

The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Mark 1:1-11

Mark 1:1 "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

The book of Mark is succinct and unequivocal. Unlike Luke, who provides an introductory framework to his book's process and purpose, or John, who waxes philosophical, Mark commences with the "Good News" whose substance is Jesus. There is an urgency in his style of writing that excludes the kind of detailed account that is characteristic of Luke. Mark's focus is on communicating to his audience, as expeditiously as possible, that Jesus and John the Baptist were not afterthoughts to God but the fulfillment of promises He had made and been declaring directly and through His prophets.

Mark 1:2 "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way"

Unlike the other Gospel authors, Mark does not anchor his story in genealogy but rather his ballast for the ministry of Jesus is the Old Testament prophecies found in such places as Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3. His purpose is demonstrating that neither John, who is Christ's messenger/herald, nor Jesus the Christ are happy accidents that God happened to capitalize on.

Mark 1:4-8 "John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John had a crucial role to play in God's redemptive plan. He came to herald and prepare God's people for the coming of Jesus given that there had been prophetic silence in Israel for more than three hundred (300) years.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a peculiar man, with a particular mission and powerful message.

John's Distinctiveness

Mark 1:6 "John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey."

Here Mark quotes the prophet Malachi who spoke of the appearance of an Elijah-like figure preceding the coming of Jesus. In 2 Kings 1:8 "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.", Malachi prophesied to Israel, during a period when they were facing the devastation of being conquered and taken into exile, that someone, who was like Elijah, would come and proclaim the forthcoming Messiah. John's distinctive deportment fulfilled Malachi's prophecy.

John's Mission

John was a herald and the man prophesied of in Isaiah 40:3 "A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." In the Old Testament there are many instances of kings and leaders sending heralds forth to declare an important message to the people in advance of their coming. Pharaoh had heralds run before Joseph's chariot and declare that the people ought to bow the knee. Hezekiah sent heralds through the land declaring to the people that they ought to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. In similar fashion, John the Baptist is sent by God as the herald of the King, Jesus the Christ. He is on a royal mission declaring that the King is on His way.

John's Message of Repentance

Mark 1:4-5 "John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

John's message was powerful and verse 5 suggests that the people were responding to it in an unusual way. All of Judea and Jerusalem, which would have been composed of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of people, were going to hear this peculiar man preach in the wilderness.

Luke 3:7-9 "He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Luke 3:17 "His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

John's message didn't consist of "name it and claim it", "health and wealth" or "your best life now". He refers to the people as offspring of vipers, or The Viper and, because of that state, that they are due judgment from God. He seeks to make them aware of their tenuous state and calls them to repent and be baptized. This is significant because, to an Israelite, baptism was the symbolic rite that proselytes (gentiles) had to go through to become Jewish. It was an outward demonstration of the inward cleansing that needed to take place. So, here, to a primarily Jewish crowd, John is stating that they too must repent and be baptized. He called for the Jews to admit their sinful state and recognize that their Jewish heritage could not make them right with God and guarantee their salvation. Conversely, this message would also proclaim to the Gentiles that their lack of Jewish heritage did not mean automatic damnation; that if they would repent and be baptized, they could likewise have salvation. John, without discrimination, called everyone to own and confess their sin and rely wholly on the mercy of God to forgive them. To prepare God's people, John exposed their need for forgiveness; for how can one understand and appreciate the good news without the ability recognize the need for it?

Application

When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent," he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance. – Luther

We are often afraid of what people or God Himself would think of us if we actually owned our sin, confessed it, and expressed our need for forgiveness. Many of us have a very difficult time admitting that we were or are wrong in how we've acted, spoken or thought. The arrogance and self-deception at work is clearly seen in us in the blame we place on others for our sinful behavior, denial of our sinful actions and half-hearted ways that we repent to others and God. If we only realized how powerful a demonstration of real gospel repentance is to the watching world and one another. Gospel repentance is an irrefutable display of the power of the grace of God in the relationships of human beings. This fearful desire to protect yourself is keeping you from tasting the sweetness of God's forgiving grace. If this describes you, hear Jesus saying "that sin of yours, I have taken to myself; and I have borne it in My own

body on the cross, so that your shame is mine and my Father's love for Me is yours, no matter what you have done.". God's Grace then drives us to a life of repentance where we turn from our sin and to Him.

Application Questions

Do you understand/appreciate and see your need for the good news of Jesus?

Do you recognize your need for repentance?

What are you hoping in?

If you recognize your need for repentance, what still keeps you from repenting (is it your concern for what people will think of you)?

Have you confessed your sin, repented, turned and placed your faith wholly on the mercy of God to forgive you?

John's Message about the Holy Spirit

Mark 1:7 "And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."

The removal of sandals to wash feet was exclusively the job of slaves and only Gentile slaves. Thus, here John emphasizes that he was not even worthy of the office of a lowly Gentile slave when compared to the One coming after him.

Mark 1:8 "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John's message was not just about Jesus, but about what Jesus would do. He did not preach the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, rather, he spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit, without whom, the sacrificial work of Jesus would be ineffectual. The work of Christ must be applied and it is only done through the work of the Holy Spirit. As a consequence of the resurrection, exaltation and ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God, God pours out the Holy Spirit. So John and Mark are establishing the person and function of the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit is a life-giver to those who are dead.
- The Holy Spirit is a comforter to those who are downcast and sorrowful.
- The Holy Spirit is a sanctifier to the people of God. He draws, shapes and molds God's people into the image of Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures to God's people.
- The Holy Spirit will guide His people into all truth.

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to regenerate our dead hearts and give us new hearts; miraculously bringing life where there was death, light where there loved darkness, and freedom where there was slavery. The Spirit then works to convict of sin, point to the cross, and give faith in Jesus' finished work in man's place for his sins. Thus man can be justified & the Holy Spirit perpetuates this work until the day that men meet Jesus face to face.

John's Message about Jesus Christ

Mark 1:9 'In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.'

John called the people to a baptism of repentance; to own their sin, confess it, turn from it and turn to God and be baptized acknowledging the need for cleansing from sin. However, Jesus had no sin and nothing to repent of. So why did Christ undergo John's baptism?

Matthew 3:15 “But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. “

John 1:29 “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Hence, Jesus is baptized to identify with sinners and demonstrate His willingness to be the mediator for man. Everyone who was baptized knew they were sinners and recognized their need for cleansing; they repented, confessed their sins and looked to God to provide cleansing and forgiveness. Jesus takes on the same symbol that the Israelites used in order to indicate that He is going to provide the forgiveness is needed to reconcile man to God.

Application

The baptism of Jesus matters because Jesus is effectively communicating *“I was baptized with the baptism of sinners because I came to take away the sins of the world. The shameful sins, the humiliating sins. If you trust Me, and you decide that my Grace is greater and more satisfying than your sin, and you turn from that sin to me then I guarantee I’ll take that sin for you. I’ll stand before God one day, as the Accuser gets set to put you to shame, and My Father will look at him and say that you have no sin because it’s all been taken away by my Son. So what do you have to say Accuser?”*

Mark 1:10 “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.”

Mark only uses the Greek word for “torn” in one other place which is at the crucifixion. The Centurion confesses that Jesus is God’s Son and the curtain in the Temple is “torn” from top to bottom. Thus this scene is depicting that God’s Son has come and God has conquered. Moreover, it is a clear display of the Spirit of God visibly filling Jesus and empowering Him to fulfill His mission and office as our Mediator. Jesus will preach in dependence on the Spirit. He’ll battle with Satan in dependence on the Spirit. He’ll overcome temptation in dependence on the Spirit. If the Lord Jesus had to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit as He worked on our behalf for our salvation, how much more ought we to be dependent on the Holy Spirit?

Mark 1:11 “And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Clearly, the identity of Jesus as God’s Son is unequivocally exposed to the Israelites present. It was a sign for them, however, this must have had meaning to Jesus as well. He’s about to enter into a mission that will cost Him His life and, as He begins, His Father says *“I love you and I want you to know this.”* In His baptism, Jesus so identified with you as a sinner that when you trust Him you are not only forgiven of your sins but you are brought into a new relationship with The Father such that all of Jesus benefits are transferred to you. These benefits include the Father’s affection for His Son. Here, in the words spoken to Jesus, are a taste of what the effective words are that will be spoken to all who have believed, *“well done, good and faithful servant ...my child in Jesus...you are loved and in you I delight.”*

Application Questions

How would it make a difference in your Christian life if you truly believed that God’s affection for His Son was transferred to you?

[Sermon Link](#)

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