

An Overview of the Book of Mark

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[0 : 0 0] John 3.16 day. So, John 3.16 day was a few days ago. Was it Wednesday or Thursday? And it was funny, I got a text from my neighbor, and it was the day after. It was on March 17th.

And he texted me and he said, what did he say? Are you going to put up John 3.17 today? And it took me about 60 seconds to figure out what he was talking about, but then I realized, oh, he got it. It was John 3.16 day. So, for those of you who don't know, there's kind of a website out there, and some people have been using March 16th as a day to get the word out. John 3.16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. It's a verse that many people are familiar with, but it seems increasingly a lot of people don't know. In fact, I was listening to a testimony by Tim Tebow. Anybody know him? Tim Tebow, he was with Florida, right? And he was in some kind of big game and decided to put John 3.16 under his eyes, where you usually use the whatever it is, shadow, whatever. And during that game, people looked at searches online, especially on Google, and it just went through the roof. Everybody was looking on. What is John 3.16?

Millions of people, because millions of people love football. And so they saw that John 3.16. 94 million Google searches on that, at that football game, because of John 3.16. So people are paying attention, maybe not everybody, but some people are paying attention. John 3.16, I think I've heard of that before. Let me look and see what that is in the Bible. And so we still have some yard signs. If you signed up for one, make sure you get one. It's out in the hallway. If you didn't, I think at this point, there are probably, I know there are extras that we bought. So if you'd still like a yard sign for your yard, you can go ahead and grab one. If you have a sign from last year, but your little stake or whatever broke, or you don't have it anymore, there's some extra ones of those as well. Another thing for this week, we mentioned family night. We usually do that on Tuesday nights, once a month. This week, we had to move to Thursday. So just for everybody to keep on their radar, we're not going to be meeting Tuesday, but this Thursday for family night. And then finally, we've got this fair that we're trying to work out for our church to have a booth at the fair. And it'll be an evangelistic type thing where we want to get the gospel out to people, let them know that

Christ died for their sins, and that they can have eternal life in Him. So we'll be, first of all, submitting to make sure that we can actually get that booth secured. And then once we do that, I think probably in about a month, we'll start doing some training. Mike Stein? All right, so I'm tethered to the pulpit here. So anyway, we'll see some things coming up regarding the evangelistic booth at the Clark County Fair, which I'm really, really excited about. And I've heard from other people. Other people are excited as well. Well, you ready to jump into the scriptures?

All right, everybody got their Bibles, whether it's on paper or iPhone or whatever it might be? We are in the book of Mark. Last week we started looking at the gospel of Mark, but we didn't get very far, did we? In fact, we didn't even get to verse 1. But that's okay, I think we might hit verse 1 today. Last week was really just an opportunity to kind of set up for us how ought we to approach the gospels. There are actually four gospels with similar content. A gospel is a story about Jesus Christ and His earthly ministry, His life, His death, His burial, and His resurrection. And we have four accounts, four accounts in the scriptures of His life, death, burial, and resurrection. But last week we talked about how do we read the gospels? And there was one verse that we focused on in which Paul teaches, Paul the apostle teaches that we have known

[4 : 57] Christ according to the flesh in the past, but we know Him now, thus no longer. So there is a transition, there's a change. We're going to be reading about the life of Christ, but it's important that as we read about the life of Christ that we keep in mind contextually that many of the things that He was ministering then are different from how we approach Christ today. Jesus Christ has accomplished something specifically on the cross for us, a finished work that we can take advantage of at any time. Anyone on the planet can take advantage of that finished work by trusting in Him and have eternal life in Him without doing anything. But as we read through the gospels, that was something that was still in the future, something that Christ offered in the future. For us, it's in the past, but as we read through the life of Jesus in the gospels here, it was something still in the future.

So we want to keep that in mind. So we talked about different ways, different things to keep in mind as we read through the gospels. This morning, we're going to do kind of an overview of the book of Mark and also more generally the gospels in general. So looking at Mark among these four gospels, well, first of all, you might ask the question, well, why are there four gospels in the Bible, right?

How come there's not just one? How come you can't just have one authoritative account of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ in just one book? Well, the Bible doesn't necessarily tell us, but you can kind of surmise the more accounts that you have, the more authority that you have in those accounts. You know, there's lots of books in the Bible where you just have one account. For example, the book of Genesis tells us about the creation and a lot of things that happened in the very beginning, but we don't have four books that describe that. We just have one.

Now, the life of Christ is a central part of history. And so I think that God in his wisdom provided four different testimonies. And we're going to talk a little bit about how they're a little bit different. The audience, I think, is different in each of the four gospels, and the perspective is just a little bit different.

So if we look at the four gospels, and many people have pointed this out as they've read the gospels, they kind of see some of the differences in the content and sometimes the wording and really it seems who the audience is. The book of Matthew seems like it's really geared towards the Jewish people. God's people, the Jews. It talks a lot about, one, one of the first things you read in the book of Matthew is a genealogy. And it's a Jewish genealogy of Jesus Christ. You also see that in the book of Luke. Also, one of the things you see in the book of Matthew is a lot about prophecies that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There's dozens of them that are mentioned. Old Testament prophecies, that are about the Messiah or things in the future, that are fulfilled in the life of Christ.

[8 : 32] One of the things we'll notice in Mark, that there are actually very few. So the book of Matthew seems to be really written geared towards an audience of Jewish people.

The book of Mark, which we're going through, seems like it's written more towards the Greeks or the Romans or the Gentiles, non-Jewish people. Again, it doesn't mean that you should read one over the other, but just something to keep in mind as you read each one.

The book of Luke seems like it's really both Jew and Gentile. We know that Luke was actually a Gentile himself, or we're pretty sure.

And it is kind of paired with the book of Acts. So if you read the book of Luke, the gospel of Luke, and the book of Acts, you can tell they're from the same author. And so it's this comprehensive account, the life of Christ, and then what happened in the church after the life of Christ. And then John is this very different gospel. And it seems to be, it's hard to tell whether it's geared towards the Jewish audience or not, but its emphasis is very different from the others. And just so, one of the things with the gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, those are typically grouped together and called the synoptic gospels.

They kind of follow the same, they're pretty close to each other, and they have kind of the same thrust. Whereas the book of John, the gospel of John, is quite different. In fact, I looked up as far as unique material, the material in the book of John is 92% unique. So if you read through the book of John, 92% of what you're going to read there is unique just to the book, just to the gospel of John. Whereas what we're going through, the gospel of Mark, is only, there's only 7% of the content, 7% in the content of the book of Mark is unique to Mark. The other 93% you can find in one of the other gospels. Matthew is only, is 42% unique, and the book of Luke is about 59% unique. So you'll see that with the book of Mark, it's actually the least unique. So a lot of the content that we'll be going through in Mark, you'll actually be able to find in one of the other gospels, which is one of the reasons I wanted to go through that. Another thing you'll find, the difference between these synoptic gospels, these three, in the book of John, is the synoptics are more historical. They're looking at the life of Jesus, what he accomplished, what he taught. Whereas the book of John is more theological, a lot about who Christ is. The teaching emphasis in the synoptics are more about ethics, morals, things about the law, and then how you ought to live.

[11 : 35] Whereas in the book of John, it's all about who Jesus is. And again, it's not like, we're just talking about emphasis. You have both in both the synoptics and in the book of John, but we're just talking about what's emphasized. And then the other thing of note is the discourses that Jesus gives.

In the synoptic gospels, most of the discourses that we read, there's a big emphasis on what he said in public, what he said publicly and taught publicly. Whereas a lot of what we read in John is the things that he said in private to his disciples, the things that he said in private to his disciples. So these are some interesting things to keep in note as we read through the gospels in general. You know, one of the interesting, there's an interesting resource, and I don't know if anybody's used it, but there's a type of Bible out there called a parallel Bible. Has anybody ever used one of those? A parallel Bible is just a Bible that has all four of the gospels, and it has four columns, and you can read kind of in parallel the four gospels all together. So it gives you an opportunity to compare, to see what maybe Luke talks about that maybe the others don't, and see, kind of get a full comprehensive story from the gospels looking at all four kind of in parallel. It's kind of a neat resource. Actually, another resource that I wanted to bring up, this is a neat book called Talk Through the Bible. Has anybody ever heard of a ministry called Walk Through the Bible?

Anybody? A few, yeah. It's a really neat ministry. They basically do, I don't know if you call them a seminar. It's usually a one-day event where you can go to a church. You can sign up. I think it's pretty cheap, \$10 to go, and they basically do a summary of either the Old Testament or the New Testament.

So in a few hours, they teach you hand motions and all these different things to go through the story of the Old Testament or the story of the New Testament, and in one day, you can basically get an, it's great for kids, but it's great for adults too, to get an overview of what the Bible's about, and what a tremendous resource that is. So the guy that started that ministry put this resource together. It's called Talk Through the Bible, and it basically just summarizes every book of the Bible.

So as you're doing Bible study, you can go to this. I'm going to start reading through the book of Mark, like we're doing, and open up to that section on Mark, and it tells you who the author is, and kind of an outline of the book, some history behind it, that kind of thing, and it really helps in your Bible study. So a resource I would recommend, something that I used in going through this book.

[14 : 26] One of the interesting things about all four Gospels is nobody ever signs their name at the beginning or the end, like you have in a lot of the other books. You know, Paul, he always starts with, hey, this is written by Paul. None of the Gospels say, hey, this is written by so-and-so.

So how do we know who the different authors were? We have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And by the way, some people have criticized these biographies because they don't have names attributed to them, and so saying, well, people didn't want to really put their names on it, so it can't be trusted. It was actually very common during this time for people not to put their names on biographies for whatever reason. So if you read almost any biography during that time period, people did not put their names attached to it.

But none of the Gospels were given attribution, but people will tell you that we know that it was written by Mark through tradition. Have you ever heard that phrase, through tradition? If you ever hear people talk about things that we know through tradition, what does that mean, we know it through tradition? Well, all that means is that there were people, especially in the early church, who taught certain things, and it's through that tradition. What they taught is not Scripture itself.

It's not necessarily authoritative, and so they call it tradition rather than something else. So we actually have lots of people, part of the early church, really within a generation of these Gospels being written, who actually attributed them to the specific authors.

So, for example, the earliest that we have is a guy named Papias. We actually don't have any writings from him, but we have another guy, I think it was Eusebius, who talks about reading Papias, and Papias himself attributes this Gospel to a guy named Mark. We're going to talk a little bit about, well, who is this Mark guy? We also have a guy named Arrhenius, who actually identified the authors of all four Gospels in his book called On Heresies. He was around during about the second century in the 100s. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, these are all guys who wrote, and we have their writings today, who all wrote within about 100 years after Christ.

[16 : 56] So who was this guy, Mark, anyway? Well, Mark was, and this is from these traditions, from these writings, who they say that it was, a guy whose actually full name was John Mark. Does that ring any bells? Anybody think of a guy named John Mark from the Scriptures? He's mentioned several times and plays somewhat of a pivotal role, though not really at the forefront. He was a little bit in the background.

If you turn to Acts chapter 12, we actually read about him during this, there was a time when Peter was imprisoned. In Acts chapter 12, it tells about Peter being imprisoned, and then an angel came to rescue him. His chains fell off, just miraculously, and the angel led him out through the prison doors that were opened, miraculously, and he just walked right out of the prison. It says in verse, let's see, where do we start? Let's look at chapter 12, verse 11.

And when Peter had come to himself, he said, Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jewish people. So when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together, praying.

And so Peter, after he had been delivered from prison, where does he go? He wants to go where all the Christians are gathered. And all these Christians were gathered at the house of this lady named Mary.

She must have been probably, I'm sure she probably had a big house, so probably a woman of some prominence. And she had a son whose name was John, whose surname was Mark.

[19 : 04] This guy, John Mark, shows up later, and he ends up becoming a minister with Paul, the apostle.

If you just go a few verses later, down to verse 25, the last verse at the end of this chapter, Acts chapter 12, verse 25, it says this, And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry.

And they also took with them John, whose surname was Mark. And so Paul and Barnabas take this guy, whose name is John Mark, and they take him with them.

They find him useful for the ministry. In a few pages over, in Acts chapter 15, verse 36. Well, we find out, actually, so Paul goes on a missionary journey.

Him and Barnabas are sent out by a church in Antioch to go on a missionary journey. And this is the first time that the gospel is preached to the Gentiles. Paul comes back, he's excited, he says the door of faith has been opened to the Gentiles in his first missionary journey.

[20 : 25] On that first missionary journey, they had taken John Mark with them. As they get set up, they're going on a second journey, and they're going to go back and visit these churches that they established.

But there's a little bit of a conflict here, described in Acts chapter 15, verse 36. It says this, Then after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.

Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John, called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by their brethren to the grace of God.

So John Mark was actually this contentious character who, at least in Paul's estimation, had abandoned them during their ministry on this first missionary journey.

[21 : 31] I guess Barnabas was not convinced that it was that big of a deal. Barnabas said, Hey, we really need him. Paul's like, No, we don't. He abandoned us. They had this contention. And it ended up splitting Paul and Barnabas.

And these are the two that had worked together so closely during that first missionary journey, when they had established so many churches across Asia. So John Mark was this kind of dividing factor between these two missionaries.

It seems, though, later, if you read through Paul's letters, that there was probably some kind of reconciliation. You don't have to turn there. But Paul actually mentions Mark twice in two different letters at the end.

Paul a lot of times wraps up his letters with talking about, So-and-so greets you with me and bring this scroll to me or whatever it might be. But at the end of 2 Timothy chapter, in chapter 4, verse 11, he says, Only Luke is with me.

Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And then again in Philemon, which is just one chapter, he says this at the end of Philemon.

[22 : 46] Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. So it seems that there was some kind of reconciliation at some point, though we don't read about it in the history, for example, in Acts.

The other thing of interest to note between Paul and Barnabas, Paul mentions this in Colossians chapter 4, verse 10. He says this, Colossians 4, verse 10, Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.

So you kind of see here why maybe Barnabas was so keen on having John Mark, his cousin, come and join them. There was some family relations involved there.

So these two were related. The other thing of interest to note is that we know that, remember, we read that Peter joined up with the believers at Mary's house, who was John Mark's mother.

And it seems, as we read that account, that Peter knew Mary quite well, and probably knew her son, John Mark, quite well as well. In the book of 1 Peter, in chapter 5, verse 13, Paul makes a mention of Mark, and he says this, She who is in Babylon, Babylon here probably refers to Rome, she who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you, and so does Mark, my son.

[24 : 22] So it seems here that this guy, John Mark, who was Jewish, seemed to have a part in both the ministry of Peter and the ministry of Paul.

At different times, it seems. But he was considered a son of Peter, but also a co-laborer of Paul and Barnabas.

Why does his name John Mark, why do you have two names? You know, a lot of us don't have two names, we just have one. Well, we have a first name and a last name, but Mark doesn't seem like they didn't really have last names back then like we do now.

You had, you know, Jesus of Galilee, right? You would say maybe where you're from, or sometimes the son of so-and-so, right? And it's really actually fairly recent in history where we've had this concept of last names.

Typically, people just went by the son of so-and-so, or from such-and-such place. So why have two names? Here, yeah, here in America, a lot of times, only in the South, right, do you have two names?

[25 : 32] Like, I have an aunt, she's Betty Jean. And so she has two names. And you don't call her just Betty. You know, it's better to call her Betty Jean, right?

And you need to keep the two names together. So was Mark from the South? No, so John Mark, John is actually a Jewish name. You see that a lot in the Bible, right?

There's a lot of Johns all over the place in the Bible. But you actually don't see Mark, even though it was quite a common name, but it was a common name not among the Jews, but among the Romans.

And so I'm going to read a little passage here from the Lexham Bible Dictionary about his name. It says this, In first-century Palestine, it was common for a man to have two names, a Hebrew name, like John, by which he was known to his friends and relatives, and a Greek or a Roman name, for example, Mark, by which he was known in the business world.

Mark appears to have been a common name in the first century. Consequently, it's difficult to know whether the person mentioned in Acts and Colossians is the Mark named elsewhere in the New Testament.

[26 : 39] So we don't know for sure, right, if all these marks that are mentioned are the same one, but really there is only one person identified as Mark where we actually see part of the story, one person mentioned as Mark.

So you can kind of assume, though we can't know 100% for sure, that this is the same one. I want to talk about the date that this book was written.

There's a lot of controversy, there's a lot of people, skeptics of the Bible, who will try to date the Bible really far out, saying, you know, a lot of this stuff in the Bible, people kind of came up with these stories over time and then they finally wrote them down and they're actually, were written maybe 100 years later, which, to be honest, actually 100 years later, writing a biography isn't that long of a time.

A lot of biographies that we know of from ancient history were written hundreds of years later. But most, I would say, conservative theologians would put the dating of Mark really as actually the first gospel.

A lot of people believe it was the first gospel that was written around AD 55 to 59. So really within, what, 25, 30 years of the death of Christ?

[27 : 59] A lot of liberal theologians say that it had to be later. And the primary reason why they say that it had to be later, they say it will have to be at least after 70 AD. And the only reason they say that is because in these gospels, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple.

And how could he have predicted the destruction of the temple? How could he have known what was going to happen in the future? So these gospels must have been written after that happened.

And so their skepticism plays into the reason why they would date it at a later date. They don't believe that really Jesus was who he said he was. Talk a little bit about the time frame.

So now we're going to kind of summarize what's the content of this book of Mark. The book of Mark starts with the three-year ministry of Jesus, really starting with his baptism, his introduction to the Jewish people.

Whereas the book of Matthew and Luke both start earlier. They actually start looking at the birth of Christ. Mark, unlike them, just starts with his adult ministry.

[29 : 11] So chapters 1 through 10 of Mark, Mark's a book of only 16 chapters. 1 through 10 basically tells us about his three-year ministry.

Jesus had three years of active ministry in which he taught and he did miracles and engaged with the people. The last five chapters, chapters 11 through 16, span an eight-day period.

So we have the first two-thirds of the book of Mark are about a three-year period. The last third of the book of Mark spans about a week. There's a lot that happened in that week.

In fact, we're about, I think a lot of people call it the Holy Week, right? Holy Week. It's that last week of Jesus' life where a lot happened. Just a quick outline.

It's difficult to outline a biography, but really the book of Mark starts with his presentation to the Jews. This is a special guy. This is somebody come from the Lord.

[30 : 17] Many people are questioning, who is this man? His opposition by the Jewish leaders, his teaching and instruction to his disciples, both his inner group and just any public people who would follow him.

And then, of course, at the very end, his death, burial, and resurrection. So you ready to actually read from the book of Mark? Let's do it.

So Mark chapter 1. Let's read to, we'll just read to the first eight verses.

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. John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

[31 : 28] 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. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

And he preached, saying, there comes one after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and to loose. I indeed baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

So, the very first verse kind of sets up the whole thing. This is what I'm writing about, Mark says. Some of the other authors, they kind of just jump right into it.

Mark at least gives us one verse of introduction. So verse one, he says, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There's a lot in there. But the first thing is the beginning of the gospel, and what is the gospel?

Man, that is a great question that everybody should have an answer to. I have a little booklet out there that I wrote because I think the topic is so important. The title of that is the gospel.

[32 : 37] What is the gospel? That term gospel just means, it's just a simple word, it means good news. But the gospel, when it comes to Jesus Christ, it's a very specific type of good news.

And there's many kinds of good news, right? So you can have many kinds of gospels, but there is a specific one that is most important to us, and it's the good news of Jesus Christ.

Specifically, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Christians today, when we tell people the good news, we want them to know what? There's a message. The good news, first there's bad news, right?

Is that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Right? We've gone astray. We haven't lived the life that we ought to. We've sinned and we've become guilty through our own sin.

But the good news is that God did something for us. Christ died for the unrighteous and for the ungodly. Through his death, his burial, and then his resurrection from the grave, he made available to us forgiveness of sins and new life.

[33 : 51] And so we tell people the good news that if you just trust in Jesus, you can have eternal life. You can receive that gift. That is the gospel. That's the good news.

And so it's important that we make a distinction. So a lot of people think that the good news is the life of Jesus. And of course, the life of Jesus and his presentation to Israel, as we'll talk about here in a second, as, or maybe even next week, more, more so, his presentation to Israel as the Messiah, that is good news as well, but it's a different type of good news.

And both are good news that's important, but we need to make sure that we make a distinction, make a difference. People today don't necessarily need to know, even though it's good to know, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah for Israel.

That's important. And that is good news, especially for Israel, that he is their Messiah, their king, who has come to establish a throne on the earth in which Israel itself as a nation will be the centerpiece ruling over the nations of the earth.

That is very much good news. But the good news that people need to hear today above all else is the good news that Jesus died for their sins.

[35 : 12] So this is the beginning of the account of Jesus. Jesus himself, the person of Jesus, is at the center of this good news, of this gospel. So that's why Mark says, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We can look again, there's, I think, two identifiers here for Jesus. Jesus, the Christ, and the Son of God. What does Christ mean anyways?

Again, is it Jesus' last name? No, Jesus the Christ is actually just the word that means Messiah. In Hebrew, there's this term Messiah, the one who is coming.

Really, literally, it means the anointed one, one who is anointed. Back in the day, if you had a king, you would do what? To establish him as ruler. You would anoint him with oil.

It was a way to establish. In fact, Sarah was just telling me, coming up here in May, there's going to be this amazing event in which the king of England is going to be inaugurated.

[36 : 14] Is that the right word to use, Sarah? There's going to be an inauguration of King Charles. Right? His mother passed away recently, and there's going to be, have this huge inauguration. And I didn't know anything about it, but I just found out about it this morning.

And they'll have this huge ceremony. And I don't know if there's going to be any anointing oil, but there will be some kind of pomp and circumstance, right? This whole big thing. Back in the day, during the Jewish time, the Jewish era, you would inaugurate, let's say, a king through the anointing of oil.

And so, Messiah just means anointed one, the anointed one. And so, the Jews are waiting for this promised king who would come so that, and establish a kingdom where they would escape from the rule and tyranny of the Gentiles and have their own kingdom.

So, Jesus, the anointed one, is described here in this first verse. And then, the Son of God. Not just any king, not just a human king, but someone who is described as the Son of God.

And we know, as we find out later, as we read through the scriptures, not just the Son of God, but God, the Son, God himself, God made flesh, as John tells us.

[37 : 39] So, he is, he is the Messiah and the Son of God. Now, the prophets had foretold of someone who was coming.

And that's what is talked about here in this second verse. 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. These are actually, this is a reference to actually two different passages. One in Malachi, chapter 3, verse 1, and the other in Isaiah, chapter 40, verse, I think, verse 3.

And if we look at Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 3, it actually says this. We'll read a few verses. It says, 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.

[38 : 42] For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. So, there is one of these few, like we talked about in Matthew, there's many indications of the fulfillment of prophecy and Mark, there's very few, but this is one of them.

This guy, John, who we're looking at in these first few passages or first few verses here in the book of Mark, this guy, John, was not just somebody who came out of nowhere, it was somebody that the prophets talked about who would come.

He was part, John was part of the prophetic plan. The prophets had laid out, this is what's coming for Israel, this is what's coming in the future and they didn't necessarily know all the details about it and for a lot of things it was mysterious.

We've talked about in the past how prophecy is kind of like a puzzle that you have to try to put together and a lot of times prophecy is a lot easier understood looking back at the prophecy than looking forward and trying to figure out what it's talking about in the future and so, and I think that's somewhat intentional.

God wants people to know what's coming but not all the details but a lot of times with prophecy you look back and you see what the prophets said and you're like whoa, this all makes a lot of sense what's happening right now or what happened for example in the life of Jesus.

[40 : 01] So what was John's purpose? And we find out here in this first few passages his purpose was according to the prophet to prepare the way of the Lord to get the people ready and we find out later for who?

For the Messiah who's coming and so John's purpose was to get the people ready in short order he didn't have much time we're not even necessarily sure how long John's ministry was before Jesus came on the scene but he had this ministry where he went out into the wilderness as a prophet he dressed like a prophet in fact as we read in the scripture what was he wearing?

Was he wearing a nice robe? He was wearing camel hair and from what I understand you could make something really nice from camel's hair but this was not a nice outfit this was something that was really really he was dressing as someone would in poverty and that was actually common for the Hebrew prophets to wear things that were like that in fact it says in 2 Kings chapter 1 verse 7 in reference to Elijah the prophet one of the one of the kings had somebody had heard from the prophet and the king asked them he says then he said to them what kind of man was it that came up to meet you and told you these words and so they answered him it was a hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist and he said that's Elijah the Tishbite so he knew Elijah by what he was wearing and you know we might think it was a hairy man but a lot of people think it wasn't the hair on his body it was the kind of clothing that he wore it was coarse grainy hairy kind of clothing like camel's hair and a leather belt and that's the kind of outfit that John wore out in the wilderness here he also his diet was kind of interesting why would he eat a diet of locusts anybody ever eaten locusts locusts like crickets

I see somebody pointing to their neighbor over there you can buy bugs right and eat bugs sometimes have you ever seen those little lollipops and they have bugs inside of them they're more like gag gifts but bugs are actually something that people eat in the world typically though do you eat bugs if you have a lot of money no no but it's interesting that in the Hebrew scriptures there's dietary regulations right for the Jews they had a certain diet that they were allowed to eat and it actually mentions locusts and grasshoppers and crickets were an approved part of the Hebrew diet so there was things you could eat and things that you couldn't and these specific bugs were kinds of bugs that were approved for the Jews to eat so John ate bugs and again

I think this is all to indicate John is a prophet who is calling people to repentance to turn to the Lord and repentance requires what humility lowering yourself so one of the things you see in the life of a prophet a lot is that their lifestyle and sometimes the actions that they would take it wasn't just the words that they spoke which is part of their message but actually the life that they lived was part of their message as well so you see some bizarre things from some of the prophets somebody lying on their side for like years on end you know even people walking around in their underwear I mean some they say it was naked but most people think he at least had underwear on I hope anyway so doing some of these bizarre things we have who was it that married a prostitute and that was all part of a message so it was not just the words spoken but the lifestyle that they lived and so John the Baptist was preaching repentance to Israel and repentance requires humility lowering yourself and so he lived a lifestyle of deep humility he wore poor clothing lived in the wilderness and ate bugs and not it doesn't mention refined honey like something processed it was wild honey wild honey just unprocessed honey which yeah can be pretty good one of the things that makes me think of though bugs bugs are not for wealthy people they're for poor people and we have this whole thing going around have you seen these videos of people basically saying hey you know we it's important for us to kind of go green and try to save the planet and when you eat too much steak and meat it's actually hurting the planet and so we need to eat more bugs in order to save the planet and people are actually promoting this kind of thing and no absolutely not

[45 : 24] I mean there's nothing wrong with eating bugs if that's you know if that's kind of what you go for if that's your thing eating bugs is fine and you can actually get protein from it right but no we don't need to eat bugs to save the planet so his clothing his food who was John's audience we read here let's see in verse five 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 this land of Judea was this is the nation of Israel and so his audience was not just anybody his audience was a specific group of people the Jews a lot of people miss that they think that Jesus came and his ministry was to everyone it wasn't in fact we mentioned last week that Jesus himself said my ministry is to the lost tribes or excuse me to the lost sheep of the house of Israel the lost sheep of the house of Israel that is who his ministry was to in fact he ended up being actually very rude to Gentiles though he was impressed by their faith at times specifically to specific

Gentiles the history of Israel we know that Israel was divided into two kingdoms during their history the northern kingdom the southern kingdom ten tribes in the north two tribes in the south both ended up being carried away into captivity the one in the south which made up two tribes called Judah and Benjamin were the centerpiece of Israel that's where Jerusalem the capital of Israel was centered in the land of the tribe of Judah and so ultimately after this captivity the people of Judah that captivity they returned back to their land the people in the other tribes kind of dissipated and they kind of got assimilated into the other nations around them now not all of them some of them I think came back and we actually see people of different tribes not just Judah and Benjamin during this time in Israel we see Anna the prophet with the birth of Jesus she was from the tribe of

Asher John the Baptist himself was a Levite and we know that the Levites lived among the Jews but a lot of the people were Judeans they were from the tribe of Judah and or Benjamin or excuse me or Benjamin and so it says when it says here that then all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him and all were baptized by him in the Jordan River confessing their sins this is talking about Jewish people they came out to hear this kind of crazy man dressed in crazy clothes eating bugs to hear his message and he baptized them what was his message John's message was a message of repentance and he had this ritual that he wanted them to complete a water ritual of what we call today baptism baptism is one of the most controversial topics in the history of

Christianity this whole idea of water baptism or just baptism in general and it's interesting that it is so controversial and has been for so long that translators refuse to actually translate the word the Greek word baptism did you know that so the Greek word for baptism is baptism well that sounds like baptism and it sounds like baptism because we didn't nobody translated it it's called a transliteration where you just kind of create a new word from a foreign language because you don't usually it's because you don't have an equivalent but we actually do have an equivalent for baptism but people refuse to actually translate it because it's too controversial because if you translate it one way you're going to offend half of Christianity if you translate it a different way you'll alienate the other half and so there are so many different views on water baptism things on well what do you do with the water do you pour it do you sprinkle it do you dunk people yeah well who's supposed to administer the baptism you know is it supposed to be a priest or somebody in robes or can it be anybody can it be a parent can you just do it by yourself what age do you do it with little babies do you do it with young kids does it have to be adults what do you say there's some people that fight over what do you have to say when you actually sprinkle or dunk or whatever it is that you do what are the words that you have to say so many controversies the word baptism just means to wash or very literally it means to overwhelm to overwhelm that's what baptizo means to overwhelm and so a lot of people have taught well that means that it must be immersion so when we do this water ritual we have to use immersion you have to get them all completely under the water but then you read in the gospels where it talks about people baptizing their furniture and then it's like well did people take their furniture out to the

Jordan River and dunk it under the water that that doesn't really seem to make sense I think that it's I think that we make a little bit too much of these things when it comes to all these different things and really this is something that was important to the Jewish people it wasn't something new this thing that John the Baptist started doing one of the things you'll notice is that you don't read like people asking well what is this strange ritual that John the Baptist is doing it was not a strange ritual to them they had ritual washings throughout the Jewish kind of ecosystem they had all these laws and ordinances and a lot of them included ritual washings you can read in Leviticus 14 about ritual washings for lepers and houses that are infected with leprosy you can read in Numbers chapter 19 about the ritual washings if you come in contact with a dead corpse there was this whole washing ritual and of course you have the priests themselves who had to go through lots of washing rituals and so this was not something that was brand new this was something that they were somewhat familiar with but this was an opportunity that people had what was the call that John was saying let me read this again verse 4

[52 : 23] John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and for time's sake I'm just going to kind of wrap this up John came telling people I'm preparing the way for somebody who's coming after me we'll probably get into that more next week somebody's coming after me shoes I'm unworthy to tie but I'm preparing the way for him and we need to get ready and we need to repent repentance means to turn we need to turn towards God a lot of people right just because you're a Jew doesn't mean you're living the way you should and I have this water ritual that I want you to submit to this water ritual as a sign that you're committed to turning towards God and so people came and I see this as kind of like a revival you know we've talked about they had this thing going on

I don't know if it's still going on Asbury down in Kentucky this revival and then that movie came out about the Jesus revolution which was kind of like a revival so there's a lot of talk about revival these days but John's kind of starting a little revival here right getting people excited about the coming king what the Lord is doing so they're getting excited and they're coming out it says all the land of Judea now did all of Judea did every Jew come out we know that they didn't in fact Jesus condemns the Pharisees later and he says to them that you have rejected the will of God by refusing the baptism of John so the purpose of John's water baptism ritual was as like a touch point a touch point as many rituals are or symbolic things a touch point and this was common in the Jewish era touch point for people to declare their intent I want to repent I want to turn to God and so

I'm going to submit to this baptism and the Pharisees refused to do it and Jesus condemned them for it and it wasn't just to be baptized a lot of people see this ritual of baptism as some kind of a magical thing that if I just submit to this water ritual then God will save me or I'll maybe be blessed by God or a lot of people think if you submit to this water ritual then I'll get into heaven and that's not the case even for these Jewish people it was not enough for them just to submit to this Jewish ritual for this water ritual could they just go and be baptized no it says up in the gospel of Luke chapter 7 it goes into this in a little bit more detail Luke chapter 7 verse 29 says this and when all the people heard him even the tax collectors justified

God having been baptized with the baptism of John but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves not having been baptized and then in Matthew chapter 3 verse 5 it says this again about the ministry of John the Baptist then Jerusalem all Judea and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan confessing their sins but when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism now they came why to be baptized said no they came to see what was going on he said to them brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance saying hey you need to bear fruits worthy of repentance this baptism thing which they refused to submit to as we read in that previous verse because they didn't want to give any credence really to this guy

John they wanted the power and control for themselves they didn't want to give credence to some crazy prophet but Paul was saying it's important to bear fruits of repentance and so the baptism itself was not necessarily crucial the crucial thing though it was something that was asked for them to submit to but the repentance itself the turning towards God is what John the Baptist wanted and what God wanted for the people to be prepared for the king who was coming so that their hearts could be in line and ready for the king who was going to come the last thing I'll end with here is this is what John the

[57 : 30] Baptist said I indeed baptize you this is verse 8 Mark chapter 1 verse 8 I indeed baptize you with water but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and so he's saying I'm doing this water ritual but Jesus is coming somebody is coming later after me and he's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit there's a different kind of baptism in the book of Acts we read I think more about what happened there when this actually happened in Acts chapter 2 we see this outpouring of the Spirit on the Christians in the book of Acts after Jesus ascended and he said I'm going to send my spirit I'm going to send him but after that event happened and the people were wondering what's going on the Jews in the area they were asking what's going on then Peter spoke up and he says this is what was spoken by the prophet

Joel this is not something that's new this is not something that came out of the middle of nowhere this is something that was prophesied and this is what Joel said the prophet isn't that an interesting word picture I'm going to pour out my spirit like water so John the Baptist I'm doing this water ritual with you guys today using water H₂O but there's one coming he's going to pour out his spirit on you so one of the things I said as we read through the gospels a lot of people get caught up in baptism there's a lot of Christian sects out there that will say that in order to have eternal life in order to be kind of in right standing with

God you have to go through a water ritual and that's just not the case today Jesus Christ accomplished something what we call a finished work he completed something that is all that we need in Galatians chapter 5 or excuse me Galatians chapter 6 Paul says this about this new work that Christ did Galatians chapter 6 verse 14 and 15 but God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation he's talking about another ritual called circumcision in which people you know this was something done on babies circumcision the cutting off of the flesh he says that doesn't matter today there's something else that matters above it all the only thing that avails anything that actually has any power for us is this new creation being a new person having a new life in

Christ so circumcision doesn't avail anything baptism in water doesn't avail anything but a new creation are you in Christ and anyone can be in Christ just by putting their faith and trust in him John the Baptist had a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins the remission of sins or the forgiveness of sins Ephesians 1 verse 7 says this in him we have redemption through his blood does it say through water is our redemption through water no it's through his blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace Christ died for us if we just trust in him we don't have to worry about a water ritual that we have to submit to in order to receive the forgiveness of sins the forgiveness of sins has already been accomplished through

Jesus Christ and by trusting in him we can have that our faith our trust the gospel that we preach is the death burial and resurrection of Jesus all these fleshly one of the verses we talked about last week like I mentioned earlier we have known Jesus Christ according to the flesh yet we know him thus no longer you know water is a very fleshly thing right water rituals is a very fleshly thing but our life that we live today as Christians is a life in Christ it's the new creation that matters that our life is hidden with Christ in God Colossians chapter 2 says we are buried with him in baptism and is it water baptism that's talking about no we're baptized into his death it says what does that mean we're identified with him just as he died we also died just as he rose from the dead we also have new life so the gospel of grace that we preach today is that anyone regardless of what they've done and these people a lot of them

[63 : 16] I'm sure had many sins to repent of right and wouldn't it be good news if we could just go through all these acts of repentance and all these rituals and God would have favor on us and he would forgive us that's good news but you know what even better news is is that all you have to do is trust on him and you can have complete forgiveness of sins not just now but on into the future and that is the gift of grace which God has offered us so you have one good news that John the Baptist was bringing good news you can come and be water baptized and have remission of your sins but we have even greater news you come to Christ and you can be clean and whole complete in him not having to do any more sacrifices not having to do any more cleansing rituals it's finished it's done amen all right let's finish up there

I like to take questions at the end of the service but I ran out of time so yeah thanks to Marv's influence let's let's finish in a word of prayer father thank you so much for the gospel the gospel of grace in which we trust in you and through your blood what you've done for us we can have eternal life as we study the life of Jesus help us father to understand what you would have us know from Christ's life the things that we how we should know Jesus according to the flesh it's important to know but also especially contrasting how we know you how we know you not according to the flesh but according to the spirit which you have accomplished spiritually in us may we grow each and every day knowing you more and better in Jesus name amen