

BAPTISTWAY

Bible Study for Texas



TEACHING
GUIDE

Good News in the New Testament

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BAPTISTWAY PRESS®
Dallas, Texas

Good News in the New Testament — Teaching Guide

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Cover and Interior Design and Production: Desktop Miracles, Inc.

Front cover photo: David M. Cochran

First edition: September 2001.

ISBN: 1-931060-14-2

How to Make the Best Use of This Teaching Guide

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This teaching guide has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you'll find first "Bible Comments" for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of the Bible comments are "Understanding the Context," "Interpreting the Scriptures," and "Focusing On the Meaning." "Understanding the Context" provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. "Interpreting the Scriptures" provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. "Focusing On the Meaning" offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is "Teaching Plans." You'll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called "Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities," and the second is called "Teaching Plan—Lecture and Questions." Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach. The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, "Connect with Life," provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, "Guide the Study," offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible's message. The third major heading, "Encourage Application," is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you and your class begin the study, take time to lead them in writing the date on which each lesson will be studied on the first page of each lesson and/or on the contents page of the *Study Guide*. You might also find it helpful to make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.

Here are nine steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents, read the study introduction, and read the unit introduction for the lesson you are about to study. Try to see how each lesson relates to the unit and overall study of which it is a part.
3. Consider carefully the suggested main focus, question to explore, and teaching aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
4. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)
5. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
6. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
7. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
8. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
9. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

In addition, you may want to get the enrichment teaching help that is provided in both the printed and Internet editions of the *Baptist Standard*.

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.)

Good News in the New Testament

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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?

Teaching Aim

To help the class summarize how Jesus' ministry fits into God's purpose in history and for their lives

UNIT



The Ministry of Jesus

Lesson One

It's Time

BIBLE COMMENTS

Understanding the Context

The Gospel of Mark along with the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are termed the “synoptic gospels” because they “see” the life of Jesus in similar ways. (*Syn* means “together” and *optic* means “see.”) Mark wrote this Gospel during the early days of the Christian movement. Jewish and Gentile Christians were suffering persecution at the hands of both religious and political leaders. Roman officials had recently executed Christian leaders, such as Peter. The Christian community needed encouragement in the face of such persecution. Mark provided inspiration for the suffering followers of Christ to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. He did this by recounting Jesus' life and teachings with an emphasis on his heroic facing of death and his victorious resurrection.

Thus Mark's Gospel provides us with facts about Jesus to strengthen our faith in the face of adversity. Mark's Gospel is not primarily a history or biography of Jesus, although it is that. Neither does it set forth an argument for a

particular doctrine, as do the writings of Paul. Rather, it purposes to show that faithfulness in the kingdom of God requires steadfastness and courage and is worth whatever the cost might be.

Who was this Mark who wrote such an encouraging challenge under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? The Gospel of Mark itself does not reveal the identity of the author. Most scholars as well as tradition ascribe the gospel to Mark, the son of a wealthy woman in Jerusalem named Mary. The early followers of Christ met in her home (Acts 12:12). Mark was a relative of Barnabas, who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; Colossians 4:10). Mark turned back for some reason, and Paul refused to allow him to participate in the second missionary journey. Later Paul and Mark reconciled (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11). According to early accounts this Mark, who was close to Simon Peter (1 Peter 5:13), recorded Peter’s teaching, preaching, and conversation about Jesus. However, some scholars dispute this identity, and ascribe the work to a Mark who was a Gentile Christian in Rome. The accuracy, purpose, and focus of the gospel do not depend on the identity of the human author.

The Gospel of Mark clearly focuses on Jesus. Both Jesus’ divine and human nature shine forth in this action-packed narrative. The book conveys not mere fact but rather calls people to steadfast faith in Jesus as the one who provides salvation. In a simple, factual, straightforward manner, the Gospel of Mark sets forth the basis for courage in the face of difficulty.

Interpreting the Scriptures

Preparing the Way for Jesus (1:1–8)

1:1. Mark’s Gospel emphasizes that the “beginning” of Jesus’ life and ministry was not his birth on the earth. In fact Mark does not include the Christmas stories found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It was as if he desired to push back the beginning of the “gospel about Jesus Christ” far beyond the birth of the baby in Bethlehem to the original intent of God as revealed by the prophets of the Old Testament.¹

Mark’s Gospel centers on “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” from the opening to the close. The very words used by Mark testify to the nature of this one who was “good news.” “Jesus” indicates his human nature. Mark’s Gospel again and again paints a word picture of Jesus as human, one who

could be thirsty, tired, hungry, and pained. “Christ” points to the fact Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God sent to be the Savior of the world. “The Son of God” clearly declares his divine nature. The Gospel of Mark tells the good news about the divine-human Savior sent by God to bring abundant and eternal life to those who believe in him.

1:2–3. The quotations from the Old Testament in these verses are not from Isaiah alone but from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Why did Mark state these are both from Isaiah? Likely Mark was not intent on providing direct quotations but on emphasizing that Old Testament prophets had clearly foretold the coming of one who was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Mark likely quoted Malachi as an introduction to the statement by Isaiah, which was the main thrust.

1:4. “And so John came” indicates that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that had revealed the intent of God. Mark does not identify John as do Matthew (3:1–15), Luke (1:5–80; 3:1–20), and John (1:6–34) in their gospels. In fact, one of the characteristics of Mark’s Gospel in contrast to the others is that Mark often rushes from event to event in the life of Jesus without giving as full an account as the other gospels do.

Because John came “baptizing,” he was known as John the Baptist or John the Baptizer. John conducted his baptisms in the “desert region,” a hot, barren land between central Judea and the Dead Sea.

Baptism as practiced by John drew attention, for it departed from the normal practices of his day. The Jews were familiar with ceremonial washing. They were also familiar with the ceremonial baths given Gentile converts to Judaism. John, however, immersed or bathed Jews, which was something novel. The practice indicated that ritual and ceremony, common to Judaism, were not adequate for a right relationship with God. “Forgiveness of sins” called for “repentance.” The Greek word *metanoia*, translated “repentance,” means a total change of life, an about face, an alteration of will. The baptism of John symbolized this radical change.

1:5. Huge throngs of people from the rural Judean countryside as well as from the urban center of Jerusalem flocked to where John was preaching and baptizing. The mere novelty of his baptism would not have drawn them to such an uncomfortable area. The man and his message touched their hearts and drew them to him. When people repented of and confessed their sin, John immersed them in the Jordan River.

John lived a spartan existence. His lifestyle helped authenticate his message. His message was not only about repentance and confession of sin but also about the One who was to come after him. In this sense he fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. A common belief in John's day was that Elijah was to return as the forerunner of the Messiah. John dressed in a manner similar to Elijah, wearing clothing of camel's hair and a leather belt (2 Kings 1:8).

1:7–8. Mark throughout his Gospel majors on Jesus. Thus Mark does not linger long on the ministry of John. Rather Mark stresses that John's role was to point the way to Jesus. John understood this role. Therefore, John declared that the one coming after him was much greater and more powerful than he, so much so in fact that he was not worthy to untie his sandals, an act of the most humble servant.

The potential for rivalry between the followers of John and of Jesus existed. John knew that he must do everything possible to diminish his standing and enhance that of Jesus. Thus even before Jesus began his public ministry, John made clear that he was not the greatest. John emphasized the contrast between his ministry and that of the greater one to follow him by declaring that while he baptized with water the One to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit. John realized what was later to be fully revealed—that people can live abundant lives in the will of God only by the direction and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus (1:9–13)

1:9. “Jesus came from Nazareth,” his hometown. Jesus had grown up in Nazareth and had become a carpenter (Mark 6:3). The eldest son of the family, he had remained at home to support his widowed mother, Mary, and the other children. When others were old enough to carry the responsibility, God released Jesus from personal family responsibilities to begin his public ministry. He was about thirty years old at the time (Luke 3:23). We know from Luke's Gospel that Jesus and John were relatives (Luke 1:36), but we do not know what contact they had with each other.

The Gospel of Mark states only that Jesus “was baptized by John in the Jordan.” Matthew (3:13–17), Luke (3:21–22), and John (1:29–34) provide more complete accounts of this historic event. None of the gospels supply a complete answer to the question of why Jesus was baptized. Matthew's Gospel records that Jesus said his baptism was “to fulfill all righteousness”

(Matt. 3:15). John's baptism symbolized forgiveness of sin following confession and repentance, but Jesus was without sin. John himself protested that he was not worthy to baptize Jesus, but Jesus insisted. We can only speculate as to the reason or reasons for Jesus' baptism, and the speculations have been numerous. Likely this act was Jesus' way of initiating his public ministry and symbolizing his death, burial, and resurrection that were to come.

1:10–11. “As Jesus was coming up out of the water” indicates that he was immersed. Only immersion adequately pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and of those who believe in him. Therefore Baptists insist on immersion as the only adequate biblical form of baptism.

God the Father confirmed the ministry of his Son by opening heaven and expressing pleasure in him. The Holy Spirit's descent further affirmed Jesus in his ministry.

1:12–13. “The Spirit sent him out into the desert,” and Jesus obeyed. Obedience to the will of his heavenly Father marked the ministry of Jesus. The desert to which he was sent offered little comfort. Rock terrain under a blazing sun created a furnace-like atmosphere and offered no water or food. For “forty days” Satan was allowed to tempt Jesus while he resided with “wild animals” and “angels attended him.” Again, the Gospel of Mark provides only a barebones account of this titanic struggle. Matthew (4:1–11) and Luke (4:1–13) provide a more complete account.

Mark gives no explanation of the reason for the wilderness temptation. We are left once again to speculate. The fact of the outcome, however, is clear: Jesus withstood all the temptation hurled at him by Satan, proving that he was superior to Satan. Jesus remained sinless not only in this dramatic incident but throughout his life as Satan continued to tempt him to forsake the terrible way that led to the cross.

The Central Theme of Jesus' Ministry (1:14–15)

1:14. Mark continues his compressed account of Jesus' ministry by recording Jesus' departure to Galilee. Mark does not indicate whether John's imprisonment caused Jesus to go to Galilee. Certainly Jesus did not act out of fear. He always demonstrated courage.

1:15. The time had come for Jesus to begin his public ministry. Thus he declared, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” This brief statement capsules Jesus' message. In

his teaching and preaching, Jesus heralded the kingdom of God as good news. He also stressed the importance of repentance and belief in relation to the kingdom of God.

And what did Jesus mean by “the kingdom of God”? A great deal! In fact a library could be filled with the books written about the meaning of the kingdom of God. In summary, certain features of the kingdom of God stand out.

The kingdom of God essentially means the reign or rule of God in the lives of people and of social structures, such as families, businesses, and governments. Thus the kingdom is within us as well as outside of us. The kingdom had not yet arrived, but Jesus indicated that it was near. “Near” does not necessarily mean near in time or imminent. Rather it means “near” in that it is close at hand and obtainable. In one sense, if a person will repent and believe the good news about Jesus, the kingdom will come into that person’s life. However, the ultimate consummation of the kingdom is in the future and is inevitable.

Jesus taught about the future coming of the kingdom. If people do not repent and believe the good news about Jesus, disaster awaits. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the King will come and establish the kingdom. Those who have repented and believed will be blessed. Those who have not will suffer dire consequences.

Focusing On the Meaning

Mark did not write his Gospel as mere history. He wrote to encourage followers of Christ to remain faithful under difficult circumstances. Therefore the Holy Spirit led him to write in such a way as to show that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and worthy of worship and followship regardless of the cost. Mark’s swift-moving, action-packed Gospel leaves no doubt as to who Jesus is and what Jesus means to those who believe in and follow him.

In a few brief paragraphs, the Gospel of Mark established the facts that Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the Son of God in whom the heavenly Father was pleased, and the sinless Christ who had power to vanquish Satan. Such credentials called for faithful followship under the harshest of circumstances. Certainly the same is true for people today.

Furthermore, by the example of Jesus’ life and the content of his teaching, Jesus provided a guide to the way we are to live life to the fullest. We

are to live as citizens of the kingdom of God. That means that the passion of our life is to find and follow God's will. Nothing less will do. We enter such citizenship by repentance of our sin and belief in Jesus as the Christ, God's Son, our Savior. Later in his Gospel, Mark will reveal that the hope of our living up to the standards of citizenship in the kingdom of God rests in the fact of Jesus' resurrection and eternal presence with us to comfort, guide, and empower. All of that adds up to good news indeed!

This lesson affords each class member an opportunity for a spiritual checkup: What do I really believe about Jesus? How faithful have I been in following the teachings of Jesus? How do I measure up to the requirements of citizenship in the kingdom of God—repentance for sin, belief in Jesus, and a passion to obey the will of God in every aspect of life?

Jesus has radically changed the course of history. It will be changed even more when more people are willing to follow in Jesus' steps and obey his teachings.

TEACHING PLANS

Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities

Connect with Life

1. Ask, If someone wanted to get to know you well, how would he or she do so? Would that person ask only one acquaintance about you, or several acquaintances? Would that person observe your actions, or your words, or both? Allow time for oral responses.
2. State that we often get to know people well according to what they say *and* do, and according to what others say about them, preferably acquaintances who have observed them in several contexts and over time. This variety in presentation exists beautifully in the four gospels, as we shall see in this unit on “The Ministry of Jesus.” We will look at snapshots from all four gospels, and we will see Jesus as he begins his ministry, as he teaches his followers, as he provokes discussion about his true identity, and as he calls us to faith through his resurrection. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, we will come to know our Savior better.

3. Lead members to form pairs and to share with each other a time when they prepared for a huge event in their lives, such as a wedding or the birth of a child. Ask:
 - What are some of the steps you took to prepare?
 - How long did it take to prepare?
 - Did the actual event meet with your expectations?
 - What if you had not prepared?
4. State that God took hundreds of years in preparing Israel for the coming of his son. As Jesus began his earthly ministry, John the Baptist announced him—an event that had been prophesied for hundreds of years. Mark’s Gospel begins with a description of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the Messiah.

Guide the Study

5. Enlist a member to read aloud the prophecy from Isaiah 40:3.
6. Enlist another member to read aloud Mark 1:1–3. Ask, What is the tone or attitude of these verses in relation to the coming of the Lord? Joyful? Fearful? Expectant?
7. Note that verse 4 begins, “And so John came,” implying that he and his actions were the fulfillment of these Scriptures. Lead the class in reading 1:4–5 aloud. Ask, Before the coming of Christ, what was John’s message? How did the people respond? When people are called to repent and be forgiven in modern times, do we ever see a similar response to that John saw? Why or why not?
8. Note how some form of the word “baptism” is used three times in 1:4–5. Ask, What is the relationship between one’s being willing to confess and repent and one’s being baptized?
9. Looking ahead to verse 15, compare Jesus’ message with that of John in verse 4. Write these words from verse 15 across the board: “The time has come . . . The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”
10. Invite someone to read verses 6–8 aloud. Encourage members to list aloud what we know of John the Baptist so far. Responses might include his odd dress and food, but also his humility and his sense of purpose. As great as John’s ministry was, note that he knew his place in the big picture.

11. Lead members to read verses 9–11 aloud. Point out that whereas the earlier verses showed John saying, *It's almost time*, these verses seem to shout, *The time is here!* Ask, Why were the voice from out of heaven and the descending of the Spirit significant to John? to Jesus?
12. Invite someone to read verses 12–13 aloud. Note that on the heels of such a miraculous confirmation of God's blessing upon his Son, Jesus was both tempted and ministered to by angels. Ask, What parallels of this do you see in our own lives?
13. Lead verses 14–15 aloud. Note that when John's public ministry ended, Jesus' began. Again, compare their messages, noting their similarities.

Encourage Application

14. Lead members to note that the “good news” involved not only the message that “the kingdom of God is near,” but also the command to “repent and believe the good news” (1:15). Inquire, How does repentance bring about good news? Lead a time of silent prayer, allowing time for members to ask God to
 - reveal areas of their lives where they need to repent, turning away from sin and towards him
 - help them to enjoy the fruits of believing and trusting in him this week
 - help them to find ways to prepare others to meet him through salvation

Teaching Plan—Lecture and Questions

Connect with Life

1. For the Unit Overview, use steps 1 and 2 in, “Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities” above.
2. Write across the board: *Good News . . . Bad News*. Suggest that we sometimes approach a delicate subject with someone by saying, *Well, I have good news, and I have not-so-good news. Which do you want*

first? For example, *The good news is that your car can be repaired. The bad news is that it will cost you a month's pay!*

3. State that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are good news. The four lessons in this study—each from one of the Gospels—contain good news. Even when we are called to confess and repent, as in the lesson today, there is good news!

Guide the Study

4. Write across the top of the board, *It's Time!* Below that, write the words, *To Recognize His Coming.*
5. Invite members to read Mark 1:1–5. Ask, How were people to prepare to meet the Lord, according to these verses? How did John prepare them? How did God prepare them? How did they prepare themselves? Inquire further, How do we prepare to meet God today? How do others prepare us? How does God prepare us?
6. Next write these words on the board: *To Repent of Our Sins!* Note the difference between confession (admitting our sins) and repentance (changing our minds and our actions). Ask, According to verses 1–5 and verse 15, how did people demonstrate their repentance then? How do we demonstrate it now?
7. Write these words on the board: *To Get Right by Receiving the Good News that the King Has Come!* Ask someone to read aloud 1:6–15. Ask, How did observers then know that the King had finally come? Read 1:15 aloud again. Note the literal translation of time as *kairos*—as the *Study Guide* notes, “a specific moment in time, an appointed time or opportunity.” Inquire, What is the implication of verse 15 today? When is the right time for people to repent and believe the good news?

Encourage Application

8. Erase all on the board except the word *Time.* Read Galatians 4:4a aloud: “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son.” By way of review, ask members to reflect on what these verses at the beginning of Mark have said about God’s timing. Answers might include:

- Although we sometimes feel that time drags by, God is preparing the way for his promises to be fulfilled.
- We need to prepare to meet God today. The time to repent is now.
- At the time God has ordained, Christ will come again. Just as John prepared the way for the first coming, we should prepare the way for Jesus' second coming.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in Lessons 1–7 are from the New International Version.