

# THE GOSPEL OF **MARK**



JULY 2026

**Psalm 2 (ESVUK)**

*Psalmist*

**2** Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
<sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the LORD  
and against his Anointed<sup>a</sup>, saying,  
<sup>3</sup> “Let us burst their bonds apart  
and cast away their cords from us.”

Humanity plots against God (v1-3)

<sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord holds them in derision.  
<sup>5</sup> Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
<sup>6</sup> “As for me, I have set my King  
on Zion, my holy hill.”

God crowns his King... (v4-6)

*God's King*

<sup>7</sup> I will tell of the decree:  
The LORD said to me,  
“You are my Son;  
today I have begotten you.  
<sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
<sup>9</sup> You shall break them with a rod of iron  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

...who will smash his enemies (v7-9)

*Psalmist*

<sup>10</sup> Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
<sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,  
and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Therefore, kiss the Son (v10-12)

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<sup>a</sup> Or *Messiah* (Hebrew); or *Christ* (Greek)

## A. Title of the book

Mark 1:1-2a provides the title of the book:

**The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,  
as it is written in Isaiah the prophet**

Note that the Greek New Testament is written in ALL CAPS, with no punctuation, nor spaces. Thus, it would be as if Mark 1:1-3 were written like this, except in Greek:

THEBEGINNINGOFTHEGOODNEWSABOUTJESUSTHEMESSIAHTHESONOFGODASITISWRITTENIN  
ISAIAHTHEPROPHETIWILLSENDMYMESSENGERAHEADOFYOUWHOWILLPREPAREYOURWAYA  
VOICEOFONECALLINGINTHEWILDERNESSPREPARETHEWAYFORTHELORDMAKESTRAIGHTPAT  
HSFORHIM

## The many titles of Jesus

Jesus is given 4 titles in Mark's gospel, three of which are from Psalm 2

- **Messiah** (Hebrew) or **Christ** (Greek)
- **King**
- **Son of God**

There is one more title from Daniel 7

- **Son of Man**

All of these refer to God's promised, eternal, righteous king who will reign over his perfectly danger-free, pain-free, death-free, tear-free kingdom forever (cf. Isaiah)

## B. Original readers

The original readers were of a Jewish background, and already knew of the basic facts around Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Their intuitive expectations of their Messiah was that he would be powerful, and defeat the Romans while inaugurating eternal life and restoring God's presence in the midst of Israel.



### C. Purpose and structure of the book

The purpose of Mark is to teach *three major unintuitive aspects* of Jesus Christ, which can be found in the structure below:

#### Premise

1:1-3:35 Jesus really is the great, mighty, powerful Messianic-King as promised in Isaiah, but:

#### Surprise #1

4:1-8:30 Most people who saw Jesus' miracles rejected him, due to God-given blindness [Isaiah 6, 28-29]

#### Surprise #2

8:31-13:37 Entry to Jesus' kingdom is for those who are humbly reliant on God, not those who rely on their external religion (e.g. religious leaders of Jesus' day) [Isaiah 56-66]

#### Surprise #3

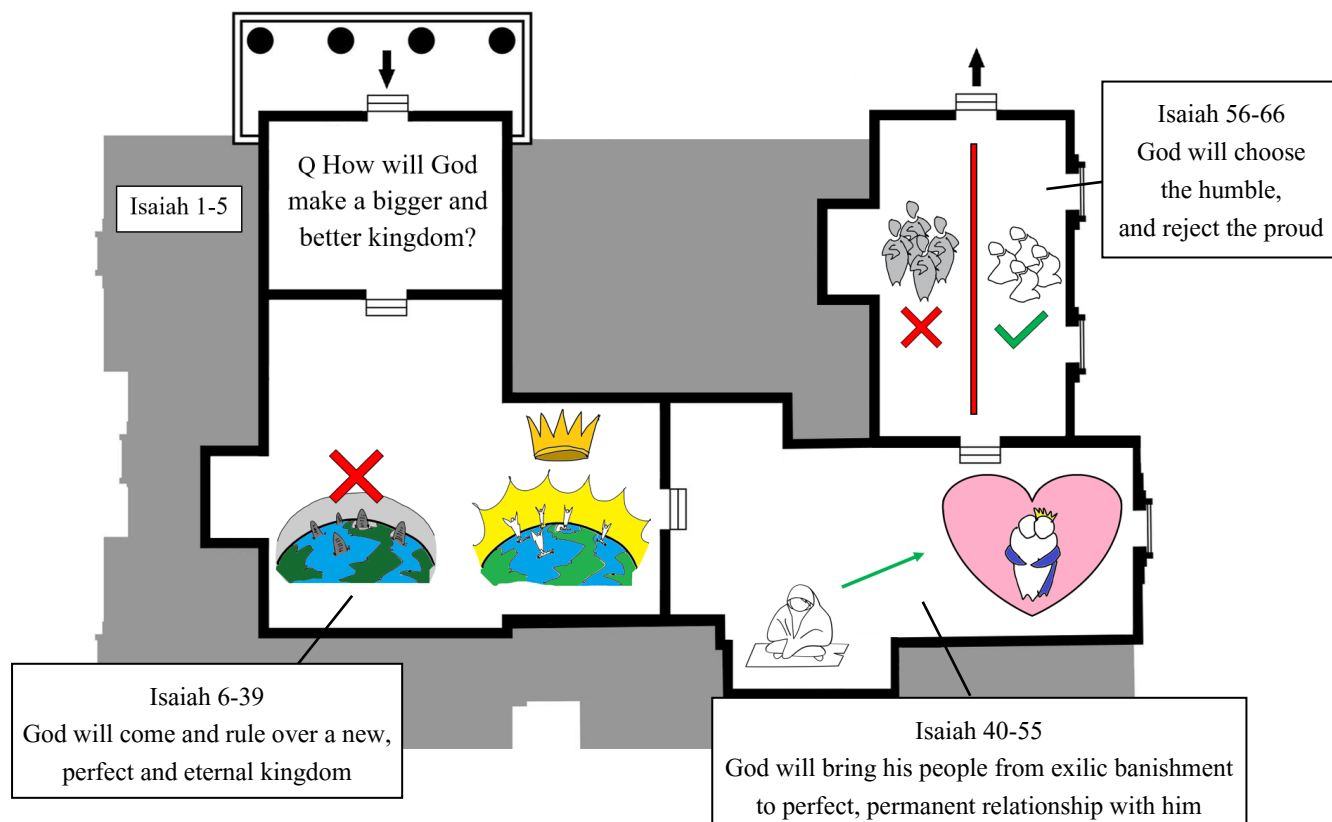
14:1-16:8 Despite being the great Messianic-King, Jesus suffered a miserable death [Isaiah 49-55]

### D. What about Isaiah?

If the original reader reviewed Isaiah, they would see that these 'surprises' were actually prophesied 700 years beforehand in Isaiah.

For us reading Mark's gospel today, a basic understanding of Isaiah helps us to understand Mark's gospel. As with every New Testament book written by Jews, Mark's gospel clearly assumes knowledge of the Old Testament. (However, it is certainly possible to see the Isaianic themes in Mark's gospel without any knowledge of Isaiah.)

Using the analogy of an art gallery to describe structure: Isaiah has an entrance gallery (Ch1-5), with three major exhibitions (Ch6-39, Ch40-55, Ch56-66):



These Isaianic themes can be seen, for example, in the first section of Mark in Chapters 1-3:

| Passage   | Function                                                                     | Main point     |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|           | <b>Hype introduction</b>                                                     |                |
| 1:1-20    | Many different parties think Jesus is a huge deal                            |                |
|           | <b>Jesus is the Isaianic Messiah #1</b>                                      |                |
| 1:21-45   | Jesus banishes sickness and evil, providing a preview of his eternal kingdom | [Isaiah 6-39]  |
|           | <b>Jesus is the Isaianic Messiah #2</b>                                      |                |
| 2:1-22    | Jesus forgives sins and is Israel's bridegroom                               | [Isaiah 40-55] |
|           | <b>Jesus is the Isaianic Messiah #3</b>                                      |                |
| 2:18-3:35 | Jesus's kingdom is for a new humble people, not externally religious Israel  | [Isaiah 56-66] |

#### E. How does the gospel of Mark apply?

The key applications are therefore found in the surprises, since Mark labours these points a lot:

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | <b>Application #1</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 4:1-8:30   | Expect people nowadays to reject Jesus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. by being unwilling to bear the cost (6:1-30)</li> <li>b. by being more concerned with religiosity (7:1-23)</li> <li>c. despite having so much good teaching (7:24-8:30)</li> </ul>                                                                                                      |
|            | <b>Application #2</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 8:31-13:37 | We ought to come to God empty-handed and entirely humbly and reliantly, rather than thinking that we can earn our way into his kingdom by works.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|            | Examples of humility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Deny yourself, take up your cross...lose your life (8:34-35)</li> <li>b. 'I believe, help my unbelief' (9:24)</li> <li>c. Prayer (9:29)</li> <li>d. Be last of all and servant of all (9:35; 10:43-44)</li> <li>e. Be dependent like a child (10:15)</li> <li>f. 'have mercy on me' (10:47-48)</li> </ul> |
|            | <b>Application #3</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 14:1-16:8  | Given how great Messianic-King ought to be, we ought to be hugely grateful and moved by his willingness to suffer and die to save his people                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

**Mark (NIVUK)**

**1** The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,<sup>a</sup> the Son of God,<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

'I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
 who will prepare your way'<sup>c</sup> –  
<sup>3</sup> 'a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
 "Prepare the way for the Lord,  
 make straight paths for him."<sup>d</sup>

<sup>4</sup> And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. <sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And this was his message: 'After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I baptise you with<sup>e</sup> water, but he will baptise you with<sup>f</sup> the Holy Spirit.'

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

<sup>12</sup> At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, <sup>13</sup> and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted<sup>g</sup> by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

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

<sup>16</sup> As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>a</sup> Or *Jesus Christ. Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) both mean *Anointed One*.

<sup>b</sup> Some manuscripts do not have *the Son of God*.

<sup>c</sup> Malachi 3:1

<sup>d</sup> Isaiah 40:3

<sup>e</sup> Or *in*

<sup>f</sup> Or *in*

<sup>g</sup> The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*.

<sup>19</sup> When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. <sup>20</sup> Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup> The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

<sup>23</sup> Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!'

<sup>25</sup> 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' <sup>26</sup> The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

<sup>27</sup> The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' <sup>28</sup> News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' <sup>39</sup> So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

<sup>40</sup> A man with leprosy<sup>a</sup> came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'

#### Isaiah 33:24

<sup>24</sup> And no inhabitant will say,  
"I am sick";  
the people who dwell there  
will be forgiven their iniquity.

#### Isaiah 35:4-6

Behold, your God  
will come with vengeance,  
with the recompense of God.  
He will come and save you."  
<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind  
shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
<sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man  
leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the mute  
sing for joy.

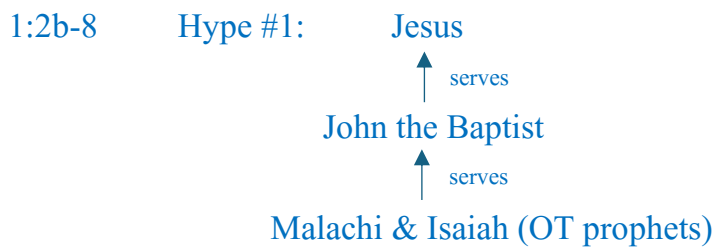
<sup>a</sup> The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

**Introduction to Mark's gospel**

[See booklet](#)

**Mark 1:1-20**    **A dramatic introduction that heightens expectations of Jesus**

1:1-2a      Title of book



1:9-11      Hype #2: YHWH anoints his Psalm 2 King

1:12-13      Hype #3: Satan meets a worthy adversary; angels serve Jesus

1:14-15      Hype #4: Jesus announces himself as God's promised King

1:16-20      Hype #5: Peter, Andrew, James & John follow Jesus immediately

**Worldview diagnostic**

**Psalm 2**

What prevents you from thinking of Jesus as *God's powerful King who will smash his enemies?*

**Mark 1:1-20**

Mark presents Jesus as supremely significant. Why might we then consider him less important than is?



### Getting back into the text

- |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psalm 2:1-3   | 1. What is the effect of 2:1 being posed as a question instead of a statement?<br>2. What is the literary effect of stacking the language of <i>nations, peoples, kings</i> and <i>rulers</i> ?<br>3. What do the rebels' words in 2:3 reveal about how they view God's rule? How might this help someone who feels that the King's later judgement is undeserved?                                                                                                                  |
| Psalm 2:4-6   | 4. What is the literary effect of the scene change from earth to the skies?<br>5. What do you make of 2:4 <i>laughter &amp; derision</i> becoming 2:5 <i>wrath &amp; fury</i> ?<br>6. To what extent does 2:6 contrast with 2:2?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Psalm 2:7-9   | 7. What is the effect of the King now speaking for himself?<br>8. What do you make of the scale of the King's rule and power?<br>9. What does the image of smashing pottery communicate about the certainty and completeness of the King's victory?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Psalm 2:10-12 | 10. What is the literary effect of the kings and rulers of 2:2 being warned directly?<br>11. What do you make of the language of <i>kiss the Son</i> ?<br>12. How does the author contrast the two binary outcomes?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Mark 1:1-2a   | 1. What expectations does this create about Jesus?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Mark 1:2b-8   | 2. What is the effect of starting with two OT prophecies about John the Baptist? How is this better than just starting with the character in 1:4?<br>3. What are the (a) dramatic and (b) theological effects of John preaching <i>repentance for the forgiveness of sins</i> ?<br>4. What might the significance of <i>locusts and wild honey</i> be?<br>5. What is the effect of introducing Jesus through <i>John the Baptist</i> rather than introducing Jesus <i>himself</i> ? |
| Mark 1:9-11   | 6. What is the effect of having all three persons of the Trinity present?<br>7. How persuaded are you that God's voice is declaring Jesus as the Psalm 2 King?<br>8. To what extent do you think Mark was alluding to Isaiah 64:1 ' <i>Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence</i> '?                                                                                                                                     |
| Mark 1:12-13  | 9. Why is the temptation account so short compared to other gospels?<br>10. How might the wild animals and angels be functioning in Mark's storytelling?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Mark 1:14-15  | 11. How might John's imprisonment contrast with Jesus' announcement about himself?<br>12. Does 'the Kingdom of God has come near' mean (a) <i>temporal</i> nearness 'my kingdom is coming soon!' or (b) <i>personal</i> nearness 'the king is standing next to you'?                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Mark 1:16-20  | 13. How do we see Jesus' authority described, as Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John?<br>14. Why does Mark emphasise what the fishermen left behind?<br>15. Why do you think Mark's tempo remains quick, like in 1:1-15?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |