



**“And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).**

### **Sharing God’s Plan**

**Central Truth:** Each Christian can share in God's redemptive work in the world.

**L548. Date:** March 1980. **Text:** Mark 1:1, 9-20.

**Topic:** Christ: Ministry of; Gospel; Witnessing.

The earliest, shortest, and in some ways the most important of the four Gospels is the text for the next thirteen lessons. It is entitled “The Gospel According to Mark.” The human author of the second Gospel was a Jewish Christian who had a Jewish name (John) and a Gentile name (Mark). Though called “John Mark” in his earlier life (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37), he was commonly called “Mark” after he became a mature Christian (Acts 15:37, 39; Colossians 4:10; II Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13).

John Mark was reared in Jerusalem in the home of his mother Mary, a woman of considerable wealth. Her house was a meeting place for Christians (Acts 12:12-17). He was related to Barnabas. (The Greek *anepsios* translated “sister's son” in Colossians 4:10 is believed to have meant “cousin” in New Testament times. It came into English as “nephew.”) He was likely the “certain young man” who was almost arrested in Gethsemane when Jesus was betrayed (Mark 14:51, 52). Since Simon Peter called him “my son” (1 Peter 5:13), it is believed that apostle led the lad to Christ.

John Mark left Jerusalem for Antioch in Syria with Barnabas and Saul (Acts 12:25). He accompanied them on their first missionary journey and was their attendant until they came to Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:5). He left them there and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:5, 13). No reason is given for the separation, but Paul considered it inexcusable at the time (Acts 15:38). Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on a second mission tour, but

Paul refused. Barnabas took John Mark to a ministry in Cyprus (his original home according to Acts 4:36), while Paul was accompanied by Silas (Acts 15:36-41).

John Mark dropped from mention in Bible history for seven or eight years. He reappeared in Rome, standing faithfully by Paul during the first imprisonment of the apostle (Colossians 4:10, 11; Philemon 24). Next, he was with Peter in “Babylon,” which some interpret to be Rome (1 Peter 5:13). The last mention of John Mark in the New Testament is Paul's word in II Timothy 4:11, *“Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”*

Mark wrote the Gospel which bears his name sometime between A.D. 40 and A.D. 65. Tradition reports he gleaned much of his information from Simon Peter, just as Luke researched before he wrote (Luke 1:1-4). His style is marked by vivid speech, rapid action, attention to detail, enthusiasm, and brevity. The Gospel was written for the Gentile mind, as indicated by the explanation of Jewish words and customs. The key verse of “The Gospel According to Mark” is 10:45, *“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

Mark sets forth the plan of redemption which God is working out in the world. That plan is to buy back the human race which has fallen in sin, through the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Each Christian has the privilege of sharing in God's redemptive work. The thirteen lessons to be studied in Mark's Gospel aim to encourage Christians to be faithful followers of Christ. This week's study is designed to encourage each Christian who reads it to be more involved in “Sharing God's Plan.”

## **I. THE PERSON OF THE PLAN**

### **(Mark 1:1, 9:13)**

The plan of God is summarized in one, terse statement: *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”* (Mark 1:1). The plan of God is declared to be (1) a “gospel” — good news of salvation — and is (2) revealed in “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” God's work is not centered in a program but in a person, a divine person.

*A. The plan of God for fallen sinners is a “gospel.”* Gospel is the English translation of the Greek term *euaggelion*. The term first meant the reward given a messenger who brought good news; then it came to mean the message itself. In the Bible, *gospel* refers to the good news concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ which made possible the redemption of sinners. The term gospel is found more than one hundred times in the New

Testament. It means the good news that salvation by grace, based on the redemption provided freely in Jesus, is offered to all who repent and believe. It is good news indeed! It is “gospel”!

*B. The “gospel” of God is revealed in the person and work of “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”* Each of those names has a special meaning. They tell an amazing amount about the person of Him whom we call Jesus. Their revelation explains why the Christian message is a “gospel.”

1. *Jesus* means “Savior.” The angel announced to Joseph, concerning Mary's miraculously—conceived Son, “*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21). The angel announced to the shepherds at the time of Jesus' birth, “*Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11). Yes, the angels of heaven called Jesus a Savior.

Those men who knew Him best announced that Jesus should be recognized as Savior. They testified, “*This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*” (John 4:42). Every sinner who has turned from sin in repentance and turned to Jesus in faith can testify that He is the Savior of those who believe.

2. *Christ* means “Anointed One.” Jesus is the one whom God has anointed with His Holy Spirit to be His personal representative on earth. The anointing of Jesus came at His baptism in water at the hands of John the Baptist (Mark 1:9-11). The Spirit descended as a dove upon Him, and the Father spoke from heaven, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Following that anointing, Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit, ministered in the power of the Spirit, and explained His ministry in these words: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me*” (Luke 4:18). The Bible explains it in these words, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power*” (Acts 10:38). In agreement with that anointing, He is called “Christ,” the Anointed One.

3. Jesus the Christ is also called “the Son of God.” That is an interesting title. The term son of God is applied in the Bible to the stars (Job 38:7), men (Genesis 6:2), angels (Job 1:6), and Christian believers (I John 3:1). But Jesus is the Son of God in a way far surpassing them all.

Jesus is the “only begotten” Son of God. He is the eternal Son of God in view of eternal generation. But He is also the “only begotten” Son of God in view of His miraculous conception in the womb of Mary, His mother, and His coming as God in human flesh. He is the unique, only begotten Son of God. The unique person who perfected the plan of redemption is declared to be the Savior by the witness of the Father at Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:9-11)

and the victory over Satan in Jesus' wilderness temptation (Mark 1:12, 13). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:19, 21).

## **II. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PLAN** **(Mark 1:14, 15)**

The early preaching of Jesus repeated the message of John the Baptist and has been summarized in these words: "*The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel*" (Mark 1:15).

*A. The proclamation of the plan of salvation was the announcement of the kingdom of God.* The kingdom of God is the sovereignty, royal power, and dominion of God. It includes the persons and territory over which He reigns.

The kingdom of God is now manifest in spiritual form, being "in you" (Luke 17:21), but shall be manifest in political form during the millennial reign of Christ. The kingdom is therefore both present and future. One enters the spiritual kingdom by the new birth (John 3:3, 5), neither by what is by nature, nor by what he can become by culture. Jesus called men to repentance and faith that they might enter into the kingdom of God which had come through Him.

*B. Repentance is required by God's plan of redemption.* It is a call for a change of mind in the acknowledgment of personal sin, a change of emotion in regret that one has sinned against God, and a change of will in turning from sin to God for forgiveness. There is no repentance without a turning from sin to God. Repentance is a great New Testament doctrine (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:5; Acts 2:38; 5:31) and is essential to salvation.

*C. Faith means a firm conviction which results in such confidence in the person of God that one makes a personal surrender to Him.* It means to transfer all confidence from every other person and thing, to center it solely upon God who is revealed in Jesus. Faith is the natural expression of belief. Over and again the New Testament calls for people to "believe" in Jesus Christ, not in the sense of mere credence but in the sense of reliance, trust, dependence.

One is born again and enters the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5) when he turns from sin and places all his dependence and trust in Jesus Christ alone

as personal Savior. That is when he realizes what “good news” is proclaimed in the Christian “gospel,” and what a privilege it is to share the gospel with others.

### **III. THE PARTICIPATION IN THE PLAN (Mark 1:16-20)**

There can be no higher ministry than helping get out the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The participation in the plan of world evangelism by early disciples sets forth guidelines for believers who would share in that plan today.

*A. God gives a specific call* (Mark 1:16, 17). It is a call to follow Christ, “Come after me.” It is a promise of personal equipping. “I will make you what you are not yet.” It is a call to specific ministry, “fishers of men.”

Christians fret needlessly about their duty to witness for Christ. There is no need to worry about whether you are able to be a “fisher of men.” Follow Jesus and He will make you what you need to be.

*B. Man should give an immediate response* (Mark 1:16-20). Peter and Andrew heard the call of Jesus just as James and John. “Straightway” (a word Mark used often to mean “immediately, without delay”) they left their work and relatives to follow Him.

Every Christian should volunteer immediately and heartily to the call to follow Jesus. Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience; delayed obedience is disobedience.

*C. The call may require personal sacrifice* (Mark 1:16-20). Each man left his livelihood, his investment in his boats and nets, and his companions to follow Jesus. Every faithful disciple must give up something to follow Jesus. But what one receives is a “hundredfold” better than what one leaves (Matthew 19:29).

*D. The plan is a personal witness concerning Jesus.* A Christian witness represents Jesus, a person. No doctrine, denomination, religion, or church can substitute for Jesus. Christians go out to tell the truth about Jesus and to call people to respond in faith to the fact proclaimed. The witness is given by actions, words, dress, attitude, work, and every other way. To be a Christian means Christ dominates every area of life.

The call still goes forth. Who will respond? Who will become a disciple of Jesus Christ “immediately” and “straightway”? All heaven pauses to see

what your response will be.

1. What do you know about John Mark?
2. What do you know about the book he wrote?
3. What is the key verse of the book by Mark?
4. What are the meanings of the names in Mark 1:1?
5. How is the Christian message a “gospel”?
6. Why should Christians share it with joy?
7. What is repentance and faith?
8. How does God call to service today?
9. How can you help witness for Christ this week?
10. What other part can you have in God's plan?