the city of Rome.

stickers on the car of a man who was visiting the school. The coincidental message conveyed by the two stickers prompted Dr. Sweeting to suggest to the unsuspecting visitor that he might want to remove one of them. One bumper sticker read, "Jesus Is Coming," and the other said, "Escape to Wisconsin."

The people of Jesus' day thought they were ready for the coming of the Messiah, but they largely missed it. Are we really

Who is Jesus?

ready? We need to stay ready so we don't have to get ready! Are we living as people who recognize Jesus' first coming and his impending second coming?

Some people live with a functional atheism. They aren't really atheists, but nothing in their work habits, family lives, or neighborhood relationships indicates to anybody that they really know the One who has come. What about you?

Good News: It's Time to Repent of Our Sins! (1:4-6, 15)

John the Baptist preached repentance and baptism so the people would get ready by forsaking their sin. His message attracted great crowds of people. They prepared for Christ's coming through repentance, which literally means changing their minds, and through confession, which means admitting their sins. Once they took the step of repentance and confession, then they were ready for baptism, which symbolized the renewal they had experienced.

*At just the right time,
the One who transcends
time took the time
to enter our time.*

Note in 1:15 that Jesus also preached the need for repentance. How can it be time for good news if we have to worry about sin?

Acknowledgement of sin is actually very good news. When we have sinned, we can be forgiven if we acknowledge our sin. It is impossible for us to find release from our problems if they are all caused by abuse or mistreatment by somebody else. But, in repentance, we own our responsibility for our lives and accept God's complete healing and redemption.

Sometimes we are sorry that we have been caught in sin. The anguish of being caught is very painful indeed. But we should not mistake that for true repentance.

Repentance is not like the person who sent the IRS a check for \$150 with the explanation, “I have cheated on my taxes and I can’t sleep. Enclosed is a check for \$150. If I still can’t sleep, I’ll send the rest.”

Repentance involves a change of attitude and action. While my family vacationed in Glacier National Park one summer, the one thing we hoped

Mark reminds us that we are living on KST—Kingdom Standard Time.

not to do was encounter a bear. The closest we came was at the top of Logan Pass at the Continental Divide where we saw a group of hikers about a half-mile away walking across a snow pack. Suddenly, somebody yelled, “Bear!” After a quick visual search for the

bear, we were convinced the message was true because the long line of hikers all turned and retraced their steps, walking in the opposite direction. Repentance requires more than being sorry for our sin. Genuine repentance means changing from the wrong direction to the right direction.

When we hate sin with a passion, when we fear nothing except displeasing God, when we change our minds about sin, then we have repented. Repentance is not just saying we have sinned or even admitting we are sorry we have sinned. Repentance is not just saying we won’t sin again. Repentance is a fundamental change of mind about sin.

When we have sinned, we can be forgiven if we acknowledge our sin.

Repentance is an about-face that acknowledges that our sin is always wrong.

What sin is holding us back? Whatever it is, Hebrews 12:2 says, “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.” Not only is it time to get

ready, but since Christ has come, ready or not, it is time to get right!

Good News: It’s Time to Receive the Good News that the King Has Come! (1:1, 7–15)

After John the Baptist preached the need for repentance, he proclaimed the coming of Christ. From the beginning, John the Baptist humbled himself by recognizing the superiority of Christ. While John baptized with water, he predicted that the Messiah would baptize people in the Holy Spirit.

On cue, Jesus fulfilled John’s preaching as John had fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy. When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended

The Kingdom of God

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. The Gospel of Matthew uses a parallel term, the kingdom of heaven. What is the kingdom of God? Is it a place? Mark's use of kingdom of God reminds us that it is more than a place. When Jesus spoke about the nearness of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), he was not referring to a location.

The term *kingdom* was filled with political implications in the first-century world. Caesar reigned without rival in the Roman world. The Romans had brought commerce and civilization with their great road system. Unfortunately, they also brought political oppression. The people of Jesus' day awaited a political Messiah who would deliver them from Rome. But Jesus' later refusal to fight when the religious leaders came to capture and crucify him clarifies that he never intended a political kingdom (14:46–48).

So what did Jesus mean by kingdom of God? An equivalent expression might be "the kingship of God." The time was coming near for people to recognize that God was their king. Centuries before, at the end of the period of the judges, the people of Israel had clamored for a king like the other nations around them. In so doing, they had rejected God as their king. A review of the kings of Israel and Judah reveals their inadequacies. Since the time of the exile, the people had been subjected to foreign rulers who were even less worthy. Jesus offered a radical reversal of the people's poor choice about wanting a human king. What if God were King of the people again? If people recognized the authority of God again, they would discover a different kind of life.

The kingdom of God requires preparation. In another call to repentance, Jesus told the people that it would be better to pluck out an eye and enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell (9:47).

The kingdom of God calls for the recognition of God's presence and work in the world as God's rightful domain. By contrasting the kingdom to hell and speaking of entering the kingdom, Jesus equated it with a place where God reigns without rival. While we might think of that place as a future heaven, Jesus announced that this kingdom comes wherever people receive it humbly, like little children (10:14).

on Jesus like a dove. God further confirmed Jesus as the Messiah with a voice of affirmation from heaven. Immediately, the Spirit directed Jesus to go into the desert for a time of temptation and preparation.

What is the best news you have ever heard? Do you remember the day the Iron Curtain fell? I remember growing up in West Germany and entering East Germany through Checkpoint Charlie to see the dismal,

Case Study

Some years ago when I was pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church near Waco, I went with a visiting evangelist to call on a young man who had not accepted Christ. Although the young man was respected for his integrity in the cattle business, he had no room for Christ in his life.

The young man initially resisted our efforts and argued that it was not “time” for him to receive Christ. However, he came to the revival one night. During that service, he received the good news and repented of his sins. The prayers of the entire church were answered that night. His wife and others confirmed that his lifestyle changed radically that night.

Recently I returned to the church to preach in a funeral service. The people told me that this young man is one of the leaders of the church.

Can you think of someone for whom you can pray to receive the good news? Do you believe that Christ still radically changes lives? Has Christ changed your life?

desperate gray world across the fence. I shared the jubilation when the people on the other side of the fence were finally free. The wonderful news led me to celebrate!

Mark wrote in 1:9, “At that time. . . .” As John’s ministry came to an end, Jesus’ ministry began. John was imprisoned, and Jesus went from the wilderness back to Galilee, the area where he was raised (1:14). There Jesus preached the good news of God.

Genuine repentance means changing from the wrong direction to the right direction.

Pay close attention to Jesus’ first sermon. Jesus said, “The time has come” (1:15). What time had come? Jesus proclaimed that the time had come for his ministry, and the time

had come for people to come to know God personally! Jesus proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom.

In the Greek language in which our New Testament was written there were different words for time. *Chronos* spoke of consecutive time. The word appears in our word *chronological*. Mark used another word when he wrote, “The time has come,” however (1:15). The word in 1:15 is not *chronos*, but *kairos*. *Kairos* speaks of a specific moment in time, an appointed time or opportunity. Using the same word, Paul wrote to the Ephesians (5:16, KJV) that they should be “redeeming the time,” referring to *kairos*, not *chronos*.

Some people feel trapped by *chronos*—chronological time. Have you felt the pressure of time? Porris Wittel, a dock worker in Gillingham, England, hated his alarm clock for forty-seven years. For forty-seven years, early every morning his alarm clock jangled him awake. For forty-seven years he longed to ignore it, to shut it off. And for forty-seven years he submitted to the pressure of that clock. But on the day of his retirement he got his revenge. He took his alarm clock to work and flattened it in an eighty-ton hydraulic press. He said, “It was a lovely feeling.”

What is the best news you have ever heard?

Even though we may feel pressured by chronological time, the moment of opportunity represented by *kairos* time still lies open to us. It is time for us to respond to Jesus' coming. How do we do it? In the same way that the people of Jesus' day did. We believe and receive by faith the good news that Jesus has come for us!

When we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1:1), then we repent of our sins and receive his gift of life. Though we are tempted to procrastinate, Jesus' words speak with a compelling urgency today. The time is now, or it might be never (see 2 Corinthians 6:2).

QUESTIONS

1. How has Christ's coming measurably affected your life? What do you need to do to prepare for Christ's second coming? Is there any sin from which you need to repent? Confess it and turn from it today.

2. In your personal ministry, is there some *kairos* moment you need to seize? What is God calling you to do? Is today the day you will begin to serve the Lord actively?

