

The Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God

Mark 1:1-8

Introduction: 1) When God decided to give the world a written account of the life and ministry of Jesus He saw fit not to give us one, but 4! Like one who examines a magnificent diamond from various perspectives to fully grasp its beauty, God moved four human authors to look at His beauty as it was and is reflected in His Son. For example:

- 1) Matthew is written to Jews telling them that Jesus is the Messiah/King who fulfills Old Testament prophecy and expectations.
- 2) Mark is written to Romans telling them that Jesus is the Suffering Servant of the Lord who actively ministers on our behalf and gives His life as a ransom for many.
- 3) Luke is written to Greeks telling them that Jesus is the perfect Son of Man who came to save and minister to all people through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 4) John is written to the world telling it that Jesus is the fully human, fully Divine Son of God in whom we must believe to receive eternal life.

2) As we focus on Mark we will encounter a gospel that is fast moving and hard hitting! It is the shortest, by far, of the 4 Gospels, and it is often noted as much for what it omits as what it includes! For example in Mark there is:

- 1) No genealogy of Jesus like we find in Matthew and Luke
- 2) No miraculous birth narrative
- 3) No mention of Bethlehem or shepherds
- 4) No visit of the wisemen
- 5) No childhood at Nazareth
- 6) No story of Jesus visiting the temple as a boy

- 7) No growth in wisdom and stature noted
 - 8) No reference to His pre-existence like we find in John's prologue
 - 9) No Sermon on the Mount
 - 10) No lengthy discourses and few parables
- 3) If we were to summarize Mark's goal for writing in light of what we find in his 16 chapters we could say something like this: "Mark recorded, in rapid fire succession, specific events from the life and ministry of Jesus to prove to a Roman audience that He is the Christ, the Son of God who served, suffered, died and rose again as the Suffering Servant of the Lord depicted in the prophet Isaiah."
- 4) As we prepare to walk through this powerful gospel narrative concerning Jesus Christ two questions need to be raised and answered. First, who wrote this gospel? It, like all the gospels, is anonymous. Second, how should we approach any of the gospels?
- 5) • The early church was unanimous that a man named John Mark was the author. John Mark, was the son of a woman named Mary. Mary's home was in Jerusalem and was a meeting place for believers of the early church (Acts 12:12).
- The Hebrew name, John, means God's gift. The Roman name, Mark, means polite or shining. John Mark, though never mentioned by name in the gospel, may be the naked boy of Mark 14:51-52!
 - John Mark and his cousin Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). But Mark turned back before the journey ended (Acts 13:13). This irritated Paul and would lead to a parting with Barnabas as recorded in Acts 15:36-41.
 - Later, Paul and Mark were reconciled. Paul wrote in II Timothy 4:11 that Mark was profitable to him for the ministry.

- Finally, the early church affirmed Mark was the apostle Peter's interpreter. He recorded and interpreted Peter's experiences with the Lord Jesus. The fact that Mark's account is especially vivid when it involves incidents with Peter would add support to this view.

6) How do we approach the four gospels, and in particular, how do we approach the gospel of Mark? What are our presuppositions that we will bring to our study? There are five.

Some Basic Presuppositions Concerning Our Gospels

- 1) They are historical and not mythological accounts. What they record really did happen.
- 2) Because they are written by four different men, the style, content, etc. will vary.
However, because they were inspired by God, all that they wrote will be true.
- 3) The Gospels are more than thematic biographical studies. They are Gospels. (The Gospels are not biographies in the modern sense.) They are historical theologies of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- 4) Portions may be condensed and summarized and not given as exhaustive accounts.
- 5) The Gospels are more concerned about Christ's death than His life (over ¼ of each deals with the final week of His life). One scholar said of Mark, "it is a Passion Narrative with an extended introduction" (Stein, 33).

Transition: As we begin an exciting journey thru this gospel, what is it that Mark at the beginning wants us to understand concerning the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I. We can trust God to keep His promise. 1:1-4

- Jesus said in John 5:39, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life/ and these are they that testify of Me." God had promised to send a Savior, a Deliverer, a Messiah. Mark says the time has arrived and He has appeared, as well as the one whom God called to prepare the way for His arrival.

- Verses 1-4 should be read as a single sentence introducing these two important persons: Jesus Christ and John the baptizer.

1) God kept His Word to send the Messiah. 1:1

- Verse one serves as the theme of the book and the introduction to 1:1-15.
- “Beginning” recalls Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1. Something new and exciting has occurred.
- “gospel” – (*euaggelion*) – good news! In the mid-2nd century the word would be used as a technical term for the 4 written gospels. Here it means a message of good news, of joyful tidings. It speaks, in the context of redemptive history, of the coming Savior who would provide salvation promised by the prophetic word. The time of God’s salvation has arrived!
- “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
 - Jesus is the Greek name for the Hebrew Joshua. It means “Yahweh is salvation.”
 - Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. It means the anointed one. Initially a title, it would become a common part of the name of our Lord.
 - Son of God is a crucial and critical title for the promised deliverer. It takes Christology to a higher level. Bob Stein says, “Son of God reveals Jesus’ unique and unparalleled relationship with God. It is the favorite title of Mark for identifying Jesus (1:11, 24; 3:11 [cf. 1:34]; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:61-62; 15:39), and when Mark was written, it conveyed to the Christian community the idea of both preexistence and deity (cf Phil 2:6-8; Col. 1:15-20)” (Stein, 41).

- 7) Mark 13:3a The Son (by Jesus of Himself)
- 8) Mark 14:61-62 Son of the Blessed One (by the High Priest)
- 9) Mark 15:39 Son of God (Roman centurion)
- Interestingly, four strategic confessions, in particular 8:29 and 15:39 frame the unfolding revelation and identity of Jesus in this gospel.

The Unfolding Identity of Jesus in Mark

Mark's Assertion:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (1:1)

Peter's (Jewish) Confession:

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." (8:29)

Messiah's Affirmation by the nation:

Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (14:61-62)

A Roman (Gentile) Soldier's Recognition:

So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (15:39)

Transition: God kept His word to send the Messiah.

2) God kept His word to send His forerunner. 1:2-4

- Verses 2-3 are a conflation, a composite or fusing of 3 texts (a common practice in that day) that evoke both the theme of the wilderness, a new exodus, and the forerunner Elijah. Mark simply references the most significant and well known of the 3, the prophet Isaiah.

- Exodus 23:20: “Behold, I send an Angel (messenger) before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.”
- Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts.”
- Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”
- This is the only place where Mark introduces an Old Testament quotation in this manner. As it is written is a perfect tense verb. “It stands written.” What stands written?
 - 1) God will send His messenger.
 - 2) The messenger will prepare the way, make the road ready before “You” (Messiah).
 - 3) He will be a loud voice proclaiming his message.
 - 4) He will do this where God has continually met His people calling them to repentance: the wilderness.
 - 5) His message is simple and clear (note the Hebrew parallelism)
 - Prepare (imp., force of a military command)...Level the roads, fill in the potholes, make them presentable and safe for the Lord is coming!
- Verse 4 notes again, in simple terms, his ministry and message.
 - Baptized (in the wilderness; a new Jordan crossing!)
 - Preached repentance

Transition: God kept His word to send His forerunner.

II. We can trust God to send His preachers.

1:4-8

- The sending of John the Baptist, John the baptizer, was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy signaling a turning point and new day in “redemptive history.”
- Chuck Swindoll says these verses concerning John the Baptist gives us the “profile of a strange evangelist!” It is hard to disagree.

- Three observations elsewhere in Scripture are worth noting:

Matthew 11:7-15: “As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare your way before You.’ Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

John 3:30: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

John 10:41: “Then many came to Him and said, “John performed no miracles, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.”

1) Like John, we should be faithful. 1:4-5Verse 4

- John came – he suddenly appeared in the wilderness (!) and is introduced the same way by Mark. Bam! There he is.

- Preaching a baptism of repentance

Preaching – the message given to him by God

Baptism – an act of immersion. It was a unique activity to call Jewish persons to be baptized. So unique was it, he became known as “the baptizer.”

Repentance – a turning and radical change resulting in the forgiveness of sins

Verse 5

- People came from everywhere to hear him, even Jerusalem! Rich and poor. Rural and urban.
- They responded by repenting (turning from sin), confessing (acknowledging their sin) and being baptized (an outward sign of humility giving evidence of the inward change of their heart).

Summary of John’s message

“The time is now to get right with God!” Popular with some and unpopular with others, John was faithful to God! He truly lived by the dictum: “all that matters in life is that I please God.”

2) Like John, we need to be humble. 1:6-8

Our tendency is to want to make John’s character like that of a modern man. That will not work. He was not the kind of man to be a presidential cabinet member, but rather he was a wandering preacher who lived in the wilderness. God chose a

forerunner entirely different from the type we would have picked. Mark helps us take a straight and honest look at this man. Not only does he appear unusual by today's standards, he was unusual by the standards of his own day. He had no credentials, had not studied in a formal school, had not sat at the feet of Pharisees or rabbis, and he wore funny clothes and ate weird food! And early in life he moved to the desert.

- Humble in appearance? He wore a camel-haired garment with a leather belt. Sounds like Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8.
- Humble in home? He lived in the desert.
- Humble in diet? He ate locusts (a clean animal per Leviticus 11:22) and honey. At least it was something high in protein and minerals.
- Humble in message?
 - A greater than I is coming (v. 7)
 - He is so great, I am not worthy to do what only a Gentile slave would do (v. 7)
 - My baptism is outward with water: a symbol. His baptism is inward with water: the real thing! (v. 8)
- The one who is coming is mightier than I am! The one who is coming is more worthy than I am! The one who is coming is more powerful than I am!
- I have touched your body with water. He will touch your soul with the Holy Spirit!
- I know who I am in God's plan. I know who He is in God's plan too! (Don't ever get confused about this!)
- John would not live to 35. He would be imprisoned and beheaded. The world, no doubt scoffed at this crazy man. Heaven, however, would smile.

Conclusion: It became an early Christian symbol to mark the tombs of believers who had died or to designate secret meeting places because of Roman persecution. It was sometimes signed in sand or perhaps across one's chest to distinguish a friend from an enemy. Further, it captured beautifully the evangelistic intent of Jesus' ministry and nicely captured the essence of who Jesus was. It also summarizes well the theme of Mark's gospel and the first verse of the first chapter. I do not speak of the cross, but of the fish! The Greek word is ICHTHUS. It is a perfect acrostic for: *Hesou Christos Theos Huios Soter* or in English, "Jesus Christ God's Son Savior!" Here is the essence of Mark's gospel. Here is the essence of the good news about Jesus.