

JESUS CHRIST AND JOHN THE BAPTIST: THE GOOD NEWS AND THE MESSENGER OF GOD

MARK 01:01–08

Introduction

Mark begins his writing with the simple words “the beginning of”. But the words that follow are not simple. They are profound and astounding: “the good news about Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*”. The heart of man leaps (or should leap) with a gasping, vibrant joy: for *God exists*, and God has sent a glorious message to mankind through One who is the Son of God.

Mark wastes no time in sharing the good news about the coming of God’s Son into human history. He jumps right to the subject of God’s messenger whom God sent to prepare the way for His Son.

- I. The gospel of God (vv. 1-2).
- II. The promise of God to send a messenger: to prepare for His Son (vv. 2-3)
- III. The mission of God’s messenger (vv. 3-5).
- IV. The spirit of God’s messenger: self-denial (v. 6).
- V. The message of God’s messenger (vv. 7-8).

I. *Mark 01:01–02 Jesus Christ, the Subject of the Gospel*

Mark says two things about the beginning of the gospel or *good news*.

1. The gospel concerns “Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. Note Mark’s exact words: “the gospel about Jesus Christ”. It is not the “gospel about Mark”, but “the gospel about Jesus Christ”.
 - a. Jesus Christ is the Subject of the gospel (See *Jesus*, Mk. 01:01; and *Christ*, Mk. 01:01).
 - b. Jesus Christ is the Author of the gospel. By Him and through Him the gospel is created and written. He brings the *good news* of God to man. He embodies and He proclaims the *good news* about God to man (See *Salvation*, Mt. 1:21; *Jesus, the Son of Man*, Mt. 8:20).
 - c. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. What did John mean by “the Son of God”? (Jn. 01:34) Note the definite article. Christ is **THE** Son, not a son of God. He is...
 - the *only* Son
 - the *one and only* Son
-

- the one and only Son who came from the very *side* of God, that is from the deepest part, from the most intimate place, from the most honourable fellowship of God.

Christ was wonderfully received by some persons as the Son of God. (Jn. 1:12) Not everyone rejected Christ — most did, but a few received Him. How did men receive Christ? They “believe in His name”. The results of receiving Christ: a person is given the power, the right, to become a child of God.

=> The word *right* (exousian) means both power and authority.

=> The word *children* (tekna Theou) means sons and daughters of God.

=> The words *to become* (genesthai) mean to become something a person is not.

When a person receives Christ into his life (as Lord), Christ gives that person the power and right to become something he is not — a child of God.

2 Cor 6:17-18 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Rom 8:15-16 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father”. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

Gal 4:4-6 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father”.

2. The gospel of the New Testament is the *same good news* of God which was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the Subject and Author of the gospel; but the gospel *began long before* the birth of Jesus and the ministry of John. The gospel began long, long ago in the mind and plan of God, and God foretold the coming of the gospel (His Son) through the prophets of old. Mark says what Paul was to say later: “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — “a voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.” (Mk. 1:1-3).

Acts 26:22 But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen.

MARK 01: 01 CHRIST (CHRISTOS)

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
Mark 01:01

The words *Christ* (christos) and *Messiah* are the same word. *Messiah* is the Hebrew word and *Christ* is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same person and mean the same thing: the *Anointed One*. The *Messiah* is the *Anointed One of God*. Mathew says Jesus “is called Christ” (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the *Anointed One of God*, the *Messiah* Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised *Messiah*. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, the people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfill His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people gullible. Many arose who claimed to be the *Messiah* and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus’ trial, is an example (Mk. 15:60f)

The *Messiah* was thought to be several things.

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David’s line who would free the Jewish state as an independent nation and lead it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of *Messiah* on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name “Jesus” shows Him to be man. The name “Christ” shows Him to be God’s *Anointed One*, God’s very own Son. *Christ* is Jesus’ official title. It identifies Him officially as *Prophet* (Deu. 18:15-19), *Priest* (Psa. 110:4), and *King* (2 Sam. 7:12-13). These three officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the *Christ*, the *Messiah* (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

MARK 01: 01 JESUS (IESOUS)

Jesus means Saviour; He will save. The Hebrew form is *Joshua* (yasha), meaning Jehovah is salvation; He is the Saviour. The idea is that of deliverance, of being saved from some terrible disaster that leads to perishing (Mt. 18:11; Lk. 19:10; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25). □

MATHEW 01:21 MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST: SALVATION

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Mathew 01:21

The statement “He will save his people from their sins” is full of meaning.

1. The word *save* or *salvation* means to deliver. A person is saved from perishing, being lost, from being utterly destroyed, from being a spiritual destitute, from being cut off. It is Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who saves.
2. The words “His people” are significant. It infers that all people are not “His people.”

John 10:26–27 “But you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

3. The words “from their sins” mean that Christ saves His people from:

- the power of sin
- the guilt of sin
- the bondage of sin
- the consequences of sin

Note Rev. 14:4 where Christ is said to redeem believers “from among men [worldly men]”. Note also Heb. 7:26 where Christ is said to be “set apart from sinners”. The believer is called to separation: to live away from, above and over sin; to conquer sin; to live victoriously over sin. □

MATHEW 08:20 JESUS, THE SON OF MAN

Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Mathew 08:20

Jesus is not only what an ordinary man is, a son of man; Jesus is what every man ought to be, the Son of Man Himself. He is the Ideal Man, the Representative Man, the Perfect Man, the Pattern, the Embodiment of everything a man ought to be. Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of a man. Everything God wants a man to be is seen perfectly in Jesus Christ (see Jn. 1:14; Col. 2:9-10; Heb. 1:3.)

The title also means the Ideal Servant of man. It stresses His sympathy for the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised, the outcasts, the bereaved (see Lk. 4:18). Jesus is the Pattern, the Model, the Perfect Example of concern and caring. He served and set a perfect example of how every man ought to serve other men.

Jesus calls Himself “the Son of Man” about eighty times. It is His favourite term. The title ‘Son of Man’ is probably based upon the Son of Man in Daniel (Dan. 7:13-14). Scripture also gives a picture of Jesus as the heavenly Son of Man contrasted with Adam as the earthly Man (1 Cor. 15:45-47). Each serves as a Representative Man for the human race in God’s plan for world history.

***Mat 9:6** “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”*

***Mat 16:13,16** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

***Mat 20:28** “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

***Mark 8:38** “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

***Luke 19:10** “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

***John 5:26-27** “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”*

***John 13:31-32** When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.”*

***Acts 7:56** “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

***Rev 1:12-13** I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands, and among the lamp stands was someone “like a son of man”, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. □*

II. Mark 01:02 John the Baptist: The Promised Messenger

There is the promise of God to send a messenger, a forerunner to prepare the way for His Son. God promised through Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets:

Mal 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. (see Mt. 11:10)

Isaiah, the most famous of the Old Testament prophets, predicted:

Isa 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.”

Thought 1. The Old Testament and the New Testament are one in purpose. They both point toward “the gospel” about Jesus Christ.

Thought 2. A significant fact is seen here. God knows exactly what is needed to bring the gospel to man. He knew that a forerunner was needed; therefore, He planned and promised to send a forerunner. So it is with every man. God knows what is needed to bring the gospel to all of us. However, the responsibility to respond and to obey rests with us.

Mat 22:2-3 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.”

Luke 14:16-17 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’”

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Rev 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Jer 35:15 Again and again I sent all my servants, the prophets to you. They said, “Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers.” But you have not paid attention or listened to me.

III. *Mark 01:03–05 The Mission of John the Baptist*

The mission of God's messenger was threefold.

1. John cried, "Prepare" (See *Prepare Roads*, Mk. 1:3). Note that he was calling "in the desert". The world is a desert full of dangerous, rough, uneven, thorny and rocky roads. It is easy to get lost in the desert of the world, to stumble and injure oneself.

Jesus came to save the lost. "The Son of Man came to save what was lost." (Mat. 18:11). This is the Messiah's great statement of purpose; this is why He came to earth. He came to save the lost. There is a world of meaning in this great statement.

- 1) It means that Christ willingly and deliberately *left* the glory of heaven and His equality with God and "made Himself nothing" of that glory and equality (Phil. 2:6; 2:7).
- 2) It means that both the world as a whole and man as an individual have gone astray. Each person has strayed away from God, is lost, and is wandering about in a wilderness of sin: and each person is doomed to be destroyed by that wilderness unless he is reached and saved by Christ. Everyone needs to be saved (Rom. 3:10-18, 23; 10:13; Jn. 3:16; Acts 10:43; 1 Jn. 5:1).
- 3) It means that *God lost man*. God lost man's worship and service and life. Not only has man *gone astray*, not only is man *not seeking* after God and gone out of the way — but he has become unprofitable, *lost to God* (Rom. 3:11-12). While man remains *lost in the wilderness*, God has no hope of fellowship with man. Man's worship, service, and life are lost to God as long as man remains lost. The words "that which was lost" should be noted. They are in the Greek neuter participle. This means that the person lost is not only man (masculine) but woman (feminine) as well. "That [neuter] which was lost" and sought after is both man and woman. The point is to show the span of Jesus' love: He loves all who are lost, both man and woman. No one is outside the scope of His love and seeking. He loves and seeks after all.

It was in the world where the messenger of God had to call, "Prepare — prepare the way for the Lord."

Mark 13:35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back — whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows or at dawn."

Luke 12:35-36 "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him."

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

2 Tim 2:20-21 *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

2. John baptized all who believed in the Messiah.
3. John preached repentance and forgiveness of sins. A person was to repent, to turn *from* his sins *to* God (See *Repentance*, Acts 17:29-30); then the person was to be baptized, “to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt. 3:15). *Baptism was part of the act of repentance.* There was no true repentance without it. A man was to feel sorry for his sin, turning from his sin to God. Being baptized was a sign of his turning to God. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. The person who truly repented was baptized, and his sins were forgiven (See *Forgiveness*, Mt. 26:28).

Luke 13:3 *“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 3:19 *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”*

Acts 8:22 *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Prov 28:13 *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Jer 3:13 *“Only acknowledge your guilt — you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favours to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,” declares the LORD.*

Ezek 18:21 *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*

4. John's impact was enormous. Note the word *all* (v. 5). All were flocking out to him and being baptized. His baptism shocked the Jewish nation, for Jews were never baptized. Baptism was only for non-Jewish persons who were converts to the Jewish faith. The Jews considered all Gentiles unclean, so they had to be baptized when they became converts (all males were also circumcised). However, Jews were thought to be clean and acceptable to God no matter how they lived. Why? Because Jews were "a descendant of Abraham," (Rom. 11:1) of his heritage. They were his seed, his descendants, the people promised to Abraham.

The religionists wanted to know if John were the Christ. They believed that when the Christ came He might institute the practice of baptism. The religionists wanted to know if John were a prophet. In theory a true prophet was said to have the right to institute new practices and to change some laws.

John's baptism was radical, most unusual, a shocking practice. It was a "baptism of repentance *for* the forgiveness of sins" (Lk. 3:3). What does this mean? Simply this: when a person wanted God to forgive his sins, the person made the decision to repent, to turn from his sins, and to change his life. Then he was immediately baptized, thereby proclaiming that he was becoming a follower of the Messiah whom John preached.

The Old Testament prophets had cried for Israel to wash themselves and to be cleansed of their filthiness. John used water baptism to show that a man was turning from his sins and returning to God, seeking forgiveness of sins.

Isa 1:16 Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong.

Zec 13:1 "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity."

Ezek 36:25-26 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Thought 1. Baptism is critical. The believer is to be baptized, but he is to be baptized because he is truly repenting and sincerely turning to God.

Thought 2. The servant of God is to be a baptizer, a man who proclaims and practices the baptism of repentance in its full meaning.

Thought 3. An enormous impact will be made for God if three things are true:

=> if the messenger is truly called by God as John was called.

=> if the messenger lives for God as John lived.

=> if the messenger witnesses and preaches for God as John witnessed and preached.

IV. *Mark 01:06 Self-Denial*

The spirit of God's messenger was self-denial.

1. His living quarters were in "the desert," that is, in the country. He deliberately chose to live away from the city with all its distractions and temptations. He chose to live where he could be alone with God in meditation and prayer.
2. His clothing was simple, made of camel's hide with a belt made of some other animal's skin.
3. His food was simple. It was locusts and wild honey (Lev. 11:22-23).

Thought 1. John knew that life was more than food and clothing and housing. He knew that he must not allow anything to distract him or the people from God...

- not living in extravagant luxury.
- not being dressed in the latest and most expensive fashion.
- not eating the most tasty dainties.

Therefore, he denied himself; he actually practiced self-denial. What a lesson for all believers, preachers, and laymen alike! (Rom. 14:17).

Mat 16:24 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

Luke 14:27 *"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

MARK 01:03 ROADS – PREPARE

This is a graphic scene. In ancient days, most roads were hardly more than dusty paths. When a king was about to visit a certain place, a runner would run some distance ahead of the king and shout, "Prepare! The king is coming." And the people would immediately begin to clean and level the road for the coming king. John was saying, "I am but a voice calling: 'Make ready! Prepare! The King is coming!'" □

ACTS 17:29–30 REPENTANCE

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:29-30

Repentance means to change; to turn; to change one’s mind; to turn one’s life. It is a turning away from sin and turning toward God. It is a change of mind, a forsaking of sin. It is putting sin out of one’s thoughts and behaviour. It is resolving never to think or do a thing again. (See Mt. 3:2; Lk. 13:2-3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 26:20.) The change is turning away from lying, stealing, cheating, immorality, cursing, drunkenness, and the other so-called glaring *sins of the sinful nature*. But the change is also turning away from *the silent sins of the spirit* such as self-centeredness, selfishness, envy, bitterness, pride, anger, covetousness, evil thoughts, hopelessness, laziness, jealousy, lust.

1. Repentance involves two turns. There is a negative turn away from sin and a positive turn toward God. It is a turning to God and away from sin, whether sins of thought or action.
2. Repentance is more than sorrow. Sorrow may or may not be involved in repentance. A person may repent simply because he wills and acts to change; or a person may repent because he senses an agonizing sorrow within. But the sense or feeling of sorrow is not repentance. Repentance is both the change of mind and the actual turning of one’s life away from sin and toward God. □

MATHEW 26:28 FORGIVENESS (APHESIN)

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Mathew 26:28

Forgive means to send off, to send away. The wrong is cut out, sent off, and sent away from the wrongdoer. The sin is separated from the sinner.

There are four main ideas in the Biblical concept of forgiveness.

1. There is the idea of why forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness is needed because of wrongdoing and guilt and the penalty arising from both (see Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 8:1).
2. There is the idea of a *once-for-all* forgiveness, a total forgiveness. A man is *once-for-all* forgiven when he receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Belief in Jesus Christ is the only condition for being forgiven *once-for-all* (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:5-8).

3. There is the idea of forgiveness that maintains fellowship. Fellowship exists between God as Father and the believer as His child. When the child does wrong, the fellowship is disturbed and broken. The condition for restoring the fellowship is confessing and forsaking the sin (Psa. 66:18; Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:7).
4. There is the idea of a *releasing from guilt*. This is one of the differences between man's forgiving a man and God's forgiving a man. A man may forgive a person for wronging him, but he can never remove the guilt that his friend feels. And often he cannot remove the resentment he feels within his own heart. Only God can remove the guilt and assure the removal of resentment, and God does both. God forgives and erases the guilt and resentment (Psa. 51:2, 7-12; 103:12; 1 Jn. 1:9). □

V. Mark 01:07-08 The Message

The message of God's messenger was twofold.

1. The preeminence of Christ and the *nothingness* of self. John said he himself was *less* than a slave. Slaves were the ones who loosed the sandals of guests and washed their feet. John said the One coming was so mighty, he was not even worthy to untie His sandals, much less wash His feet.
2. The power of Christ. John said he could minister only physical substance: water baptism, a baptism that could only point toward God. But the One coming, the Messiah, would minister spiritual reality, the baptism of the Spirit of God Himself.

Thought 1. The message of the messenger is to point to Christ and to Him alone.

Thought 2. The glorious message of the gospel is twofold.

- 1) The "One more powerful than I" has come, the One who rises above all men and holds the answer for all men.

John 13:13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am."

John 3:31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Rom 14:9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

1 Cor 8:6 *Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

- 2) The One who can ‘baptize [immerse] us with the Holy Spirit’ of God has come. The One who can fill us with “the divine nature” and save us from “the corruption in the world” has come (2 Pet. 1:4).

Luke 24:49 *“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

John 7:38-39 *“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

John 14:16-18 *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

John 16:7 *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” ■*

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS BAPTISM: A DECISION FOR GOD MARK 01: 09–11

Introduction

Jesus' baptism pictures what happens when a person makes a decision for God.

- I. There is a decision for God and a submission to God (v. 9).
- II. There is a beginning and an identification with God and His people (v.9).
- III. There is a commissioning and an empowering (v. 10).
- IV. There is the approval and encouragement of God (v. 11).

I. *Mark 01:09 The Momentous Decision of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' baptism involved a decision and a surrender, a momentous decision and a total surrender. Note the words "Jesus came from Nazareth...and was baptized in Jordan by John." In Nazareth, Jesus had all that most people dream about: a happy home, a close-knit family, a profitable occupation (carpenter), friends and all the fond memories that accumulate through the years of childhood and youth. Yet, He left it all; He left Nazareth to be baptized by John in the Jordan. Why?

Within Jesus' mind was the call of God to launch the mission to save the world, a mission that demanded the sacrifice of everything:

- => the sacrifice of all that He had in Nazareth.
- => the sacrifice of a long earthly life. By choosing the mission of God, He was to be killed in only thirty-six months.
- => the sacrifice of His Godly righteousness. He was to become the sin-bearer for the world (See *Justification* Rom. 5:1).
- => the sacrifice of God's presence. In death, God was to forsake Him (Mt. 27:46-49).

It was a *momentous decision* for Jesus to leave Nazareth to be baptized.

- => By being baptized, Jesus was *surrendering totally* to God's will and mission to save the world.
- => By being baptized, Jesus was showing what is involved in paying the ultimate price: the price of sacrificing oneself totally for the will of God.
- => By being baptized, Jesus was showing the world what is involved in making a momentous decision and a total surrender to God.

Thought 1. The decision to follow Jesus is a momentous decision. It involves the total surrender of all we are and have. If we genuinely decide for Jesus, we pay the price of

sacrificing self completely. However, we must remember: a decision not to follow Christ will lead to discontent and drifting, a wasted and tragic life.

***Luke 9:23** Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

***Luke 14:33** "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

***Rom 8:13** For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

***Gal 5:24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

***Phil 3:8** What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

ROMANS 05: 01 : JUSTIFICATION AND PEACE

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Romans 05:01***

Justification (*diakioun*) means to count someone righteous. It means to reckon, to credit, to account, to judge, to treat, to look upon as righteous. It does not mean to make a person righteous. It does not mean to make someone something, but merely to count, to judge, to treat someone as something.

The first result of justification is peace with God.

1. The meaning of peace with God is striking. Peace with God does not mean escapism, a quiet atmosphere, the absence of trouble, the control of situations by positive thinking, the denial of problems, the ability to keep from facing reality. Peace *with* God means the *sense and knowledge...*

- that one has restored his relationship with God.
- that one is no longer alienated and separated from God.
- that one is now reconciled with God.
- that one is now accepted by God.
- that one is freed from the wrath and judgment of God.
- that one is freed from fearing God's wrath and judgment.
- that one is now pleasing to God.
- that one is at peace with God.

2. The source of peace is Jesus Christ. Men can have peace with God only because of Jesus Christ. It is He who reconciles men to God. He has made peace by the blood of His cross.

Eph 2:14-15 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.

Col 1:20 And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

3. The reason we have peace is the glorious truth of justification. □

II. *Mark 01:09 The Baptism of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' baptism involved a beginning and an identification. His baptism was a *beginning* in that it was the beginning of a new life, a new direction in His life. His baptism was launching the mission of God to save the world. It was an *identification* in that He was identifying with John's ministry. John was proclaiming the coming of the Messiah, the Lamb of God. Through baptism Jesus was identifying Himself as the Messiah, the Lamb of God.

Note the words "to be baptized by John." Jesus came specifically to John to be baptized. Jesus was compelled to be baptized, but not just to be baptized - to be baptized by John. He was to identify Himself with John's ministry. He was the Messiah, the Lamb of God, being proclaimed by John.

Note why Jesus would seek to be baptized. The very fact that the Son of God would be baptized is startling. He was the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Founder of the movement of Christianity. He was the One who was making baptism *possible and effectual* (working) for man. John's baptism was a call for men to take a stand and to become identified with a life of repentance and righteousness. Jesus needed no repentance; He was already perfectly righteous. He was the Purchaser of righteousness, the Ideal Man. His righteousness was the pattern, the very righteousness that could stand for and cover every man. Why then would Jesus be baptized? Very simply, in His own words, "to fulfill all righteousness."

Thought 1. The decision to follow Jesus involves both baptism and the identifying of ourselves with Jesus the Messiah, the Lamb of God. If Jesus had not been baptized, He would not have identified Himself as the Messiah, nor would He have been known

as the Messiah. Likewise, if we are not baptized, we do not identify ourselves with Jesus, nor are we known to be identified with Jesus.

Mark 16:16 *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 10:48 *So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

Acts 22:16 *‘And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’*

III. Mark 01:10 The Commissioning and Empowering

Jesus’ baptism involved a commissioning and an empowering. This is seen in the heavens’ opening and the Spirit’s descending upon Him.

Jesus’ commissioning was a dramatic moment. The word *open* (*schizamenous*) really means to rend asunder or to tear apart. This could mean two things.

1. It could mean a moment like the rays of sunlight breaking through the clouds ever so brilliantly after a thunderstorm.
2. It could mean a moment when God miraculously tore apart the barrier between heaven and earth, allowing Jesus to see into the glory of heaven from where He had come.

Whatever the meaning, Jesus was being commissioned and set apart by heaven itself. God was giving His Son an experience that would make the commissioning unquestionable and unforgettable.

The empowering of Jesus was also a very dramatic moment. The Spirit of God descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. This event was not only identifying Jesus as the Messiah, it was declaring that the Spirit of God and His power were upon Jesus. This man, Jesus of Nazareth, was being empowered by God’s very own Spirit to do the work of God.

The dove was a sacred bird to the Jews. It was a symbol of peace and gentleness, of purity and innocence; but even more significant, the dove was often identified with the Spirit of God. When the dove descended upon Christ, it symbolized the Spirit of God Himself descending upon Christ. The dove identified Jesus as the Messiah and imparted to Him the power of God.

The Holy Spirit entered the life of Christ once-for-all, permanently and powerfully, in His full manifestation and unlimited power.

Thought 1. When a person is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, the Holy Spirit enters the life of the believer and becomes a permanent experience of the believer.

John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

Rom 8:9-10 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

There was also something else symbolized in the dove. The work which Jesus was to do would be the work of peace and purity. Luke 3:21 points out that the Spirit came to Jesus while He was praying *after having been baptized*. The Spirit’s descending upon Him, not in Him, was definitely an empowering experience as well as an identifying experience.

Thought 1. Every true believer is commissioned and empowered by God to do the work of God. Some commissioning experiences are dramatic (the heavens are torn apart); other experiences are not so dramatic (the still small voice of God’s Spirit tugs at the heart with an awareness that one is called). Nevertheless, every true believer is commissioned and empowered by God’s Spirit.

The *awareness* of the commission and power, however, is a different matter. Too many are not aware of God’s commission and of the Spirit’s presence within. What makes the difference? The first two points: one’s decision and submission, one’s beginning and identification. Too many of us lack a consistent commitment in both steps. As a result, we wander through life unaware of God’s commission and the presence of the Spirit of God empowering us to do the task.

- => Too many of us do not make a decision to follow Christ totally; we do not surrender all we are and have to Christ. Therefore, we are not aware of the great call and commission of Christ.
- => Too many of us do not begin with Christ; we just never identify with Him. We may be baptized, but we never follow through with Christ. The world never knows that we are a follower of Christ, not a committed, genuine follower.

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 26:16 ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.’

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Isa 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

IV. Mark 01:11 God's Approval and Encouragement

Jesus' baptism involved God's approval and encouragement. As Man, Jesus Christ needed the perfect assurance of God. So much was being required of Him, and He was to pay such an enormous price to serve God. He needed some clear indication, some special strength, some encouragement from God. What God did was profound: "And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" Three significant things are said here.

- *My Son*: this points to the deity of Christ (Mt. 14:33; 27:43; 27:54; Mk. 1:1; Jn. 1:34; 3:18; 10:36; 11:4; 20:31; Acts 8:37; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 4:14; 1 Jn. 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 13, 20).
- *Whom I love*: this points to the love within the Godhead (Trinity) (Jn. 3:35; 10:17; Co1. 1:13; see Isa. 42:1).
- *Well pleased*: this points to the perfect life Jesus lived. He was "yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; see 2 Cor. 5:21).

Thought 1. The one thing that a believer should want to hear is what Jesus heard: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

- 1) Believers are adopted as children of God (Rom. 8:15; Ga1. 4:4-6).
- 2) Believers can have their lives and service approved by God.

Mat 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

Thought 2. God saw the life and behaviour of Christ, and He judged Christ as well pleasing. God sees every man and shall judge the life and works of every man. Nothing is hidden from His eyes.

Luke 12:2 "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."

1 Cor 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Thought 3. God meets the needs of His servants for assurance. He sees to it that we know His will and gives *assurance* that we are doing His will. He speaks to our hearts and gives signs of approval and *encouragement*.

1 Cor 1:30 *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Psa 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ■*