

## The Herald Sent from God

Mark 1:1-8

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**Mark 1:1-8** *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way"-- <sup>3</sup>a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'" <sup>4</sup>And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

### Introduction

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

Mark quite simply opens up the gospel with a gospel! What is this word gospel that Mark uses? It is from the Greek word *euangelion* or *evangelion*. Today we think that the word gospel refers to the first four books of the New Testament, but when Mark wrote his gospel, it had a simple meaning of good news. How was it used in those times?

For the Jews, we find this word in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), which means 70 because there were 70 interpreters who worked in the LXX. We find this word in this following passage:

**Isaiah 40:9-10** *You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" <sup>10</sup>See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and His arm rules for Him. See, His reward is with Him, and His recompense [payment] accompanies Him.*

What is this good news that God is talking about? We see in verses **1-2**, that Isaiah is talking about their release from captivity; however, what God is saying here is even better news! God as king is coming, arriving to be King. For the Jews, this is the best news of all!

The Romans saw this word in a similar manner—good news. They had proclamations concerning Caesar Augustus in 9 BC on his birthday.

*The birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings [evangelion] which has been proclaimed on his account. (William Lane, Gospel of Mark, New International Commentary on the NT)*

For the Romans, Caesar was treated as a god, provided by the gods to bring about power, peace, and prosperity to the whole empire. It was proclaimed as a good news! Evangelion is commonly used to declare significant events (birth of a king or major military victory).

The Romans and the Jews would have no trouble recognizing Mark's use of evangelion or gospel—Mark is proclaiming that the King has arrived, and it concerns only one person—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ is the Greek form of Messiah, which means "Anointed One." We use the word King in the same way.

Mark further says that this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He does not start with Jesus' birth genealogy or His childhood; instead, he starts at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. For Mark, the beginning begins with a herald of the coming King.

## I. The Herald Foretold (2-3)

**Note:** Mark understood his audience. To his audiences' mind, a herald would go before the king and prepare for his coming. He would announce that the king was coming, explained the king's purpose, and ensured that the way was safe for the king to come. Here in his introduction, he makes sure that the Romans understand that this herald is a man sent from God to prepare for the King's arrival.

<sup>2</sup>*It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way"--* <sup>3</sup>*a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'"*

- The messenger
  - *It is written in Isaiah the prophet*
    - Mark was noting the major prophet, even though he quotes Malachi first
  - *I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way*

**Malachi 3:1a** *See, I will send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me.*

- God is sending a herald to prepare the way of the King
- *a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him*

**Isaiah 40:3** *A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.*

- The messenger would proclaim in the desert
- He would be telling people to straighten out their lives in preparation for the coming of the King.

- The King

**Malachi 3:1** *"See, I will send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the Messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.*

- "before Me" God is speaking here
- Messenger of the covenant is Jesus Christ—He is coming to His temple!

**John 2:13-16** *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple courts He found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup>So He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>To those who sold doves He said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn My Father's house into a market!"*

**Transition:** Mark states simply that God promises a herald would announce the coming of the King and this is the best news for the world.

## II. The Herald Appears (4-6)

<sup>4</sup>And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

- John the Baptizer

**Note:** Mark doesn't go into much detail about John. In fact, Mark completely ignores John's beginnings (as Luke records) and sermons (as Matthew and Luke record). All Mark tells about John is a brief description of him and his ministry.

- Sent from God
  - To baptize people
  - To preach
  - Empowered by the Holy Spirit

**John 1:6** *There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.*

- John's description
  - Clothing made of camel hair and leather belt around his waist
    - Not a hide with fur on it—very common in movies or pictures
    - Camel hair woven together into a thread—rough and hairy
    - Why is Mark interested in John the Baptizer's clothing?

**Zechariah 13:4** *On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision. He will not put on a prophet's garment of hair in order to deceive.*

- False prophets would wear that if they wanted to deceive people

**2 Kings 1:8** *They replied, "He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist." The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite."*

- Elijah was identified by those clothing

**Malachi 4:5** *See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*

- John the Baptizer saw himself as Elijah, so he put on those garments
- Mark is saying that John is a true prophet, the true forerunner, the herald that actually came and announced the king

- Eating locusts and wild honey

**Leviticus 11:20-22** *All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. <sup>21</sup>There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. <sup>22</sup>Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper.*

- John the Baptizer was a desert man—baptizing people in the Jordan River
- Mark identifies the promised herald

### III. The Herald Prepares (4-8)

<sup>4</sup>And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Note:** This is the most important point Mark makes with John the Baptizer. John is preparing the way of the Messiah by telling them to repent and confess their sins.

- Baptism of repentance
  - For the forgiveness of sins
    - Not salvation baptism
    - Demonstration of repentance
    - John performed baptism in preparation for the Messiah's saving work

**Mark 1:8** *I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*

**Note:** John never saw baptism as a means to salvation, but as an outward show of their confession. He challenged them to a true repentance

- True repentance

**Luke 3:8** *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.*

- Confession of sins
  - John only baptized people who confessed their sins
  - People came from all over the area
    - Why?

**Luke 3:8b-9** *And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup>The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.*

- They wanted to be part of the covenant people of the Messiah

**Note:** Because John preached judgment, the people were afraid that they wouldn't be a part of the group.

- The message
  - The coming King
  - The salvation the King gives