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# JESUS STEPS ONTO THE STAGE

In the first book of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series, a man named Boromir has a dream in which he sees a pale light lingering in the West and hears "a voice, remote but clear," which cries out with a poetic prophecy:

**"Seek for the Sword that was broken:  
In Imladris it dwells;  
There shall be counsels taken  
Stronger than Morgul-spells.  
There shall be shown a token  
That Doom is near at hand,  
For Isildur's Bane shall waken,  
And the Halfling forth shall stand."<sup>1</sup>**

To understand this prophecy, you need to know the world of the story. The sword that was broken belonged to Isildur, the last king of the realm of Gondor. It is now owned by Aragorn, who has come to claim the throne. "Isildur's Bane" is the evil ring. "The Halfling" means the hobbit Frodo (one of the small, human-like people in Tolkien's world), who is carrying the ring. This prophecy points forward to the return of the king. Mark begins his gospel by quoting from two poetic prophecies from the Old Testament (Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3). Like the prophecy Boromir hears, the prophecies Mark quotes announce that something amazing is about to happen. But we need to understand the story of the Old Testament to understand the prophecy. Let's see what Mark says!

***Read: Mark 1:1-13***

*In verse 1, what kind of news does Mark say he's telling us about Jesus?*

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*What two titles of Jesus does Mark give us?*

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*In the prophecy, God says He's sending someone (v. 2) to prepare the way for someone else (v. 3). Who is preparing the way for whom?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** In the Old Testament, "the LORD" means God.

*In verses 4–8, Mark introduces a man named John the Baptist. Which part of the prophecy do you think describes John the Baptist?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** John's weird outfit in verse 6 would have reminded people of the great Old Testament prophet Elijah, who also wore a garment of hair and a belt of leather (2 Kings 1:8).

⇒ **FUN FACT:**

The Greek word translated as "good news" is sometimes translated as "gospel." It means a special announcement from an emperor or king—for example, an announcement of a victory in battle. Kings in ancient Israel were anointed with oil, and our word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word for God's anointed King. Our word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of "Messiah." So, when we call Jesus, "Jesus Christ," Christ is not His last name! It means "Jesus, God's anointed King." At the time when Mark was writing, "Son of God" was also a way of talking about God's King.

*In verse 7, what does John the Baptist say about the person for whom he's preparing the way?*

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*What does John say that this person will do (v. 8)?*

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*In verse 9, who comes? Which character in the prophecy does He relate to?*

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*What happens when Jesus is baptized (vv. 10–11)?*

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➡ **FUN FACT:** The Bible teaches that the one true God who made all things exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Which verses in this passage help us see that God is Father, Son, and Spirit?*

Father:

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Son:

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Spirit:

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*In verses 12–13, where does the Spirit send Jesus and what happens to Him there?*

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*How does this passage help us to see how powerful and wonderful Jesus is?*

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Ask God to help you understand more of who Jesus is, to trust Him as your King, to worship Him as God, and to love Him as your Lord! You might pray something like this: “Dear Heavenly Father, please help me to recognize that Jesus really is Your Son who came to die for me. Thank You that Jesus is the King of all the universe. Please help me to trust Him with my life today. I want to worship Him and love Him, but I know I need Your help. Thank You that by Your Spirit You will always help me follow Jesus. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

# JESUS TURNS FISHERMEN INTO FISHERS OF MEN

How do you feel when people at school are picking teams? If you're athletic, you might feel excited. If you're not very good at sports, you might start feeling worried you'll get left till last. Or maybe you worry that you'll let your team down. In the passage you'll read today, Jesus is starting His mission and picking the first members of His team. We'll see later in Mark's gospel how everyone in this team lets Jesus down.

## *Read Mark 1:14–20*

*We learned in our first study that John the Baptist was pointing people to Jesus. In verse 14, what does Mark tell us has happened to John the Baptist?*

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*We'll find out later (in Mark 6:14–29) what happened to John the Baptist after that. Spoiler alert: it's not a happy ending! How does John's imprisonment help us think about the cost of following Jesus?*

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➡ **FUN FACT:** The word "repent" means to turn away from sin and back to God, like doing a U-turn on the road.



*What is Jesus' message in verse 15?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** Jesus was announcing God's kingdom because He is God's promised King. The "good news" was His proclamation of victory and invitation to everyone to repent or switch sides before it was too late.

*Who does Jesus see as He's walking by the Sea of Galilee (v. 16)?*

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*What does Jesus tell Simon and Andrew to do (v. 17)?*

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*What does Jesus tell Simon and Andrew He's going to send them to do (v. 18)?*

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*What do you think Jesus meant when He told these brothers that He'd send them out "to fish for people"?*

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*How could we “catch” people for Jesus’ kingdom today?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** Simon’s other name is Peter. So, this is the guy whose memories Mark is mostly drawing from for his gospel!

*What did Simon and Andrew do when Jesus called them (v. 18)?*

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*Which other fishermen brothers does Jesus call (v. 19)?*

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*How do James and John react when Jesus calls them (v. 20)?*

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*Why do you think both these pairs of brothers left their fishing boats and families “immediately” when Jesus called?*

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*How does this passage help us to see that Jesus cares about individual people, not just people in general?*

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**PRAY:**

Thank God that He sent Jesus as the greatest King the world has ever known and that He includes His followers in His mission even today! Pray that God would help you to fish for people for His kingdom by sharing the good news about Jesus with your friends and family.

# JESUS SHOWS HIS POWER TO HEAL

In the third book of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series, the strange-looking wanderer named Aragorn claims to be the rightful king of Gondor. A wise woman quotes an ancient saying: *the hands of the king are the hands of a healer*. "And so," she said, "the rightful king could ever be known."<sup>2</sup> In today's passage, Jesus announces His kingdom, gathers followers, and heals people suffering with spiritual and physical sicknesses.

## Read Mark 1:21-34

*Where did Jesus go on the Sabbath day, and what did He begin to do (v. 21)?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** A synagogue is a Jewish place of worship, and the Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown) was the special day of rest and worship. The fourth of the famous Ten Commandments that God gives to His people in the Old Testament is to "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

*How did people react to Jesus' teaching (v. 22)?*

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*How was He different from the teachers of the law (v. 22)?*

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*Who started shouting (v. 23)?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** Okay, maybe this fact isn't so fun! But in the Gospels, Jesus often encounters people with evil or "impure" spirits. Another term for this would be "demon-possessed." These spirits all tend to have a similar reaction to Jesus.

*What two questions did this evil spirit, speaking through the man, ask (v. 24)?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** In Jesus' day, people didn't have last names in the same way we do, so sometimes they were known by their first name and where they came from. Jesus was often called "Jesus of Nazareth" because He had a common first name.

*What did the demon-possessed man say about Jesus (v. 24)?*

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*What two things did Jesus say to the evil spirit?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** In the Gospels, Jesus often tells people to keep quiet about who He really is, because He isn't yet ready to reveal His true identity to everyone. He knows that when He does that He'll be killed. This has always been Jesus' plan, but He knows the right time for it. He also knows that people will misunderstand His mission when they hear that He is God's anointed King, so He keeps things quiet.

*What did the impure spirit do on Jesus' command (v. 26)?*

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*Why were the people amazed (v. 27)?*

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*Where did Jesus go (v. 29)?*

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*What was wrong with Simon Peter's mother-in-law (v. 30)?*

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*What did Jesus do and how did the sick woman react (v. 31)?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** When Jesus heals people in the Gospels, they often want to serve or follow Him.

*In verses 32–34, what things happen again that have already happened in this passage?*

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**PRAY:**

Thank God that Jesus has the power both to teach us and to heal us. Thank Him that Jesus has control over physical and spiritual sickness. Pray for someone you know who is sick, that Jesus would heal them and that they'd respond like Simon's mother-in-law by serving Him!

# JESUS SHOWS HIS POWER TO MAKE CLEAN

In March 2021, our family had to quarantine. Two of us had tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, so we had to keep away from school and work and all our friends until we were considered no longer infectious. In Jesus' day, there was a skin disease called leprosy. It was a terrible disease, and people believed that if you touched someone with leprosy, you'd very likely get it too. So, lepers had to live away from everybody else. But in today's passage, we see Jesus has no problem touching lepers.

**Read Mark 1:35–45**

*In verse 35, Jesus goes to a solitary place, which means a place where He could be alone. What did Jesus do there?*

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*People had just been flocking to Jesus for healing. What do you think we can learn from Jesus' choice to leave the crowd the next morning to pray?*

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*What do Simon Peter and the other disciples do (v. 36)?*

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*What did they tell Jesus when they found Him (v. 37)?*

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*Why do you think everyone was looking for Jesus?*

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*What did Jesus say they should do and why (v. 38)?*

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*What two things did Jesus do as they traveled throughout Galilee (v. 39)?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** In Jewish law, there were lots of things that could make you “unclean” and unable, for example, to participate in worship in the temple in Jerusalem. Having a skin disease like leprosy was one of the things that made you unclean in this way.

*Who came to Jesus in verse 40?*

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*What did this man with leprosy do and what did he say (v. 40)?*

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*How did Jesus feel (v. 41)?*

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🚩 **FUN FACT:** There are a few places in the Gospels where we are not completely sure what the original text said. Your Bible might say that Jesus was indignant or that he was “filled with compassion,” because some early copies of Mark’s gospel say one and others say the other. This is one of a few places where experts aren’t sure which is right. But if the original does say that Jesus was indignant (i.e., angry), He’s clearly not angry with the man!

*What amazing thing does Jesus do in verse 41?*

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*What happened to the man when Jesus touched him and said, “Be clean”?*

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*What did Jesus tell the man to do and not to do (v. 44)?*

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⇒ **FUN FACT:** In Mark's gospel, Jesus often tells people He has healed to keep it quiet, just like He told the demon in verse 25 to be quiet.

*In verse 44, instead of keeping quiet, the man went around telling everyone about Jesus. Why do you think he did this?*

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*What was the result of the man telling everyone in (v. 45)?*

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**PRAY:**

Thank Jesus for being so loving and for touching this sick man. Ask Him to help you see how loving He is and to bring all your problems to Him.