

Introduction

1. We learned last week that each of the Gospel writers had a unique purpose in writing their books:
 - a. Luke's purpose was to write an accurate historical account of Christ's life and that of the early church (Gospel of Luke and Acts)
 - b. Matthew focused on the teaching of Jesus
 - c. John's Gospel serves as an apologetic and evangelistic tool so that we might know that Jesus is the Son of God and how we can have eternal life
2. Mark's purpose is to reveal Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God:
 - a. He summarizes these in his prologue (v. 2-13) which is our text for today
 - b. He then reveals these truths by telling the story of Jesus in a rather unique way—as a journey with one purpose: to make it to Jerusalem where He will lay down His life and save us from our sins
 - c. It is through this story that Jesus is revealed and declared to be both the Messiah and the Son of God (including Peter's and the Roman Centurion's pronouncements)
3. Today we will look at Mark's prologue where he introduces us to Jesus Christ through two historic events:
 - a. One, the arrival and ministry of John the Baptist, points to Jesus as the Messiah
 - b. The second, the baptism of Jesus, points to Jesus as the Son of God

A. Mark points to John the Baptist as evidence that Jesus is the Messiah (1:2-8)

1. Ever since the Fall of mankind, God promised redemption and salvation through one Man:
 - a. Initially this Man is simply referred to as the seed of Eve (Genesis 3:15): **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**
 - b. Later He is identified as a physical descendent of Abraham (Genesis 22:15-18) and King David (Jeremiah 23:5-6) and deliver Israel
 - c. Ultimately it is revealed that this Savior would be God Himself who would come in human form, walk among us and ultimately deliver us from our sin (Isaiah 7:14)
2. God also revealed to Israel that before this would happen He would send a forerunner, a prophet like Elijah, to announce His arrival and prepare for His coming:
 - a. One passage is found in Isaiah 40:1-5 (READ)
 - b. Another is found in Malachi 3:1: **“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.”**
3. So as Mark begins His Gospel and his quest to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, he begins with these prophecies (1:2-3): **“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “behold, I send my**

messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'make ready the way of the LORD, make his paths straight.'"

- a. Though Mark attributes these words to Isaiah, they are actually a combination of three different passages, Exodus 23:20, Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1
 - b. It was common when quoting from the OT to combine verses from different texts when they were referencing the same events or topics—they didn't have chapter and verse divisions like we do today
 - c. Mark selected the portions of the larger texts above to focus on a few things:
 - 1) A messenger will arrive before Messiah for the purpose of preparing the way for Messiah
 - 2) He would be preaching in the wilderness
4. Mark then reveals that John the Baptist was this prophet and prepared the way for the Messiah (1:4-8)
- a. Malachi prophesied around 430 B.C. which was at the end of the Babylonian captivity
 - b. He was the last of God's prophets to the nation of Israel and the Old Testament closes with his words: **"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."**
 - c. So, the last thing God said to Israel was that a time would come when He would send them another prophet before the Day of the LORD:
 - 1) The NT reveals that a proper understanding of this verse is that the prophet would be like Elijah, not Elijah himself
 - 2) That this prophet would be like Elijah is significant because Elijah was raised up at a time when God's prophets were corrupt and worshipping Baal along with much of Israel
 - 3) Elijah was called upon by God to call Israel to repentance and lead them back to the LORD
 - 4) This new prophet sent by God would be like Elijah in the same respect, both in regard to the state of Israel and the corruption of its leaders
 - d. However, for the next 400 years, God did not speak to the nation of Israel--this intertestamental period (period between OT and NT) is referred to as the silent years
 - e. But then, God finally made good on His promise to send an Elijah-like prophet and John was this prophet:
 - 1) John preached in the wilderness just as prophesied:
 - a) **"John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness..."** (4)
 - b) His ministry remained in the wilderness (5): **"And all the country of Judea was going out to him and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins"**
 - 2) John called on Israel to prepare for the LORD through confession and repentance just as prophesied: **"preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins"** (4b)
 - 3) John pointed the hearts of the people back toward the LORD just as prophesied (7-8): He alluded to the importance of Christ: **"and he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

- a. John cites two reasons why Jesus was mightier than he was:
 - 1) One is here in v. 8: **“I baptize with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”**--in fulfillment of God’s promise to pour out His Spirit on all people in the last days (Joel 2:28-29)
 - 2) The other is in John 1:30 where He states that Jesus existed before Him (thus recognizing the deity of Jesus Christ)
- b. According to Luke, John made this statement in response to the crowd wondering if he himself was the Christ
- 4) And just for good measure to identify John as the prophesied Elijah-like prophet, Mark even describes John dressing much like we might expect of Elijah (6): **“John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.”**

****All of this makes the case that Jesus is the promised Messiah****

B. Mark points to Jesus’ baptism as evidence that Jesus is God’s Son and the One through Whom God would carry out His redemptive plan (READ 9-13)

- a. According to Matthew, when Jesus first approached John to be baptized John objected (READ Matthew 3:13-15)
 - 1. The tense (imperfect) indicates that John objected more than once to Jesus wanting to be baptized (e.g. **“he kept trying to prevent Him”**)
 - 2. He was insistent that he needed to be baptized by Jesus, not the other way around
 - 3. John understood that his baptism was a baptism of repentance and confession for sin, but that Jesus was sinless and did not need to repent or confess sin
- b. Why did Jesus get baptized?
 - 1. There have been many suggestions as to why Jesus had John baptize Him but all are speculative (and mostly inadequate) because the Bible doesn’t give a specific reason:
 - a) It validated John’s ministry
 - b) Jesus was setting an example of obedience for others to follow
 - c) It associated Jesus with sinners
 - 2. The answer Jesus gives to John is this (Matthew 3:15): **“Permit it as this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”**
 - a) So, Jesus’s baptism was appropriate **“at this time”** which means there was something special about the timing
 - b) It had something to do with **“fulfilling all righteousness”**
 - 3. I wonder if Jesus was symbolically fulfilling the priestly duty of purification before beginning His ministry:
 - a) The Levite priests were commanded to bathe themselves with water before they put on their priestly garments and performed their duties (Leviticus 16:4, 23-24)
 - b) Jesus serves as our High Priest
 - c) Was His baptism symbolic of this ritual at the beginning of His ministry?

- c. While we may not know exactly why Jesus got baptized, we do know that God used the event to identify Jesus as not only His Son, but His Servant in Whom He was pleased (10-11):
1. Three things happened at Jesus' baptism:
 - a. The FIRST is that the Spirit descended upon Him (10a): **"Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him."**
 - 1) Why did the Spirit descend on Jesus?
 - 2) To reveal the Messiah to John the Baptist (John 1-32-33)
 - 3) To lead Jesus in His earthly ministry (Luke 4:1, 14)
 - 4) The Spirit empower Jesus to preach, heal and perform miracles (Luke 4:18; Mathew 12:28; Acts 10:38)
 - 5) It enabled Him to face death (Hebrews 9:14)
 - 6) He was raised by the power of the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18; Romans 1:14; 8:11)
 - 7) It was ultimately a sign of God's favor and presence with Jesus
 - b. The SECOND is that God the Father spoke to Him (10b): **"and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.""**
 - 1) The text says that Jesus ("He") saw the heavens open and the Spirit descend (Matthew records it this way as well)
 - 2) However, other's must have seen and heard it as well because John the Baptist claims to have seen it as well (John 1:32): **"John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him."**
 - 3) Both of these are a fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-4 (READ) and identify Jesus as not only God's Son, but His servant in Whom He delights and through Whom He will accomplish His redemptive purpose
 - c. The THIRD is that the Spirit immediately lead Him out to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (READ 11-13):
 - 1) Mark only touches on this briefly but unlike Matthew and Luke provides almost no details aside from the fact that he was there for 40 days being tempted by Satan
 - 2) This may be Mark's way of foreshadowing the ongoing interactions Jesus has with demons throughout Mark's Gospel
 - 3) In fact, later Jesus tells a parable which reveals that in order for Him to plunder the house of the enemy He must first bind the strongman (Satan)

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| Conclusion |
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1. Mark's purpose is to introduce his readers to Jesus who is both Messiah and God's Son
2. He begins with a prologue identifying Jesus as the Christ as evidenced by the arrival and ministry of John the Baptist whose purpose was to prepare the way for Messiah
3. He reveals Jesus Christ as God's Son through the Father's declaration at His baptism