**Introduction to the Book of Mark**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Mark 1:1-8**

**Sunday Morning**

**June 8, 2025**

**The Purpose**

To present the person, work and teachings of Jesus

**Author**

John Mark. He was not one of the 12 disciples, but he accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey.

**Audience**

The Christians in Rome, where he wrote the Gospel

**Date Written**

Between A. D. 55 and 65

**Setting**

The Roman Empire under Tiberius Caesar. The empire with it’s common language and excellent transportation and communication systems, was ripe to hear Jesus’ message, which spread quickly from nation to nation.

**Key Verse**

**Mark 10:45**

“For even I the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many”

**Key People**

Jesus, The 12 Disciples, Pilate and the Jewish Religious Leaders

**Special Features**

Mark records more Miracles than does any other Gospel.

**Introduction**

WE’RE number one! . . . The greatest, strongest, prettiest . . . champions! Daily such proclamations boldly assert claims of supremacy. Everyone wants to be associated with a winner. Losers are those who finish less than first. In direct contrast are the words of Jesus:

**Mark 10:44-45**

“And whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many”

Jesus is the greatest; he is God incarnate, our Messiah, but he entered history as a servant. This is the message of Mark. Written to encourage Roman Christians and to prove beyond a doubt that Jesus is the Messiah, Mark presents a rapid succession of vivid pictures of Jesus in action.

Mark reveals Jesus' true identity as revealed by what he does, not necessarily by what he says. It is Jesus on the move.Omitting the birth of Jesus, Mark begins with John the Baptist’s preaching. Then, moving quickly past Jesus’ baptism, temptation in the wilderness, and call of the disciples, Mark takes us directly into Jesus’ public ministry.

We see Jesus confronting a demon, healing a man with leprosy, and forgiving and healing the paralyzed man lowered into Jesus’ presence by friends. Next, Jesus calls Matthew (Levi) and has dinner with him and his questionable associates.

This initiates the conflict with the Pharisees and other religious leaders, who condemn Jesus for eating with sinners and breaking the Sabbath. In chapter 4, Mark pauses to give a sample of Jesus’ teaching (the parable of the farmer and the illustration of the mustard seed) and then plunges back into the action.

Jesus calms the waves, drives out demons, and heals Jairus’s daughter. After returning to Nazareth for a few days and experiencing rejection in his hometown, Jesus commissions the disciples to spread the Good News everywhere.

Opposition from Herod and the Pharisees increases, and John the Baptist is beheaded. But Jesus continues to move, feeding 5,000, reaching out to the woman from Syrian Phoenicia, healing the deaf man, and feeding 4,000. Finally, it is time to reveal his true identity to the disciples. Do they really know who Jesus is?

Peter proclaims him Messiah but then promptly shows that he does not understand Jesus’ mission. After the Transfiguration, Jesus continues to teach and heal, confronting the Pharisees about divorce and the rich young man about eternal life. Blind Bartimaeus is healed.

Events move rapidly toward a climax. The Last Supper, the betrayal, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection are dramatically portrayed, along with more examples of Jesus’ teachings. Mark shows us Jesus moving, serving, sacrificing, and saving! As you read Mark, be ready for action, be open for God’s move in your life, and be challenged to move into your world to serve.

**Mark 1:1-8**

1 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 And 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."

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

Saints, the first verse, here begins the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, acts as both a title to the book and a summary of its contents.

No mention is made of the author, generally considered to be John Mark. Mark was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus but probably knew Jesus personally.

While we generally call this book the Gospel of Mark, the title correctly penned by Mark was the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

**The first name, “Jesus,” was a common name in Israel as the Old Testament form of the name Joshua meaning**

**“Yahweh saves”**

**Matthew 1:21**

And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

**Luke 2:21**

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

The second name, “the Messiah,” is from the Greek word Christos meaning

**“The Anointed One.”**

The Anointed One, the Messiah, would fulfill the Old Testament prophecies.

**Genesis 49:10**

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

**Psalm 2:7-8**

7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

**Psalm 110:1-2**

1 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." 2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Mark gave no genealogy because he presented Jesus as the servant. A servant needs no pedigree, but demonstrates his validity by the worth of the service he provides.

**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.' "**

Saints, Verses 2 and 3 are a composite quotation, taken first from Malachi and then from Isaiah.

**Malachai 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.

**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.

Saints, Malachi was a prophet to the Jews in Jerusalem who had returned to rebuild their beloved city after the exile. Isaiah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament and one of the most quoted in the New.

The second half of the book of Isaiah is devoted to the promise of salvation.

Isaiah wrote about the coming of the Messiah and the man who would announce his coming, John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3).

Like Isaiah, John was a prophet who urged the people to confess their sins and live for God.

Saints, although quoting from two prophets (Isaiah and Malachi), Mark simply applied the words to Isaiah.

The theme in both references is the focus on a messenger who would prepare the way.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, Mark understood the ministry of John the Baptist as fulfilling these promises.

This messenger considered himself a voice shouting out to the people of Israel, “Prepare a pathway for the Lord’s coming!

**4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**

Saints, this messenger was John the Baptist. There had not been a prophet in Israel for more than four hundred years.

It was widely believed that when the Messiah came, prophecy would reappear.

**Joel 2:28-29**

8 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. 29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

**Malachai 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.

Saints, some people thought John himself was the Messiah. John spoke like the prophets of old, saying that the people must turn from their sin to avoid punishment and turn to God to experience his mercy and approval.

This is a message for all times and places, but John spoke it with particular urgency—he was preparing the people for the coming Messiah.

Because Mark’s audience was comprised of primarily Roman Christians, he began his book with John the Baptist, whose mission was to announce the coming of Jesus, the most important man who ever lived.

John preached in the wilderness in the area near the Jordan River, but he did more than that.

John was demanding that Jews be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

John’s baptism was immersion, and it was a visible sign that a person had decided to change his or her life, giving up a sinful and selfish way of living and turning to God.

It was a public action signifying that a person had been cleansed of sin through repentance and had chosen a new way of life.

After Christ’s death and resurrection, baptism became an outward sign for identifying with Christ and his resurrection and for signifying entrance into the Christian community.

**Romans 6:3**

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

**1 Peter 3:21**

There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ…

Saints, Baptism did not give forgiveness; baptism was a visible sign that the person had repented and received God’s forgiveness for his or her sins.

Matthew recorded that some of the Jewish religious leaders (Pharisees and Sadducees) came to be baptized and John angrily turned them away, for he knew there was no humble repentance in their hearts.

**Matthew 3:7**

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

**5 And 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.**

Saints, from Jerusalem (the holy city of the Jews) and from all over Judea, a stream of people constantly flowed into the wilderness to hear John the Baptist preach.

**Why did John attract so many people?**

**He was the first true prophet in four hundred years!**

He blasted both Herod and the religious leaders, a daring act that fascinated the common people.

But John also had strong words for his audience—they too were sinners and needed to repent.

When they confessed their sins, John baptized them in the Jordan River.

Confession is more than simply acknowledging one’s own sinfulness; it is agreeing with God’s verdict on sin and expressing the desire to get rid of sin and live for God.

Confessing means more than verbal response, affirmation, or praise; it means agreeing to change to a life of obedience and service.

**6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.**

Saints, John’s clothes were much like the prophet Elijah in order to distinguish him from the religious leaders, whose flowing robes reflected their great pride in their position

**2 Kings 1:8**

So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

**Mark 12:38**

Then He said to them in His teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces…

His diet, locusts and wild honey, was common for survival in wilderness regions.

**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.**

Saints, although John was the first genuine prophet in four hundred years, Jesus the Messiah would be far greater than he.

John saw himself as even lower than that slave in comparison to the coming Messiah.

**John 3:30**

He must increase, but I must decrease.

What John began, Jesus finished. What John prepared, Jesus fulfilled.

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

Saints, John’s baptism with water indicated immersion in the water of the Jordan River.

John’s baptism demonstrated repentance, humility, and willingness to turn from sin. This was the beginning of the spiritual process.

To be effective, it had to be accompanied by an inward change of attitude leading to a changed life.

John’s baptism did not give salvation; it prepared a person to welcome the coming Messiah and receive his message and his baptism.

John’s statement, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, revealed the identity of the “one” coming after John as the promised Messiah.

The coming of the Spirit had been prophesied as part of the Messiah’s arrival.

**Jeremiah 31:31-33**

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Saints, the Old Testament promised a time when God would demonstrate his power among people and give special relationship and blessings to his people.

This looked ahead to Pentecost (Acts 2). All believers, those who would later come to Jesus Christ for salvation, would receive the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, the entire person would be transformed by the Spirit’s power. Jesus would offer both forgiveness of sin and the power to live for him. We need more than repentance to save us; we need the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.”**