

Mark 1:1-8 – Preparing for the Full Gospel

TSK, GreekLexicon, Henry, JFB, Geneva, PNT, Trapp, Robertson, Poole, Expositor, Gill, Calvin, Alexander, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Many people believe that John Mark, the young man who abandoned Paul (Acts 15) and was later reconciled to him (Colossians 4), wrote this shortest Gospel. While Mark is a Roman name, he was probably Jewish but adopted his name, even as Paul adopted a Roman name and dropped Saul. Mark was probably Mardocai. Mark had great exposure (接触) to Gentile lands, (Rich Barnabas of Cyprus was his relative. His mother was well to do.) and that exposure to Gentiles (外邦人) is evident in his writing. The Gospel by Mark is often called the Gentile Gospel, and is directed to Gentiles. And while we have no record of Mark being an Apostle, there is strong historical tradition that puts Mark under the direction of the Apostle Peter. Further, it is easy to believe that Mark was one of the 70 disciples mentioned in Luke 10:1.

Now I am eager to get into the substance of the Gospel (福音), but we will begin today by looking at the foundational issues of the Gospel – what it is, how it came to be, and how it was preached.

Our headings are:

Identification of the Gospel

Preparation for the Gospel

Proclamation of the Gospel

Our goals are: That you will learn of the provision of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for you so that you may be saved and sanctified (使成圣), and that you will be motivated to spread its life-giving value.

Identification of the Gospel

1 The beginning of the **gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**.

1. What is the Gospel? “Gospel” means “good news” or “glad tidings 消息.”

2. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ - Messiah. Why is it necessary to clarify that it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? While there are all kinds of good news, none of them is salvic. Only Jesus was **good tidings to the world**...and **men would have peace** through him. That was what the angels cried out at Jesus’ birth. Consider 2 illustrations:

a. If you learn that ISIS has been defeated and their warriors killed, that good news will bring you joy. The destruction of ISIS is good because you have less to fear. At least they won’t be able to kill you. But that news does **not have a saving effect** on your soul as the good news about Jesus.

b. If you learn to be a good moral person, like many cultures teach – Chinese, for instance, it might give a degree of joy, but that good news does not have one single effect on your salvation. The good news of Jesus does, **Jesus is the author and the subject of the Gospel**, so it is rightly called “his” Gospel. Further, he is deliverer of the Gospel.

3. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus was a common name, but it was absolutely uncommon to be named as “THE” Son of God – which was a specific title. The Jews knew that this was a title for the 2nd person of the Trinity. This is why they executed Jesus – he claimed to be the Son of God.

John 19:7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

The substance of the Gospel is that Christ would come among the people and fulfill the Gospel’s purpose...to die for the sins of the world.

4. But the truth is, this Gospel was in existence long before Jesus made his appearance on earth. The Gospel was in the Garden of Eden. The Gospel is like a tree. **A tree is still a tree, whether it is short or tall, or whether is young or old.** And this tree was always there. Jesus made the tree grow to its fullness. The substance of the Gospel is exactly the same in the Old and New Testament.

Acts 8: 32 The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." 34 So the eunuch (太监) answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" 35 **Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus** to him.

5. Lessons:

a. Do you see how gracious God is to you to give you this salvic Gospel? Not everyone gets it and not everyone gets the Holy Spirit to awaken them so that they believe the Gospel.

b. Don't make a mistake the subject of the Gospel. The Gospel is not about being moral. Jesus did not come to be a moral lesson. He came to teach about your salvation and to secure your salvation.

c. Those who ignore the OT are ignoring 2/3rd of the Gospel. And this leads to the 2nd point. God prepared the way for the Gospel to come in its fullness.

Preparation for the Gospel

2 As it is written in the Prophets: "**Behold, I send My messenger before Your face**, Who will prepare Your way before You." 3 "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: '**Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.**'"

1. OT prophets, under the inspiration (默示) of the Holy Spirit, wrote about Jesus Christ – the personification (人格化) of the Gospel - with more than 100 clear references to his coming to save the world from sins.

Acts 26:22 "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come--

This was quite convicting to the Jews who were denying the Gospel of Jesus and that he was the means of the salvation of the lost.

2. The fulfillment of the Gospel of Jesus was so important that God wanted the way prepared for the delivery of the Gospel. Mark directly quotes from the prophets about the one who would prepare the way for Messiah.

Mark's latest or most recent quote came from Malachi (the last book of the OT) and his longest quote coming from Isaiah, to show the coming of the full Gospel. Look at the full verses.

Malachi 3:1 "**Behold, I send My messenger**, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

The quote from Malachi was important because it shows a continuity between the Old and New Testaments.

You would notice that Malachi predicted John preparing the way for the Gospel and Mark begins with the preparing of the way. And now look at Isaiah, the Old Testament preacher of the Gospel.

Isaiah 40:3 The **voice of one crying in the wilderness**: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.

This Forerunner (先锋, the preparer of the way, started calling people to faith and repentance. In a way, John was like the opening act for someone important. John confirmed that he was the one who was sent to cry out in the wilderness – John 1:23. This picture of John preparing the way for Jesus was commonly used to describe messengers running on Persian roads to clear the way for the king or other dignitaries (权贵) to pass.

3. Why was preparation necessary for the Gospel and the coming of Jesus Christ? There were objections or stumbling blocks (绊脚石) that need to be removed. Questions raised by the Jews needed to be answered and their errors corrected, for example. That was like clearing rocks from the path of dignitaries.

4. Lessons:

a. See how important Christ's work was ...that God would use his greatest prophet to prepare the way for him. There could be no doubt about the importance of his work. We do this for important people today!

b. How well are you bearing out (证明) the message that Jesus has come? Are you announcing truth? Are you answering questions raised by non-believers...and preparing the way for the Gospel to spread?

Proclamation of the Gospel

4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a **baptism of repentance** (悔改) for the remission of sins. 5 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. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

1. John the Baptist began preaching the Gospel...the same Gospel of the Old Testament...to prepare the way for

Christ's work. He called men to put their trust in Jesus Christ (like those in Hebrews 11) and to repent of their sins. This was not an abstract repentance. This was not a simply change of mind, like some people teach. There is no real repentance without blood – the blood of Jesus Christ. Later, Jesus instructed his disciples to preach the same thing – through him – his work in life and death – repentance, as he was going back to heaven.

Luke 24:47 "and **that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name** to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Verse 4 **is not teaching that repentance brings salvation**. So the purpose of repentance is not salvation. This phrase could best be translated: "...repentance with reference to remission of sins..." We repent because we have

been regenerated (被重生) . We don't repent to be generated.

2. But notice the circumstances of John's life – the one who would prepare the way of Jesus. He was clothed in camel's clothing – meaning they were cheap, ordinary, and uncomfortable. And he had a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. This means, like Elijah, he was not drawing attention to himself. Rather, these things helped to identify who he would be, so people to prepare for the Messiah (弥赛亚 , 基督) – as Isaiah and others said, and these things remind you that the Gospel did not come from royal places. The Gospel was simple.

7 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 loose. 8 "I indeed baptized you with water, but **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**"

3. John preached Christ.

a. Christ would be pre-eminent (卓越的). Christ would not preach a better Gospel. He couldn't. But he could live the Gospel and bring it to fulfillment.

b. Christ would be powerful. The Words of the Gospel were the same, but Christ could look into the hearts of men and tell them what they were thinking. He could accompany his words with miracles (神迹) . He could raise himself up from the dead.

c. Christ would give them a special gift. This gift was the Holy Spirit. But this is not saying that the Holy Spirit only made his appearance in the life of men when Christ came, for he was involved in men's lives from creation. No OT saint (圣徒) was saved without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus would give his Holy Spirit in a special way to help spread the Gospel quickly. He would enable men to speak different languages without study, etc.

4. John baptized those who repented-that symbolic (象征性的) sign to show that we have been cleansed.

Don't let people tell you that this has to be by immersion (浸礼). There is no proof of that. Rather, see how baptism was done in the Old Testament –for that was what we have as a reference and that was all John had. Exodus 24:8. Leviticus 6, 8, 9, etc. It was never the amount of water that we use that makes the difference. But to change from sprinkling (洒水礼) to submersion (浸礼) in baptism would have required instruction not inference! Let the Baptist prove that you must stop sprinkling. Even if "baptism" mean "sprinkling" also (and that was a common later meaning), you have to see how it was used – the context. Consider that "tea-time" doesn't mean you drink tea." It simply meant "a break time."

5. And what an amazing cry by John: "I am not worthy." He was not worthy of the salvation he had...not even worthy to tie or untie Jesus' shoe! Wasn't this the same cry of Peter, Jacob, the centurion (百夫长) , and even Augustine?

6. Lessons:

a. Let all ministers and Christian leaders ensure that they don't confuse themselves with Christ. Watch out for ministers who promote themselves. The nature and work of Jesus must be principal in their preaching.

b. Like John, don't let the outer circumstances of the preacher matter much. Let the preacher stammer if he stands for Christ. Ignore his clothes if he speaks of Christ's covering for you!

Conclusion:

Mark recorded the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In order to confirm what Jesus would do, Mark appealed to the prophets who spoke not only of Christ's work but also of the one who would prepare the way for Christ. He knew that more witnesses confirmed truth.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: 1. You have heard about the historical preparation and presentation of the Gospel but now you have to learn that the Gospel must be promoted in the future. Are you promoting the Gospel? You are without excuse if you don't. You will save men from eternity from hell if you do. 2. But this Gospel must be fresh in your life for you to be motivated to do this work. You have to daily spend time in his Word through reading or listening to preaching...preaching that focuses on the cross of Jesus Christ.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, let me make this clear: If you don't believe the Gospel you will die in your sins and go to hell. But I plead with you by the mercies of God that you believe the Gospel. Believe the Jesus died in your place on the cross and plead that before the Father in heaven.