**Gospel of Mark**

The most obvious feature that structures Mark’s Gospel is geographic: Jesus moves from the Judean wilderness to Galilee, then on to Jerusalem for the climactic events of his story. The geographic movement from preparatory events in the wilderness to climax in Jerusalem corresponds to the Deutero-Isaian vision of the “way of the Lord,” which Mark cites at the beginning of his drama (1: 2– 3).

The evangelist’s decision to produce a narrative bears implications for proper interpretation. Narratives have a “logic,” that is, a way in which the various episodes and sections fit together to form a coherent plot, and a “rhetoric,” that is, they seek to persuade the audience of something. Thus, it is by studying the Gospel as a whole that readers are able to grasp the meaning of the individual parts that together communicate Mark’s “good news.”

Mark’s Gospel, however, is not simply a story about Jesus’s identity; more fundamentally, it is a story about what God wills to do in and through Jesus. The framing of the narrative by the words and actions of God makes this clear: at the opening, God speaks through the words of Isaiah, then tears open the heavens to invest his Son with the Spirit; and at the Gospel’s climax, God tears the Temple curtain, then raises Jesus from death.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to Mark are the following:

1. The Preparation for the Public Ministry of Jesus (1: 1– 13)
2. The Mystery of Jesus (1: 14– 8: 26)
3. The Mystery Begins to Be Revealed (8: 27– 9: 32)
4. The Full Revelation of the Mystery (9: 33– 16: 8)
	1. The Longer Ending (16: 9– 20)
	2. The Shorter Ending
		1. The Freer Logion (in the note on 16: 9– 20)

**John the Baptist in the Synoptic Gospels (and John)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pericope** | **Matthew** | **Mark** | **Luke** | **John** |
| John the Baptist | [**3:1-6**](https://www.gospelparallels.com/#1) | [**1:2-6**](https://www.gospelparallels.com/#1) | [**3:1-6**](https://www.gospelparallels.com/#1) | [**1:19-23**](https://www.gospelparallels.com/#1) |

**Matthew 3:1-6** 1 In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea 2[ and] saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3 It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: “A voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’ ” 4 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him 6 and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

**Mark 1:2-6** 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. 3 A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’ ” 4John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. 6 John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey.

**Luke 3:1-6** 1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. 3 He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. 5Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, 6and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”

**John (not synoptic) 1:19-23** 19 And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites [to him] to ask him, “Who are you?” 20 he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, “I am not the Messiah.” 21 So they asked him, “What are you then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” 22So they said to him, “Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?” 23 He said: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Matthew: “A voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight

Mark: A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’ ”

Luke: “A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

John: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’

Is 40:3. 3A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!

**Mark**

Chapter 1:1-13

**Mark** 1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God].

**The Preaching of John the Baptist** 2ab As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. 3c A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’ ” 4John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. 6 John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. 7And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. 8d I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit.”

**a: Mt 3: 1– 11:** **The Preaching of John the Baptist**. 1t In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea 2[ and] saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3 It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: “A voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’ ” 4 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him 6 and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. 7 When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. 9And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.

 Lk 3: 2– 16: 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. 3 He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. 5Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ” 7He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance; and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” 10And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” 11He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.” 12Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” 13He answered them, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” 14Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?” He told them, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.” 15Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.

b: Mal 3: 1: 1 Now I am sending my messenger— he will prepare the way before me; And the lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple; The messenger of the covenant whom you desire— see, he is coming! says the Lord of hosts.

c: Is 40: 3: 3A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!

 Jn 1: 23: 23 He said: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

d: Jn 1: 27: 27the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”

 Acts 1: 5: 5for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.”

 Acts 11: 16: 16and I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.’

**Mark** 9eIt happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. 10 On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. 11f And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

e: Mt 3: 13– 17: 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” 15Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. 16 After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. 17 And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

 Lk 3: 21– 23: **The Baptism of Jesus**. 21 After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” **The Genealogy of Jesus.** 23 When Jesus began his ministry he was about thirty years of age. He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli,

 Jn 1: 32– 33: 32 John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. 33I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.’

f: Ps 2: 7: 7I will proclaim the decree of the Lord, he said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you.

**Mark** 12g At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, 13and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

g: Mt 4: 1– 11: The Parable of the Sower. 1 On another occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. 2And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them, 3“ Hear this! A sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. 6And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. 7Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. 8And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” 9He added, “Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear.” The Purpose of the Parables. 10And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables. 11 He answered them, “The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables,

 Lk 4: 1– 13: The Temptation of Jesus. 1 Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert 2 for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. 3The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” 4Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’ ” 5Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. 6The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. 7All this will be yours, if you worship me.” 8Jesus said to him in reply, “It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.’ ” 9 Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10for it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ 11and: ‘With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ” 12Jesus said to him in reply, “It also says, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’ ” 13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Review the other sections of Mark’s gospel; see Synoptic Gospels chart and compare the unity between the Gospels.