

## Mark 1:1-15

## The BEGINNING

PRELIMS. As we are studying the Book of Mark in **Christianity Explored**, I thought it would be **helpful** to have a look at Mark together without in any way affecting the course. \*I just want to mention a few verses that **stuck out** at me as I read Mark for myself. I am not sure how much of it we will do but we will start today.

It is always helpful to know who is speaking to us! It can affect how we will receive a message! So, who was Mark? **Read 14:48-52!** He is very likely the “**young man who followed Him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked**” [14: 51,52] Why record this insignificant incident, which does not seem to be **relevant**? Well, it may well be relevant, because, if it was Mark who wrote this, the incident was not only **vivid** but **unforgettable** to **him**! He never forgot it!!

What likely happened was this: It was the time of the **crucifixion**. Mark has just recorded that when the captors came looking for Jesus, **all** the disciples **fled** [50c] It was early in the morning and all the disciples were staying at Mark’s mother’s house and he was rudely awakened! He **grabbed** a shirt, or blanket, and wound it round him and he **fled**! Having just mentioned that **all** the disciples fled, he does not want those of his readers, some who may have been there at the time, to think he was a brave young man and did not flee like the others, so he tells this incident, that he too fled, but does not give his name. Mark probably tried to **hide** himself among the crowd who followed Jesus, but he was “**seized**” and scampered away! He too was **scared**! Mark is here giving us a **picture** of the **fear** and **panic** of **true** believers when the evil band with clubs, came to take Jesus and his followers! It **was frightening**! There **was hysteria**!!

Mark starts his gospel, by telling us about the **beginning** of the gospel! **Note** where he **starts**! He starts with the OT! With Isaiah the prophet foretelling of the events that are about to take place in the lives of Mark’s readers. “...**the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ...as it is written in Isaiah the prophet**”[1] The gospel is **no new invention** - of God or anyone else. It was **prophesied** (700 yrs) before it took place by Isaiah [Isa 40:3], and then 300 yrs after that by

Malachi [Mal 3:1] It was **planned in eternity** past! **Before** the world!

John the Baptist is the **voice** of one crying in the wilderness. Now we need to remember that in the **OT**, yes, the OT, there were **many baptisms**! That is why it is no great thing for John to have the **new one** “*a baptism of **repentance** for the **forgiveness** of sins*”[4]. Jesus challenged the Jews about John’s baptism ‘From heaven or from man?’[Mat 21:25] They were afraid to answer Him! Writer to Hebs refers to “*doctrine of **baptisms/washings***”[Heb 6:2]

John’s baptism was not an outward profession but an **inward grace**! When he saw the Phars/Sadducees coming he had to declare “*You **brood of vipers**! Who warned you to **flee from the wrath** to come? Bear **fruit in keeping with **repentance****. And do **not presume** ...we have Abraham as our father*”[Mat 3:7]! **APP** Imagine **greeting** newcomers to your church that way? John Baptist was a very **strict disciplinarian**! He did perhaps emphasise too much the judgmental aspect of God’s justice, rather than the mercy aspect of the Cross! That is why he became **depressed** when he saw X’s **good works** and X did not seem to bring the promised **judgment** that was prophesied!

You see, there was **always** a **spiritual** element in the OT church! Although it may **appear** that salvation was determined **racially**, by blood relationship to Abraham, John makes it plain, not true! The Jews needed a **circumcised heart** for **salvation** - not a circumcised flesh! Even in the giving of the **Lev Law** reference is made: “*if then their **uncircumcised heart** be **humbled***”[Lev 26:41]! In Deu Jews are **commanded** “*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your **heart**, and be no longer stubborn*”[Deu 10:16] Jeremiah repeated it in [Jer 4:4] and complained that “*all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart*”[Jer 9:26] And in the **promise** “*And the LORD your God **will circumcise your heart** and the **heart** of your **offspring***” [Deu 30:6]! Ezek **twice** in talking of the nations “*Thus says the Lord GOD: No foreigner, **uncircumcised in heart and flesh**...shall enter my sanctuary*” [Ezek 44:7,9] Finally **Stephen** refers to those still living in his day as: “*You stiff-necked people, **uncircumcised in heart and ears**, you always resist the Holy Spirit*”[Acts 7:51]

So, in **both** OT and NT there is the important distinction between an **outward relationship** to God in covenant, and the **inward spiritual**

relationship to God through His grace and by His Holy Spirit! So, God wants **all** His covenant people to **press on** and ensure that they have that vital spiritual relationship which makes them Sons of God! *“be all the more diligent to **make** your calling and election **sure**”*[2P]

Now X Himself was baptised by John again, obviously, it is **not** Xn baptism. But look what happens next! The Holy Spirit **leads** Him into the wilderness [12], and Mat tells us it was *“**to be** tempted by the **devil**”* [Mat 4:1] Ever since the Fall of man, life on earth is a **series** of **tests!** We need to realise that. Although life on earth was **initially** meant to be as heaven, it no longer is - not even for the Son of God. Sin spoiled it all. Life is a **battle** until we get to heaven. And as in any war, some have it worse than others. For some, life is almost a **constant** battle against illness, pain, sorrow, discouragement. Jesus with no sin of His own, was called to live life on our behalf, and overcome every temptation that came upon Him!

And *“He was with the **wild** animals”* [13]! **Wild** animals! Not very pleasant!! But we read *“the **angels** were **ministering** to Him”*[13c] I’d love to know more about that! The ministry of angels is a **neglected subject!** The Bible makes clear angels **are** *“**all ministering spirits sent out to serve**”* those who will *“inherit salvation”*[He 1:14] **Imagine** the scene - X surrounded by beasts - they would come up and **‘sniff’** Him! On the other hand, perhaps they would **lick** a **wound** Looking at David **Attenborough’s** nature programmes, one wild animal that frightens me most is the **hyena!** Well, this Jordan valley was the **haunt** of hyenas, and jackals, panthers, even lions...

.....but angels were there **controlling** the situation! Jesus was being **protected** by angels, **visible** or **invisible!** Sometimes angels assume a human body - sometimes they do not! We can **interact** with angels and **not know** it! *“some **have** entertained angels **unawares**”*[He13:2] Many of the **mysterious** happenings in life, I believe, are very likely the work of angels! Ask the sentry guards at Herod’s prison when Peter was led out by one. Ask the sentry men outside X’s grave!

The very last inspired recorded words of Jesus informs us that Christ **sends** angels with messages **for churches!**! *“I, Jesus, have **sent** my angel to **testify** to **you** about these things **for the churches**”*[Re22:16]

Surely if they are sent to minister to those who are to inherit salvation then the most likely place to find inheritors of salvation is the church!  
[BS next few weeks on **Angels** - Where do evil angels come from?]

What is the gospel? What is its **content**? When we read a notice that the gospel is preached in this place, what do we immediately think of? Jesus came to Galilee “*proclaiming the **gospel of God***” [14] He said **two** things that we tend to forget. He said: “*The **time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand;***” What did He mean? **What time?**

Ans: Friends, we forget that Xnity is **not** primarily an ideology or a philosophy (although it is by default). Xnity is **not a crutch** for the simple to lean on. Xnity is **reality**, ie, **history and facts!** The whole thing has historical **roots** and a historical **basis!** Xnity is **not simply** a system of **beliefs** all joined together. Its **based on actual happenings in history in time and space!** You can go to the actual place in Palestine where Jesus died on the Cross. You can go to the Red Sea where Israel crossed over. You can go to Mount Sinai. There are **facts** in the Xn faith that need **explaining**. There are **questions** that need to be asked. **Why** did they crucify Jesus? **Why** did so many common people **die** for His cause? Because it was **True!** It happened in **time!**

The **time?** The time **promised** to Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, the Prophets, to **Israel**, etc, etc about the Messiah. the **faith** of all these people were **united** in One Hope and the time of that Hope being fulfilled. The **King** of the kingdom **promised**, has now come! He is “*at hand*”! You can see Him, you can hear Him, you can handle Him!

The second thing: The message was “*repent*”! [15c] Everyone needs to repent. We do not preach for conversions! We cannot convert. God uses all sorts of means and He alone converts. We preach **repentance!** “*except you repent you shall all likewise perish*”! John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and Paul’s ministry all began with repentance!

And what then? “*believe the gospel*” - and the gospel is just what we had at the beginning of the chapter about the baptism of “*repentance for the forgiveness of sins*”!! [4] When we repent, we are forgiven. So many people today, just do not want to face the reality of their sinful life and want the joy of believing. But there is no true believing unless there is repentance!