



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Seeing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God



Part 4

"The Messenger of the Messiah"

2-28-21

Introduction: Religion in 1st c. Judea

- Although rule of Judea was divided between Herod's sons (Antipas & Philip), it was the Romans who exercised control over both the political and religious lives of the Jews. Nowhere was this seen more clearly than in Rome's authority to select the high priest and the head of the Sanhedrin. As a result, many of the faithful from among the populace saw the ritual institutions of their people (the temple) to be compromised.
- The people were also experiencing a 400 year famine of the Word of the Lord, leading some to turn away from the keeping of the Law (Sadducees), others to fervently pursue keeping it as well as their own manmade rules (Pharisees), while still others separated themselves from society and moved out into the Judean wilderness (Essenes) to await the redemption promised by the prophets.

Key Point: The ministry of John the Baptist served to prepare the way for Messiah by calling the people to acknowledge their need for _____ and _____ from their sin as they awaited God's promised redemption.

The Appearance of the Messenger

Mark 1:2-5—² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY, ³ THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS: 'PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT,'" ⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

- **No background information on John is given to us in Mark's gospel other than these OT quotations.**
 - ⇒ None of the gospels provide any detail regarding the life of John leading up to his sudden appearance. Only Luke gives us details about his family background (he was of the tribe of Levi and his father served as a priest). His parents are identified as godly people and the uniqueness of his birth highlights his importance in redemptive history.
 - Luke 1:76-78a—⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God...
- **Mark places emphasis on both John's _____ and his _____.**

The Wilderness

- ⇒ The wilderness imagery has great OT significance. It was the place of new beginnings (Exod. 19:1) but also a place where sin was both judged and purged (Num. 14:29-33). It was also a place of hope as it was the location from which Israel entered the Promised Land and the place from which the prophets anticipated that their redemption would come (Isa. 40:3).

John's Work

(1) _____

Background: Although this was not a practice that was commanded in the OT, it is certainly related to certain Jewish ceremonial washings which are referenced in Scripture as well as to practices that developed in the intertestamental period.

(2) _____

"repentance"—μετάνοια (*metanoia*) —A change of mind, as it appears to one who repents, of a purpose or action.

"Contrary to popular thinking, repent does not mean *to be sorry*...In the NT it indicates a complete change of attitude, spiritual and moral towards God. The primary meaning involves a turning to God which may indeed make a person sorry for his sins, but that sorrow is a by-product of the repentance and not the repentance itself." — Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*

- ⇒ John's proclamation is that _____ of sins is made possible through the act of repentance, with baptism serving as an outward sign of an inward work.

- **There was a significant response to John's ministry from the people of the region.**
 - ⇒ They were baptized by John, recognizing their need for cleansing. They were also confessing their sins, recognizing that they were themselves sinners in need of forgiveness.

Key Point: John's work serves as a direct challenge to the _____ of Israel's religious institutions.

- * *Israel needs to be forgiven of sin, but the sacrifices of the temple are ultimately inadequate.*
- * *Israel needs to be cleansed from the defilement of sin, but their ritual washings are inadequate.*
- * *Israel cannot rely on their earthly heritage alone, but must look to the completion of God's promises (Luke 3:8).*

The Man & His Message

Mark 1:6-8—⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- **The description of John highlights the _____ nature of his ministry.**
 - ⇒ John's clothing and diet demonstrated the simplicity of his lifestyle and his reliance upon the provision of the Lord. More than that, however, John seems to have specifically chosen to dress in the manner of Elijah.
2 Kings 1:8—They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah..."
 - ⇒ The connection to Elijah would further establish him as the prophetic messenger who would prepare the way for Messiah.
Mal. 4:5-6—⁵ "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."
- **John's words that accompany his work show that he anticipated a _____ work to come.**
 - (1) **Messiah is John's Master** →
 - (2) **Messiah will perform a greater work** →
Ezek. 36:25-27—²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Key Point: John's ministry pointed the people away from their religious institutions and away from even his own ministry so that they would be prepared to _____ the ministry of Messiah Himself.

"There was all the difference in the world between John's symbolic baptism with water and Jesus' supernatural baptism with the Spirit. John showed people their natural hearts; Jesus gave people new hearts. John brought people to the Jordan, to the river of death; Jesus brought people to the river of life." —John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Mark*

Concluding Thoughts

On Baptism:

1. John's baptism looked _____ to the work that Christ would accomplish.
2. Christian baptism looks back to that _____ work.

On Repentance:

1. **Repentance involves a personal change of mind and willingness to agree with God regarding our _____.**
Psa. 51:2-4—² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
2. **Repentance involves an acknowledgement of our sin through _____.**
Psa. 32:1,3-5—¹ Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered...³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah
3. **For unbelievers, repentance is about salvation, for believers it is about restoring _____.**
Rev. 3:19-20—¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.
1 John 1:7—But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.