

Mark Chapter 1

This study of the book of Mark will take us through some of the same territory that we went through in the book of Matthew. You will quickly see that even though it covers some of the very same events as Matthew, that the details many times are enlarged upon by Mark.

The author of Mark is probably the same Mark as John Mark that we read about (in Acts chapter 12).

Acts 12:12 "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together."

This Mary, who was the mother of John Mark, lived in Jerusalem.

In Colossians 4:10, we see that Barnabas was a close relative, as well as an uncle. Mark was also, a close friend of Peter.

We see in Mark the working Jesus.

In Revelation, we read about the four beasts. We have said in our teaching on Revelation that a better interpretation would have been "living beings" for beasts.

Revelation 4:7 "And the first beast [was] like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast [was] like a flying eagle."

As I said before, even though Matthew, that Mark, Luke, and John cover the same events in many cases. They are seen through four different people's eyes and are very different. The main topic of the book of Mark is: Jesus Christ, the servant of God and man.

In this book, we are not dealing with Jesus from the tribe of Judah; but Jesus Christ, the healer and servant. We see Jesus as the servant of man.

We see nineteen specific miracles in the book of Mark. Eight of these miracles deal with His power and authority over disease, five of these miracles show Jesus as having power over all the world and everything in it, four over demons and Satan, and two show His power over death.

As we go on through this book, take note that Jesus has power over all the earth, everything above the earth, everything under the earth, and everything in the sea. We will see Jesus as someone who gets the job done quickly. He sees a need and takes care of it right then.

John 14:11 "Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

If there is one theme, as I said, more than any other in Mark, it is "believe me for the very works' sake." We will get into all of this more as we go along.

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

“The beginning ... the Son of God”: This is best viewed as Mark’s title for his gospel. The historical record of the gospel message began with John the Baptist (Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16; Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24).

Mark begins with a burst of information that functions as a title. “The gospel” here refers not to the whole book but to the content of the early Christian proclamation, which in turn centers on a person. “Jesus” is His given name; “Christ” is both a name and His Old Testament title; “the Son of God” points to His unique familial intimacy with the God of the Old Testament.

“Jesus Christ”: “Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua (“the Lord is salvation”); “Christ” (“Anointed One”), is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. “Jesus” is the Lord’s human name (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31); “Christ” signifies His office as ruler of God’s coming kingdom (Dan. 9:25-26).

“Son of God”: An affirmation of Jesus’ deity, stressing His unique relationship to the Father (3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 13:32; 15:39; see note on John 1:34).

“Gospel”: The good news about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; of which the 4 gospels are written records.

We see here, in this first verse, that this is the beginning. There is no earlier writing by Mark. The gospel, as we said in Matthew, means good news. This is not just good news from anywhere, but is in fact, the good news of Jesus Christ.

We dealt with this name before, but I feel it is important to know what the name Jesus Christ implies, so bear with me, and we will get into it again. Jesus means The Savior, and Christ means the Anointed One. We discussed in a previous lesson that one of Jesus' names, before He came to earth, was God the Word.

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

We also read in 1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

You see, in heaven the one we call Jesus Christ is known as the Word. He took the name Jesus Christ for His earthly stay in a human body so that He, The Anointed One, might become the Savior of the world. For His stay on earth, He was also known as the Son of God.

Jesus had no earthly Father. His Father was God. We touched on this in Matthew. The Holy Spirit hovered over Mary, and she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the Spirit of God in fleshly form; and thus the Son of God.

Verses 2-3: By “prophets,” Mark means the so-called major and minor prophets of the Old Testament, specifically Malachi and Isaiah. Because early Christians had a great reverence for Scripture, and had only the Old Testament for their bible, passages foretelling Jesus’ coming are regarded as strong proof of His divine identity. These prophecies relate especially to John’s activity.

Mark 1:2 "As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

“It is written”: A phrase commonly used in the New Testament to introduce Old Testament quotes (7:6; 9:13; 14:21, 27; Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 6-7; Luke 2:23; 3:4; John 6:45; 12:14; Acts 1:20; 7:42; Romans 3:4; 8:36; 1 Cor. 1:31; 9:9; Gal. 3:10; 4:22; Heb. 10:7; 1 Peter 1:16).

“In Isaiah the prophet”: Mark’s quote is from two Old Testament passages (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1), which probably explains the reading “the Prophets” found in some manuscripts. The gospels all introduce John the Baptist’s ministry by quoting (Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23)

“My messenger”: John was the divinely promised messenger, set to prepare the way for the Messiah. In ancient times, a king’s envoys would travel ahead of him making sure the roads were safe and fit for him to travel on, as well as announcing his arrival.

We could go through and list the prophecies in the Old Testament. The prophecies of Jesus Christ began in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 and went through most of the books in the Old Testament.

The greatest number were in the books of the prophets such as: (Isaiah 9:7; 7:14; Micah 5:12; Daniel 9:25; Jeremiah 31:15; Deuteronomy 18:15; Psalms 110:4; Zechariah 9:9 or Zechariah 11:12). There are many more, too numerous to mention. In fact, that is a study just in itself.

The specific prophet meant above however, was Malachi. The Scripture which confirms this is:

Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

In (Matthew 17:12”, we see that Jesus said that John the Baptist was the messenger spoken of. This messenger's job was not to elevate himself, but to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Mark 1:3 "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

John the Baptist was born and lived for one purpose, and that was to proclaim the coming of Christ. He had one message. It was Repent and be baptized for the Lord is coming. God, throughout the Bible, picked out a specific person and called them to do a specific job for Him.

This was what God called John the Baptist to do. He was to use his voice to proclaim the coming of the Lord.

We see many others in the Bible chosen by God for a specific job such as Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. He called Noah to build an ark. You see, God chooses whomever He will. This wilderness was not just physical, but spiritual as well. Our cry, like John the Baptist's cry, should be "The Lord is coming".

Mark 1:4 "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

“John”: a common Jewish name in New Testament times, it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name “Johanan” (2 Kings 25:23; 1 Chron. 3:15; Jer. 40:8), meaning “the Lord is gracious.” John’s name was given by the angel Gabriel to his father Zacharias, during his time of priestly service in the temple (Luke 1:13).

His mother, Elizabeth, also a descendant of Aaron (Luke 1:5), was a relative of Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36).

As the last Old Testament prophet and the divinely ordained forerunner of the Messiah, John was the culmination of Old Testament history and prophecy (Luke 16:16), as well as the beginning of the historical record of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, Jesus designated John as the greatest man who had lived until his time (Matt. 11:11).

“John” (the Baptist), breaks a centuries-long prophetic silence in Israel. Other Jewish groups practiced ritual water cleansing, but John called all Israel to “repentance” (verse 5).

“Baptism”: Being the distinctive mark of John’s ministry, his baptism differed from the ritual Jewish washings in that it was a one-time act. The Jews performed a similar one-time washing of Gentile proselytes, symbolizing their embracing of the true faith.

That Jews would participate in such a rite was a startling admission that they, although members of God’s covenant people, needed to come to God through repentance and faith just like Gentiles.

“In the wilderness”: The desolate, arid region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea (see note on Matt. 3:1).

“Baptism of repentance”: A baptism resulting from true repentance. John’s ministry was to call Israel to repentance in preparation for the coming of Messiah. Baptism did not produce repentance, but was its result (Matt. 3:7-8). Far more than a mere change of mind or remorse, repentance involves a turning from sin to God (1 Thess. 1:9), which results in righteous living.

Genuine repentance is a work of God in the human heart (Acts 11:18). For a discussion of the nature of repentance, see notes on (2 Cor. 7:9-12).

“For the remission of sins”: John’s rite of baptism did not produce forgiveness of sin (see notes on Acts 2:38; 22:16); it was only the outward confession and illustration of the true repentance that results in forgiveness (Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31; 2 Cor. 7:10).

John’s baptism was not regarded as equal to baptism in the name of the Trinity as a testimony to one’s personal trust in Christ. (See Acts 19:1-5). “For” here means “with a view to,” that is, in order to attain “remission of sins.” The Greek word order shows that it is not baptism but repentance that secures remission of sins.

We have discussed in our lessons on Matthew, that it was the custom to baptize for the remission of sins long before Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross. Even in the tabernacle in the wilderness, the washings were symbolic of baptism to wash away sins. This actually was different to the baptism we Christians do.

A Christian being baptized is actually performing Jesus’ burial and resurrection. We are baptized into a water grave, and we are following Jesus in His resurrection. We rise again to newness of life in Jesus.

Mark 1:5 "And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

“All the land of Judea . . . and they of Jerusalem”: After centuries without a prophetic voice in Israel (Malachi had prophesied more than 400 years earlier), John’s ministry generated an intense amount of interest.

“Judea”: The southernmost division of Palestine (Samaria and Galilee being the others), in Jesus’ day. It extended from about Bethel in the North to Beersheba in the South, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the West to the Dead Sea and Jordan River in the East. Included within Judea was the city of Jerusalem.

“River of Jordan”: Palestine’s major river, flowing through the Jordan Rift Valley from Lake Hula (drained in modern times), North of the Sea of Galilee, South to the Dead Sea. According to tradition, John began his baptizing ministry at the fords near Jericho.

“Confessing”: To confess one’s sins, as they were being baptized, is to agree with God about them. John baptized no one who did not confess and repent of his sins.

The whole of Judea and Jerusalem is rocked by John’s presence. The tense of “baptized” stresses that it took place continually over a length of time. The condition for baptism was a public response, by which and in which one confessed his sins.

There, strangely enough, was no rejection by the people of John the Baptist. We see here, that many people went to great trouble to go into the wilderness and be baptized by John in the River Jordan. In (Matthew 21:26), we see that the people believe John to be a true prophet.

Matthew 21:26 "But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet."

Isn't it strange they believed he was a prophet and did not believe the message he brought that Jesus Christ is Messiah? This river Jordan is still a favorite place for Christians worldwide to be baptized.

Mark 1:6 "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;"

“Camel’s hair ... girdle of a skin”: The traditional clothes of a wilderness dweller which were sturdy, but neither fashionable nor comfortable. John’s clothing would have reminded his audience of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), whom they expected to come before Messiah (Mal. 2:5; Matthew 17:10-13).

“Locusts and wild honey”: The Old Testament dietary regulations permitted the eating of “locusts” (Lev. 11:2-22). “Wild honey” could often be found in the wilderness (Deut. 32:13; 1 Samuel 14:25-27). John’s austere diet was in keeping with his status as a lifelong Nazirite (Luke 1:15).

John’s appearance is reminiscent of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8; Mark 6:15).

We can see from this that John the Baptist was a simple man with simple needs. The Bible says those that wear fine clothes live in palaces. John did not live in a palace, but rather in the wilderness.

In a land where there are many camels, it would not have been expensive to get a camel's hide to make a garment from. A "girdle", we learned in Exodus, is something similar to a very wide belt. In all of this, I say again, we see a simple man with simple needs, setting out to carry out the job that God had called him to fulfill.

Mark 1:7 "And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

“Preached, saying” denotes a continuous activity. This is John’s characteristic message. Better translated: “proclaiming.” John was Jesus’ herald, sent to announce His coming (see note on verse 4).

“Latchet” refers to the thong of a sandal. John is concerned to make clear both his inferiority (so as not to distract from the future-oriented focus of his message), and the Coming One’s superiority (so as to cultivate longing and expectancy).

“The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose”: The most menial task a slave could perform. John vividly expressed his humility.

We see here, a humble man. John the Baptist knew that he was nothing compared to Jesus. Our ministers of today could take a lesson from John. We are nothing but a voice fulfilling the ministry that God has called us to. The person of the preacher is not the important thing. The message is the important thing, for by the foolishness of preaching people are saved.

As John the Baptist elevated Jesus to His rightful position as God manifest in the flesh, so should every follower of Jesus and especially the ministers of His Word. Get our minds and messages off of mortal men and onto the mighty God, Jesus Christ our Lord. At the presence of the Lord, every knee will bow as John did.

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;" "And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

We must all remember with John that we are not worthy to unloose His shoes.

Mark 1:8 "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

"I" and "he" are emphatic, stressing the contrast. John has a vital function, but Jesus has an even greater one. As John was used by God to administer immersion in water, Jesus will serve to bring men under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

"Baptized you with the Holy Ghost": This takes place when a person comes to faith in Christ (see notes on Acts 1:5; 8:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:13).

You can easily see from this that the baptism of repentance, which John the Baptist baptized with, was not the same baptism. John's baptism is of water, and Jesus' baptism is of fire of the Holy Ghost.

Luke 3:16 "John answered, saying unto [them] all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:"

We see the explanation of this baptism (in Acts 19:2-6).

"He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism." "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." "When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." "And when Paul had laid [his] hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

Mark Chapter 1 Questions

1. Why would we do this Bible study, if it covers many of the same events as Matthew?
2. Who is the author of Mark?

3. Who was his mother?
4. What was Mark's full name?
5. Give his uncle's name?
6. Who was a close friend to Mark?
7. What does Mark show us about Jesus?
8. The main topic of the book of Mark is what?
9. In Mark, we are not dealing with Jesus from the tribe of Judah, but Jesus the what?
10. How many major miracles are listed in Mark?
11. How many deal with disease?
12. How many deal with Jesus' power and authority over the world?
13. How many show His power over demons and even Satan?
14. How many show His power over death?
15. How does Jesus get the job done (in one word)?
16. If there is a theme in Mark, it is found in John chapter 14 verse 11. What is it?
17. Gospel means what?
18. What does the word Jesus mean?
19. What does the word Christ mean?
20. What was Jesus' name in heaven that we read in John chapter 1 and First John 5:7?
21. How was it possible for His (Jesus) Father to be God? Explain.
22. In the Old Testament, where were the most prophecies of Jesus? Name a few.
23. Covering verse 2 in Mark, which one specifically was intended, perhaps?
24. In Matthew 17:12, what were we told about this messenger?
25. What was the purpose of John the Baptist's life?
26. What was his message?
27. Name two other men in the Bible who were called of God to do a specific job?

28. What was John's baptism of?
29. Was it practiced before Jesus was crucified?
30. How does this baptism in water differ from the baptism of us, Christians?
31. What is strange about the ministry of John the Baptist?
32. Where do we find the Scripture that the people believed John to be a true prophet?
33. How was John clothed?
34. What was he eating?
35. What is a girdle?
36. What was the locust, really?
37. In all of this, we see a _____ man, with _____ needs, setting out do what?
38. How did John the Baptist compare himself to Jesus?
39. The person of the preacher is not the important thing. What is the important thing?
40. We should get our minds and our messages off of what and onto what?
41. Philippians 2:10 tells us what?
42. John baptized with water, but Jesus baptizes with what?
43. Where was the word fire added to this?
44. In chapter 19 of Acts, what do we see clearly about the baptism of the Holy Ghost?
45. What was the only comment the author made about this?