

# The Gospel According To Mark

## Part Two

**Mark 1:1-3** [New King James] *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 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 the LORD; make His paths straight.’”*

**Mark starts the record of Jesus Christ’s mission a long way back in time**, not with His birth as a human being nor on the emergence of John the Baptist, **but with the dreams of the prophets long before.**

**Isaiah 40:3-5** [New King James] *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’”*

This is the prophecy that Mark was directly referring to.

**Malachi 3:1-3** [New King James] *“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, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. ‘But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.’”*

**The same message referred to by Malachi as a threat to the priests of his day who were failing in their duty.**

The same could be said of some of the leadership in the Christian Church today.

In Malachi’s day the offerings were blemished and shoddy second-best, [**Malachi 1:7-8, 13**].

The messenger was to come to cleanse and purify the worship of God by His people on earth.

**Mark 1:4-5** [New King James] *“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”*

Three things are mentioned in these verses.

**Repentance – before this can happen a person must confess to themselves a need for change.**

**Human nature causes us to shut our eyes to what we do not want to see, especially our own sins.**

**There is no-one harder in the world to face than ourselves, yet the first step towards repentance and a right relationship with our Creator God is to admit to ourselves our own sins.**

**James 1:21-24** [New King James] *“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is*

*like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”*

This response to what we are shown in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, as sin against our Creator is all too easy to resolve any glimmer of guilt we may feel.

**We must confess to those whom we have wronged, [James 5:16].**

Human barriers must be removed before divine barriers can be removed, [Matthew 5:23-24].

**We then confess to our Creator God –**

**The end of pride is the beginning of repentance and forgiveness.**

It is when a person says *“I have sinned”* that God gets the chance to say *“you are forgiven.”*

**You can never meet God on equal terms, we must, to discover repentance and forgiveness, kneel before our Creator in humble contrition and admit in shame that we are a sinner.**

**Baptism –**

**Baptism comes only after repentance and the confession of our sins.**

**Romans 6:1-8** [New King James] *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,”*

The fact that baptism is likened to entering our grave indicates total immersion in water, [John 3:23], symbolic of the death of our old way of life *“old man”* and a new like that was centred on Jesus Christ, *“live with Him.”*

**Mark 1:5-6** [New King James] *“Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptised by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.”*

It is clear that the ministry of John was mighty effective, for people flocked to listen to him and submit to his baptism.

Why was it that John the Baptist made such an impact upon his nation?

**John lived his message –**

Not only his words but his whole life was a protest.

Three things marked the reality of John’s protest against the contemporary life of his nation.

**The place where he lived –**

The wilderness, a limestone desert.

John was no city-dweller with all its noise and clutter.

**John was a man who in the solitude of the desert who had given himself a chance to hear the voice of God.**

**The garments he wore –**

These were the garments of Elijah, a great prophet of God, [2 Kings 1:8].

**To look at John was to be reminded of the ancient prophets of God,** not the fashionable dressed orators of the day, or the style of John's day.

**The food he ate –**

Both of these words, locusts and wild honey, are capable of two interpretations.

Locusts, Greek word "*akris*" can be the animal [Leviticus 11:22-23]. The Arabs stew them with butter after removing the head, legs and wings.

**Only food tolerated by the poorest.**

**It can also refer to a kind of bean or nut, the "carob" which again was the food of the poorest.** The wild honey can also refer to the sweet sap that distilled from the bark of certain trees.

**All point towards John's diet being of the simplest fare.**

John was **not** like many a preacher who has a comfortable bank account yet preaches about "*laying up treasures in heaven*" or who extol the blessings of poverty yet live in a very comfortable home.

**In John's case the man himself was a powerful part of the message he preached.**

**John's message was also effective because he told people what in their heart of hearts they knew to be true.**

**John confronted people with a choice and they all knew how they should react.**

**Also the voice of prophecy had been silent for three hundred years.**

**We in this age are in a very similar situation, a lack of vision and purpose, [Proverbs 29:18].**

John brought both vision and purpose to the people of his generation.

**John's message was effective because it pointed to something and someone beyond himself –**

**Mark 1:8** [New King James] "*I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*"

**John told people that his baptism was only an outward sign of what can happen in them and to them with the baptism of the Holy Spirit which Jesus Christ would make available to them.**

John's one and only aim was not to occupy the centre of the stage himself, but to try to connect people with the One who was greater and stronger than he.

**People listened to John because He pointed to the One whom all people need, Jesus Christ our Creator, Sustainer and most important our Saviour from the result of our own sinful way of life.**

**Romans 3:23** [New King James] "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*"

That includes you and I.

**Romans 6:23** [New King James] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

This is the **only** way we receive life after physical death.