

Prepare the Way: Mark 1:1-8 Explained

Scriptures for Today: Mark 1:1-8

""Mark 1:1-8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.""

Introduction:

We are starting the book of Mark. It has 16 chapters. It takes about an hour and 25 minutes to read. This is considered one of the four gospels — the new testament scriptures start with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Those 4 books provide an account of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is something very special about how this book starts out...

I want you to understand how big of a moment this is.

When we open the book of Mark, we're not stepping into another story, we're stepping into the **fulfillment of a promise** that was made about **fifteen hundred years earlier**.

All the way back in the wilderness, in the days of Moses, God told Israel, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee... and I will put my words in his mouth." (Deut. 18) Imagine standing there in that desert heat, listening to Moses himself say, "One day, God is going to raise up a Prophet like me. Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed."

Picture those parents going back to their tents that night, sitting their children down and saying, "God promised us a Prophet who's coming. Not just another leader— a Prophet like Moses, with the very words of God in His mouth."

And then those children grow up, and they tell *their* children. And they tell *their* children. Generation after generation—through Joshua, through the judges, through David and the kings, through the captivity and the return—parents are still telling their children, "God promised. The Prophet is coming."

But as the years go on, the stories get older, the nation grows colder.

They were offering God their scraps. Marrying women from other lands that worshiped false gods. They were robbing God in tithes and offerings.

God sent Malachi to confront their polluted worship and expose their unfaithfulness. He called them to remember the law, the statutes, and judgments. Malachi stands up and gives one final call; a promise was made of a coming messenger as well as the Sun of righteousness who would arise with healing in his wings. Then Malachi puts down his pen... and heaven goes silent.

Four long centuries go by where nothing seems to be happening, the promise of the prophet is in the distant past. But remember, just because you think nothing is happening, God is always working.

People often can get discouraged because they can't see the big picture of why things are happening the way that they are. Maybe things are not going the way that you planned them in your mind.

You need to stand strong in faith and wait patiently on the Lord. Pray for His Will to be done.

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

If we could see everything that God was doing then we would not need faith.

""**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God **must believe** that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.""

During that 400-year period rulers continued to rise and fall, empires were changing hands, and a little remnant was still clinging to that old promise: *"God said He would send a Prophet."*

A messenger was going to prepare the way for Him.

Right when it looks like God has almost forgotten —**a voice breaks the silence**. It's not coming from a palace, not from the temple, but from the wilderness. A rough man in camel's hair steps out and cries, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." That man is John the Baptist.

The messenger has come to prepare the way for the Prophet. The same Prophet that was promised 1500 years in the past. The same Prophet that would justify and bear the iniquities of many. That Prophet was Jesus Christ.

""**Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;""

The time has finally come for the prophecies, and the promises to come to pass.

One of the most amazing times to be alive in human history. God had arrived in human form.

""**Mark 1:2** As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.""

John the Baptist was the messenger that was prophesied back in Isaiah and Malachi. I want to show you exactly where it is written.

""Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.""

So we have the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And then we are reminded of the one who would come before the Lord to prepare His way. And you might ask, "Why would God need someone to prepare the way for Him"?

""Mark 1:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.""

John the Baptist's job was to prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight. How would he do that? By preparing the hearts of the people to receive the Words that Jesus would speak. Remember, Moses told Israel that they shall hear all things that the Prophet shall speak.

But how will they hear if their hearts are not ready to receive...John was reminding the people of their sinful state. He was reminding them of their need for remission of sins. He was a voice crying in the wilderness pointing to their need for a savior...

We see this prophesied in the book of Isaiah. This is where Mark 1:3 is quoting from:

""Isaiah 40:1-8 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.""

Where does our comfort come from? It comes from our hope in Jesus Christ. He is the one that pardons our iniquities.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. **3** The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. **4** Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

Understand that the voice crying in the wilderness is John the Baptist preaching the gospel to the people. He was preparing their hearts to receive Jesus Christ. Just like when we go out and preach the gospel, it brings great comfort to the low and humble minded. Every valley shall be exalted. The sick, the broken, the oppressed are lifted up through Jesus.

But you cannot preach the gospel without the reproving of sin. If sin in a person's life is never brought to their attention, then there is no need for the gospel. There is no need for a savior.

That's why we always start the preaching of the gospel by showing someone that they are a sinner.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Every mountain and hill shall be made low. Every person that is lifted up will be brought down by showing them their spiritual condition. It's only when a person sees that they have a debt to pay, and that the payday is coming—it's only then that they will see a need to turn to the only one who can save them. There is only one that can remit sins. Only one that can pay the debt for you. And that is Jesus Christ.

And this is exactly what John the Baptist was crying in the wilderness. He was preparing the way of Lord. He was making the path straight to the hearts of the people. Preparing them to hear the words of the Father through the final Prophet that would bring salvation to all.

""Mark 1:3-4 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **4** John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.""

Some people get confused by false teachings when they read that John was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

They read verses like Acts 2:38

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...

They think repent means that you must turn from your sins. Stop sinning in your life. And get baptized to be saved.

This is a false teaching and it's why we let the Bible interpret the Bible. What does it mean when John is preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins?

""Acts 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.""

So we clearly see that the baptism of repentance is defined as John telling people that they should believe on Jesus Christ.

Repentance in the context of salvation is always talking about seeing your need for a savior and turning toward God in faith.

""Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.""

Understand that John was preaching the same gospel that Jesus preached, the same gospel that the disciples preached, the same gospel that Paul preached.

The only difference was John was pointing forward to the one that would make the ultimate sacrifice. Now we point back to the sacrifice that is finished forever.

""Mark 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.""

People were coming from all over the land of Judaea and Jerusalem to hear John the Baptist. That would be like if word started spreading around Louisville that there's a man out in the knobs of Kentucky. He's not in a big church building; he's out by the riverbank. He doesn't have a band, or fog machines. Just a rough man clothed in camel's hair. Imagine that...

""Mark 1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;""

Imagine you have this rough man that is crying out, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And people from **all over Jefferson County** start going out to hear him. Then Shepherdsville. Then E-Town. Then Shelbyville. Families are packing up and traversing for miles to hear and be baptized by this messenger.

That's what Mark is describing. From the villages, from the little towns, from the city of Jerusalem itself, people are streaming out of their homes and fields, walking dusty roads down toward the Jordan River.

There were rich and poor, religious and wicked, soldiers, tax collectors, common people—they all were making that trip. Crowds lining the riverbank, listening to John thunder against sin. But his message was clear. John could not save them. The water could not save them. The people could not save themselves. Then why did John baptize? What was his purpose? People were asking that question.

""John 1:19-26 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? **20** And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. **21** And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. **22** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? **23** He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. **24** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. **25** And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?""

Then going back to Mark, we see John's reply...

""**Mark 1:7-8** And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. **8** I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.""

John was saying..."Don't look at me. There cometh one mightier than I after me. I'm not even worthy to stoop down and untie His shoes."

Then he draws a sharp contrasting line:

He says "I indeed have baptized you with water..."

That's all a man can do. John can preach. John can call people to repent. John can take them into the Jordan and bring them back up again. John can **prepare** their hearts.

"...but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

Only Jesus can reach inside a person and make them new. Only Jesus can give the new birth. Only Jesus can wash away sins and fill a believer with the Holy Ghost.

""**John 1:29-31** The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. **30** This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. **31** And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.""

Why did John baptize with water? Not to draw men to himself. Not to wash people's sins away. He baptized in water so that Jesus Christ would be made manifest to Israel.

The Prophet that was promised. The Christ. The Anointed Savior was finally revealed.

The most important job that any man could do, apart from the work that Jesus did, was accomplished.

""**Acts 13:25** And as John **fulfilled his course**, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.""

John knew exactly what his "course" was: **prepare the people, then point to the Person of Jesus.**

""**John 3:28** Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him...""

""**John 3:30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease.""

That's the spirit behind Mark 1:7–8. John is saying, "I can take you down into this river, I can get you wet with water, I can prepare you, but He is the one that takes your sins away, He is the one that will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, He is the one that can save.

So when Jesus finally steps onto the scene and John cries, "*Behold the Lamb of God,*" —that is the defining moment of his ministry. It's not the beginning of a rivalry. John isn't disappointed that the crowds start following Jesus instead of him—that's what he's been working toward all along. His entire life was aimed at this one great purpose: **to make Christ known.**

And that's where this hits us. We don't have John's exact calling, but we do follow John's example. That's why we call ourselves a Baptist church. It has nothing to do with tradition. It has nothing to do with denominations...

Our preaching, our soul winning, our ministry—it is not about drawing people to ourselves, or cleaning them up on the outside, or getting them into our church because WE are so great. It's very easy to get caught up in the pridefulness of what we have done. Look at what we have accomplished. Understand we have done nothing outside of Jesus.

Our purpose is to do what John did: preach the truth, call men to repent toward God, and place their faith in Jesus Christ.

I want you to remember that in your life. Every time that **YOU** think you're doing something, Every time **YOU** have a little bit of success, don't forget the one who brought you to that point. Everything that you do in your body, every action you take, every word that you speak, minute by minute, second by second. You want it to reflect back and point to Jesus.

We have a lot of work to do on that don't we? We need to be striving every single day.

A lot of people were coming to John, He could of easily gotten puffed up with pride and said, "You know what? I kind of like all of this attention." And do you think John ever had a foolish thought? John was a sinner just like us. But John walked in the Spirit of God and He fulfilled the prophecy by being the messenger that pointed to the promised one.

""2 Corinthians 4:5-7 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. **7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.""

""2 Corinthians 4:10-11 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. **11** For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.""

TRUE WORDS

Baptist Church

Revelation 21:5 

Book of Mark

Mark 1:1-8

So the same way that John the Baptist manifested Jesus Christ to Israel, Let's use our bodies, let's use our mortal flesh to manifest Jesus to this lost and dying world.

I hope you continue to reflect on the ministry of John...

Remember when God makes a promise, when He says something will happen. It will surely come to pass.

Let's Pray