

# THE GREATEST

## MIGHTY TO SAVE

Early in WWII, the French and British forces were in full retreat as the German blitzkrieg pushed the allied forces across France all the way back to the beaches of Dunkirk. Hundreds of thousands of troops stood helplessly as the German Luftwaffe tormented them from the skies.

The impressive British Navy found itself unable to mount much of a rescue because of the shallow waters on the Dunkirk beaches. A call went out, to almost any craft that could float with a motor. Fishing boats, trawlers, pleasure crafts, and ship after ship joined in the rescue. Whereas it was estimated that the British might only rescue a quarter of their forces, this motley crew rescued over 300,000 men from certain death. The war very nearly ended before it began. It wasn't battleships and cruisers that made the difference—it was ordinary people in ordinary boats.

Jesus took on flesh, came to earth, in order to bring salvation. He did not do this because of how great we were, quite the opposite. Christ brought salvation to sinners—by grace through faith. We don't bring anything to the table. And, it's that message of hope Christians are called to share. Like the "merchant marines" at Dunkirk, you might be sorely out-gunned and ill-prepared for the fight. However, with your humble willingness, God can use you to bring salvation to a helpless generation. Not because of how great *you* are, but because he is mighty to save.

### MARK 1:9-15

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup> The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How do I tell my friends about Jesus? What is the gospel? What if they ask a question and I don't know the answer?

Perhaps you've asked these or other questions about what the gospel is or how to share it. Obviously, in a study about Jesus the two main things is that you know him more and tell others about him. If you need a little help for a very simple way to share the gospel, scan the QR-code.



## DISCUSSION

What are some of the ways Jesus is portrayed that may or may not line up with Scripture?

1. What immediate events happened as Jesus "came up out of the water"?

2. What forces challenged Jesus? Supported him? (13)

3. What three things did Jesus proclaim?

4. In your own words, define the term...  
"repent" –

"believe" –

"gospel" –

5. Have you personally repented of your sin, believed the gospel of grace through faith alone, and received God's new life? Describe that experience.

Sharing the gospel isn't about winning an argument. It's "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." If you have questions about the gospel, talk to your Coach today!

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## STUDY NOTES THE SKY-RIPPER

Running a marathon requires setting a pace and enduring long enough to complete the journey. Sprinting, on the other hand, is all-out, full-bore, max effort for seconds, not minutes or hours.

Reading *Mark* feels much more like sprinting than a marathon. Jesus never seemed to rush around anywhere, but Mark's 16 chapters use the word "Immediately" 43 times. Our passage today covers three different scenes in just six verses—with two uses of the word "immediately." Mark begins his gospel trying to answer the implied question, "Who is this guy?" He wastes no time answering the question by showing us three quick glimpses.

Last Week, we saw Mark's main idea in verse 1, "*Jesus is the Son of God.*" We also saw the ministry of John the Baptist as his "forerunner." Our passage today starts out, "*In those days...*", when John was baptizing. It was then that ***Jesus came from Nazareth*** and began his public ministry. Immediately, we see how different this Jesus was from anyone who came before (or since)—he's the sky ripper, the Spirit-filled Son, King, Creator, and Redeemer.

## JESUS IS GREATER THAN HIS KINGDOM

To begin his ministry, Jesus ***was baptized by John in the Jordan.*** Three things happen instantly ***when he came up out of the water.***

First, ***immediately he saw the heavens being torn open.*** Mark uses the word "ski-zo" here translated as "torn." This seems like a violent word for ripping or tearing the sky. This term could take Mark's audience back to the prophet Isaiah when he cried out in chapter 64, "*Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down.*" "Ski-zo" appears only twice in the book of *Mark*. In Mark 15:38, Mark described the veil of the Temple covering the Holy of Holies being *torn* in two.

What we see is that Jesus, the God-man has arrived, and the work of tearing the barrier between humanity and God that will finish at the cross has already started.

Second, ***the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*** Although we might have some questions about the dove-like nature of the Holy Spirit in this moment, all three persons of the Trinity are present for the inaugural moment of Jesus' ministry.

Finally, ***a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son"*** When a person comes into a relationship with God through Jesus, we are adopted into God's family. He loves us. However,

there's a special love that God the Father seems to hold for God the Son. God called him "beloved." In the original language that word pertains to the *only* one of their class—one *especially and uniquely* loved. Again, Jesus is entirely unique. *The Greatest!*

God went on to say, "***with you I am well pleased.***" When is the last time you gave or received genuine affirmation? I bet you'd have a much easier time thinking of the last time you gave or received criticism. Our souls do not crave improvement, we crave encouragement. If we're surrendered to Christ, when God looks at us, he sees Jesus. Despite our shortcomings, he is as pleased with us as he is with Christ.

***Immediately*** after these events, ***the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness.*** Mark used two sentences in verse 13 to describe Jesus' forty-day ordeal—both beginning "And he was..."

***"And he was...being tempted by Satan," "And he was...with the wild animals."***

How did Satan tempt Jesus? Mark doesn't care. For his purposes, it is enough to know that the ruler of this world took his best shot and missed. Not only that, but the power of Satan is grammatically equated to "wild beasts." So, not only did Satan get his shot—the worst this world has to offer spiritually and physically was thrown at Jesus, and he came out on top.

## GOD'S KINGDOM IS LIFE-GIVING

Following these events ***John was arrested*** soon to give his life. However, it was at that time that ***Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.***

Jesus didn't start his ministry in the great cities of the ancient world. He started in the backwaters of Galilee—not even a blip on the radar for the greatness of the Roman Empire. Jesus' message was the "*gospel of God.*" Gospel means "good news." What was so good about what Jesus proclaimed?

First, people aren't good wait-ers. So, it's good news to hear that "***the time is fulfilled.***" Second, "***the kingdom of God is at hand.***" Jesus didn't come to establish a physical kingdom (yet). He came to expand God's eternal kingdom by removing the barrier between humanity and God—sin.

Finally, the hard news, "***repent and believe in the gospel.***" Sin causes people to bow up—to reject God's demands on our life. The call to repent means to turn away from sin and turn back to God. The good news of the gospel rests on Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection. Through him we have the offer of hope for eternity. It's a gift we couldn't earn received only through surrendering our way and turning to the One who tore the sky open and came down.