

Exegetical Notes, Mark 1:1-13
“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

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Mark 1:1-13

Verse 1

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

- The Gospel of Mark contains no birth narrative. However, it opens with three very strong declarations.
- The first declaration is found in the untranslated word “gospel.” The word means “good news.” From the very beginning, Mark declares that what follows is good news.
- This good news relates to Jesus Christ. The second declaration is found in the untranslated word “Christ.” This is not Jesus’ last name. It is his title. The word means “anointed one.” It is the Greek form of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” By using this word, Mark declares that Jesus was the anointed one of God; the one God had set aside for the purpose of saving his people.
- The third great declaration is found in the words, “The Son of God.” By using these words, Mark declares that Jesus was God come to earth. Mark declares that Jesus was not just flesh and blood he was divine.
- These three great declarations set the tone for everything that follows in Mark’s Gospel.

Verses 2-3

It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way -- a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

- This passage comes from Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. Its point is that straight, easy roads should be prepared for the Messiah because his time is valuable and his mission important. It is a cry for all humanity to make the way of God’s anointed one easy and direct. It also contains a warning to stay out of his way.

Verse 4

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

- Mark sees John the Baptist as the one Isaiah and Malachi spoke about, the one sent to “prepare the way for the Lord.”
- Mark says that John came to prepare the people to receive Jesus. He did this by preaching about the necessity to confess sin and get right with God and by baptizing people as a sign of personal repentance. Baptism was a sign of a changed heart.

Verse 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 impacted the whole region of Judea, as well as the city of Jerusalem. Great numbers of people repented of their sin and were baptized by him.

Verse 6

John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

- John was a rather strange person. He dressed after the manner of Elijah. See 2 Kings 1:8 and Zechariah 13:4. His clothing and diet proclaimed him to be the one who would come before the Lord to prepare the way.

Verses 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. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

- John’s message pointed to the one who would come after him, Jesus. He told of Jesus’ greatness and predicted that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. This prophecy was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The story is told in Acts 2.

Verses 9-11

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And

a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

- This moment marks the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry.
- All three members of the Godhead are present. The Father speaks from heaven to declare his approval of the Son. The Son submits to the will of the Father and is baptized even though he is sinless and does not need a baptism of repentance. The Holy Spirit descends upon the Son to enable him to do all that the Father calls upon him to do.

Verses 12-13

At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

- Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was taken into the desert by the Holy Spirit. There he was alone, deprived of human company. He was tempted by Satan to surrender his divinely appointed mission in exchange for other things. The story is told in Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus remained faithful through the tempting and was attended by angels following it.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Prepare the Way of the Lord*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)