

"1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; 3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'" 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Mark 1:1-9, NAS95.

I would like to make a few more comments about what the Gospel is light of what we discussed last week.

D. A. Carson recently spoke on this at the Gospel Coalition conference and gave this outline in Eight Summarizing Words based on 1 Cor. 15:1-19

1. The gospel is **Christological**. It is Christ-centered. Not a bland theism or an impersonal pantheism; it's irrevocably Christ-centered. "The gospel is not preached if Christ is not preached" (Stott). The gospel embraces not just Christ's person, but also his death and resurrection. It's not enough to emphasize Christmas and downplay Good Friday and Easter. Jesus is the promised messiah who died and rose again.
2. The gospel is **theological**. It makes no sense to pit the mission of the Son against the mission of the Father. Some surveys of redemptive history depersonalize the wrath of God. From the beginning sin has been an offense against God. When we sin in any way, God is invariably the most offended party (cf. Ps. 51:4). God gets most angry at idolatry, the de-Godding of God.
3. The gospel is **biblical**. Christ died, buried, was raised--"according to the Scriptures" (cf. Luke 24; Ps. 16; Isa. 53; Ps. 2).
4. The gospel is **apostolic**. There were 500+ witnesses, but attention is drawn in particular to the apostles.
5. The gospel is **historical**. The burial (death) and appearances (resurrection) are historical, in datable sequence. They combine to form a nexus. The claims are irreducibly historical. In other religions, there is nothing intrinsic in the leader that is required for its truth. But for Christianity, part of the validation of faith is the truthfulness of faith's object--in this case, Christ's resurrection. The Bible never asks us to believe anything that's not true.
6. The gospel is **personal**. The gospel is not merely a historical event, but also sets out a way of personal salvation.
7. The gospel is **universal**. Christ is the new Adam (vv. 22, 47-50). There is a comprehensive vision, drawing people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. It does not save every person, but it is gloriously universal in its comprehensive sweep.
8. The gospel is **eschatological**. Some of the blessings we receive now are end-time blessings brought back into today. But there is also a final transformation. All of the fruit of the gospel will appear in the new heavens and the new earth.

His eight points easily correspond to what we said last week.

First and foremost, the good news is the Person of Jesus Christ.

In the era of the New Covenant the explicit reason men are saved by grace is because

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of Christ who came and died for His people. Those who are His are lost in their sin and cannot find Him. He calls them and they hear His voice. His Spirit changes their hearts so they will repent and believe. These gifts are given by Him. They are sealed by His spirit and are known by His name. They will live for His glory and have an eternal hope in Him because He was born of a virgin, He suffered under Pontius Pilate, He was crucified and shed His blood, He raised himself from the dead on the third day and He is coming again for His people and to execute His final wrath on the unbelievers. He will reign forever and ever in His eternal kingdom. He will be the light forever and His saints will praise Him forever.

The Gospel is Jesus Christ and all of what He has provided for the salvation of men. The Gospel is not just words about Christ it is the Living Word Christ and the words that tell us about this one whom men can call their savior.

The good news of what He has done is rooted in the good news of the person that He is.

In v.2 Mark gets right to his purpose,

**"2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;" Mark 1:2, NAS95.**

This was the history that Mark wanted the gentiles to be aware of. God's redemptive purpose is played out on the stage of human history and was foretold in Jewish Scripture.

Let's look at the original text:

**Mal 3:1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.**

Prior to the coming of the Messiah, the Lord, the messenger of the covenant, one would first come and prepare the way. That one was John the Baptist.

John's work was a foreshadowing of the real work of repentance that only The Lord could bring. The attitude of the people was not much different from Malachi or Amos's days.

**"17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"" Malachi 2:17, NAS95.**

"18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light;" Amos 5:18, NAS95.

To those, whose attitudes concerning the coming one did, those who did not understand the purpose of His coming, there would only be judgment. They were looking for unqualified good news. But the good news has qualification.

Malachi makes this clear,

"2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. 3 "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness." Malachi 3:2, 3, NAS95.

When the Lord comes, he will perform two complementary works: he will purify some sinners,

"5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts." Malachi 3:5, NAS95.

and judge others

NOTES:

## 1. THE ARRIVAL OF JOHN.

We are told six things about John:

John was the promised one. It was not by John's own volition that he appeared as a preacher at this time. A man could be moved by the condition of his community that one day he decides to go and stand in the city somewhere and preach to the people as they pass him by. But this initiative to get up and preach in the desert region did not lie within John - this proclamation was planned long before by God. He had prophesied that his special messenger would one day appear. Two prophets had announced this, Malachi, 500 years or so earlier, and Isaiah, two centuries before him. In this plan of God, the Messianic King would come, but he would be preceded by a messenger whom God would send. Though there had been no prophets for hundreds of years, God was biding his time but still in charge of his world. Then God acts. The word was not in vain. God does what he has promised to do and John appears.

"With God things don't just happen, Everything by him is planned."

John was a herald. The Greeks had heralds. In Homer we meet men of dignity who hold a high position in a royal court. The king sends for one of them: "I want you to go to Athens and take this message from me to that city." What a responsibility, being sent to proclaim a royal message. Pharaoh made heralds run before Joseph's chariot in Egypt and cry to the people, "Bow the knee!" Nebuchadnezzar's herald cried, "Fall down and worship the golden image." Hezekiah sent heralds through the land saying, "Come to Jerusalem and keep the Passover." John the Baptist was one of the King's heralds telling the people that the King is on his way. A herald was a man on a royal mission

John was the one who prepared the people for the coming of the King; "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him" (v.3). That was John's vocation. It is rebellious contempt for the King of Kings to be told that on the morning of the Lord's own day he will come here to deal with us sinners and that we refuse to prepare ourselves for such an encounter. A herald has a sense of expectancy when he tells the people to prepare. He not only makes sure he serves his master faithfully but he looks earnestly for a response.

John was the King's messenger (v.2), in other words he was an ambassador. He bore a message from his monarch. He had a certain dignity and considerable self-control. He had to deliver the message with the same accuracy and even the same tone of voice in which his king had given it to him. As a mouthpiece for his master he dare not add his own interpretation. Then he could speak with the authority of the one who had sent him. "Don't listen to me for my own sake, but you must heed what I have to say because I am telling you God's message."

John was a voice - "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (v.3). Men came to John the Baptist and they wanted John the Baptist to talk to them about John the Baptist. But John the Baptist wouldn't talk to them about John the Baptist. He said, "a man can receive only what is given him from heaven" (John 3:27). He was just a voice. "I must decrease," he said, "and he must increase". He was pointing away from himself all the

time to his King. He told his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The one who came after him would be much more powerful than John. How unworthy he was to do the most menial task for him. The man is a voice, that's all. John was bringing a message from God as the servant of the King. If at the end of a sermon you don't know one more thing about the personal life of the minister then you are none the poorer for that and probably much richer. We live in a day when people ache to be famous, whether or not they have any talent that might justify fame. This explains why they are willing to sell so many details of their private lives; most of them have little else to sell. Politicians in particular are not very interesting people, but neither are preachers. The cult of the preacher is a loathsome cult. The preacher is a shout that tells of the King of kings.

John dressed in prophetic plainness: "John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey" (v.6). John wore the clothes of the poorest people made of rough camel's hair gathered from thorn bushes. His belt was not fancy, just a strip of sun-dried skin from some dead beast. He ate what he could gather in the desert, locusts and honey.

John had assumed the dress and style of Elijah the Tishbite who also called the people to national repentance. John's lifestyle was a protest against the godless materialism of this holy people living in God's own promised land. Come out from this decadent culture, repent, and live a godward life, it said. Even his chosen meeting place, the wilderness, brought the same message because it was into a wilderness that Israel came from Egypt to meet with God: "*Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God*" (Ex. 3:18). "We've been sinful rebels and we want to begin again," the people said as they came to meet the Lord's prophet, John.

So the truth to the nation was coming to them through the whole person of John, not just through his voice. It came through his character, his affections, his whole intellectual and moral being and the chosen location of his preaching. He embodied his message. His words saturated his being and dominated his life. Even in his diet and clothing he had

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become the message he brought from God, so seriously did he take his calling. Little  
wonder the people also took him seriously and flocked to hear the voice of God. This was  
no fraud, no self seeking entertainer - "There was a man sent from God, whose name was  
John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him  
might believe" (Jn. 1:6&7, A.V.).