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# WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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9:30 am Bible Class—all ages  
10:30 am Sunday Worship  
5:00 pm Proverbs study (online)  
7:00 pm Wednesday Bible Class

Phone Number: (623) 695-5623  
Website: [www.wvcochrist.com](http://www.wvcochrist.com)  
Email: [wvchurchofchrist@gmail.com](mailto:wvchurchofchrist@gmail.com)  
Facebook: West Valley church of Christ

April 24, 2022

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## Mark's Look at Christ's Temptation (and What It Teaches Us About Bible Study) (Part 1)

One of the hallmarks of a growing knowledge of the Word of God is the ability to associate key events or doctrines with the Bible chapters that record them. Sometimes though, this ability can lull us into thinking that a single Bible chapter contains the entirety of what the Bible has to say on a subject. For example, if I were to say, tell me where can I find the temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness, what chapter springs to mind? Was it Matthew 4? Maybe in studying this subject, you discovered that Luke also records this event, and so Matthew 4 and Luke 4 both came to mind. But – and be honest now – did Mark 1 come to mind as quickly as those other two? Did it come to mind at all?

In all honesty, if you had asked me before I started taking a closer look at the Gospel account of Mark, Mark 1 wouldn't have come to my mind. Further, if you had asked me back then to present an in-depth look at the temptation of Christ, I probably would have discovered that Mark 1 recorded the event, but I would not have used it as my main text and I may or may not have attempted to reflect upon its uniqueness. What I probably would have done (and have been guilty before of doing with other Bible accounts) would be to try to present a picture of the event by combining the looks of the various authors who covered it.

I might have said “guilty,” but there is actually nothing wrong with studying Bible events and doctrines topically – in other words, taking all the information that the Bible presents, organizing it logically or sequentially, and drawing conclusions. Even the Bible demonstrates the value of topical study. For example, Peter's sermon (or, better put, the excerpt from his sermon given he spoke “many other words” – Acts 2:40) recorded in Acts 2 presents the fruit of a topical study of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, examining events and doctrines exclusively as topics can lead to 1) neglecting the context of statements which often leads to misinterpretation and 2) ignoring the author's intention as expressed by including and/or excluding certain details.

What we sometimes fail to reflect on is that if God had wanted to give one exhaustive presentation of the life of Christ rather than the four accounts we have, He could have done so. There is value in studying the events of the life of Christ topically, combining the four accounts to present one cohesive picture. However, there is also value in reflecting simply on what each author presents in his account, and how it fits into his unique presentation of Christ's life.

(concluded next week)