

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

The Herald of the Eternal King

Mark 1:1-8

I. The Beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

A. A Stunning Journey Begun Today

Today we begin one of the most thrilling journeys on which we could ever embark... ultimately far more exciting and fruitful than the voyage of Columbus that led to the discovery of the New World; far more stunning and beautiful than the Lewis and Clark expedition that led across the west to the shimmering Pacific Ocean; far more mysterious and powerful than the Apollo missions to the moon. Today we begin our verse by verse study into the perfect words of the Gospel of Mark... and the deeper discovery of the person of Jesus Christ.

B. The Dimensions and Details of the Son of God

Why do I say all these things? Simply because the study of the person and work of the Son of God is infinitely glorious... indeed it will extend on into eternity. We will never be able to fathom the depths of Christ, and the study of the dimensions and details of his glory will occupy us eternally in heaven.

Last Christmas, as I was writing my Christmas message, I came across a marvelous statement by Athanasius on the infinite dimensions of the incarnation of the Son of God:

And in a word, the achievements of the Savior, resulting from his becoming man, are of such kind and number that if one should wish to enumerate them, he may be compared to men who gaze at the expanse of the sea and wish to count its waves.

For as one cannot take in the whole of the waves with his eyes, for those which are coming on baffle the sense of him that attempts it; so for him that would take in all the achievements of Christ in the body, it is impossible to take in the whole, even by reckoning them up, as those which go beyond his thought are more than those he thinks he has taken in.

Better is it, then, not to aim at speaking of the whole, where one cannot do justice even to a part, but, after mentioning one more, to leave the whole for you to marvel at. For all alike are marvelous, and wherever a man turns his glance, he may behold on that side the divinity of the Word, and be struck with exceeding great awe.

In simple terms, Athanasius likened the depths of Christ and his achievements to trying to study the ocean and its wave upon wave of power. There are too many waves, the shoreline extends beyond what the eye can see, and even to try to comprehend one wave would overwhelm his mind... how then can anyone take in all of Christ? It's just too much!

C. This is ONLY THE “**Beginning**” of the Gospel!

Look again at the very first words of the Gospel of Mark:

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

My friends, that is exactly what heaven is for... for us being educated in the infinite greatness of Christ... to comprehend the whole!

Even as we were to finish careful study of this magnificent gospel and become believers in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the gospel – the good news – of his eternal kingship, of his majestic person and perfect rule over his adoring people – would just be beginning. In this world, that is all we can do... BEGIN to study the GOOD NEWS of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Heaven is infinite in its scope because it will take eternity to study and comprehend all the dimensions and details of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ

And at that time, we will see him face to face and be in his glorious presence; and we will be free from all our sins and the limitations sin has wrapped us up in – limited in time, limited in comprehension, limited in love

So, heaven’s study will be infinitely better than this one. This is just another sermon series... another time to see through a glass darkly, not yet face to face.

But this is what we have – the WORDS OF GOD

For now, we must console ourselves with the careful study of the written Word of God to understand the Son of God. And that is exactly what we must do.

For with the study of the life of Christ and with our repentance and faith comes the salvation of our souls... that we would spend eternity in heaven and not in hell. That is the treasure that awaits this study.

The FACTS of the life of Christ are essential to our salvation. The HISTORY of Christ is essential.

D. The Gospel is the Only Power of God for Our Salvation

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

The gospel of Jesus Christ alone has the power to SAVE SINNERS from the condemnation we deserve

Gospel means “good news” ... and the good news is Jesus Christ himself, a good and loving King, who is calling us out of our rebellion into full submission to his kingly reign. The good news is this good king laid down his life on the cross for those who were in rebellion against his kingdom.

In this gospel story the power of God resides... but it must be received BY FAITH:

Romans 1:17 ... as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

In Romans, Paul makes it very clear how we sinners can be saved, by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

E. The Facts of Christ's Life Are Essential to the Gospel

But how can we know that Jesus of Nazareth is LORD... the Son of God? Romans 10 shows how vital the FACTS of the life of Christ are!!

Romans 10:14-15 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

The facts of Jesus' life must be preached based on the Bible:

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

The facts of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are essential to the salvation of our souls!

And in his goodness, God has given us FOUR PERFECT RECORDS of the life of Jesus Christ: The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John.

These four perfect records are all equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are therefore perfect histories of the person, words, miracles, activities of Christ. They are all perfectly true, and

though it is sometime difficult, they can all be perfectly harmonized with one another.

So, while we will be studying the Gospel of Mark, we will feel free to take also from the other three gospels whenever we need to.

F. A Call to Non-Christians to Hear and Believe for the First Time

For any that are listening today that are not yet believers in Christ, I say to you that this is the best book in the Bible to begin your study. The Bible is really a library of 66 books. Sometimes Christians will give to non-Christians a Bible and tell them to read it, but give no further instructions. Then the non-Christian opens the Bible like any other book and begins at the beginning. The Book of Genesis. But it isn't long before the account becomes harder and harder to understand.

I recommend the Gospel of Mark as the BEST starting place for any non-Christian. It is the shortest and simplest of the four gospel accounts of Jesus' life, and it gets you immediately to the point: Jesus Christ IS the Son of God... and by believing in Jesus Christ your sins can be forgiven. The first eight chapters of the Gospel show Jesus' deity by his mighty works and his amazing words; the second eight chapters show Jesus' deity by his death on the cross for our sins and his resurrection from the dead.

So, this study in the Gospel of Mark is an opportunity for you to hear the gospel and believe for the first time!

G. A Call to Christians to Hear and Believe Continually

However, I am aware that most of you here today have been Christians for a while... some for decades. You have heard many sermons and you have read the Bible for years. Very little in the Gospel of Mark will be radically new to you...

Yet this is an opportunity for you to HEAR and BELIEVE CONTINUALLY!

Our faith in Christ is a LIVING THING, and like all living things it needs FOOD...

Romans 10:17 says *“faith comes by hearing the word of Christ.”* Well, just as it comes initially by hearing, so it is FED CONTINUALLY by hearing!

H. My Delightful Journey in Scripture Memorization

October 3, 2020... on sabbatical in Cardiff, Wales, I began memorizing the Gospel of Mark. It was one of the most delightful journeys of scripture memorization I have ever done! Day after day I fellowshiped with Christ... drank in his words, marveled at his effortless power over every disease and every demon... melted at his tenderness toward hurting sinners, drank in his wisdom in his amazing teachings... in short, I WALKED WITH CHRIST by these words... he is the vine, I am the branch...

These sermons will come out of the fruit of countless hundreds of hours of meditation in this Gospel over a full year.

And now, we begin at the beginning...

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That is the theme of the entire gospel and the purpose of all four gospels:

John 20:31 these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name

That a man named Jesus Christ who lived two thousand years ago was actually the Son of God, the Savior of the World. Mark 1:1 is the purpose statement, and in a marvelous bracketing way, the centurion who stood at the foot of the cross testified:

Mark 15:39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Now the essence of his ministry was to call us sinners out of our rebellion into his Kingdom, as we will see in Mark 1:15:

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Amazingly, we begin not with the King himself, but with the
HERALD of the King... John the Baptist

II. The Mission of the King's Herald

A. It May Seem Strange to Start with the Herald

But... that's only because we are not used to the patterns of a king

A king never just shows up somewhere! He always has officials who precede him and get everything ready for his arrival!

He has heralds who run before him and announce his coming

John the Baptist was the Herald of the King... sent before him to prepare the way of the King

What was his mission?

B. To Prepare the Way of the King

Mark 1:2-3 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 desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

God send his MESSENGER ahead of Christ... whose task is clear: to go ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for him

C. The Prophetic Preparation

1. Right away in Mark's Gospel, we have quotation of Old Testament prophecy
2. From the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, God had predicted the coming of the Son of God, the King of the World, who would crush the serpent and save sinners
3. Prophet after prophet spoke and instructed the Jewish nation of the coming Messiah, the Son of David who would rule forever on David's throne and to the ends of the earth; and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah who would die for the sins of his people

4. So, Mark begins with two Old Testament prophecies preparing the way... but they focused not directly on Jesus Christ, but on Christ's HERALD, John the Baptist
5. God speaks directly to Jesus in the first prophecy, Malachi 3:1, saying "I (God the Father) will send my messenger ahead of you (the Son of God) who will prepare YOUR way"

D. The Mission: to PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

1. The image is one of road building... like a massive road grader that levels the road, removing obstacles
2. The fuller quote from Isaiah makes this powerfully clear:

Isaiah 40:3-4 "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

3. Since John was not a civil engineer, a literal road builder, this was a spiritual preparation in the hearts and minds of the people
 - a. "every valley raised up" refers to people so crushed by their sins that they thought God had forsaken them forever... like a prostitute or a tax collector who had lost all hope of a relationship with God
 - b. "every mountain and hill made low" on the other hand refers to people so arrogant in their self-righteousness that they thought they needed no Savior at all...like the scribes and Pharisees
 - c. "the rough ground shall become level, and the rugged places a plain"... the devious nature of the human heart had to be levelled, all the pride and false doctrine, and idols and false expectations had to be removed

E. The Deity of Christ Clearly Proclaimed

1. Fundamental to the mission of the herald was the greatness of the coming King
2. See it in the two prophecies

Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple

Isaiah 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."

Clearly these verses are referring to Jesus Christ... and the Old Testament passages say they are directly related to YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the one true God. So these two prophecies are openly claiming that Jesus is YAHWEH, Jehovah God.

So this is the King that John the Baptist came to herald. How did he do his ministry?? How did he "prepare the way of the Lord?"

III. The Ministry of the King's Herald

A. Who Is John the Baptist?

1. Luke 1 tells the amazing story of John's miraculous birth to a elderly barren couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth
2. Jesus tells us that John was the greatest man who had ever lived up to that point...

Matthew 11:11 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist

So... Abraham was not greater than John, neither was Moses, nor David, nor Job, nor Daniel...

Mark does not tell us hardly anything about these things... just launches in

B. A Desert Ministry

1. John ministered in the desert

Mark 1:3-4 "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" ⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

2. This must have reminded Israel of the Exodus, when God sustained them and when they were purified of their sinful idols
3. The desert also represents austerity... and John's manner and clothing and diet all represented a rejection of luxury

Mark 1:6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

4. He was clearly seeking to convict people of their luxurious lifestyles of sin
5. It is important to note John didn't call anyone to imitate his lifestyle; that was not required for their repentance; but his whole approach to life must have been a rebuke to them all
6. As Jesus later pointed out

Matthew 11:7-8 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.

7. He was an other-worldly figure, like the heroes of Hebrews 11

Hebrews 11:37-38 They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

C. In the Spirit of Elijah

1. John's clothing also immediately reminded everyone of Elijah, for that is exactly how he was dressed, and he also lived out in the desert:

2 Kings 1:7-8 ... "He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist." The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite."

2. John was the fulfillment of these words

Malachi 4:5-6 "Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

3. As the angel Gabriel announced to his father Zechariah

Luke 1:17 he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous-- to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

D. Bold Preaching

Matthew 3:7-10 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

That's what it looks like to level every high mountain and lofty hill!

E. Baptizing

Mark 1:4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The word "baptize" means to immerse... John was doing something radically new in Israel, never seen before; not an Old Testament practice at all. History tells us that, in the intertestamental period, the Gentile converts to Judaism were made to be baptized as a symbol of their cleansing from their old defiled pagan ways. But John was doing this to JEWS!! Basically saying, "Your having Abraham as your father in no way helps you spiritually... you are every bit as much defiled as the Gentiles."

F. Repentance

John called on people to REPENT for their sins... to repent is to think differently, from the heart... to turn away from sin to God

G. Forgiveness of Sins

The goal of John's ministry was to proclaim the forgiveness of sins... that God was coming to work a deep work of restoration in the hearts of the people resulting in their reconciliation with God

H. Popularity

Mark 1:5 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.

John's ministry was electrifying!! He prepared the way of the Lord by heightening everyone's expectations.

Some misunderstood and thought he himself might be the Messiah, the Christ... but his message was plain and clear

IV. The Message of the King's Herald

Mark 1:7-8 And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs 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."

A. The Centerpiece of John the Baptist's Ministry Was Proclaiming the Infinite Greatness of the Coming King

B. John's Humility: I don't deserve to stoop down and untie the thongs of his sandals

1. The lowest of slaves would be called on to cleanse the master's feet
2. This was the most menial task one could ever imagine a slave doing
3. John said "I don't even deserve to do that. I am a sinner. I am not worthy to touch his feet."
4. This kind of humility is the essence of what it takes to be saved

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

C. The Infinite Superiority of Jesus' Ministry

Mark 1:8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

1. John's baptism was symbolic... water only
2. Jesus would immerse all repentant believers in the Holy Spirit
3. This was a direct fulfillment of this prophetic promise

Ezekiel 36:26-27 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. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

This is the work that Jesus does to all who truly believe in him... he immerses their souls in the Holy Spirit... working a total internal transformation that prepares us for eternity in his heavenly kingdom

D. John's Fuller Message

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:32-34 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

The Herald of the King made it plain that the coming King was the Son of God and also the Lamb of God whose bloody death would take away the sins of the world.

This is the gospel... the GOOD NEWS... that forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ is available for all who will repent and believe

V. The Spirit Calls Us to Respond

A. John's Message and Jesus' Message Are the Same... STILL:

Matthew 3:1-2 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

B. How Do We Enter?

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

C. Continual Repentance and Faith

1. This is not just one time, but a continual thing
2. For the rest of our lives, living under the authority of Christ the King

D. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

1. Not referring to what charismatics refer to as a second experience
2. Rather, the gift given to all Christians
3. Baptism means IMMERSION
4. The presence of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity in each and every Christian

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ 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.

5. The power of the Holy Spirit for everything in the Christian life...

a. Personal holiness

i) Negative: mortification

Romans 8:13-14 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, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

ii) Positive: fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

b. Gospel witness

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.

Our responsibility: Be filled with the Spirit; Keep in step with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Ponder what it means that Jesus has immersed your soul in the Holy Spirit!