

Sunday, January 23, 2011—Mark Dispensatioinally Considered—Mark 1:1-3: Who Was John the Baptist?

## **Introduction**

- Over the past two weeks we have had an introduction to the gospels in general and Mark specifically.
- Today we are going to begin looking at the text of Mark.

## **Mark 1:1**

- *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;”*
- The first verse of Mark’s gospel is indicative of the rest of the book. It is very abrupt and to the point.
- As we will see throughout this study the word “gospel” simply means good news. The specific good news being spoken about is determined by the context.
- Hosea 1:2—is an example of the same Hebrew figure of speech.
- The idea here in Mark 1 is not simply that this is the beginning of Mark’s gospels but the beginning of the facts regarding the good news of Jesus Christ.
- The expression “Son of God” is only used three times in the book of Mark
  - Mark 3:11, 15:39
- In contrast, the expression is found 8 times in Matthew, 7 times in Luke, and 10 times in John
- The title “Son of God” expresses the relation of the Son to the Father (Luke 1:31, 35). It differs from the relationship expressed by the title “Son of Man,” which relates to Christ’s dominion in the earth.
- As the “Son of God” Jesus Christ is made heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2) and is invested with all power and is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25), having power to raise the dead (John 5:25). In contrast as the “Son of Man,” all judgment is committed to Him (John 5:27) in the earth.
- In contrast the title “Son of Man” occurs 16 times in 14 verses in Mark.

## Mark 1:2

- ***“As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”***
- The King James Bible correctly maintains the word “prophets” plural because Mark is making a compound quotation from more than one prophet.
  - Verse 2—is quoting Malachi 3:1
  - Verse 3—is quoting Isaiah 40:3
- Virtually all modern versions substitute the word Isaiah for “prophets” while their footnotes maintain that Mark is quoting from more than one prophet.
- This is a mistake folks in the modern versions. The mistake highlights the dirty little secret when it comes to Bible translations. The issue is not how to translate individual words from one language into another it is which set of manuscripts are you going to use when translating.
- A side by side comparison of Mark 1:2 with Malachi 3:1 highlights another potential problem of a different sort. Mark’s quotation of Malachi does not match word for word. Bible critics will utilize passages such as these to prove that the Bible is not trustworthy and full of mistakes and errors.
- A New Testament citation of the Old Testament does need to be an exact quotation. As long as the meaning is retained the words can differ. So it is in this example, while the words differ the original means and sense is retained.
- The change from “me” (first person in Malachi) to “you” is necessitated because God is speaking in the Malachi passage, whereas Mark is speaking about God. Had he not changed the words he would have changed the meaning.
- “The difficulties found in connection with this subject arise from our thinking and speaking is only of the human agent as the writer, instead of having regard to the fact that the Word of God is the record of the words which He Himself employed when he spoke “at sundry times and in diverse manners” (Hebrews 1:1) and from not remembering (or believing) that “holy men of God spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost.” (II Peter 1:21)” (*Companion Bible*, Appendix 107)
- “The Holy Spirit, in referring to words which He has before caused to be written in connection with the special circumstances of each particular case, frequently refers to them again in relation to different circumstances and other cases. He could have employed other words had he chosen to do so; but it has pleased him to repeat his own words, introducing them in different connections with other applications and in new senses.” (*Companion Bible*, Appendix 107)

- Textual and quotation issues aside, Mark 1:2 points out the fact that the Old Testament predicted that a forerunner would come to prepare the way for the Messiah.
- Luke 1:15-17—John the Baptist was the fulfillment of these Old Testament prophecies it was his job to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”
- John 1:15-21—why did the leaders of Israel ask John if he was Elijah?
- Malachi 4:5—because Elijah will come again before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
- Matthew 11:2-14—according to Jesus if Israel had received the kingdom that John would have been the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5.

### **Mark 1:3**

- *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*
- As I said earlier this verse is a quotation of Isaiah 40:3.
- John 1:23—John knew he as the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3
- This issue of the wilderness is a critical issue in John’s ministry.
- Matthew 3:1, 4-5—people had to make a choice to go out into the middle of nowhere to hear John’s preaching.
- Through John’s ministry, God was in the process of distinguishing believing Israel from apostate or unbelieving Israel. The Message and ministry of John was drawing a line in the sand in Israel and determining the “little flock” of true believers from the rest of the apostate nation.
- Matthew 3:7-12—this is why John chastises the Pharisees for coming to his baptism because they were trusting in fact that they were the physical seed of Abraham. John’s message and ministry was vital in separating the wheat from the chaff in Israel.
- Luke 16:16—John’s ministry makes a monumental shift in God’s dealings with Israel. John announces for the first time that the long prophesied kingdom is at hand (Matthew 3:2).