

Exploring the Gospel of Mark

By Jim Myers

We do not know who wrote this Gospel, but a tradition that has been passed down over the centuries is that the author was a follower of Paul's group of the Jesus Movement who was living in Rome. He was writing to readers who understood the Jewish culture of Jesus, read the Torah, and attended synagogues. Mark was living in the center of power in the Roman Empire. After it was written, it was quickly recopied and sent to other groups of the Jesus Movement. Here is Mark 1:1.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

There are three technical terms in this verse, which means they are “words with meanings linked to institutional authority.” The three words are *gospel*, *Christ*, and *Son of God*. The original readers of Mark knew the meanings below.

- The word “**gospel**” meant “**good news brought by a messenger of a King or God.**”
- The word “**Christ**” meant “*The Anointed One*;” a person “**anointed by God to perform a specific task.**”
- The phrase “**Son of God**” was linked to **the covenant Yahweh the God of Israel made with King David** (2 Samuel 7:12-16):

*“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **He shall build a Temple for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.** If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And **your Temple and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.**”*

We find both of those technical terms in Psalm 2 – a Psalm read during the coronation of a *King of Israel*. Below are verses 2 and 7: “*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against **His Anointed One** . . . I will declare the decree of Yahweh, He has said to me, **You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.**”*

Now I will continue with Mark 1:1-2: “*As it is written in the Prophets: ‘Behold, I send **My messenger** before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ ‘The **voice of one crying in the wilderness**: ‘Prepare the **way of Yahweh**; make His paths straight.’”*

- The first prophecy is found in **Malachi 3** - “**the Messenger**” is “**The Anointed One.**”
- The second prophecy is found in **Isaiah 40** - “**the voice of one crying in the wilderness**” is a reference to **John the Immerser** who we know as **John the Baptist.**

The translators of most English Bibles, probably to avoid theological controversy, transliterated the Greek instead of translating it. The Greek word means **“to immerse”** and that means **“to completely dunk under water.”** Some denominations **“sprinkle people with water”** in their **“baptism rituals.”** However, in the Jewish culture, **“people immerse themselves,”** no one dunks them!

John the Immerser was literally standing in the wilderness by the Jordan River preaching this message (Mark 1:7-8): **“There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**

We won't have to wait long for this prophecy to be fulfilled (Mark 1:9-11): **“It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was immersed by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, he saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”**

- **“The Spirit descending upon Jesus”** made Jesus **“The Anointed One.”**
- **“The voice from heaven”** declared that **“on this day, Jesus became the Son of God.”**

The earliest reference in a Gospel to the beginning of the Jesus Movement is Mark 1:14-15: **“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God”:**

*“The time is now!
The Kingdom of God is here!
Repent!
Believe the Gospel!”*

Now we understand the first verse in the *Gospel of Mark*, but then this happened!

The New Sanhedrin

Before the Temple was destroyed, a very important event took place that isn't mentioned in the *New Testament*. It is virtually unknown to Christians. But our research indicates that it not only played a major role in history, but it also strongly influenced the ways the *Gospels of Luke and Matthew* were written.

Johanen ben Zakkai was the youngest of all the learned disciples in the academy of Hillel. Before the Temple was destroyed, it became clear to him that the Jews would lose their battle with the Romans. If Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, how would the Jews survive as a people?

Ben Zakkai faked his death, and had his disciples place him in a sealed coffin. They carried it past the guards and beyond the gates of Jerusalem. There, Ben Zakkai got out of the coffin and asked to be taken to General Vespasian. His reputation for pursuing peace preceded him. Jewish legend has it that when Ben Zakkai met General Vespasian, he predicted

Vespasian would become the emperor of the Roman world. Vespasian was so impressed and flattered, that when the prediction came true in 69 CE, he granted Ben Zakkai permission to leave Jerusalem and go to Yavneh.

Ben Zakkai created a temporary place for the new Sanhedrin to meet, and consider options for the future of the Jewish people. Vespasian's decision literally changed the history of the world. After the Temple and other government institutions in Jerusalem had been destroyed, in Yavneh the Jews still had a connection and legal standing with the Roman Emperor.

At the top of the list of decisions for the new Sanhedrin to make, was "*which Jewish sects from the old government will would be part of the new government.*" At that time their choices were these: *Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Hasidim, Zealots, Sicarii, and the Jesus Movement.* There was an unusual problem with the Jesus Movement however, Gentile members of Paul's Movement were mixed with Jewish members of the Jesus Movement. And, the Gospel of Mark, was just beginning to spread to other places in the Roman Empire!

Subscribe Now to our FREE Educational Email List.
Go to the BHC Website at -
<https://biblicalheritage.org>

Choose Life, Do Tov!
Shalom