

Mark 1:1-5 The Meaning of Repentance

We start a new book today, the Gospel of Mark. And for our introduction we are going to take the title of the book, which reads **The Gospel According to Mark**. We will use that title as our introduction.

Mark is the second book of the New Testament: (1) Matthew, (2) Mark, (3) Luke, and (4) John. It is part of a group of books known as the historical section of the Bible of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts. So Matthew through Acts is the historical part of the New Testament because it is the history of the Lord's ministry and His teachings. There is a second section that runs from Romans through Philemon, it is the doctrinal or teaching section - all of Paul's writings, Romans through Philemon. And then the last section is Hebrews through Revelation, that is the Jewish literature section of the New Testament. Letters written to Jews who believed who were scattered outside of Jerusalem after the persecution started after the stoning of Stephen in Acts chapter 7. So the Jewish literature section: Hebrews through Revelation.

Getting back to Mark, it is one book of three of the four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called The Synoptic Gospels. *Synoptic* comes from a compound Greek word that means *to view together*. They are all individual, written to certain specific groups of people, with a specific theme, picking out of the ministry of Jesus for people to receive.

The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written around the middle to late 60s AD. The Gospel of John was written thirty years later, one of the last books written in the New Testament.

Matthew wrote his gospel to the Jews to present to the Hebrew people their king, the promised coming Messiah.

Mark was probably the first gospel written of the three. He wrote his gospel to the Roman mind, to the Gentiles in Rome. He wrote his gospel from the testimony of Peter, as Mark did not join up with the brethren until Acts chapter 12. So he was not even around for the public ministry of Jesus Christ. He presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant.

Luke was written to the Gentiles, and he emphasized the human side of Jesus Christ. He, being a physician, would be very up on that, very sensitive to that area of life. And he emphasized the deity of Christ but more along the lines of his human frame and human circumstances.

John, again written thirty years later, wrote his gospel to the church and he presents Jesus as the Son of God. So he emphasizes His deity.

Now, Introduction to Mark's Gospel. Mark originates in Acts chapter 12 verse 12, he is in Jerusalem. We learn from Acts chapter 12 verse 12 that his name is John Mark. He has two first names like many people we study about. One is his Jewish name, it is John. And then his

Roman name, or surname, which is Mark. John Mark was cousin to Barnabas, one of the missionaries that went with Paul on his missionary journey.

In Acts chapter 7 it tells us that there was a stoning of Stephen, which started widespread persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem. So the Christians fled Jerusalem and went to other countries, other cities. And one of the more prominent is two hundred miles north of Jerusalem, the place called Antioch of Syria. It is right on the coast. There was a great revival that took place there, many Gentiles were saved, and Jews lived there to fellowship together. So Paul and Barnabas up in Antioch of Syria came down to Jerusalem to talk about some issues with the brethren. And when they went to leave, to go back up to Antioch, they took John Mark with them, that is in Acts chapter 12 verse 25.

In Acts chapter 13 it describes the first missionary journey as the Holy Spirit said, **Separate out for me Paul and Barnabas for this missionary journey.** So Paul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journey and they took John Mark with them. Remember he is cousin to Barnabas, so Barnabas has kind of taken him under his wing. They went straight west, sailed straight west of Cyprus. And there was a great revival, many, many people came to know Christ.

After they got to the end of the island of Cyprus they went straight north to the southern part of Asia Minor, and they began to experience difficulty. Paul was sick. The traveling was hard. They experienced opposition and they got to Perga, first of all. In Acts chapter 13 verse 13 it tells us that when they got to Perga it was so tough that John Mark went back home. He said, "I want to go home. I do not want to do this." So he went home.

After they got through with the missionary journey - Paul and Barnabas - it tells us about the second missionary journey. They were going to go back to the island of Cyprus, and to the southern part of Asia Minor to all the churches that were established. Visiting the brethren in order to strengthen and establish the churches. So Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again and Paul said no. In Acts chapter 15 verses 37 through 40 it tells us there was great contention between Paul and Barnabas about taking John Mark. So much so that Paul refused to take him, so Barnabas said, "Well, we will go our own way. You choose somebody else, we will go our own way." And Barnabas and John Mark went to the island of Cyprus to establish the churches there, while Paul took Silas and went up into the southern part of Asia Minor to establish and strengthen the churches there.

After the second missionary journey, we do not know what happened to Mark. There are a lot of historical documents that tell us that after the return of the second missionary journey John Mark apparently went with Peter, and became Peter's disciple. And that is where his gospel comes from, from the testimony of Peter.

Apparently after Peter died around 63 AD, Mark joins up again with Paul. Mark has now matured in the Lord. Before Paul died he wrote II Timothy chapter 4 verse 11. He said to Timothy, **Bring Mark with you as he is useful for ministry.** So he is now a useful tool. Like I say, he has matured. In Philemon verse 24 Paul calls Mark *my fellow worker*. So he has now joined up with Paul after Peter died.

John Mark is somebody who became a strong pillar in the church and very effective for Christ after a rough start.

The theme of Mark's gospel is the Suffering Servant taken from Mark chapter 10 verse 45, **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.** So Mark presents Him as the Suffering Servant.

To Whom the Letter was Written ~ As I said just a few minutes ago, the letter was written to the Roman mind. So it was written in the style to reach the Roman mind. The Roman mindset was one that followed the judicial system. Everything had to be according to the law - justified by the law, proven by the law. That is why the book of Romans, which is called The Constitution of the Christian Faith, is written the way it is. Every doctrine is found in the book of Romans. The book of Romans was written like a legal brief, as if a lawyer could take it, and stand it before the people of the court, and present the gospel in legal form.

Mark does not give a lot of details. His is the shortest gospel and he leaves a lot of details out that Matthew and Luke include. Mark presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant, as I said.

The Outline of the Book ~ Chapter 1 verses 1 through 13 is The Prologue or Introduction. Chapter 1 verse 14 through chapter 9 verse 50, The Presentation of the Servant in Galilee, the Lord's ministry in Galilee. Chapter 10, The Presentation of the Servant in Judea. And then in chapters 11 through 16, The Presentation of the Servant in Jerusalem.

So let us begin at verse 1, of the prologue or introduction. Mark chapter 1 verse 1, ***The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*** Notice the word *the* at the beginning is in italics because in the Greek text there is no definite article. It just says **Beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** ἀρχή (archē) the word for *beginning* represents a Hebrew word, תְּחִלָּה (t'chillāh), which means *first stage* or *first phase*. He is saying, "I am going to begin the gospel of Jesus Christ at this point." Here is the point he is starting at. He is going to start with the baptism of John. As we will see in a moment, he skips the birth narrative, and all the younger years of Jesus, and his stage or beginning point is going to be with John's baptism. That is John the Baptist, not John Mark, but John the Baptist.

He says, ***The beginning stage of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*** The word *gospel* means *good news*, used in a couple of different ways:

- 1) To announce to the people when there is a new Roman Emperor. They would send out notices of the good news of this man taking position as the Emperor.
- 2) They also used it for a rider who would ride through the villages and announce that the war that they are fighting is over and that they have won the victory.

So it is called *good news*.

He says, **it is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** Jesus is known as *Jesus the Christ* prior to 60 AD. Mark lists him as *Jesus Christ*. *Jesus* come from *Yeshua*, which means *Yahweh Saves*. That is His name. Christ is His title, He is Jesus the Christ. *Christ* means *anointed*, it is the Greek word (Χριστός, Christos) for the word מָשִׁיחַ (Māshîach) in the Old Testament that means the same thing, *the anointing*.

Then he says, **The beginning stages of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** Interesting, with all the disagreements with the cults over the deity of Christ, they pick out the word *Son*. How could Jesus be God if He is God's Son? Well this word *son* is not a word used for a son that is born, that is the word τέκνον (tekonon). This is a son (υἱός, huios) who inherits all things. He is the inheritor. He is called the Son of God, which is equivalent in the Jewish mind to the Messiah Himself. The Son of God. So He is the inheritor of all things. God the Father gave to Jesus all of His authority and all of His power. He is now the Son of God who inherits all things.

Now, in Mark chapter 1 verses 2 through 8, the credentials of John. This is John the baptist, as we know him in our English Bibles. Except he is not called *the baptist* in the Greek text, he is called *the baptizer*. He was not a Baptist. He was known to the Jewish people as Yochanan haMatbil, John the baptizer. And we will see that as we go through the book, he will be mentioned as that.

Verse 2, **According as it has been written in the prophets.** So now we have the prophecies fulfilled by John the baptizer. This is a quote from Malachi chapter 3 verse 1, **Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.** So God says, "It is prophesied I am going to send My messenger to pave the way." That is who John is, John the baptizer.

Then in verse 3, which is taken from Isaiah chapter 40 verse 3, **A voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths."** So John is that voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

Then verses 4 and 5, the preaching of John. **John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the Judean country and the ones of Jerusalem went out to him, and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.** So John went out preaching a baptism of repentance. The word *repentance* is an interesting word. It applies to us as well - not this baptism, but the word itself we find throughout Scriptures for everyone to repent. The word *repent*, μετάνοια (metanoia), means *to make a decision for change*. I am going to change the direction of my life and repent of my sins and turn my life over to Christ, over to the Messiah. So he is preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

But all of Judea and all the ones from Jerusalem went out to him, and were baptized by him in the Jordan River. Why are they coming out there? Just to see John? No, the Jews once a year celebrate תְּשׁוּבָה (t'shûvâh). That is the Hebrew word for *repentance*. It lasted for forty days. And so all the people at the time of *teshuvah* were going out to the Jordan River about eighty miles north of Jerusalem to be baptized. And the reason why they wanted to be

baptized, and the reason why they confessed their sins, is so that if next year Messiah comes He will receive them because they have repented of their sins. It was a religious ceremony that they did every year. It was not believer's baptism, and it was not even Christian baptism. This is John's baptism specific for the Hebrew and Jewish people.

We see that in Acts chapter 13 verse 24. During the first missionary journey they came to a place in the southern part of Asia Minor called Perga and that is when John Mark went back. And then they wound up in Antioch of Pisidia that is in southern Asia Minor. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue. And on the Sabbath day they rehearsed for the people the history of God working with God's people. And when he came to the part of John's baptism in his presentation he said (in Acts chapter 13 verse 24), **After John had first preached before His coming (before the coming of Messiah) the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.** This is for Israel. Not believer's baptism, not Christian baptism, but this is specifically for Israel.

In Acts chapter 5 verse 31 one of the references by Peter to the council who was telling the disciples they could not preach anymore in the name of Jesus. Peter says, **Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.** John's baptism was to Israel. It is interesting, that little part there "to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." We are going to find out that even repentance is a work of God, not a work of man. A person cannot repent and turn to Christ without the Lord working in their heart and life to bring them to Christ. So it is to Israel that this baptism of repentance was for.

Then repentance came to the Gentiles. In Acts chapter 11 Peter, after ministering at Cornelius' house, went back to Jerusalem and was confronted by his fellow Jewish brethren. And they said, "You went in to Gentiles and ate with them. You are not allowed to do that. You cannot mix with Gentiles." So Peter rehearsed for them all that had happened - how he was in Joppa, saw a dream, and the dream told him to eat unclean animals. And he said, "Not so, Lord. Nothing unclean touched my lips." But then it happened three times, not knowing what it meant. After the dream there were three men standing at the gate where Peter was residing. And three men were asking him to go with them to this man who is a Gentile but who had a love for Israel and the God of Israel. So God told him, "Go with them." You see, that is what the unclean animals meant on the sheet, "You are going to be asked to go to a Gentile and preach the gospel." So he went with them, and he went to Cornelius's house, and he preached to them Jesus, and while he was preaching the Holy Spirit fell upon them and saved them. While he was preaching. And Peter told the countrymen who were questioning him, "All this was done they were saved just like we were at the beginning." In Acts chapter 11 verse 18 it says that the Jewish brethren responded and said, **When they heard these things they became silent and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also given to the Gentiles repentance to life."** God has given to the Gentiles repentance to life. And then it was preached everywhere.

In Acts chapter 17 when Paul was on the third missionary journey, he was preaching in Athens at the statue of the monument to the unknown God. And he says to the people, "This unknown God that you think He is has now made Himself known." And he went on to say in Acts chapter 17 verse 30, **Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He**

commands all men everywhere to repent. Not a baptism of repentance, but the act of repenting, making a decision to change the mind, to turn to Christ and to turn from sin.

But there is an element here that I pointed out just a few minutes ago. Acts chapter 5 verse 31 again, Peter speaking, **Him** (meaning Christ) **God has exalted to his right hand to be Prince and Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.** The only way Israel could repent is if God gave them repentance. It is a work of God, the same with everybody's life, to make a decision to change the direction of your life.

That is why I sort of cringe when I hear about people being presented Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins so you can go to heaven. There must be repentance. You are calling on Christ to come into you and change the direction of your life to His direction, not yours. To stop me from going on the path that I want to go. Here in America the Gospel is presented in such a way to say, "God wants to give you His Spirit so that He can bless you in whatever you want to do." That is not the gospel of the Bible. The gospel of the Bible says, "To change the direction of your life." You make a decision to change and, again, that cannot happen unless God gives you repentance.

Interesting Paul wrote to Timothy in II Timothy chapter 2 verses 24 and 25 about the people who oppose him, Timothy, as he is pastoring. He says to Timothy in II Timothy chapter 2 verse 24, **And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel; but be gentle unto all men, able to teach, and patient,** which literally means *to hold up under adversity*. But in II Timothy chapter 2 verse 25 he goes on to say, **In humility disciplining the ones who are opposing you; listen to this, if God perhaps might give them repentance for acknowledgment of the truth.** That little phrase *if God perhaps might give* is in what is called the subjunctive mood: possibility. Again, taking into consideration people are coming against you and they do not see the truth and they are arguing against the truth. Then pray that God might bring them to repentance. There is no guarantee. It depends on their heart - if they are really seeking the truth or not, or just want to argue.

Repentance is preached everywhere. We do not hear it enough. Repentance is part of the salvation process. It is a work of God in a person's heart and mind. We as Gentiles, we sort of learn it backwards. We do not realize that once we receive Christ and surrender to Him that He is going to lead us down His path, not our path. And we have struggles with it for years because God is just not doing things our way. We are trying all the phrases; to do things in Jesus' name so that magically the Holy Spirit will bring about what we desire. But in reality God wants us to be in submission; to follow Him. That is what a disciple of Jesus Christ is, following the direction of their Lord. So, to make a decision for change, to change the direction of one's life.

Along with that meaning is also the fact that the person realizes, "I make a decision for change, but I cannot change myself." It must be Christ. It must be His Spirit coming in. It must be me receiving His Spirit for Him to take over the direction of my life. It is surrender. That is what salvation is. It is not a free ticket to heaven, it is following Christ.

And we will stop there for this week. We will finish out the rest of the prologue next week. Let's close with prayer.