



The Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida (Mark 5:22–26), Julie Stankova, 2010, Bulgaria

background for the lesson. I would, however, encourage you (as you begin the study and spend this year, and this study, reflecting on your understanding of Jesus) to treat yourself to a careful reading of each of these Gospels. Find a quiet place and remember to read them as if you are reading them for the first time. You will be amazed at what you find.

The Earliest Gospel

Most scholars agree that Mark's is the earliest Gospel written, probably penned sometime between 68 and 70 CE, during or just after the **Jewish War** (66–70 CE). It is the shortest of the Gospels and appears to be the basis for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It is not, as some have thought, an abbreviation of the other two.

Note One: The abbreviations BCE and CE are used as exact equivalents of the designations BC ("before Christ") and AD (*anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord). The abbreviation BCE stands for "before the Common Era" and CE stands for "Common Era." (The Horizons Editorial Committee honors author preference.)

As you read through the Gospel of Mark, you no doubt noticed that it does not begin with a birth story. Instead, we meet Jesus as a grown man coming to John the Baptist to be baptized. Why would Mark have left out such a beautiful and significant story as the birth narrative? Perhaps this author did not know the **traditions** about Jesus' birth, or perhaps he desired to get straight to the point (his point) of Jesus' ministry.

Jewish War

Reference to the great revolt of the Jews against the Romans from 66–70 CE, an effort to be rid of the oppression of Roman rule that had grown more and more onerous since Rome took over in 63 BCE.

Tradition

In biblical studies, this is another word for "story," a reference to those stories handed down orally from generation to generation.