



# A SAVIOR APPEARS: COME AND SEE

**SERIES: EPIC**

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Our *EPIC* journey has brought us to the start of Jesus’ public ministry, and we will ask two questions to guide our study. What did Jesus hear as he began this work, and then what did he say?

Mark 1:2-13:

**<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>3</sup>“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”**

**<sup>4</sup>And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

**. . . <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 baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**

**<sup>9</sup>At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized 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 forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.**

Three voices spoke to Jesus preparing him to begin the work he had been born for. The first is the voice of his cousin—John the Baptist. John was sent by God as a prophet to prepare the people for the Messiah. Jesus heard John preach.

Second, he heard the voice of his father from heaven as he was raised from the water of baptism. Third, in the wilderness he heard the lies of the tempter. Taken together these messages propelled Jesus into public ministry—the

task of making himself known as the long-awaited Messiah.

John’s preaching was electrifying. There had been no prophet in Israel for 400 years. The Jews returned from exile to their homeland, rebuilt the temple, later expanding and beautifying it. They established patterns of behavior and religious duty that underscored Jewish identity while they lived under occupation by foreign armies. Centuries of waiting to hear from God were ended by the powerful voice of a true prophet, one whose speech and appearance recalled the wonder-working authority of Elijah himself. John called for repentance in Israel (religious routines were not enough) and for hearts to be made ready for the One who was coming.

Jesus must have been moved to hear a prophetic voice describing himself (the One who would come with great power), and to see large crowds seeking renewal of heart. The preaching of John was one voice that prepared Jesus for the task before him.

More important than John’s preaching, Jesus heard the voice of his Father spoken from heaven. Jesus’ baptism was an act of identification with sinners as they repented. As he was baptized he heard, “You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” The statement, ‘You are my Son’ was used of Israel’s kings at their coronation and conveyed the fact of Jesus’ royal authority here. But more important, I think, is the intimate and tender word of approval. Jesus is the beloved Son of his heavenly Father, fully known and loved without qualification. He had not yet ‘accomplished anything important’ by way of preaching and healing. He would soon begin that work with the assurance of his Father’s approval. Perhaps this scene has special meaning for those who have had painful relationships with their earthly fathers. By faith we can hear what Jesus heard—that we are children of God and that he is pleased with us.

Satan’s voice was the third one which spoke to Jesus in the days before he embarked on ministry. It was God’s will, a necessary element of his preparation, for Jesus to go into the desert and face the enemy. Though Mark’s account is brief we know from the other gospels that Jesus fasted for forty days and was tempted by the deceiver when he was at a low point physically. Three devilish conversations began

with the statement, “If you are the Son of God.” The voice of God from heaven affirmed Jesus’ sonship; the tempter called it into question.

Further, Satan urged Jesus to focus on himself. “If you are so important, use your status to serve yourself. Take the gifts I offer.” Here, said the devil, is extravagance at no cost, benefits that require no waiting or self denial. Jesus drew strength from Scripture and quoted the word of God (his Father) to reject the devil’s offers. Returning from the desert, Jesus began his ministry knowing that he would face a cunning and relentless enemy and that the battle between them was not over.

Jesus’ work was launched by listening. He knew that he was prepared (John’s voice), that he was beloved (the Father’s voice) and that he was opposed (Satan’s voice). It is worth noting that we are called to lives of service under the same conditions.

What, then, did Jesus say? John’s gospel informs us of the first days of Jesus’ ministry after he returned from his period of fasting and temptation in the wilderness to the place near the Jordan River where John was preaching.

John 1:35-39:

**<sup>35</sup>The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup>When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”**

**<sup>37</sup>When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”**

**They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”**

**<sup>39</sup>“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”**

John identified Jesus as the Messiah to two of his own disciples. They approached Jesus who began his work of changing the world by asking a question: “What do you want?”

In this case the question can be read as an ordinary introductory exchange between people who are meeting for the first time. But it goes deeper. Jesus takes our longings seriously. He continues to ask men and women like us what we want in life. An honest answer is often difficult—our desires for noble accomplishment are at war with our appetites for sinful pleasure. I want to serve God on the one hand and to be pampered on the other. This question posed by Jesus can lead not only to a new relationship with him, but new discovery of ourselves.

What do you want?

The second thing he says to these two disciples is “Come and see.” Again this can be read as an ordinary exchange about lodging or as a pointer to something much greater. Jesus invites companionship and discovery. A day will come when he will call on these fishermen to, “Put down your nets and follow me”; when he will say “Take up your cross and follow me.” But these challenges are not where he starts. First he says, “Come and see.”

The opening chapters of John’s gospel focus more on private conversations than on preaching to crowds. Jesus’ early miracles are accomplished privately. His first followers learned of Jesus’ insights into human need and his heart of mercy at a wedding in Cana, a conversation with a nighttime visitor in Jerusalem, and at a well in Samaria. Come and see. Their eyes were opened and their faith in him grew. Enduring faith is built on an experience of seeing Jesus not on blind leaps or on the word of another. These men needed more than John’s testimony and every subsequent generation needs to ‘see’ Christ for themselves not just inherit faith from an older generation.

Before too long, coincident with John the Baptist’s arrest, Jesus began to minister in public—preaching and healing. There was a tidal wave of response.

Matthew 4: 23-25:

**<sup>23</sup>Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup>News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. <sup>25</sup>Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.**

Jesus was unlike any teacher anyone had heard before. His words and actions were drenched in power. He healed the sick, demons were banished, lepers embraced, the Sabbath was liberated, sins were forgiven, the wounded were welcome, and storms were subdued. Everywhere Jesus went the world was changed. People sensed it whether they knew how to respond or not and more and more came.

Skeptics were brushed aside, “So that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins he said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, stand, take up your mat, and go home.’” Guilt and disease were banished at his

command. Jesus dispelled darkness of every sort—making clear from the beginning that he had come to rescue humankind and that his power was equal to the task. And for purposes of our *EPIC* journey through the Bible we will end this study at this point: with Jesus before crowds—on display as the One who came to change the world.

One final text to focus this picture.

Luke 4:16-21:

**<sup>16</sup>He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:**

**<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

**<sup>20</sup>Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup>He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

What a dramatic scene! The breathtaking text of Isaiah read aloud by the commanding voice of the Savior—all eyes fixed upon him. Release, freedom, vision, and hope are themes that stir the heart. Then most stunningly of all—‘today this Scripture is fulfilled.’ The year of the Lord’s favor had been the hope of every generation and seemed to recede impossibly far into the distance. But in Christ everything changes—today the age of God’s favor has begun.

‘Today’ on that Sabbath in Galilee and ‘today’ for us as well. Is there a burden you’ve carried too long that you can turn over to Christ—today? Are you hiding behind a false front that could be torn down—today? Is there a chasm of anger between you and a loved one that could be bridged by forgiveness—today?

May we be captivated by the extraordinary declaration of Jesus:

**<sup>18</sup>“He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.