

## Chapter 1

### 1:1-3

**The beginning of the gospel** If Mark is using **gospel** in the sense that Paul is (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), it is certainly an expansion on Paul's truncated version and goes on the vein of thought that if Jesus was able to die for our sins, then he must have lived a perfect life—otherwise there would be no resurrection. We are, therefore, reading of His perfect life.<sup>1</sup>

“The “gospel” is an important subject in Mark. The word *euangelion* appears seven times (also 1:14–15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; and 14:9. Cf. also 16:15) versus only four times in Matthew and none in Luke and John (but Matthew has the cognate verb once and Luke ten times).”<sup>2</sup>

**of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2As it is written in the Prophets:** There are some variances in the manuscripts here: Some versions drop “Isaiah the prophet.” Without getting into manuscript evidence and translation philosophy, let's address two arguments:

1. It was an addition by some scribes to clarify where the crux of the quotation is coming from, but it was not given by the original writer as he would have known it wasn't correct.
2. It was dropped by later scribes who assumed the original writer would have never given a “faulty reference.”<sup>3</sup>

**“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.”** This, along with his description found in verse 6 and its implication of the prophecy concerning the “coming Elijah” in Malachi 4 make the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> references to Malachi found in this book. **3“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’ ”** So, two prophets are quoted here: Malachi (3:1, to be exact); and Isaiah (40:3, to be exact).

### 1:4-8

**4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance** Repentance is big, and whatever it means at this junction one comes away understanding that it was huge from the perspective of Jesus as well (1:14-15).

**for** One should point out that if you “take an aspirin for a headache, it is because you already have one; not because you wish to have one. So also if you are baptized **for the remission of sins** it could be understood that you are being baptized because “you already have” **remission of sins**, and so you wish to partake of **baptism**.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, maybe Mark is just using the “Good news of Jesus Christ” in a different way than Paul did. This leads to another question, though: “Would Paul declare Mark as ‘damned’ in light of Galatians 1:8-9?” It rather leads to another question, which version of the **Gospel** will the end-times angel be preaching (Revelation 14)? It is my opinion, then, that Paul gave a truncated version of Mark's **Gospel**.

<sup>2</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 38. Knowing that Matthew uses the word Gospel only four times and: 1. Virtually none of them are other than what one finds in Mark (Other than Matthew 9:36, perhaps—which could be easily attributed to Matthew's thought pattern from 4:23 and a handy way to summarize), and 2. Matthew lacks the thematic flow of Mark...one could argue that Mark is the original document while Matthew is a sort of enlargement/development (otherwise, Matthew would have been more concerned about the thematic flow of the word “Gospel”).

<sup>3</sup> However, they unwittingly allow a clear conglomeration of Jeremiah and Zechariah to exist without similar argument in Matthew 27 where we read of Judas' place of death. Jeremiah was given the credit for the bulk of the conglomeration, perhaps, because he was the better known of the two, or because the books were in a different order at the time and his was first (the entirety of the group being labeled “Jeremiah” because it was the front book), or because the bulk of the material making the point of Matthew came out of Jeremiah.

<sup>4</sup> Alvah Hovey, ed. *An American Commentary on the New Testament, Mark & Luke* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1881), 16; This commentary offers a lesser-known argument that sounds quite nice: “Pardon was not then promised or expected upon submission to baptism, in itself regarded; but this act, in which repentance was confessed and reformation of life was promised, was evidently a suitable act for one who wished to forsake his sins and be forgiven.”

**5 Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all** The comprehensiveness of these two “all” statements of verse 5 should strike the reader with the effect of an entire population being baptized, and giving the credit for it to this very unorthodox man. **baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.**

**8 I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”** This is the second reference to Isaiah (44:3).

**1:10**

**10 And immediately,** Used 40 times by Mark.<sup>5</sup>

**coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting** a clear third reference to Isaiah 64 and a wonderful fulfillment of the God of Heaven coming down through “rent” Heavens in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

**1:11**

**Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** There are three things which were our observation as to the details the Holy Spirit includes within the record:

1. There are three distinct persons within what is normally called “the Trinity” (verse 11).
2. There is at least a necessary consideration as to the mode of baptism (with the “coming up from the water” (verse 10).
3. The very curt beginning to a ministry full of urgency and intent (“immediately”, verse 10). Before one feels like they can finally put their hands on their knees in 2:13, they are moved quickly and often through 1:10, 18, 20, 21, 29, 30, 31, 42, 43 and 2:2, 8 & 12.

We are not saying that these were teaching points for Mark’s agenda, but we are saying they were not, at least, excluded by the Holy Spirit, and did occur.

**But Having now read the account of the baptism of Jesus;** and having observed that Mark called it “the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” let us answer the question of “why did Mark begin with Jesus’ baptism.” The short answer is: “to show us the beginning of the good news of Jesus the Christ and Son of God.” It means, then, that Mark knew the story began here with this episode of Jesus’ baptism.

Having given, now, the short answer, here are the reasons that apply to Mark’s agenda<sup>6</sup>:

1. To show a proper reception to an approaching King (verses 2, 3, and 15).<sup>7</sup> In that time there would be a forerunner for a King to “clear the way” and get people’s attention.
2. To show us when Jesus received Who it was that drove Jesus to temptation (verse 12). All one must do is see how little is mentioned of the temptation of Jesus in Mark compared to Matthew and Luke to see that the temptation was not the point of baptism, and was certainly not a big deal in proving that Jesus was the Christ or that Jesus was the Son of God (Mark 1:1).
3. To show us how Jesus became the Christ. Jesus was always known as the “Christ” (1:1), but that was proleptically. The Holy Spirit came upon him and anointed him at his baptism so though he has always been Jesus the Christ, he was actually in real time “Christed,” at his baptism. Some have asked whether Jesus’ identity as “the Christ” (verse 1) actually occurs here. In other words, was Jesus “the Anointed” (“the Christ”) before He was “anointed” (“christed”)? Since we’re dealing with Isaiah language four times already in this passage, it seems reasonable that Isaiah 61:1 is at least being recognized:

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<sup>5</sup>“G2112 - eutheōs - Strong's Greek Lexicon (KJV).” Blue Letter Bible. Web. 16 Jan, 2017.

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G2112&t=KJV>; The author that uses it the most after that is Matthew with 15, and then Luke with 8.

<sup>6</sup>This is not a Gospel harmony. I will only consult the other Gospels to keep me from error in interpretation of this Gospel. To do anything else would be little more than undervaluing the agenda of Mark. Some of these reasons are already listed in my Matthew commentary and applied to his agenda.

<sup>7</sup>*Life Application Bible, NIV Edition* (Tyndale House & Zondervan Publishing, 2001), 1725.

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has **anointed** Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

Here, then, is the verb form of “Messiah” (O.T.) or “Christ.” Luke 3:21-4:21 leave no almost no doubt—placing Jesus’ quoting of this Scripture almost immediately after His baptism with Jesus saying “today this Scripture is fulfilled.”

We are absolutely not saying that there was an eternal Christ that came upon Jesus. This is the perspective of most eastern religions and those American offspring spawned primarily in the 1800’s (such as Christian Science).<sup>8</sup>

**“The earliest heretics took advantage of this statement to represent this event as the descent of the eternal Christ upon the man Jesus for personal indwelling.** Later critics have adopted this view. But it need hardly be said here that such an opinion is altogether inconsistent with all that we read elsewhere of the circumstances of the Incarnation, and of the intimate and indissoluble union of the Divine and human natures in the person of the one Christ, from the time of the ‘overshadowing of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Highest.’ The Spirit descending upon him at his baptism was not the descent of the eternal Christ upon the man Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>

4. To show us how Jesus became the Son. Did you notice that the voice from Heaven declares Him to be “my Son?” There is good reason to see that, as “Christ”, “Son” is a term that was given to Jesus at His baptism. Furthermore, as will be seen here, “Son” is related to “Christ”/“anointed One” and to the idea of “kingship” (discussed under #'s 1 and 3).

*Psalm 2:1-7 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His **Anointed**, saying, 3“Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.” 4He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6“Yet I have set **My King** On My holy hill of Zion.” 7“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, **‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.***

It is immediately observable, then, that Jesus was “begotten” or became “the begotten Son of God” at His baptism.

5. To show us where Jesus has been (verse 9). Why is Mark taking the time to use those words other than the simple fact that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to do so? Because it is to draw in contrast to the other folks (1:5).
6. To show us the impeccable character of Jesus (verse 11).
7. To show us Jesus' identification with sinful people (verse 4). Okay, here is Jesus taking part in a baptism that symbolizes repentance from sin. Jesus did not have any sin to confess, but he was still taking part in a baptism of repentance from sin. How do we justify this? Consider this fifth reference to the prophet Isaiah:

*6:1...I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; And one cried unto another, and said, Holy,*

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<sup>8</sup>For more information on this theory listen to <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=123141240368> [accessed 1/18/17].

<sup>9</sup>H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *St. Mark*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 2.

*holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.*