

The Beginning of the Gospel
 Mark 1:1-8
 ABC 1/16/22

In literature there are some great opening lines. I'm going to read a few, see if you can place them:

It was a bright cold day in April, & the clocks were striking thirteen (George Orwell's, *1984*).

Call me Ishmael (Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*).

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife (Jane Austin, *Pride & Prejudice*).

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ... (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*).

It was a pleasure to burn (Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*).

A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct (Frank Herbert, *Dune*).

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark, his gospel, 1:1).

This, & the other gospels, is the greatest story ever told because it's about the greatest Person to have ever lived. Of the 4 gospel writers, only Mark uses the word **gospel** to introduce his history of Jesus. Mt begins, **The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham** (1:1). Luke starts this way:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses & servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught (1:1-4).

& of course John opens, **In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God** (1:1). If Mark intended his work to have a title, vs 1 is it: **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God** (Mk 1:1). Like Genesis, Hosea, & John's gospel, the 1st word of Mark is simply **beginning**. Mark doubtlessly chose it as a reminder of God's activity in history: **In the beginning God created the heavens & the earth** (Gen 1:1). So, too, the age of the **gospel** is evident when the Son of God becomes human in Jesus Christ. For Mark the introduction of Jesus is no less momentous than the creation of the world, for in Jesus a new creation is at hand.¹ The word **gospel** is a familiar one & frequently used today to designate the 1st 4 books of the NT; they are *the gospels*. But that

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar NT Commentary, p 23

isn't how the biblical writers used the term, nor is it how Mark does in his opening vs. In the NT, the **gospel** is never a reference to a book but always refers to the good news of Jesus & His message of salvation. That's Mark's meaning here. His 1st-century audience would have understood the word **gospel** to mean *good news* or *glad tidings*. But it had an even more specific meaning that would've been familiar to both Jewish & Gentile people in ancient times.² 1st-century Jews would have been familiar with the word *gospel*/from its occurrence in the Greek translation of the OT. There it's used to speak of military victory, political triumph, or physical rescue (1 Sam 31:9; 2 Sam 4:10; 18:20–27; 2 Kgs 7:9; Ps 40:9). The term is also found in a messianic context, where it points to the ultimate salvation of God's people through the messianic King who was to come (Is 40:9-10; 52:7). The term **gospel** also had significance to those outside of Judaism. Though largely ignorant of Jewish history, 1st-century Romans (whom Mark was writing to) would have understood the term to refer to the *good tidings* of a coming king. A Roman inscription dating back to 9 BC gives evidence of how the word **gospel** was understood in a Gentile context. Speaking of the birth of Caesar Augustus, a portion of the inscription reads: *the birthday of the God Augustus was the beginning of the world of the glad tidings (gospel) that have come to men through him...*³ It speaks of *glad tidings* to describe the birth & reign of Augustus, a ruler whom the Romans regarded as their divine savior. The word **gospel** functioned as a technical term, for Jew & Gentiles, to refer to the arrival & triumph of a ruler. Original readers of Mark's account would have understood the **gospel** to be a royal pronouncement, declaring that a powerful ruler had arrived, one who'd usher in a new order of salvation, peace, & blessing. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mark chose that word in order to communicate to Jews & Gentiles that he was presenting the good news of the divine King.

1. The Purpose of Mark writing his gospel, & in a sense, the outline of the book, are given in vs **1**. Mark wastes no time in establishing the identity of his subject. He abruptly & bluntly asserts that **Jesus** is the **Christ** & the **Son of God**. This is the **gospel** of Jesus, His human name. It's a form of the

² John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur NT Commentary, p 12

³ *Inscription Priene*, cited from Gene L. Gree, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, Pillar NT Commentary, p 94

Hebrew name Joshua which means *Yahweh is salvation*. As the angel explained to Joseph, **You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins** (Mt 1:21). This is the **gospel of Jesus Christ**. **Christ** isn't a name but a title. It's the Greek translation of the Hebrew word translated *messiah*, which means *anointed one*. It was used in the OT to refer to the divinely appointed kings of Israel (1 Sam 2:10; 2 Sam 22:51) & ultimately to the great Deliverer & Ruler, the Messiah who was to come (Dan 9:25–26; cf Is 9:1–7; 11:1–5; 61:1). But Mark doesn't leave it even there. He continues & calls Him the **Son of God**, speaking of Jesus' lineage & right to rule. Jesus isn't God's offspring but He is one in nature with God; co-eternal & co-equal with the Father. This is an astonishingly bold claim that goes beyond the popular understanding of the Messiah at the time. It's a claim of outright divinity.⁴ For Romans, who regarded Caesar as a god, Mark introduces them to the true God. As Nathaniel said to Jesus, **You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel** (Jn 1:49). In the 1st 8 chpts of his gospel, Mark highlights Jesus' astonishing words & works. In chpts 9–16 he focuses on Christ's death & resurrection. Both sections reach the same inevitable conclusion: Through His words, works, death, & resurrection, **Jesus Christ** proved Himself to be the promised messianic King, the **Son of God**, Servant & Savior of the world. Peter's confession confirms this clearly: **You are the Christ** (Mk 8:29). That this majestic confession stands in the middle of the book is no accident. It represents the very heart of Mark's message: Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be & Mark puts that upfront in vs 1. Mark announces that the content of the **gospel** is the person of **Jesus**, who is the **Christ, the Son of God**. It's a brief confession of faith, the meaning of which will unfold as we follow Mark's presentation of Jesus.⁵

2. The Preparer Mark starts the story of Jesus a long way back. It doesn't begin with Jesus' birth nor even with John the Baptizer in the wilderness. Mark begins with the prophets from long ago. By quoting Isaiah's prophetic passage, Mark asserts that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the **voice** calling out in the desert. He then raises the stakes all the way & makes the ultimate claim. Since Mark equates John with the one who'd **prepare ... the way for the Lord**, he's clearly equating

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Jesus the King: Understanding the Life & Death of the Son of God*, pp 3–4

⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar NT Commentary, pp 25–26

Jesus with God Himself. The Lord God, the long-awaited divine King who would rescue His people, & **Jesus** are somehow one & the same Person. 2-3

This is a voice offstage, reading Scripture. While John & Jesus may seem to appear out of the blue, this quotation of Scripture makes it clear they appear because of God's plan. The story Mark is going to tell is **the beginning of the *good news***, but every beginning has a back-story. By cross-referencing Scripture, Mark makes it clear the **gospel** he's presenting comes from the promise of God in the OT & is a continuation of the story of God's saving activity. Long before the preaching of John the Baptist, there was the preaching of Isaiah, which shows that God had planned things out long before John appeared & that God is the One who initiated all of it. While Mark identifies the quotation of vss 2-3 as coming from Isaiah it's actually a blending of 3 OT passages. The reference to the sending of the messenger in vs 2 follows the 1st half of both Ex 23:20 & Mal 3:1. Vs 3 is a quotation of Is 40:3. All 4 gospels use this in reference to John as the forerunner of Jesus (Mt 3:3; Lk 1:76; 3:4-6; 7:27; Jn 1:23). Don't let the fact that Mark doesn't mention Malachi's name but attributes it to **Isaiah**, bother you. It wasn't uncommon when citing multiple OT prophets to refer only to the more prominent one. Mark's appeal to the prophets is an important one in that it demonstrates that Jesus' arrival wasn't a secondary plan or afterthought. This was the plan of God that had been working out from eternity past. In keeping with that plan, the prophets predicted the coming of the Messiah's forerunner hundreds of years before he was born. Let's take a closer look. Mark begins by referencing Malachi 3:1, **Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way** (Mk 1:2; cf Mt 11:10; Lk 7:27). John was sent by God **ahead of** the Messiah as a royal herald to **prepare** the **way** for Jesus' arrival. Such preparation came through proclamation not through a bull-dozer or paving machinery. John was called to be a preacher, who made a call for people to ready themselves for the Messiah's arrival. An expanded paraphrase of Malachi 3:1 might read, *Behold, I, Jehovah, send My messenger John the Baptist to be the forerunner for You, the Messiah, & to prepare the people for Your coming.* Mark's use of OT prophecy continues with a reference to Is 40:3, **Mk 1:3**

In the ancient world, a forerunner was charged with making the road ready for the king's arrival. But how was John to do that for the coming Messiah? Rather than clearing roads of physical objects, John sought to remove obstacles of stubborn unbelief from the hearts & minds of sinners. The **way of the Lord** is the way of repentance, of turning from sin to righteousness, & of turning spiritual **paths** that are crooked into ones that are **straight** & holy. Notice that in the quotation, several of the pronouns & **the way for the Lord** refer to God. Mark, however, applies these texts to Jesus. This indicates that John isn't simply the herald of the Messiah but of God Himself, appearing in Jesus.⁶ After all, remember what Isaiah 40:5 says? **Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed.** We talked about that during Advent. This was all predicted. There was nothing unforeseen in the coming of Jesus into the world. In the opening chpts of Genesis we find predicted that the woman's Offspring would crush the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). All through the OT we find the same event foretold with increasing clearness. It was a promise renewed to the patriarchs & repeated by prophets, that a Deliverer, Redeemer, Messiah, King would one day come. His birth, His character, His life, His death, His resurrection, & His forerunner was all prophesied long before He came. Redemption was worked out & accomplished in every step, just as it was written. Ex 23:20 contains God's promise to send His messenger before the Israelites on their exodus through the desert to Canaan. Is 40:3 speaks of a 2nd exodus through the desert to the final deliverance prepared for God's people. Mal 3:1 warns that God will send a messenger to prepare the way before Him prior to His coming. By quoting these vss, Mark certifies that the Torah (Exodus), the Major Prophets (Isaiah), & the Minor Prophets (Malachi) confirm what he's about to write.⁷ This passage is the only place in Mark where Mark tells us that Scripture is being fulfilled. All other OT references in Mark are spoken by Jesus Himself. Mark highlights these promises in vss 2-3 because he knows they'll resonate with his readers, whether Jew or Gentile. The Messiah's arrival, preceded by a forerunner, was promised by God through the Hebrew prophets in centuries past. But there's an additional aspect to those OT prophecies that we can't overlook. They not only describe the Messiah's forerunner, they also

⁶ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar NT Commentary, p 28

⁷ David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary, p 44

reveal the divine character of the Messiah Himself. The full text of Malachi 3:1 reads: **'Behold, I am going to send My messenger, & he will clear the way before Me. & the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; & the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the Lord of hosts.** The implications of that are profound. God explains that the coming King, the One before whom the herald would be sent, is **Me**, meaning God Himself. The prophecy continues with a promise that God would suddenly come to His temple. It's no accident that Jesus began His public ministry by going to the temple & cleansing it according to Jn 2 (13–22). Mark, of course, references only the 1st part of Mal 3:1. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he paraphrases it slightly, changing the **Me** to **You**, to emphasize that the divine pronoun refers to Jesus. His use of this OT passage underscores the divine nature of the Messiah. Jesus is none other than God Himself. The God of the universe broke into history to provide salvation, blessing, & peace. This is the good news. His arrival had been promised from long ago. He was preceded by a royal herald who proclaimed His coming. The King's name is **Jesus**, & He is the **Christ, the Son of God**.⁸

A. The Ministry of John Mark has no interest in John except as the forerunner of Jesus. We get no information about his parents, birth, or ethical teaching, all which can be found elsewhere. In Mark, he's simply John the Baptizer, who **appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** (4). His preaching has to do with the promise of a more powerful One, who will soon arrive. John announces His coming to prepare the hearts of the people so they'll respond appropriately when He arrives. He knows it will take more than a dunk in the muddy Jordan to create within them a new heart & spirit. He acknowledges that his water baptism is preparatory, whereas the Spirit baptism of Jesus will be complete. In a word, John's message was *repentance*.⁹ Where did John's ministry take place? The **wilderness** which had great significance in Jewish history. The **wilderness** was a place of hope & new beginnings. It was in the wilderness that God had met with Israel & led them out of Egypt. In the **wilderness** Israel experienced hardship & danger, &

⁸ John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur NT Commentary, p 19

⁹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar NT Commentary, p 31

learned through this testing to trust in the provision & protection of their God.¹⁰ The **wilderness** was a constant reminder of the exodus from Egypt & entrance into the Promised Land. That significance wouldn't have been missed by those who traveled to hear John's **preaching** & witness his ministry of **baptism**. John's ministry centered on the **preaching of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. Again, in those days, the herald of an arriving king would go before him, removing all the obstacles in the path & making sure the people were ready to receive their king. But how were the people to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah? They needed to forsake their sin & receive God's forgiveness. In order to demonstrate their repentance, John called them to be baptized. This was a one-time act, distinguishing it from other ritual Jewish washings. In Jewish practice, the closest thing to John's baptism was the one-time washing of Gentile proselytes, which symbolized both their rejection of paganism & their acceptance of the true faith; that baptism was the mark of an outsider becoming a part of God's chosen people. For a Gentile proselyte to be baptized was nothing extraordinary. But John's call for Jews to be baptized was radical. Why? Because it required them to see themselves as outsiders who must acknowledge they were no more fit for God's kingdom than Gentiles were. John's baptism directly confronted the religious hypocrisy that permeated Judaism of his day. It challenged his listeners to consider the reality that neither being a physical descendant of Abraham nor an observer of Pharisaical laws was enough to gain admittance into God's kingdom. Instead, what was required was an internal change of the person's heart, mind, & will. The word **repentance** implies a genuine turning from sin & self to God (1 Thes 1:9). Don't think that this means that baptism brings the forgiveness of sins. It doesn't. It could be translated, *a baptism of repentance on the basis of the forgiveness of sins*. The divine action of forgiveness of sins precedes human action (Is 40:2; Jer 31:34; Mic 7:18).¹¹ True **repentance** involves a transformation of one's nature, making it a gracious work of God (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25). The fruit, the evidence of that internal transformation, is seen in changed behavior. As John the Baptist told the crowds, **Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, & do not begin to say**

¹⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, p 57

¹¹ David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary, p

to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham” (Lk 3:8; Mt 3:8–9). An early evidence of that heart change was a willingness to be baptized. Those whose self-righteous pride remained wouldn’t do such a public, humbling act. But those whose minds had turned to forsake their sin & pride would willingly declare themselves to be no better than Gentiles. They knew they were sinners & recognized their unworthiness & need to walk rightly before God. Because of this, baptism marked the outward profession of inward repentance. It didn’t generate repentance but was its result (Mt 3:7–8). The act of **baptism** didn’t produce the **forgiveness of sins** but served as a symbol of the fact that, through faith & repentance, sinners are graciously forgiven by God (Lk 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31; 2 Cor 7:10). Though John’s ministry of baptism preceded Christian baptism, it served the purpose of preparing people for the arrival of the Messiah. As Paul explained years later, **John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus** (Acts 19:4).

Apparently John demands that all come for his baptism. It’s a remarkable demand because Jews believed only gentile proselytes & those who were defiled needed to be immersed to cleanse themselves of their impurity (2 Kgs 5:13). To call all Israel to baptism implies in some way all Israel is defiled. Was John successful? Mark tells us the Jews came in droves. **All the country of Judea was going out to him, & all the people of Jerusalem. Why? To be baptized by him... confessing their sins** (Mk 1:5). John’s preaching arrested the attention of the whole Jewish people, & created an excitement all over Judea. It roused the nation from its slumbers & prepared it for the ministry of Jesus when He appeared. Jesus Himself says, **John was the lamp that was burning & was shining & you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light** (Jn 5:35).

B. The Appearance of John Having described the nature of John’s ministry (4–5), Mark continues in vs 6 by describing John himself. The NT records many wonderful stories about John the Baptist, from his supernatural conception by elderly parents, to his being filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother’s womb, to the fact that Jesus called him the greatest man who had ever lived (Lk 7:28). But Mark leaves out those details. His description of John is short & to the point. **6**

John's physical description fits a man who lived in the wilderness, where clothing fashions were traded for durability, & where **locusts & wild honey** provided sustenance. But there's more here than a superficial statement about John's wardrobe & eating habits. A hairy garment made of **camel's hair**, girded **around** the **waist** by a rough **leather belt**, would have designated John as a prophet. In our culture, we'd pick up the allusions if someone were wearing a coonskin cap & buckskin (Daniel Boone) or a stovepipe hat & beard (Abraham Lincoln) or a cape with S on their chest (Superman). This description of John is reminiscent of Elijah. The crowds, at least some of them, believed he was Elijah reappearing to prepare for the imminent coming of God (Mal 4:5–6; cf Mk 9:11–13). Mark's short description of John is enough to indicate he must have been a shocking figure to those who saw him. He claimed to be a messenger from God but his lifestyle was radically different than the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The Sadducees & Pharisees were refined, well-dressed, & sophisticated. John clearly didn't care about worldly comforts & even made a point of refusing them. His clothing, diet, & way of life were in themselves a rebuke of Israel's religious elite, who indulged in the benefits of their positions. It confronted the common people as well since many of them admired & aspired to the advantages of their leaders. Significantly, John didn't call the people to live or dress like he did. His goal wasn't to turn them into social recluses or desert hermits. But his physical appearance served as a dramatic reminder that the pleasures & pursuits of this world can be stumbling blocks that keep people from repenting of their sin & turning to God. Why does Mark fill us in on these seemingly minor details while ignoring seemingly more important background information? Is it to tell us that John isn't mainstream? Maybe a hippie or homeless person? These descriptions suggest 2 things: 1) To go out to someone like this in the desert requires a break with the institutions & culture of Jerusalem. The way that's prepared won't be a comfortable path & will require forgoing pleasures long taken for granted. 2) John is an Elijah-type prophet (2 Kgs 1:8; cf Zech 13:4).¹²

C. The Message of John John has only 2 small speaking parts in Mark's gospel, here & in 6:18. The only thing that interests Mark in John's preaching is his announcement that the One who is coming

¹² David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary, pp 45–46

is more powerful than he is. & yet John hardly seems to rank with those normally deemed to be powerful or mighty. He'll end up a prisoner of Herod's & will be executed; his head handed to the king on a platter (6:14–29). If John's to be regarded as powerful, then the conventional understanding of power must be redefined. In John's case, he's powerful by his proclamation of God's will & of what God's about to do. The One who's to come is infinitely more powerful because He'll be the One who executes God's will because He is God in the flesh. John comes as a voice crying, a lowly servant. Jesus comes as the beloved Son, who also will serve. The more powerful One isn't a warrior who is victorious because of His sword. Instead, He'll die a seemingly powerless death on a cross. The sum of John's ministry is articulated in vss 7-8. The entire purpose behind his **preaching** or *proclaiming* was to point his listeners to the **One** who was **coming** after him. That's what it meant to be the forerunner, the herald who directed everyone's attention away from himself & toward the coming King. As John explained to his own disciples, Jesus **must increase, but I must decrease** (Jn 3:30). He rightly understood & embraced his role as the Messiah's messenger. Therefore, he told the crowds, 7.

The Greek includes a definite article, indicating John was speaking about *the* **One** who was **coming**. John's ministry didn't precede just any king. He was pointing to *the* King whose coming was foretold by the OT prophets. John quickly acknowledged this coming King was **mightier than** he. The Messiah would be greater in every respect, so much so that John didn't regard himself as even being **fit to stoop down & untie the thong of His sandals**. A little context to see what this means. One Rabbi stated, *all service that a slave must render to his master a student must render to his teacher, except untying his shoe.*¹³ According to an ancient Jewish tradition the difference between a *disciple* & a *servant* or *slave* was that a disciple was willing to perform every service for his master that a menial slave would perform except to untie his sandals. So what may very well be implied here are 3 ascending degrees or stages of humility: 1) The disciple is willing to render almost every service. 2) The slave is willing to render every service, including untying sandals. 3) John considers himself unfit or unworthy even to render the service the lowest slave by untying his Master's sandal

¹³ Babylonian Gemara, *Ketubbot* 96a, Joshua B Levi

straps.¹⁴ John said he wasn't worthy to perform this most humble of tasks for the One to come. If John was a prophet, then how much greater was the One to follow him? John's aim wasn't to occupy the center stage but to point people to the One who was greater & stronger than he. People listened to him because he pointed, not to himself, but to the One whom all men need.¹⁵ John's main message wasn't, *You're a sinner, you need to repent*. John's main message was, *The Messiah is coming!* & his call to repentance was the response to the news that the Messiah was coming. Jesus was clearly mightier than John & made the prophet pale by comparison. The cleansing of people's lives cleared the way for God's powerful presence in the Spirit. The good news of the One to come was about the forgiveness of sins that follows repentance & makes it possible to enter into fellowship & life with God by the presence of the promised Spirit within those who are cleansed.¹⁶

John continued to distance himself from Christ by noting the immeasurable difference between their 2 ministries: **8**

It's as if John's saying, *All I can do is wash you on the outside with water. But He can transform & cleanse you on the inside*. Being baptized **with the Holy Spirit** refers to the regenerative work of salvation (Ezek 36:24–27; Jn 3:5–6). This isn't a reference to an after conversion experience but is the washing of regeneration & the renewing of the Holy Spirit that occurs at the moment of salvation (Acts 1:5; 8:16–17; 1 Cor 12:13; Titus 3:5–7). This is the purification of the new covenant, & the transformation of the new birth that comes only through Jesus. John told them he'd drenched them with water which was only *external*, but One would come who would drench them in the Holy Spirit, which was intrinsically *internal*. What a beautiful metaphor for the work of the Holy Spirit! John's baptism was symbolic & temporary of a more permanent & powerful reality to come. When we're baptized with the Holy Spirit, He permeates every part of us. Christianity meets us in our radical need & provides a *radical* answer. If you don't know Jesus, you're still in your sins. Vs 8 is also an extraordinary declaration because in the OT the giving of the Spirit belongs exclusively to

¹⁴ William Hendriksen & Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, vol. 10, New Testament Commentary, pp 40–41

¹⁵ William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of Mark*, The Daily Study Bible Series, p 18

¹⁶ David Turner & Darrell L. Bock, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 11: Matthew & Mark*, p 407

God. John's declaration, according to Mark, transfers the giving of the Spirit to Jesus, once again indicating that, as the Greater One, Jesus will come in the power & at the will of God.

John's message summarizes the heart of the **gospel**, bringing us back to Mark's use of the term in vs 1. The **gospel** is good news. It's the glad tidings of a new King who is bringing a new kingdom. The new King is the long-awaited Messiah. He is God Himself. His kingdom is a kingdom of forgiveness, blessing, & salvation. It comes to those who repent & those who do so will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This **gospel** is the culmination of all past redemptive history & the door to all future glory. & John the Baptist, the faithful herald & forerunner, had come to announce His arrival. The question for you is this: Do you know Jesus? Have you repented & placed your faith in Him? If not, you haven't received & believed the good news Mark is writing about. It's not too late. Put your faith in Him today.