

Mark 1: Into Action

Mark assisted one of the leading Apostles, Simon Peter, and many readers get a sense of Peter's energy here. It's the shortest of the four Gospel accounts and the one containing the least preaching.

There's no mention of Bethlehem or Jesus' early life. After a one verse intro and a short Old Testament quotation explaining that John the Baptist and the Christ were predicted centuries earlier, ch 1 launches us into the action.

Jesus is introduced as an adult who is baptized by John, affirmed by God the Father and Spirit and tempted unsuccessfully by the devil, before commencing a powerful ministry of preaching, backed up with a variety of miraculous signs reminiscent of Old Testament epiphanies. He heals sickness and drives out evil spirits as a foretaste of heaven and announces, 'The Kingdom of God is near. Repent (Change/Turn) and believe the good news!'

He invites twelve men to be His close disciples. It's a symbolic number representing 'new Israel', the renewing of God's people. They observe His obvious power and authority and note His private times of prayer.

Mark ch1 also contains some marvellous episodes involving *individuals* – there's the man with a controversial disease whom Jesus embraces, the demon uncovered in the synagogue and the lady who experiences not just a miracle but our Lord's tender bedside manner!

Now take a breath. More action, and controversy, are to follow in ch 2!