

STUDIES IN MARK—LESSON ONE

The Beginning of The Gospel of the Son of God

Mark 1:1 - 15

INTRODUCTION -

- I. THE AUTHOR OF THE SECOND NEW TESTAMENT BOOK IS JOHN MARK.
 - A. "Cousin of Barnabas" (Col. 4:10), Mark was not one of the twelve, but Peter called him "my son" (I Pet. 5:13).
 - B. His mother, Mary, lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). His father's name is not given in the Bible.
 - C. He attended Paul and Barnabas as minister on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5), as far as Perga (13:13).
 - D. Paul declined to take him on his second journey (Acts 15:36-40), but some years later found him useful during his first imprisonment in Rome (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24), and finally asked Timothy to bring him to Rome during his final imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:11).

- II. WHEN AND WHERE THE BOOK OF MARK WAS WRITTEN IS UNCERTAIN.
 - A. So far as we know Mark was not an eyewitness of the Lord Jesus, yet he may have seen him.
 - B. Early church fathers testify almost unanimously that Peter was Mark's source of his information, and that Mark was Peter's interpreter.
 - C. It is believed Mark wrote about 60—70 A.D., most likely before Jerusalem was destroyed, primarily for Gentiles (Romans).

- III. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK IS TO TELL THE GOSPEL OF "JESUS THE ALMIGHTY KING" IN SUCH CONVINCING MANNER AS TO ESTABLISH FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD.
 - A. Starting with the title, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1), Mark launches immediately into the public ministry of Jesus, omitting the birth and infancy of Jesus.
 - B. Originally written in Greek, Mark emphasizes the mighty works, rather than the words or sermons, of the eternal Word.
 - C. His baptism by John the Baptist is the first event recorded.

love, mercy and providence of God.

- b. An adequate view of our spiritual condition: The exceeding sinfulness of sin and man's utter helpless predicament in sin.
- c. Yet, "Fear not....": A knowledge of the Saviour is revealed: God's remedy for sin, the message of salvation, is offered to all who obey him (Heb. 5:9). A wonderful Saviour has come, and there is remission of sins through his name (Luke 24:47).
- d. Life abundant: The Christian life is "the more excellent way" (I Cor. 12:31).
- e. Life everlasting: An eternal home and eternal happiness at last in heaven with God.

CONCLUSION -

- I. The gospel of the Son of God alone unfolds a perfect system of mercy and pardon, presenting the true plan of salvation (John 14:6).
- II. The gospel of the Son of God alone imparts an adequate knowledge of our Saviour, Mediator and Lord.
- III. The gospel of Christ alone is God's "power unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).
- IV. The gospel is the strongest motivation to fulfil our responsibilities, Christian duties, and to tell others that Christ is the answer to all our problems: He is divine drawing power, an upward pull to God which includes "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:1-4).

-Charles Crouch

- 1. Matthew 3:1 identifies the place as "the wilder ness of Judea," and Luke 3:3, as "all the region round about the Jordan."
 - 2. Confession of sin was a requirement for his baptism (Matt. 3:6).
 - 3. John's baptism was peculiar to the period of preparation for the kingdom of God.
 - 4. Being baptized, not "at," but "in the river Jordan," the true meaning of the word baptize (immerse) is supported.
 - C. Appearance and diet: "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leathern girdle about his loins, and did eat locusts and wild honey" (6).
 - 1. He wore the coarse, simple clothing of poverty, affliction, humiliation, which prophets often wore (2 Kings 1:8; Zech. 13:4).
 - 2. His girdle was evidently of untanned leather.
 - 3. His food was grasshopper—like insects and wild honey (Lev. 11:22).
 - D. His message: "And he preached, saying, There cometh after me he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (7).
 - 1. His humility is seen in his assertion that he was unworthy to be even Jesus' servant.
 - 2. He also said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).
 - 3. John's baptism required faith in one mightier than himself, who was to come after John (Acts 19:4; Matthew 3:11).
 - E. A contrast: "I baptized you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (1:8)
 - 1. This additional distinction between the ministries of John and Jesus is strong testimony to the divine power of Jesus (cf. John 10:41).
 - 2. The promised baptism in the divine Spirit, administered only by Jesus, not my men, was limited in scope and purpose.
- III. TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER: "MY BELOVED SON" (1:9—11).
- A. Jesus baptized: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan" (9).
 - 1. He was about thirty when baptized (Luke 3:23).

DISCUSSION —

- I. TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE: "EVEN AS IT IS WRITTEN IN ISAIAH THE PROPHET" (1:2,3).
- A. My messenger: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way" (2).
1. This was the custom of eastern monarchs, who sent "advance men."
 2. Out of the vast prophetic testimony concerning Jesus in the Old Testament, Mark uses only a few references, appealing rather to the works of Jesus to demonstrate his nature and power, as a foundation for faith.
 3. Yet he introduces the personal ministry of Jesus by quoting "Isaiah the prophet," then gives a brief account of the mission and testimony of John before relating the baptism of Jesus.
 4. Mark actually quotes from two prophets: Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3.
- B. Make ye ready: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight" (3).
1. John came as the harbinger or forerunner of Jesus, to prepare a people for him (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:3; John 1:23).
 2. Mark's purpose was evidently to show that the mission of John originated with God, who authorized and sent him forth on his ministry (John 1:6; Luke 7:29,30).
 3. John was "more than a prophet" (Matt. 11:9): He came to "make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him" (Luke 1:17).
- II. THE TESTIMONY AND MINISTRY OF JOHN (Mark 1:4-8; John 1:29-34; 3:30)
- A. John's work: "John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (4)
1. Baptism was a prominent feature of John's ministry.
 2. John preached a "baptism of repentance," which was also "unto repentance" (Cf. Acts 19:4; Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:7-14).
- B. The results: "And there went out unto him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (5).

2. He walked or rode a beast some 60 or 70 miles "from Nazareth," to "fulfil all righteousness" in this act of obedience to God.
 3. Not "for the remission of sins," but to be manifested as "the Lamb of God" to Israel (John 1:29—34).
 4. Since Jesus did not balk at immersion in being "baptized" of John "in the Jordan," but humbly and gladly submitted to the will of God, what a rebuke this becomes to those who argue for "a more convenient mode" today.
- B. As a dove: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him" (10).
1. Matthew 3:16: "And, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God as a dove descending upon him."
 2. Luke 3:21,22: "Jesus also having been baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form upon him."
 3. The descending, abiding Spirit upon Jesus was God's prearranged confirmation to John of Messiah's identity (John 1:33, 34).
 4. "Coming up out of the water" proves they went down into it for baptism.
- C. My beloved Son: "And a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (11).
1. Obedience to God's will still pleases God (John 14:21,23).
 2. By (a) the opened heavens, (b) the descent of the Spirit, and © the voice of the Father, the mission of Jesus was solemnly authenticated and publicly launched.
 3. If it required obedience in baptism for the sinless Jesus to be declared well-pleasing to God and for the heavens to open to him, how can any sinful person now feel he can be well pleasing to God and have heaven open to him while rejecting God's teaching on baptism?

IV. TESTIMONY OF HIS SINLESS LIFE: TOTAL VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION (1:12,13).

- A. Tempted of Satan: "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan" (12, 13a).

1. Jesus was "led" into the wilderness by "the Spirit" (Matthew 4:1).
 2. The temptation was not then voluntarily sought by Jesus.
- B. Angels ministered: "And he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him" (13b).
1. The temptation came during (Luke 4:2) and after (Matt. 4:2) his forty day fast.
 2. He was tempted "in all points like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15a).
- C. "Yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15b): Herein is valuable testimony to us of two things:
1. The worthiness of the sinless Lamb which was offered for sin.
 2. The power of the weapon he used to resist Satan's appeals: "It is written" was entirely effective.
 3. Let us always remember that Satan is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, but that God is both omnipotent and omniscient (Rom. 11:33 -36; 8:31-39).
 4. Let us never forget that no one can serve two masters and that we are the servants of the one we obey (Matthew 6:19—24; Romans 6:15,16).

V. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND (1:14,15).

- A. The gospel of God: "Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God" (14).
1. The imprisonment of John marks the beginning of the Galilean ministry (Matt. 4:12: "Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee").
 2. He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14).
- B. Heaven at hand: "And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel" (15).
1. The time appointed of God, of which the prophets spoke (Gal. 4:4).
 2. Jesus was preaching "the gospel of God" to people who already believed in the true God, so he said, "Repent... and believe in the gospel."
 3. "The gospel of God" is *glorious good news* because of what it reveals (2 Cor. 4:4).
 - a. The highest motives for trusting and obeying God: The