

The Gospel in Person: Part 1: The Promise of Mark 1.1-15

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Series: Who Is This Man?
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The introduction of a book often makes the promise the book itself will deliver. This is certainly true of the Gospel of Mark.

Mark's Introduction:

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as 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 wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

And so, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Breaking it down:

[1] The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,

- This is the beginning of a story that is ongoing. All of Mark's readers live within it.

- "Beginning": just as God began a new creation in the "beginning," Jesus the Messiah is bringing the "beginning" of the new creation.

[2] as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—

[3] "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' "

- This Gospel was promised in the prophetic tradition.
- Mark gives the credit to Isaiah, but he actually wove three different passages together establishing the Gospel in the entire Old Testament tradition:

Exodus 23.20; Mal. 3.1; Isa. 40.3

- God is sending His messenger to lead His people to God's deliverance AND they should prepare themselves to participate in it.

[4] And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a

baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] The whole

Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

[6] John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around

his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. [7] And this was his

message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps

of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. [8] I

baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- John appears out of the wilderness. John was very popular inside and outside of Israel. His stamp of approval on Jesus carries a lot of weight for disciples.

- John sees himself as an important prophet, equal to the Old Testament prophets:

His dress and lifestyle imitate the greatest prophet, Elijah.

His message is a bold claim to know what God will do.

He acts it out in an innovative which draws on the entire story of Israel.

- John baptizes people so that they may enter the fulfilled promises of God as a nation.

- The one who comes after John, the Messiah, will “baptize” people in the Holy Spirit. This is the key promise made by the prophets in the exile. God will bring his presence to all people.

[9] At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10] Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. [11] And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

- Jesus comes to be baptized by John. Why? Matt. 3.15 - “to fulfill all righteousness”

- In that moment: the veil separating heaven and earth is torn apart, the Spirit comes like a dove empowering Jesus to baptize in the Spirit and God speaks his approval.

[12] At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, [13] and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

- Immediately, the Spirit “casts Jesus” into the Wilderness to defeat God’s enemy.

- The first son of God, Adam failed in paradise God when tempted in the Garden. The second Son of God, Israel failed in the wilderness when tempted by God. The only begotten Son of God, Jesus succeeds in the wilderness.

[14] After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

[15] “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

- Jesus makes the public declaration, “the Kingdom of God has come near.”

- The Kingdom is God’s authority and everywhere it is obeyed.

- To Mark’s readers, this means the promises of God are being fulfilled.