

Mark 1:1-8

'Prepare the way for the Lord'

Vs 1 The *'gospel of'* or *'about' Jesus Christ'*. This is a title & a summary of its contents. **'Gospel'** or *'news'* to be received with gladness. **Jesus** = 'Yahweh is salvation' – the name given to the divinely-appointed leader (see Mt. 1:21 'You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people'). **Christ** (Messiah)= 'anointed' i.e. being anointed for the task (see Mt 26:63-5 – 'tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God'). **Son of God** = he is uniquely, Son of God, the Divine One (see 1:11; 14:61-62; 15:39). The full implications of these titles are developed in the rest of Mark together with the other Gospels.

Vs 2-3. Fulfilment of the OT prophecies.

The gospel era is ushered in by John the Baptist, who is God's messenger, preparing the way for the ministry of Jesus the Christ. John is seen as a powerful desert preacher who arouses much curiosity but has no official status. His preparatory work is to preach for repentance, calling people to get ready for the coming of the divine One who will usher in the Kingdom (rule) of God. Later Jesus describes this as the 'covenant' established by his death (blood) (Mk. 14:28, and Paul spells out this is a 'new covenant' 1 Cor. 11:25 – the Old Covenant was for God's people the Jews, now a New Covenant for God's people established by Christ for Jews and Gentiles, see also Heb. 8)

Vs 4. 'Repent'

John called for a response of repentance – the way to get prepared – from all his listeners (all of Israel), including the religious leaders! Repentance = a change of heart & purpose, a desire for a new beginning – which would result in forgiveness of their sins by God. John demanded a change of life as proof of the change of heart.

Vs 5-8. 'after me will come one greater than I'

Large numbers of ordinary people responded to John and were baptised by him. John was recognised as a prophet, a messenger who announced God's word. John showed great humility, he recognised his preparatory role. He gives great honour to the one who will follow him, the one he is preparing people to receive and honour. The prime contrast is between two persons not two baptisms. John is saying that Jesus is not just another prophet like him, rather Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophetic tradition. God is ushering in a new reality through this divinely appointed one, who is rightly called 'the Lord'.

'Baptise with the Holy Spirit' = to be immersed in or under the control/guidance of the Spirit. (see Ezekiel 36:24-28, esp. 27-28). The coming of the Holy Spirit is made possible through the coming of Jesus the Christ (see Mk. 1:10). Historically the coming of the Spirit is experienced at Pentecost for believers (Acts 2). Theologically it means that one belongs to Christ, see Rm. 8:5-11 *those who 'belong to Christ ... have the Spirit of Christ'*.

Reflection/Response. Prepared/Repentant = a change of heart seen in a changed life.

How do we show an 'attitude of repentance' in our personal and corporate life?
How is the presence of the Holy Spirit evident in our lives?

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