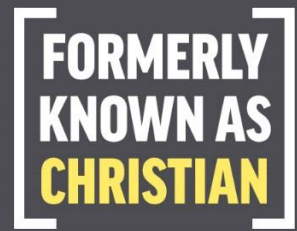


# Week 1 - Mark 1:1-15



Begin reading Mark 1:1-15

Alright, let's slow down. A LOT is happening in these 15 verses, and even more is being communicated to the reader. In the matter of 15 verses Mark introduces his work, introduces John the Baptist, introduces Jesus, recollects both the baptism and temptation of Jesus, and gives a brief summary of Jesus' first sermon (1:15). For comparison, Matthew and Luke both take 3 ½ chapters to get to the same point in the story. The common thread, however, running through all four of the Gospel accounts is that **Jesus is the central point**.

This is especially obvious in Mark, as he starts, "This is the Good News about **Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God**" (1:1). Even throughout his introduction of John the Baptist, Mark makes sure that his audience knows this isn't the main character. In fact, John doesn't even consider himself worthy to untie the sandal straps of the one who is coming. John is simply a voice, one who prepares the people for what, or rather *who*, is to come.

And then *he comes*. The long-awaited Messiah; the one called Christ.<sup>1</sup> What happens next is wonderful beyond imagining. John the Baptist, who self-identifies as unworthy to untie Jesus' sandals,<sup>2</sup> is instructed to *baptize* him. It is in this baptism that Jesus is affirmed and announced to all present as the Son of God.

We, too, get to participate in this baptism. Many this past weekend at all services across all campuses at Grace participated in this baptism. So, what does it mean to share in the baptism of Jesus Christ?

Through baptism into Christ:

- We participate in his death and, therefore, in his resurrection life (Romans 6:3-14)
- We are clothed with Christ and embrace our identity as sons and daughters of God (Galatians 3:26-29)
- We receive the Holy Spirit, having been set aside by God as vessels of His goodness and love (Mark 1:10; Ephesians 2:10)
- We are sent to various places to proclaim the *good news* that the *Kingdom of God* is near (Mark 1:12-15)

## Questions for discussion/reflection:

1. How does sharing in the baptism of Christ affect the way you view yourself?
2. What blessings and responsibilities come with being a son/daughter of God?
3. How have you experienced the Good News of the Kingdom of God in your own life?

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<sup>1</sup> The words "Messiah" and "Christ" are transliterations of the Hebrew and Greek words, respectively, for "anointed one." The same word is used throughout the Old Testament to describe those who were set aside by God and by the community to lead both spiritually and politically. The anointing was often done with oil, but there was also an implied anointing with the Holy Spirit. "Messiah" is also used by Isaiah to describe Cyrus, King of Persia (Is. 45:1). For more on Cyrus, check out the book of Ezra.

<sup>2</sup> In the ancient world, the task of untying someone's sandal straps was considered menial and represented a sharp difference in societal worth between the one wearing the sandal and the one untying the straps. Beyond this, sandal straps, though worn by all classes, were so cheap and common that they were considered insignificant (if they were considered at all). John doesn't even see himself as worthy to perform a degrading and insignificant act of service on behalf of Jesus, yet he is called to participate in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God! (Smiths Bible Dictionary)