

Mark 1:1-11

“Christ Introduced and Identified”

Just in case you're wondering this is the same “Mark” otherwise known as “John Mark” found in the book of Acts that bailed out on Paul and Barnabas on their 1st missionary journey. “John” was his Hebrew name, *Mark* would've been his Roman name, or his surname. But the reason I bring out who this guy was, (his mother, apparently a wealthy woman named Mary, evidently hosted a gathering of the early church in her home. There in the book of Acts when Peter was released from prison you recall he went to her house where many were gathered praying for him to inform them of God's intervention in his life). But I draw attention to Mark's failure early on in ministry to demonstrate and illustrate the fact that failure doesn't mark (no pun intended) the end for the child of God regarding God's ability to use them.

You find throughout the epistles of Paul that Mark was ultimately (obviously) restored, they reconciled and God went on to use Mark's life in a radical way even penning the 1st record of the account of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is still ministering to countless millions even today. and So take heart, perhaps you're one who's failed, you've fumbled, you've dropped the ball, and you're thinking, “Well, I guess that's it, I can't be used now, God's got to be finished with me, I'm a failure.” Hey, God's not finished with you, if you're willing to repent, He's willing to restore, and He'll use you for your eternal good and His eternal glory. We serve a God of reconciliation and restoration, and if we will but bear the fruits worthy of repentance, He'll recalibrate and reactivate our lives in such a way as to be used by Him once again.

Mark was not one of the 12 apostles, however it seems as you study the scriptures that he was closely connected with Peter. Peter calls Mark his “son” in 1 Peter 5:13 alluding to the fact that he was instrumental in the leading of Mark to Christ. Mark was to Peter what Timothy was to Paul. Because of that it's generally accepted then that what we have before us is in reality the gospel according to Peter, penned through Mark. Meaning that Mark heard Peter preach these things over and over again, took notes, recorded them and penned this gospel account. There's a lot of internal evidence for that conclusion as well throughout the gospel of Mark however we're not going to take the time to examine all of it because the bottom line is that the author of the gospel of Mark is the same author who penned the rest of the scriptures through various human instruments, the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* 2 Tim 3:16-17

Now you may be wondering, “What's the deal with 4 gospel records anyway, isn't 1 enough?” and The answer is “Yes” one would be enough, but God has ordained in His goodness and mercy to give us a broader scope on the life of Christ. It would be like saying to all you guys who are really into your surround sound, “What's the point? Isn't that pair of speakers in your T.V. good enough?” and The answer is ““Yes' it would suffice, but when you

get the sub woofer to pumping, and those 2 speakers on either side of you, and the 2 back behind you it's just so much more vibrant, it gives me a much greater feel regarding the reality of the experience." The same holds true for the gospel account, though they're all completely compliant with one another, each one adds distinct nuances to the life of Christ granting us a greater understanding regarding the reality of who He is.

Add to that each author was targeting a different audience in His writing. and Scholars have grabbed on *to* that and drawn application *from* that out of the book of Rev Ch 4 Vs 7. Because there you find in the midst and around the throne of God 4 living creatures, each with 6 wings and each full of eyes both in front and in back. The 1st living creature was like a lion, the 2nd like a calf, (the NIV says an ox), the 3rd had a face like a man, and the 4th was like an eagle. and We read that they do not rest day or night but are continually crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come!"

But from that scene and based upon the target audience of each author scholars have attached (if you will) 1 of those creatures to each of the gospels. For instance Matthew in writing to the Jews presents Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of Israel. and So the emblem ascribed to Matt's gospel is the creature like a lion. Luke writing with the Greek in mind presents Jesus as the perfect Man, and so you find the phrase "The Son of Man" with regularity throughout the gospel of Luke. John writing to *really* all of humanity, showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, pointing to His deity, and the eagle soaring high, being majestic in its nature. So the eagle like creature attached to John. Mark writing to the Romans presents Jesus as the *Servant* of God, getting the job done. and So the beast of burden ascribed the Mark, the calf, of the ox. The Romans were about the work ethic, what they wanted to know is can this person get the job done that's been assigned to him?

Because of that we find Mark presenting Jesus as a Man of *action* and *accomplishment*. Always on the move, always meeting needs, always serving others; if we were to pick key Vs out of the gospel of Mark without question we'd find it to be **Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."** The gospel of Mark is all about Jesus' service and sacrifice, serving others even to the point of the cross, laying down His life for the benefit of others. and So we'll find an emphasis being placed more on His *works* than on His *words*. We find a minimum of *discourse* and a maximum of *deed*. Mark is the gospel on the go. Having said that we should find as we make our way through the gospel of Mark the net effect should be to make of us greater servants, like our Savior. So let me just say if by the time we make it through Mark you're not serving around here anywhere you're in sin...;0) (just kidding).

Vs1

So Mark just drops it like it's hot here, just straight out of the shoot, doesn't mess around or mix words, "Here's what I'm writing to you about," "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." and with that statement he gives us 3 things, he gives us "When, what and who." and He gives us 3 additional things regarding the "Who."

We just want to take the time to highlight these things here and the 1st thing we note is “When” he tells us that he’s giving us “The beginning.” Now there’s more than one *beginning* in the bible, as a matter of fact there’s 3. and So don’t be confused by the fact that he states he’s giving us the beginning. Because you might say, “I thought the beginning was found in **Gen 1:1**, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” and You would be right regarding that particular context. Mark isn’t talking about the beginning of creation. In John’s gospel regarding the existence of Jesus Christ as the 2nd person of the Godhead we read, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” John 1:1 and Again in his 1st epistle we read, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life --*” 1 John 1:1 and That’s a beginning that goes back before Genesis 1:1 into eternity past, the idea being go back in your mind as far as you can fathom and when you just can’t comprehend it any longer the Triune God was there from before that point.

The beginning that’s in view here is the beginning of the gospel. and This is the “What” that Mark is talking about. The *gospel*, now the word *gospel* simply means “good news.” God has good news for you. But before you can receive it as good news, you have to be aware of the fact that there’s some bad news that goes before it.

The bad news is that all mankind has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, not one of us are worthy on our own to stand *before* Him and be accepted *by* Him. Which translates into the fact that we all deserve hell and apart from some sort of help that’s our destiny. Because we’re hopeless and helpless on our own. Because as those of you know who are taking that “Way of the Master” class on Monday evenings, if you’ve ever placed anything before God as a priority in your life that makes you an idolater, if you’ve ever taken anything that wasn’t yours that makes you a thief, if you’ve ever had an impure thought toward anyone regarding sexual interaction that makes you a fornicator or an adulterer, and of course if you’ve ever told a lie that makes you a liar. We’ll just stop there though we could go on, the bottom line is that by our own admission we’re all lying, thieving, idolatrous, adulterers or fornicators, and that should concern you. Because God’s standard is perfection, which leaves me *and you* out. People say, “Well I’m a pretty good person.” Compared to who? The bible teaches we err when we compare ourselves amongst ourselves. Because we can always find someone who helps us feel better about ourselves because at least we’re not doing what they’ve done or do. But the problem is they’re not the standard. God’s own holy righteousness and perfection is the standard. Now that’s presents a problem.

But there's good news, and that good news is regarding the "Who" Mark calls into the equation, "Jesus Christ the Son of God." God's Servant, our Savior. and In brief being without sin, He was able to stand in the gap on behalf of sinful humanity, pay the penalty that we deserve, shedding His blood, giving His life, so that as we trust Him *for* that, believe on Him *regarding* that, God will accredit us *His* righteous standing, robe us in the righteousness of Christ that we might stand before God and be accepted *by* God, live eternally *with God* in absolute ecstasy and perfect peace. 3 Things we see about this Servant/Savior of ours. #1 His name, and as we mentioned last week in the book of Hebrews, His name isn't Jesus Christ His name was Jesus, He wasn't addressed as Mr. Christ, Christ isn't His last name. *Jesus* is His name, it was a common name in His day, just like John, or Jim or whatever today, it wasn't uncommon to name your child Jesus. That's why He's identified as "Jesus of Nazareth" so that He would be distinguished from others bearing the same name. The 2nd thing we see is His title, "Christ." The Anointed One, the Messiah, One sent from God to be our Savior.

and The 3rd thing we see is who He is intrinsically, eternally, the Son of God. Not *a* Son of God in a generic term or sense of the word, but *the* Son of God, meaning uniquely, specifically the only begotten Son of God; Deity. God has many sons and daughters, as by adoption, but He only has 1 begotten Son, Jesus. Now again Jesus is His earthly name, however He's been with God from eternity past as we mentioned a moment ago. He didn't come into existence in a little stable in Bethlehem, that's when He took on the form of a Man coming to this earth for the purpose of redemption, but He's always existed. Because He's God, God is eternal in nature. We've spoken of this before, you beget what you are. It's all around us, cats beget cats, dogs beget dogs, bugs beget bugs, birds beget birds, fish beget fish, a human begets a human, guess what God begets? God, Jesus is God, God's only *begotten* Son, He was from the beginning, He was with God and He *was* God.

and The gospel begins with God's word declaring the fact that He's coming to do something about this sin dilemma that's got mankind caught in it's grip, and He's going to send someone even before Him, to prepare the way *for* Him.

Vs2-3

Again a few things we want to see here, #1 1st and foremost we note the fact that God will always do what He says He will do, He acts in correlation to His word. "As it is written in the Prophets:." and In this case what He said He would do was send a forerunner before the Messiah to prepare the people to receive Him. That they might be made ready for His appearing and Mark is quoting from both Malachi Ch 3:1 and Isaiah Ch 40:3, John was to be God's instrument to introduce the Messiah. Now God Himself would *identify* Him as we'll see in a little bit, but John would be the one to introduce Him, to share and prepare people for His coming.

The idea behind "preparing" the way of the Lord (and by the way note that Mark underscores again here the deity of Jesus saying that preparing the way of the LORD, of God coming to man, was a reference to Jesus Christ) was that of making sure roads were ready when a king was coming to or through your area. We don't comprehend that a whole lot where we're at because most of our roadways are paved and kept up by the state or various counties, whatever. But in that day (especially before the days of Rome when these prophecies were issued) roads weren't exactly what we call to mind when we think of roads. They might be

washed out, giant potholes or boulders in the way, rubbish lying across them. They just weren't really what we would call quality, and so when a King was coming, they would send forerunners ahead of him to clear the debris, fill in the holes, make things ready. When I was in Nigeria a particular king was going to visit Bernard's church while we were there, and in the village we were in the roads were horrible, it took skilled navigators to keep the bottoms of the cars from being torn off they were just so bad. The night before the king came Bernard called for some willing laborers from the church to prepare the way for him, to fill in the holes and make the roadways acceptable. That's what this is talking about, making sure the conditions of people's hearts were prepared and primed to receive their Savior, the Lord.

and What's cool about this is that God uses us in much the same way today, we don't speak of it so much as "preparing the way of the Lord." But we talk about planting seeds (from the parable of the sower), or perhaps we *water seeds* already planted. But essentially what's happening is that, that particular person's heart is being *prepared* for an encounter with the Lord, that they might *receive* Him when He comes to them, and reveals Himself to them. You become "the voice" that God uses, that He "Cries out" through. Remember Paul told the Corinthians, "*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" 2 Cor 5:20-21 and So there is a sense in which God uses you and me today to prepare the way for Him to come and reveal Himself to those around us.

Vs4-5

So basically what's happening here is that people were being brought face to face with their sinfulness, realizing that the Christ was coming and that they needed to do something about it. They weren't seeking to justify themselves, or somehow make excuses for where they'd been or what they'd done, they just knew that Messiah was on the way and they wanted to be ready for Him. What word for us today. Because we live in a day and in an age whereby Jesus is preparing to come again, and believe me when I tell you that sin is every bit the pandemic in *this* day as it was in *that* day.

The question is are you going to try and justify sin in your life, make excuses for it, or just do what you need to do to get ready for His return? "Well what do I need to do to be made ready?" Same thing they did, confess your sin and repent. Then when you give your heart to Christ, identify with Him in baptism (we'll touch on that in a minute).

But what's the idea behind *repentance*? What does it mean to repent? To put it simply it means to turn around, and/or to change one's mind. This is what you think, you think sin is good, like being apart of it, look forward to the next opportunity to engage in it. When you *repent* you have a change of heart and a change of mind/thought about whatever particular subject is in view, in this case *sin*. (and This ties closely with confession which we'll draw attention to momentarily) But now you see the destructive nature of sin, not only in your life presently, but ultimately eternally, how it grieves the heart of God, it placed Jesus on the cross, you're convicted, you don't want to do those things that hurt you, or others, or wound the heart of God anymore, you've had a change of heart, a change of mind, it's called *repentance*.

and These people came to John, knew they weren't where they needed to be and they were cut to the heart, and were repenting, and confessing their sins. Now what does it mean to

confess your sins? Well, what it *doesn't* mean is a simple audible listing of them, "I've done this and this and this, I *should've* done that, but I didn't." That's not a *confession* of sin, what this is talking about is "agreeing fully based upon a deep conviction of the facts." In other words, we're confessing our sin when we come in full agreement with God *about* our sin, it's effect, it's destructive nature, it's need to be turned from. It's "God I see this how You see it, I don't want it anymore, I agree with You about it, please forgive me and help me to walk no longer in it." That's confession and repentance from sin. and The bible says, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" 1 John 1:9 This same idea of confession comes into play when the bible tells us that, "...*if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*" Rom 10:9 I come to agree with God about Christ, who He is, my need *for* Him and to surrender *to* Him.

Now when you confess your sin, when I repent of my sin, and surrender to Christ what's the result? Remission/forgiveness, deliverance, when cancer goes into *remission* what does that mean, it's gone. When your sin remitted or forgiven it's gone, God *washes it away* as by the blood of Christ. and Really that's the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news; the wages of sin is death, but we don't have to die, we don't have to suffer the penalty of our own sin. Jesus bore the full brunt of the fury of God poured out upon Him for the sin of the world, and now when we look *to* Him and trust *in* Him by faith God places our sin on the "paid in full" side of the ledger because now we're on Christ's account and He imputes or accredits to us Christ's righteousness. The result being everlasting *life*. Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*" John 11:25-26

These people went to John because there was a need in their lives that was bigger than they were, beyond their ability to meet, and they were desperate for something to be done about it. and Maybe that's you today, you're here and you've come here because there's a need in your life that's bigger than you are, and something needs done about it. Let me do for you what John did for them, point you to Jesus, notice.

Vs6-8

By the way this baptism that was taking place was completely radical for the Jew in this day. Because they believed that basically by being born a Jew (the covenant nation) and not being against the law, they were saved. and Baptism was practiced by it was for the Gentile converting to Judaism.

and So for John to call the Jews to baptism and them to submit to it was equivalent to them saying, "We're no better than the sinners of the Gentiles and we all come to God the same way."

But look at this guy, we know from Luke's gospel that he was given to the Nazirite vow from birth so here he was out in the desert, radical looking, long hair (I like this guy already), camel's hair for clothing, a big leather belt, locust legs between his teeth, telling people they better get right because the Messiah is coming. and People are coming to him in droves; and how is that possible? He didn't use any marketing strategies, no demographic studies, no target audiences or focus groups, didn't do the "seeker friendly" thing, appeal to people to get them through the door and then try to slip the gospel in their on them. What a model for us today,

don't worry about demographics, popular appeals, watered down messages, and slick marketing strategies. Just let the Spirit lead you, give out the Word of God, and let God worry about the results. What was the result? Revival. God was moving, the Spirit was working, and people were preparing their hearts for the work of Christ in their lives. Anticipating the remission of sin, which ultimately took place through the cross, they were looking forward by faith to the work of the cross, even as we look back by faith to the work of the cross.

But note the humility of John, this guy had a "mega church" so to speak. Thousands, multitudes, masses coming out *to* him, hoping to get a glimpse *of* him, hear the word taught *by* him. But he just deflects the attention, and points the praise to Jesus, he says, (read Vs 7).

He's referring to a custom in that day, it was common for teachers to have disciples, and in order to show appreciation to the teacher, the disciples would serve him. But the one thing they were *never* required to do *for* him would be to get down by his nasty stinking feet and remove his sandals for him. That was too low, that's actually documented, they couldn't require a disciple to do that for them. Yet John is saying, "I don't deserve the honor of loosening the sandal strap of the One who's coming after me, Messiah."

and As long as we're on the subject of humility consider Christ Himself, if there was anyone who deserved to be pompous, hold His head high, and demand service and sacrifice from others to cater to His whims it was Christ. Yet this Man who was so Holy, so righteous, so pure that we aren't even worthy to unloose His sandal strap, girded himself, took a basin of water, got on His knees and washed His disciples dirty, filthy, road wearied feet. He didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many, and He said, "I've given you an example that you should to others even as I've done to you." What? Wash their feet, no...no, no, serve them, love on them, there's no position so low that we won't go there if it'll bless and build up or point people to Jesus.

Vs8

John says, "I may immerse you with water as a demonstration of repentance *from* sin, but when Christ comes He will immerse you with the Holy Spirit and truly *cleanse* you *of* sin." and This would be a great place to talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but we don't have time today. But what's the deal with baptism, necessary or not? Well being immersed with the Holy Spirit is 100% essential, apart from that you can't be saved, the bible calls it being *born again*, born of the Spirit of God. As far as being immersed in water, it's not a matter of salvation, but it is a matter of *identification*, and an act of obedience. Will it keep you out of heaven in you're not, no. But I would have to wonder what's up with the person who refuses to identify with Christ through baptism. Jesus said we're to do it, He did it Himself (We'll see that here as we close).

Baptism identifies you with both the death and the resurrection of Christ.

Going down in the water identifying with the death, coming back up identifying with the resurrection and the newness of life that you have in Him. There's every good reason for you *to* be baptized if you're a believer and no good reason not to.

Is the Christian baptism like John's in the sense that it demonstrates repentance, yes. But our baptism goes beyond John's because it's not only a turning *from* our sin, but it's a demonstration of being immersed *into* Christ.

Vs9-11

There are a # of things that we could draw out of this and perhaps we'll pick up with this next time. But for now I want you to note the difference between the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of every other human being that John baptized. We read of the multitudes that they were baptized by John, *confessing their sins*. But when Jesus was baptized *He* didn't confess any sins, why? He didn't have any, He was the sinless Son of God.

Why then did He get baptized? 2 Reasons, #1 To be identified *with* sinful man, Jesus identifies with us on every level from conception forward. He was to be the sacrifice for the sin of the world, and so that He might identify with sinful man He was baptized. 2^{ndly} He was baptized not only to be identified *with* sinful man, but also to be identified *to* sinful man. For *immediately* (Key word used in the book of Mark over 40x's), coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting (that word means torn in 2) the Spirit descending upon Him, and a voice came from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Can you imagine how incredible that scene must've been, "because that didn't happen just a second ago when Joe got baptized..." You know what I'm saying, there was something different about this guy. and What was different was that He was the sinless Son of God sent from heaven to the sacrifice for the sin of the world. and He was identifying *with* man and was being identified *to* man. The question was would they recognize Him, receive Him, or reject Him? He was right there in their midst and there was a decision to be made.

and He's right here in our midst, the sinless Son of God, moving in the midst *of* us ministering *to* us through the Spirit of God. The question is will you recognize Him, will you receive Him, or will you reject Him?

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful for the good news that You've provided for us in Jesus Christ We were dead in sin, but You have made us alive in Christ, and we give You praise. Use us God to share with others, to prepare them for Your Divine appointment with them, God immerse us, fill us to the overflow with Your Holy Spirit. Give us servants hearts, and help us to be more like Jesus. Teach us as You take us through Your word, we look forward to what You have for us in this gospel.

Before we completely wrap up and wind down I want to give you the opportunity to recognize and receive Jesus Christ right here and right now. If God has been dealing with you, preparing you for this moment and you know it. God is knocking on the door of your heart. and You're ready to open it, confessing your sin, repenting *of* your sin before the Lord, God is ready to grant you the remission, full forgiveness, pardoned, paid in full, why not receive Him now?