

God Himself Will Baptise You

Mark 1:1-8

Halifax: 9 September 2018, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Today we are beginning a new sermon series in the Gospel of Mark.

- It has been a while since I have preached through a gospel and I thought it was time for us to do it again.
 - There are four gospels in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
 - They are called the four evangelists (the Greek word for gospel is *yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on*, so that is where our word evangel comes from).

Each of the four evangelists present the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ in a unique way—so as to give us a complete picture.

- All of them were guided by the Holy Spirit so that we can be sure that what they wrote was without error or misdirection in any way.
 - Many have tried to find contradictions or historical errors, but time and again they have been embarrassed when documents or artifacts are found that dispel the errors.
- Mark is the shortest of the four gospels because he likes to get straight to the point.
 - He is supremely interested in telling us what Jesus did where Matthew takes more interest in what Jesus said...
 - And Luke is a historian who did research and presents us with many historical details from various onlookers.
 - And John likes to analyse things more than others—he is more philosophical and presents Jesus as the door, the good shepherd, the bread of life—that sort of thing.
- Mark is also an excellent story teller—
 - Though he is about actions, he is also about painting a very vivid picture with lots of details that the others do not include.
 - He tells us about peoples' reactions, very much what you would have seen if you were there.
 - With Mark, you get drawn in as if you were there looking on.
- Mark is believed to have obtained his information from the Apostle Peter.
 - He is the one who is sometimes called John Mark and who spent time with Paul, was the cousin of Barnabas, and was the son of wealthy widow who owned a large house in Jerusalem where believers gathered for worship.
 - When Peter got out of prison in Acts, he immediately went to the house that was owned by Mark's mother, so we know that he stayed with Mark's family.
 - We have writings from the early church that tell us that Mark spent time with Peter in Rome, and it is believed that he wrote his gospel through the information he got from hearing Peter preach about Jesus.
 - The details he includes are things observed by an eye witness.
 - You can tell that he is writing to Roman people because he uses Latinisms, explains Jewish customs and words, does not quote extensively from the Old Testament, and speaks to the Roman mind.
 - The Romans were indeed interested in empires and power and in action more than say the Greeks who liked to analyse things more and evaluate history.

You can see some of these unique features about Mark from the way he presents Jesus in the opening verses of Mark that we are looking at today—chapter 1 verses 1-8.

- He gets straight to the point—presenting Jesus as the Son of God who came to baptise.
 - He shows us His official herald, John, and how he came on the scene baptising and proclaiming Jesus as God who would baptise with the Holy Spirit.
- If you compare Matthew, who writes to the Jews,
 - You have a genealogy showing that Christ was the Son of Abraham and David, and showing all the flaws in His line to humble the proud Jews...
 - And then you have the angels coming and announcing Jesus and who he is rather than Matthew just telling us who he is from the start.
 - Then you have the Magi, all long before Jesus appears in His official ministry.
- And if you look at Luke, you find the work of a historian...
 - He speaks of John’s birth and of how people responded to it, and then of prophecies that were given to parents of John and Jesus including the angel’s visit to Mary,
 - And he includes his birth, how Jesus came to be in Bethlehem because of the census that was taken by Caesar Augustus, and he includes the testimony of the shepherds, of Simeon and Anna at the temple, and also a genealogy going all the way back to Adam...
- And then there is John’s gospel—
 - He presents Christ as the *Logos*, the eternally existing *Word* who was with the Father and who created the world, but then became flesh and dwelt among us.
 - Compare that to Mark who simply says that He is the Son of God in verse 1.
 - And here from the beginning, John speaks of Him as the Lamb of God, the light of men, the life, and such wonderful things that Mark does not take time for.
 - You can almost imagine the Romans reading John and saying, “Why don’t you just tell us who He is?”

But perhaps it is high time for me to learn from Mark (and his Roman hearers) and get to the point.

- So give me your attention as I read the first 8 verses of Mark to you.
- This is the Holy Word of God, so give reverent attention to what you hear.

Mark 1:1-8: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 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.’ ” ⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance 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. 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.”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy word.

You can see how Mark gets straight to the point...

- The gospel is about the Son of God coming to baptise us with God the Spirit,
 - And it begins with His herald coming to prepare the way for Him by baptising with water in the wilderness.

I. Mark begins with the words: *The beginning of the gospel.*

A. What does this mean?

1. The word *gospel* (*yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on*) means *good news*...
 - Not just any good news, but epic, life-altering, world-transforming good news.
2. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on* was used to refer to the good news of God's salvation that would bring peace...
 - It is called the *gospel of peace* because it brings reconciliation with God and wholeness to men.
 - That is why in Isa. 52:7 it says: **How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"**
3. But the idea of *gospel* as epic, life-altering, world-transforming good news was also well known to the Romans.
 - In 9 BC, it was used of Augustus Caesar (Octavian) in the same way that Mark uses it was said: "the birthday of the god was for the world *the beginning of the joyful tidings* which have been proclaimed on his account."
 - In other words, by coming into the world, Caesar Augustus brought transformation to the world for good.

B. Mark is saying something very bold here to the Romans.

- Now keep in mind that the Romans were very proud of the fact that they had world dominion and they gave divine honours and worship to their emperors.
1. And Mark is essentially saying here: The gospel did not begin with Augustus; it begins with Jesus Christ the Son of God...
 - Not with your emperor who perishes, but Jesus Christ the Son of God is the one who is the good news for the world.
 2. And Mark is certainly right!
 - a. It is not Caesar Augustus for whom the calendar is dated, but Jesus Christ.
 - The Roman Empire fell long ago, but the kingdom of Christ continues to spread into all the world to this day.
 - We are deceived because in the west we are under judgment for our ingratitude and the gospel is being rejected, but in the world at large, it continues to spread to the nations.
 - b. But much more important, Augustus could not give anyone peace with God, neither can any other ruler of this world. He could not atone for their sins or give them new hearts.
 - Only Jesus can do that.
 - And He reigns forever, continuing to bless us in this way for all eternity.
 3. Do all of you see what wonderful news it is that He has come?

TRANS> Let's see how Mark further demonstrates the excellence of this news for the world.

II. He shows us here that Jesus is truly God who has come to us.

A. You can see it right here in verse 1 where Mark immediately describes Him with three names or titles.

1. First, you see that he calls him *Jesus*.
 - Jesus was a common name in those days. It meant *Jehovah saves...*
 - But for Jesus, it means that *He* is Jehovah who saves...
 - He was named Jesus *because* He is Jehovah who saves His people from their sins.
2. You see that Mark, also calls Him Christ—Jesus Christ.
 - Christ is not His last name, it is His title.
 - It means *Anointed One*—the word in the Old Testament is *Messiah*.
 - God anointed people to serve Him.
 - Anointing was symbolised by pouring oil on them, representing God endowing them with the Holy Spirit to serve as prophets, priests and kings.
 - But Jesus is the Christ who was promised from ancient times...
 - He is in the sense the only anointed one.
 - The unique, one of a kind, prophet, priest, and king—the one anointed to be the Saviour of the whole world.
 - He is the Son who was promised to Eve after the fall, and then to Abraham as a Son that would come from him to bless all nations (good news),
 - And then to David as a descendant to him and as the Son who would take the throne and establish it forever, completely delivering the kingdom of God from sin and death and all their enemies including Satan.
 - All of the Jews were looking for the Son of David, the Messiah, the Christ, to come when He did because Daniel had indicated the time of His coming.
 - By calling Him the Christ, Mark is saying that He is the long expected Messiah.

➤ But Mark does not even stop with that!

3. He goes on to call Him *the Son of God*... Jesus Christ the Son of God!
 - The Romans knew that unlike them the Jews were monotheistic—when they spoke of God, they meant the self-existing creator who lives forever.
 - Mark refers to Christ as the Son of God in the highest sense of a divine person, a partaker of the divine nature, the one who sustains the relationship of a Son to God the Father from all eternity and to all eternity.
 - He is very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, equal in power and glory.

B. Mark continues to emphasise that He is God in the fullest sense as he continues.

1. In verse 3, he quotes prophets who refer to Him as Jehovah.
 - They describe His forerunner or herald, whom we know to be John the Baptist, as commissioned from heaven to “prepare the way of the LORD.”
 - Notice that the passage quoted in v. 3 has the word LORD in all capital letters.

- That shows that it refers to the name Yahweh, which the Jews did not want to pronounce because it is such a sacred name, so they substituted the word LORD.
 - When Christians say that Jesus is Lord, they are saying that He is Yahweh, the eternal God who is from everlasting to everlasting, who is not made but is the maker of all things, and who is sovereign over all.
 - He is the One whose way John was to prepare.
- 2. And you see in verse 7 how Mark records that John also testified of His absolute supremacy and superiority over him.
 - He said of Him, **“There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.”**
 - John made this statement, not when he was down and dejected, but when he was at the height of his ministry, with all the people of Judea and Jerusalem coming out to be baptised of him (as it says in verse 5).
 - John is making a striking contrast here between himself as the greatest prophet who had yet lived, and Jesus Christ who is the very Son of God.
 - It will help you to appreciate the contrast if you understand something about the culture.
 - In this culture where honour and rank was very important, it was considered the lowest of functions to remove someone’s sandals.
 - In fact, it was forbidden that any a Jewish servant ever be required to do this for his master... it was a function that was to be performed by a Gentile slave of lowest rank.
 - And John says that removing Christ’s sandals is a task that is too high and honourable for him to perform!
 - The difference here is no longer between men of different ranks!
 - The difference here is between one who is a mere creature and the one who is the eternal Son of God, the God of all glory and honour.
 - As J. A. Alexander says, “To an oriental audience, words could hardly have expressed the idea of disparity in a stronger or a more revolting manner.”

TRANS> Oh my dear friends, when we see Him in His glory at the last day, we will fully understand this! We will fall on our faces with what we might call joyful fear!

- *Joy* at seeing one so beautiful and so glorious and so majestic and honourable...
 - And *fear* at being so wonderfully far beneath Him in awe and amazement.

C. And here is the thing: He is the One who came to save us!

1. The good news is that it is He Himself who came to save us.
 - He is pre-eminently qualified.
 - There is no one so qualified as He is.
2. That He should come is incomprehensible.
 - Such love, such condescension, such kindness.
3. Surely we have no other place to go if we would be saved!

- Surely it instills great confidence in us that as God, He is able to do the saving work that He came to do and will not fail.
- Surely such love constrains us to pour out our lives in loving devotion and gratitude to Him!

TRANS> Ah, but what is this saving work that God the Son came to do?

III. Mark describes His saving work as *baptizing* us.

- That may seem strange at first, but let me explain.
- A. We are told first of all that baptism is what John, His herald, did in the wilderness to prepare the way for Him to come.
1. The prophecies that are quoted in verses 2 & 3 are from three different verses meshed together...Malachi 3:1, Exodus 23:20, and Isaiah 40:3.
 - Each of these verses speaks of a messenger leading the people out of bondage through the wilderness to the LORD and His salvation.
 - Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and encouraged the people that God would send His messenger like Elijah, before the Messiah came to lead them to Him in the wilderness...
 - It was the first sign that the Messiah had come and they were looking for it.
 - And the Isaiah passage is much the same, though it speaks of them being led through wilderness from Babylon—
 - Yet it also was understood to be looking ahead to the coming of Christ even many years after the return from the exile...most of the prophecies given at that time referred to the Messiah.
 - And the Exodus passage speaks of God's angel or messenger leading them through the wilderness to the Promised Land to be God's people.
 - So again you have the same pattern that we have with John.
 2. And you see in verse 4 that John is the messenger in the wilderness, and that he came baptizing in the wilderness.
 - That was the way he went about preparing the way of the LORD.
 - Verse 4 says: **John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**
- a. The Jews to whom John came were certainly familiar with baptisms.
- They had many of them.
 - In Hebrews 9:10, it refers to various washings (the word is actually *baptismos*—baptisms).
 - Such washings were performed by pouring or sprinkling of water to purify them ceremonially when they went to worship the Lord.
 - There were baptisms prescribed to remove their uncleanness, sometimes they were sprinkled with water and sometimes with blood and sometimes with a combination.
 - But the whole idea of baptism to cleanse them so they could meet with God was very familiar to them.

- b. So when John came describing himself as the voice in the wilderness who came to prepare the way of the LORD, it makes sense that they would wash in their preparations to meet God.
 - And you see that it is called a **baptism of repentance for remission of sins**.
 - The ceremonial washing was meant to represent a true change of heart—of turning from sin to God to be His people and to receive forgiveness or as it says here, **remission of sins**.
 - Remission of sins is the same as forgiveness—it means that the sins are removed from your record and not held against you so that you can come to God and not be condemned.
 - Baptism was a washing with water that pointed to both repentance and remission—an external ceremony that was to be associated with a true change of heart and a right standing with God as one who was forgiven.
- c. In Ezekiel 36, the passage I read to you earlier today, the LORD speaks of baptism with water as something that He will do for His people.
 - He speaks of it as something that He will do when He restores them from the exile in Babylon—
 - Take a look at what the LORD promises in Ezekiel 36:24-28:
 - **²⁴ “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”**
 - This is referring to the same time that Isaiah 40 is talking about, and you see how Mark applies it to the time of John and Jesus.
 - These prophecies all point ultimately to Him as the coming Saviour.
 - And you see that the LORD here refers to Himself as the one who will baptise them—
 - and that the effects of His baptism will be remission of sins and repentance—the two things that John’s baptism was about.
 - He tells them that they will be clean from the filthiness of their idols—the guilt that defiled them so that they could not be with God as His people will be removed... that is the remission of sins...
 - And in verse 26-27, there is the new heart and spirit in them that comes by the working of God’s Spirit and causes them to live for God—to keep His statutes and judgments.
 - It is a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

TRANS> So here is the thing about John’s ministry of preparation...

- It was a ceremonial baptism that pointed the people to the Son of God in the wilderness as the one who would baptise them as God had promised.

- John baptising was the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- B. And Mark records that this is exactly how John described his baptism.
1. He said that it was a baptism with water that represented and directed them to the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ the Son of God would do for them.
 - Look at Mark 1:8, the last verse we read today.
 - John says: **“I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**
 - John is contrasting what he can do as a man with what Jesus can do as the Son of God.
 - He is comparing what he as the voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the LORD was sent to do with what Jesus Christ the Son of God was sent to do: **“I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**
 2. As the Son of God, Jesus can do what no man can do.
 - All any many can do is sprinkle you with water...
 - God has sent us ministers to do this in His name to those who confess their sin and profess to look to God’s Son for salvation.
 - But that is merely baptism with water—a symbol.
 - The baptism that you all need is the baptism that water baptism points to!
 - It is the baptism by God the Son with God the Spirit—not with water which can only cleanse your body, but with the Spirit who can renew your heart...
 - And with the Spirit who joins you to Christ so that you have full forgiveness of sins by Him.
 - No minister or priest died on the cross for you, and even if they did, they could not atone for your sins.
 - Only the Son of God was worthy enough to secure remission of sins for us by His death.
 - It takes God to baptise you with God if you are going to be saved.
 - You are too guilty and too lost for any man to do that.
 - That is why both Mark and John emphasise that the one who baptises you with the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ the Son of God.
- C. Now here is a very sad thing.
1. There are many people who go to church and they are baptised with water.
 - But they never get beyond that.
 - They do not see that water baptism is only the washing of their bodies.
 - It tells them that they are filthy and defiled before God.
 - It tells them that they need forgiveness and a new heart.
 - But it does not give these to them.
 - What is even worse is that there are priests and ministers who only preach their own baptism with water.
 - They preach it as that which cleanses sinners instead of preaching it as John did as a sign of the work of Christ in sinners who come to Him.

- A proud minister or priest or whatever he calls himself can never save you... and what judgment there will be for them for refusing to do as John does and tell you that: **“I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”**
2. Only Jesus the Son of God can give you forgiveness and a new heart when He baptises you with the Holy Spirit.
- So the great question for you is do you know the Son of God in this way?
 - Ponder the words of J. C. Ryle about this:
 - How much practical experience do we have of the truths John preached? What think we of Christ? Have we felt our need of Him, and fled to Him for peace? Is He king over our hearts, and all things to our souls? What think we of the Holy Ghost? Has He wrought any work in our hearts? Has He renewed and changed them? Has He made us partakers of the divine nature? Life or death depend on our answer to those questions. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.”

Conclusion: How thankful we should be that God the Father sent God the Son to baptise us with God the Spirit.

- That is the gospel—the good news that changes the world forever.
 - If you come to Christ, it is wonderful eternally permanent life-changing news for you as a sinner who, in Christ, is redeemed.
 - If you refuse to come to Christ, to throw yourself on Him who was crucified to be baptised by Him, then the good news becomes news that condemns you.
 - Just as to the enemies of Rome, the birth of Augustus was not good news at all—not unless they came to be in his kingdom...
 - Christ reigning in your case is not good news, but the most wretched news you could ever hear.
 - But He is a Saviour who came to save sinners.
 - And if you will come to Him, He promises that He will not cast you out.
 - Let us give thanks that God the Son Himself has come to baptise us with God the Spirit.