

1. The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Mark 1

The Beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ

Mark 1:1-3

1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way" –*

*3 "a voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"*

The Gospel by Mark begins with Jesus and John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke cover much more of the Lord's early life and matters of importance to many of their readers: genealogies, the virgin birth, the nativity, and days in the temple. Mark's narrative starts at the beginning of the Gospel, focusing on Jesus life as one who demonstrates the power of God and one who teaches the will of God.

Mark chooses two prophecies foretelling the coming of John the Baptist. The first in verse 2 is from Mal. 3:1, and the second in verse 3 is from Isa 40:3. Both Matthew and Luke quote the Isaiah passage, but much later in their gospels (Matt 3:3 and Luke 3:4-6). Luke's reference includes the follow-up verses which illuminate the great importance of John's message and the coming of the messiah:

*"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.*

*5 Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.*

*6 **And all mankind will see God's salvation.**"* [Emphasis added.]

Mark 1:4

4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John came immersing – the proper English word for baptism. Strong gives the meaning:

baptizo (bap-tid'-zo); from a derivative of NT:911; to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism: Baptist, baptize, wash.

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In keeping with the very sense of baptism as immersion only, John used the Jordan River. Lest one make too much of a desert area, lacking water for immersion, note that desert area more likely means deserted area. This necessity of enough water to immerse was a requirement in John 3:22-24:

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

The baptism of John is definitive in mode, immersion; qualification, repentance; and purpose *for (unto)* the remission of sins. Baptism is never *because of* the remission of sins as taught by modern adherents of faith only. Again, Strong clarifies:

eis (ice); a primary preposition; to or into (indicating the point reached or entered), of place, time, or (figuratively) purpose (result, etc.); also in adverbial phrases:

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John's baptism comes up two different times in Acts. In both cases, the recipients were baptized once again in Christ's baptism. The examples speak for themselves: Acts 18:24-26 reads:

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 19:1-7 reads:

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

The Baptism of John and the Baptism of Jesus Christ

Mark 1:5-8

5 *The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

John's message had such great impact that all the people came out to hear him. The participial use of *confessing their sins* with the implied subject of all these people makes confessing their sins and repentance of their sins prerequisites to baptism by John. In Christ's baptism, confession will be the good confession with the mouth that Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God. 1 Tim 6:12-13 describes the good confession made only after Christ himself declared it on the cross:

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession . . .

It is this confession, of Christ as Lord that people must now make to be saved. Rom 10:10 teaches: "10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

John came not in pomp and ceremony as mighty scholar and teacher, but he came dressing simply and eating simply. The character of his life was match by his humility toward the Lord as the statement implies: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." The humble statement occurs also in Matthew where John shows his deep humility toward Jesus when Jesus comes to be baptized in Matt 3:13-15:

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

Mankind today should view baptism as Christ did: God commands it; and to do it, fulfills righteousness. The answer to the question—why were you baptized?—is not, "So I can be saved." Although, indeed, baptism is essential to be saved, we must do it because God told us to do it, making it a righteous act—yes, and it is a proper act.

Mark 1:9-11

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

There are only two examples in the New Testament describing scripturally approved baptism—Christ here and in Matt 3 and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8. The language in all three reports makes baptism immersion, which is exactly what the word means. Compare the language of the three examples:

Mark 1:10: As Jesus was coming up out of the water

Matt 3:16:10: 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

Acts 8:38-39: Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water . . .

They went down into the water, and they came up out of the water necessarily inferring that they were immersed. This certainty and the certain meaning of the word *baptism* makes binding that baptism is immersion and these scriptures "cannot be broken." John 10:35. God, openly and before many witnesses, endorsed his Son here at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration. At the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father added the important clause: Listen to him! Mark records that example in Mark 9:2-8:

2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 6 (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

7 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

Mark 1:12

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13 and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Mark mentions briefly the temptation of Jesus. However, Matt 4:1-11 offers a detail account of the conversation between the Lord and Satan.

Getting Started: The Time Has Come

Mark 1:14

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

As Jesus began preaching the good news of God (the gospel), he preached that the time had come. Older version use the expression the time is fulfilled. The expression – *time has come* – when combined with the expression – *the kingdom of God is near* – make Jesus' time both the beginning and end of God's eternal plan. Paul described the certainty of the times in Gal 4:4: "4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law." Various millennial theories would have this plan of God at the fullness of time fail, and replace it with some speculative and mystical return of the Lord and some future date. Mark is clear and plain: "The time has come; the kingdom of God is near.

The times command urgent and immediate action in obeying the Lord by repenting and believing and being baptized.

Mark 1:16-20

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Jesus also began to enlist those to be his apostles. Simone (Peter) and Andrew are told that the Lord would make them *fishers of men*. This beautiful metaphor for all those who teach and preach has become universally known.

The Lord chose common people to do the greatest work. That they could do so well astonished those who heard. Later, as the apostles would begin their work, those who were leaders of the Jews, learned and bright, marveled that common men could speak so well. Luke

captured their astonishment in Acts 4:13: "13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

The Authority of Jesus

This section illustrates the vast power of Jesus from God the Father. He immediately demonstrates his power over evil spirits and disease. Later in the book, Mark will chronicle his power over nature and sin. John describes the unlimited nature of Jesus' gift in John 3:34-35: "34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

Authority in Teaching and Power over Evil Spirits

Mark 1:21-28

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!"

25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Jesus spoke the certain truth of God; and because he did, he came across to his audience "as one who had authority." This appearance of truthful speaking and teaching is *ethos* a Greek word meaning moral nature. Jesus authority was evident in what he said and did.

Even the evil spirit knew that Jesus had come to destroy such agents of the devil, and he knew that Jesus was the "Holy One of God." James confirmed this awareness of demons and evil spirits in James 2:19: "19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder." The casting out of the demon gave added credence to Jesus' authority. Indeed, the miracles of Jesus strengthened the faith of those who saw them. In fact, John recorded the miracles of Jesus in his gospel so that people might believe in Jesus. John 20:30-31 reads:

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

As will become evident, Jesus often healed because of his great compassion toward the afflicted.

Power over Disease

Mark 1:29-37

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Simon here is the name used for Simon Peter, and the episode produces an interesting and important point—Peter was married, for he had a mother-in-law. Paul also noted this marital situation of Peter in 1 Cor 9:5: "5 Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas [Peter]? The fact that Peter and the rest of the apostles were married exposes the fallacy of the Roman Catholic doctrine of celibacy, which forbids the clergy to marry.

This episode confirms Jesus as the Holy One of God, since Jesus now forbids them to speak.

That Jesus sought solitude to pray, but Simon and his companions came looking for him, is an example of Mark's relationship to Peter, whom he mentions specifically. The others, who Mark calls Peter's companions, would be the other disciples who also became apostles.

Jesus Came to Preach

Mark 1:38-45

38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Jesus reply, "That is why I have come," focuses on his mission—preaching and teaching. However, the leper sparks the compassion of Jesus as he unequivocally believes that Jesus can heal him. Often times, Jesus will respond in a way that shows accommodation. One example is when he turned water in wine at the request of his mother (John 2:1-11); another is when he raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-45). In all cases, the miracles testify that he is the son of God.

The healed leper spread the word about Christ abroad causing the Lord to stay outside the towns in lonely places. The chapter closes with the Lord empowered to perform miracles beyond human imagination. However, Jesus is a Lord, who came to teach and preach, as his primary mission. Luke recorded the Savior's own words describing this mission in Luke 19:9-10:

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."