

# OpenTheo

## Mark 1:1 - 1.11



### Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg gives a thorough analysis of the Gospel of Mark, which focuses on the actions of Jesus and emphasizes the role of John the Baptist as his precursor. The baptism of Jesus is a significant event, as it marks the point when he receives the Holy Spirit and is identified as God's Son by the Father. John's testimony to Jesus' identity as the Son of God changed the way he viewed the Messiah and spurred him to proclaim Jesus' ministry to others. The significance of Christian baptism as a profession of repentance and the receiving of the Holy Spirit is highlighted.

### Transcript

Tonight we're beginning to examine the Gospel of Mark, the shortest of the Gospels. Shorter than Matthew and Luke largely because of the absence of any extensive teaching material that is of the teachings of Jesus in the book. There are some of the teachings of Jesus here, but they're much more abbreviated than in some of the other Gospels.

And therefore, the Gospel of Mark is clearly a Gospel of action. It's a Gospel focused on what Jesus did more than what he said. Because of that, the Gospel of Mark has often been neglected among the Gospels.

People have shown more interest over the years in Matthew and Luke. But Mark is an important Gospel, too, and some think it's the earliest of the Gospels. We don't know if that's true or not.

It's kind of the general opinion of scholars that it is the first of the Gospels to be written. And we know that it really is not the Gospel according to Mark so much as it is the Gospel according to Peter, from whom Mark, we are told, got the material. So let's begin at the beginning of the first chapter, where it says, The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the Prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Now, there's a bit of a difference in the reading in

some manuscripts here.

This says, As it is written in the Prophets, The Alexandrian text, which is followed by most of the modern translation, says, As it is written in the Prophet Isaiah. It only mentions one prophet and mentions him by name. It's a little troublesome because the first quotation, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, is not from Isaiah, although the quotation in verse 3 is.

In verse 2, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you, is from Malachi, chapter 3, in verse 1. But then the next verse, 3, quotes from Isaiah, chapter 40, in verse 3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. So I actually, I don't know why some of the manuscripts simply say, As it is written in the Prophet Isaiah. Although he does quote Isaiah, he first quotes Malachi and then Isaiah.

In any case, it's clear that he quotes more than one prophet and wants to tell us of the gospel. This gospel goes back further than some of the others. Mark does not contain any birth narratives of Jesus, as both Matthew and Luke do.

Mark does not tell us any childhood stories of Jesus, as Matthew and Luke do. But Mark goes back further to the Old Testament prophets. And says this is really the beginning of the gospel, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

By the way, in verse 1, the term, the Son of God, is not found in some manuscripts, but that's not an issue. Jesus being the Son of God is a major emphasis of the book of Mark in general. So, although some manuscripts lack that expression here in verse 1, there are many affirmations throughout the gospel of Mark that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now, the beginning of the gospel, it's interesting that he refers to the beginning of his book as the beginning of the gospel, as if the gospel is the whole story he's about to tell. We sometimes think of the gospel primarily as focused on the ending of Jesus' life. The death and resurrection, of course, is probably the part that most often gets preached when the gospel is preached in our day.

But you'll find that when the apostles preached the gospel to unbelievers, they at least summarized the life of Jesus. They didn't just talk about his death and resurrection. They would tell something about his activities, his miracles, the ways in which God attested to the onlookers that Jesus was from God.

You find this in the first sermon of Peter in the book of Acts chapter 2. You find it in his sermon to Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. And, of course, Peter, who preached those two sermons, is also considered to be the mind behind this particular gospel. And it is a focus on the whole life of Jesus, not just the ending of it.

Jesus coming in the first place is the good news. And what he accomplished makes the

news even better. And what he accomplished when he died was, again, is perhaps the most significant part.

But the entire life of Jesus, the entire story of Jesus' public ministry, is treated as if it is the gospel. And so Mark's saying, I'm beginning now to tell you the gospel. It starts, actually, in the Old Testament.

And the scriptures he quotes from the Old Testament are somewhat interesting, certainly worthy of taking a look at. Because in Malachi chapter 3, where he says, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. Which we will find, as we read only a verse or two later in Mark, that that's a reference to John the Baptist, not a reference to Jesus.

And Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. And there are two references in Malachi to John the Baptist. One of them is in Malachi 3.1, which is the verse that Mark quotes here.

Malachi 3.1 says, Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. But this is actually, in Malachi, in the form of a threat to apostate Israel. In Malachi's day, the people of Israel and Judah were actually compromised.

And the prophet Malachi wrote in order to rebuke them. And to warn them that the day would come when God would send the Messiah. Now, you'd think that's the good news.

Mark calls it the good news. Well, it's the good news for men of good will. Remember what the angels said when Jesus was born? According to one of the other gospels.

Luke, I guess it is. The angels, when they announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, they said, I give you good tidings of great joy to all people. Now, it's to all people, though, of good will.

They said, Glory to God in the highest. And the way some translations say it is, On earth, good will toward men. Though most translators feel that would have been better translated, and peace to men of good will.

God has a message of peace to those who are of good will, good men. It is good news to good people. That is, to people who are honest, people who want the truth, people who want to follow God.

Well, he has certainly come down and made himself available to us. But to those who are his enemies, it's not good news. And Malachi says, And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant.

This is a reference to Christ. The first messenger in Malachi 3.1 is John the Baptist, as the Gospels tell us. But after that messenger comes, then the messenger of the covenant,

Jesus, will come.

And then it says in verse 2 of Malachi 3, But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand it when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap. He will thoroughly purge the sons of Levi, the priesthood. Jesus had many conflicts with the priesthood.

And although this is a promise that the Messiah will come, the hope for Messiah, yet it says, Well, when he comes, who's going to be able to endure that? Not everybody. Not everybody will. Isaiah said, Who can stand with everlasting burnings? Who can stand before God? When Jesus comes, it's not the easiest thing in the world.

And so God sends a messenger ahead of him to prepare them, hopefully that they will repent before the messenger arrives, before the Messiah arrives, and then they will be able to endure. And so there would be a remnant in Israel who could endure the coming of the Messiah and would come into the kingdom through him. But most of Israel was not prepared for that.

So God sends a messenger, John the Baptist, ahead of time, to announce the time is near, and you'd better get ready. And John the Baptist, by the way, did announce that judgment was imminent. The Messianic appearance was going to bring judgment upon Israel.

Mark doesn't record much of John's message. Mark is very brief about this. But as you look at Luke and Matthew, you find that John the Baptist was saying that he saw the Pharisees and the Christ, and who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Obviously, there was a wrath that was coming upon Israel shortly after that time.

And he was calling people to flee from that wrath and to repent and be ready. John said already Christ's axe is poised at the root of the tree, and every tree that does not bring forth good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. John further said, and this is in both Matthew and Luke, he said that his threshing stand is in his hand, and he will separate the wheat from the chaff, and he will gather the wheat into his barn, but he'll burn the chaff in unquenchable fire.

What John the Baptist was saying is there's a judgment coming. The Messiah is coming to gather the remnant to himself, and John is there to prepare them for that. But those who do not become fruitful trees, those who remain chaff rather than wheat, are going to succumb to fire.

And that fire was a judgment that was in fact impending when John showed up. Many Christians don't know enough about the history immediately after the New Testament time to know that this whole nation that John and Jesus spoke to, within that generation came under the most grueling and horrendous holocaust that Jesus said it's like none

before and nor shall any be afterward. The Romans came in A.D. 70, within 40 years of this announcement, within that generation, and they came and they slaughtered thousands, hundreds of thousands of Jews, and they carried the rest in captivity.

But that was only after a terrible siege in which many died slow and horrendous deaths. And so there was a great judgment that was coming upon Israel at this time. John comes and Jesus after him comes in order to rescue those who happen to be faithful to God.

And John is trying to increase the number of those, and saying you better get ready because there's a judgment coming. The messenger of the covenant is going to come, but who will endure the time of his coming? Not everybody. If you look over at Isaiah chapter 40, this is the verse that is quoted next in Mark, in Mark 1.3. It's quoted from Isaiah chapter 40, and I believe all, I think that all four of the Gospels quote this verse and apply it to John the Baptist.

And Isaiah 40, verse 3 through 5 says, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain will be made low. The crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Now, as I said, all four of the Gospels quote this passage and apply it to John the Baptist. In fact, John applies it to himself in the Gospel of John.

When the Pharisees come and say, are you the Messiah? He says, no, I'm not the Messiah. They say, are you Elijah? He says, no, I'm not Elijah. They say, well, who are you then? Why are you baptized? He says, well, I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

He quotes this passage. Now, this passage is an important Old Testament passage, and it mentions the wilderness, which is where John happened to live, out in the wilderness. He was literally a voice in the wilderness.

But in Isaiah, the wilderness has something more of a symbolic meaning. And if you would look up the word wilderness in a concordance, and look at all the places in Isaiah that mention the wilderness, you'll find it is a predominant theme in the book of Isaiah. And it's significant because, although a wilderness is literally a place where man has not cultivated, and things have grown wild, as opposed to a cultivated field, which has been brought under the control and care of man to produce fruit.

In Isaiah, there's many poetic passages where Israel, as a wild people, not governed by God, not succumbing to His law, following other gods and running wild, as it were, are like a wilderness. The land of Israel is like spiritually a wilderness because it is not under God's cultivation. God wants to cultivate it, but it's not being cultivated.

They are not obedient to God. And therefore, a wilderness becomes, in Isaiah, a common illustration for the spiritual state of apostate Israel. But in Isaiah, there's a series of prophecies about the wilderness changing in two different ways.

One is that it's going to be watered and become a fruitful field. This theme is repeated quite a few times in the book of Isaiah. The wilderness will be watered and it will become a fruitful field.

In other words, it will become cultivated. There will come a time when the spiritual state of God's people will become fruitful. It's in Isaiah that we have that famous parable in Isaiah chapter 5 about God's vineyard.

And how God was seeking fruit from the vineyard, and the vineyard is Israel. And He didn't find fruit, He got wild grapes. Again, the idea is that the vineyard has gone wild.

The grapes are like those of an uncultivated grapevine. But He says He's going to tear down the hedge and destroy that grapevine. Jesus picks up the idea of Israel being a vineyard, and He makes some of the same points.

And then He says, but God's going to lease His vineyard out to others who will bring forth the fruits of it. He says in Matthew 21, verse 44, He will give His vineyard to others who will bring forth the fruits of it. God, throughout Isaiah and Scripture, is seen as looking for fruit from His people.

The fruit is the fruit of justice and righteousness and good works. Remember Paul said in Colossians 1, verse 10, that we should be fruitful in every good work. The fruit God's looking for is a righteous life from His people.

He gave Israel the law. He sought to cultivate these wild people and bring forth the fruit of righteousness and justice in their society. They resisted.

They didn't obey the law. They remained a wild wilderness. And so Isaiah predicts a time, and the time he predicts, we find here, is the Messianic age, the time the Messiah would arrive.

Wait, if you had not read the New Testament and you came across Isaiah 40, in verse 3, you would find, oh, this is just another one of those many passages in Isaiah that talk about the wilderness being transformed. In this case, the wilderness of the city would be transformed into a roadway. Now, in ancient times, we probably cannot appreciate this, because if we want to go just about anywhere, there are paved roads that go everywhere.

We can zoom along at 60 miles an hour and not feel a bump in many cases. But in those days, a paved road was an unusual thing. And people were on these rutted, dirt paths and so forth.

And so if a king was going to visit your town in his carriage pulled by his horses and so forth, you didn't want the king to have a bumpy ride. And so prior announcement was given. A messenger would be sent ahead of the king to say, the king is coming, prepare the roads.

And the people of the village would be given adequate time to go out and level the roads, smooth them out, so that the king, when he visits, will not find himself uncomfortable on their bumpy roads. And it says the mountains will be brought low, the valleys will be brought up. It means you're going to fill in the dips, going to bring down the mounds, going to make a smooth road, the crooked ways are going to be made straight.

They're going to straighten out the highway for the king. That's the imagery. That was commonly done in ancient times, and that's the imagery here.

It says the king is going to come, and there will be a messenger sent ahead of time to warn you so you can get the roads straight. So you can smooth out his entry into your lives. How is that done? John preached the baptism of repentance.

That repentance was the way to remove the obstacles in your life from the wilderness that your life has become, so that it might become a smooth path for the king. Let me just show you a couple of other passages in Isaiah. There are at least twice or three times as many as the ones I'll show you that talk about the wilderness being transformed.

But a few of them that are of great interest will be Isaiah 35, because this is the theme that lies behind Isaiah 40, and Isaiah 40 is the theme that lies behind the significance of John the Baptist, according to Mark. In Isaiah 35, in verse 6, it says, Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will sing, for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. One reason the wilderness was wild is because it was hard to transport water there.

It was hard to cultivate anything because it was hard to get water there. And God speaks of time when the wilderness will be breaking forth with streams. But what are these streams? What is it referring to, really? It might seem, and I actually know some teachers who say this is literally going to happen in Israel, the desert is going to become water.

In fact, they say it's already happening because if you go to Israel today, the desert area, as much of it which was just barren desert 50 years ago, has in fact been irrigated, and there's all kinds of greenery growing out there where there used to be desert. And many people say that's the fulfillment of these prophecies in Isaiah. But Isaiah is not talking about literal fruitfulness or a literal desert.

He uses the imagery because that's familiar of the topography of the area. But what

does he mean when streams break forth in the desert? If you look back at Isaiah 32, we have another of these passages which brings it out in clear terms. Isaiah 32, 14 and 15.

It says, Because the palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city will be deserted, the forts and towers will become lairs forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks, until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field becomes like a forest. Now, the Spirit is what's going to be poured out. The water that breaks forth in the desert is living water.

Remember Jesus said in John chapter 7, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and as the Scripture said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And John says he spoke this about the Holy Spirit. The rivers of water bathing the scorched desert.

That is the age of God pouring out His Spirit. This happened, of course, at Pentecost. This happened in the New Testament times.

Isaiah lived 700 years before that and was predicting the times when this spiritual fruitlessness of Israel would be transformed by the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon them, like waters in the desert, and transforming it into a fruitful field, and therefore God's people would become fruitful. Now look at one other Isaiah passage, we'll get back to Mark. But in Isaiah chapter 43, this passage sort of combines the ideas of the transformation of the desert, both the fruitfulness and the road that's made in the desert.

The highway for our God. In Isaiah 43, in verse 19, it says, Behold, I will do a new thing. This is done in the New Testament, the New Covenant.

Now it shall spring forth, shall you not know it, I will even make a road in the wilderness, which of course is what John the Baptist came to announce, prepare a highway in the wilderness for our God, and rivers in the desert. So both of these ideas are here. The idea of these rivers of the Holy Spirit being poured out in the desolate spiritual wasteland of Israel, and of the road being prepared.

So Isaiah, and I said these are only a half or a third of the passages that we can find in Isaiah that talk about the transformation of the wilderness, it's a major theme in Isaiah. But the idea here is that Israel at a certain time has become fruitless, Israel has become wild, and it's not what God wants it to be. But a time will come when God will transform it.

God will pour out His Spirit upon Israel, on the desert, like rivers in the desert, and it will bring forth fruit. And this is what happened at Pentecost, the fruit of the land, the people of Israel who got saved and were filled with the Spirit began to produce spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit.

And their lives were transformed, so they became fruitful in every good work too, and



that became a tremendous testimony to the others in Jerusalem who had not become Christians, to see how these people cared for each other and sold their goods to help the poor and things like that. The fruitfulness that God had sought from the people of Israel actually began to be produced in the body of Christ in the Church when the Spirit was poured out. But John comes at a time when the Messiah has not yet shown up to do this, but He's coming.

And the announcement is you need to make the road ready, the King is going to be coming here and it's not too far off, prepare a highway for God. Now that's what John, that's what his ministry was, preparing the way for Christ to come. The highway in men's hearts, so that they could receive Him as their King.

But they were in no sense ready, they were not faithful to God, they needed to come in mass and repent. And it says that John, in verse 4, came baptizing in the wilderness, Mark 1, verse 4. John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. So this is why he preached this, they needed to get ready for the Messiah to come, and they weren't ready, they had to repent, they had to get their life together.

Now the word repent literally means to change your mind, with the effect that it turns you around. You're going one direction because that's the direction you want to pursue. You change your mind, you say I don't want to go that way, I want to go that way, and so you turn around and go the other way.

That's what repent means. And so the idea is that people were living for themselves, living selfishly, living carnally, living sinfully, living disobediently, and that had to change, they had to turn around and start being obedient and submissive and humble before God. And so John comes with that message and says, now if you want to repent, I'm going to be out here in the water and I'll baptize you.

Now baptism, this is before there was Christian baptism. What was the background of baptism? It's not known for sure, but most scholars believe that the Jews at this time, in John's time, were baptizing those who wished to become Jewish. Yes, you could become Jewish.

You didn't have to be born Jewish, you could become what they called a proselyte. We would call them a convert. If you were a Gentile, you could convert to Judaism.

We know that the Jews were practicing baptism, with respect to this rite, at least in the second century A.D. They may have been doing it much earlier, and most commentators will say that they were. However, if a Gentile wanted to become a Jew, they had to do three things. They had to, if they were a man, they had to be circumcised.

They then had to offer a sacrifice to cover their sins. And then they had to be baptized.

This is not something the Old Testament designated.

Yes, circumcision and sacrifice, yes, but baptism was never really practiced in the Old Testament. But sometime before John's time, in all likelihood, the Jews had begun to practice this immersion in water. Sort of like giving the Gentiles a bath.

The idea was, it was sort of a development out of the Jewish idea of all the washings they did. The Jews had many washings they did. There were some washings commanded in the Old Testament, but not anywhere near as many as what the Jews practiced.

In the Old Testament, if you actually contracted some uncleanness, you touched a leper, or you were a leper, you touched a woman on her period, or you were a woman on her period, or you had been to a funeral and come in contact with a dead body, you were unclean for a season. In many cases, you were unclean until sundown. Other times, you were unclean for a full week.

Under the law, different defilements would make you unclean for different lengths of time. But at the end of the period of uncleanness, the law said, you shall wash your clothes and wash your body with water, and then you'll be clean and you can go back into normal life again. So, the law did have a certain occasional washing that it commanded in association with ceremonial uncleanness.

But the Jews, of course, they added to it a great deal. So that in the time of Jesus, Mark tells us, in Mark chapter 7, that the Jews washed just about everything whenever they came indoors. They always figured, well, I probably contracted some uncleanness outdoors.

Maybe the wind blowing over Samaria blew against my face, and Samaria is an unclean place. Or maybe somebody who had walked through Samaria had dust on their shoes, and I walked on their dust, and then, you know, I'm unclean. They had this really anal concern about, you know, remaining ceremonially clean, having no contact.

If a Gentile brushed against you in the marketplace, then you were unclean. As far as they were concerned, the law didn't say that. These are the traditions they had.

And in Mark 7, Mark kind of tells us the kinds of things that the Jews did. It says, in verses 3 and 4 of Mark 7, For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come in from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.

And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Now, these are all things, traditions they've come up with. They didn't wash because they knew about sanitation.

We might go out and get dirty and wash up before we eat because we know about germs

and sanitation. They didn't know about germs and sanitation. They washed because they were afraid they had been ceremonially defiled by possibly, you know, breathing the same air a Gentile had breathed in the marketplace or something like that.

It was a religious thing, not a hygienic thing. And so the Jews were practicing this in the days of John, and so they had also amplified this practice to Gentiles. If a Gentile wants to become a Jew, well, a Gentile is really unclean.

I mean, they've got to go all the way under. They've got to be immersed in water. They've got to take a full bath because everything about a Gentile is unclean.

And if a Gentile wants to become a Jew, he can get circumcised. He can offer a sacrifice for his sinfulness, and he can get baptized. That was how the Jews were doing things, not how the Bible said to do things.

It was just the practice of the time. But that being so, when John began to call the Jews to be baptized, you see, it's like a slap in their face. This is what you do to Gentiles.

Those Gentiles, they're dirty. They're unclean. They're not acceptable to God.

You have to baptize them, of course. But John says, now all you people need to be baptized. You Jews.

And he's saying, you are no better than the Gentiles, as far as God is concerned. If you are guilty of sin, it doesn't matter that you're Jewish. A sinner is a sinner, as far as God is concerned.

See, the Jews actually believed that it didn't matter much if they sinned, because they were Jewish. Because they were Jewish, because they were circumcised, they were God's people. They kind of had a pass that God gave them because they're Jewish.

And then, of course, every year, the high priest would make a sacrifice for the whole nation, and that covered them. So they could be really slack about their moral lives. And they were.

They were slack in many cases. And so John's saying, being Jewish isn't going to help you. In fact, although Mark doesn't record it, Matthew records that John said to them, Don't think to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our ancestor.

God could from these stones raise up children from Abraham. That was part of John's preaching, too, not mentioned by Mark. But he was addressing the fact that they thought that since they were descended from Abraham, they were circumcised, they were Jews, therefore it was cool.

And John said, that doesn't count for anything any more than this rock. God can make a child of Abraham from this rock. It doesn't matter who your ancestors are.

God doesn't have grandchildren or great-grandchildren. You have to be related to God by your own submissiveness and humility and obedience to God. And that's what John was calling them to realize.

And they had to repent of their slackness toward God and be baptized, just like the Gentiles. Just like the Jews required the Gentiles to be baptized. It's like God was saying, OK, that's a good idea.

You guys be baptized, too, then, because you're not any better. And that was the message that they would get from this man out there calling them to be baptized. And many of them did.

It says in verse 5, all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him and were all baptized by him in the river, in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. So a real revival broke out. It's sort of like the days of Josiah, when the people had been slack about the law.

They hadn't even totally forgotten the law. And the priest Hilkiah found a copy of Deuteronomy in a, you know, it was covered with dust in some bin in the temple when they were cleaning out the temple. And he said, what's this? For generations they'd totally forgotten the law of Moses.

And they found a copy of it when they were kind of refurbishing the temple. And the priest looks at it and says, whoa, this is really something. He takes it to King Josiah.

Josiah reads it and says, we are in trouble. We are in a lot of trouble because these laws are God's laws that were given to our ancestors and we have been breaking them routinely. And so Josiah repented and he called the nation to repentance.

And there's like a national turning to God. That's kind of what happened with John the Baptist. These people had just been kind of lackluster in their relationship with God.

And now with a new prophet showing up with this message, then they say, well, they took him seriously. And they confessed their sins while they were baptized. Now it says all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea.

That's a good example of the hyperbole the Bible uses. Not everyone came. How do I know that? Because there are mention of people who didn't.

In Luke chapter 7 and verse 30, it says that the Pharisees rejected the will of God for themselves by not being baptized by John. Luke 7 verse 30. So we know there were some who didn't get baptized.

But this is a sweeping generalization. This is what we call a hyperbole. It's an exaggeration, but it's emphatically saying this was a sweeping movement that virtually

everyone came to.

It says verse 4, John came baptizing. Verse 5, all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him and were all baptized. Not every last one, but basically such a generality of the population did that it's as if you say everybody's following.

It's like later on when the Sanhedrin were upset because Jesus was so popular, they said all the world is following him. That's a similar kind of hyperbole. We talk that way too.

And it's not a lie, it's just a manner of speaking. It's a figure of speech. But here we see that John was very successful initially and had a tremendous revival movement.

Now think about this. He was probably the most visible, most popular in one sense, religious figure in Israel. It's like today if somebody came to a town that was pretty dreary and started a church and everybody joined his church.

Everybody came to hear him preach. I mean he'd be a big popular preacher. But John, that kind of thing didn't go to his head.

He was extremely modest and although he was the sensation in Israel at this time, it says in verse 6, Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey, 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. I indeed baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Now remember Isaiah predicted a time when the road would be built in the wilderness and then the Spirit would be poured out in the wilderness.

So John says, I'm here to build the road, but the one who's coming after me, he's going to pour out the Spirit. I can only pour out water on you or dip you in water, but he's going to immerse you in the Holy Spirit, so that the age that Isaiah predicted of the transformation of the spiritual wilderness is here. The road is being built, the Spirit's going to be poured out.

That's what John predicts. But notice how humble he is. Now he's, like I said, he's got the megachurch in town.

He's the pastor of the megachurch. He's the only preacher there. Everyone comes to him to be baptized.

No one's going to anyone else to be baptized. It's all about John. But to his mind, it's not all about John.

John is a model of a messenger of God in a number of ways. One way is that he lived his message. He lived his message.

We find that some modern preachers, you know, they preach hard against sexual

immorality and then they get busted for being sexually immoral themselves. Or they preach against, you know, greed, and then you find out that they're living luxuriously themselves. And, you know, it's one thing to say the right things.

It's another thing to be credible when you say them. It's essential that the messenger lives his message. And John did.

Notice, first of all, his message was that they're to build a highway in the wilderness. Now, the wilderness, the highway and the wilderness are spiritual, you know, images. They're not really going to go out and build a real road out there in the desert.

This is a spiritual wilderness, a spiritual highway. But the point is, to illustrate his message, he lived out in the desert. After all, he had to be the one that Isaiah called a voice in the wilderness.

So he went out in the wilderness and raised his voice. Now, he didn't just go out there for his preaching. He lived out there.

In fact, in Luke's gospel, it tells us that the boy John, after he reached a certain age, in all likelihood from the time of his bar mitzvah on, age 12, 13, he went out and lived in the wilderness the rest of his life. And it's not like he had an RV out there, you know, living out in the Arizona desert, you know, with all air conditioning and all that kind of stuff. The desert there, between Judea and the Dead Sea, is some of the most severe, hot desert anywhere.

And there were wild animals out there. We find later in this chapter, when Jesus went out to the desert for 40 days to fast, he was with the wild beasts. And it's known there were bear, there were leopards, there were hyenas.

These jackals, these beasts were mentioned in Scripture as being in the wilderness of Judea. Not here, but, you know, they are listed elsewhere in Scripture. Lions, even, at one time.

There's no lions there now. But there were lions there in David's day and Samson's day. They apparently got eradicated from the area.

But there were still leopards and bears and so forth in John's day. And he lived out there with the wild animals. I don't mean like, you know, Mowgli or Tarzan or something like that.

They weren't his friends. He just lived out there vulnerable to them. And, you know, he was supposed to be a voice in the wilderness, so he lived in the wilderness.

Now it's partly due, probably, that his message was also a denunciation of Jewish society as it currently was being lived. And so it's in a sense a rejection of society to go out and

live in the wilderness. There were whole colonies of Jews that were disgusted by the low moral state of Jewish society and went out and started their communities in the wilderness.

The Essenes, for example, they're not mentioned in Scripture, but they're the ones who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. We know a lot about the Essenes community because they were down in the Dead Sea area in the desert. They had a community there.

In fact, since not very many people really could survive and live out in the desert, some people have speculated that John was maybe from the Essenes community since it's known to have been out there, but there's no reason to believe so. The Essenes did baptize. They were really, really religious.

They were much more religious than the Pharisees. In fact, the reason they were out in the desert is because they thought the Pharisees were way too compromised. These people were very legalistic Jewish people, and they washed themselves many times a day.

And this was for ceremonial purification reasons. Although living out there in the desert, they probably didn't mind it that much. I'd probably want to take a bath several times a day if I lived out there too.

But the thing is, some people say, well, John's idea of baptism came from the Essenes because we know from their records in the Dead Sea Scrolls that they washed themselves several times a day. Well, John didn't do that. John baptized people one time as an emblem of repentance and no doubt of cleansing.

And yet he lived in the wilderness, a very inconvenient, very uncomfortable place to live. He lived his message. He's supposed to be a voice in the wilderness, so he lives in the wilderness.

And he lived it in other ways too. It says he wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt. Now, camel's hair, I suppose many of us, when we think of a garment of camel's hair, we think of someone in a shaggy, you know, animal pelt.

Sort of like a caveman or something wearing a shaggy, hairy garment. You just take the hide of a camel and wrap it around you. Camel's hair was actually cloth that was woven from the hair of camels.

He wasn't wearing a camel's skin. There was a cloth which the poorest people wore because it was not smooth and not comfortable against the skin. It was like sackcloth.

It was like burlap. It was the cheapest cloth. The poorest people would wear it because they had to wear something and they couldn't afford anything more.

But they would, of course, they would shear a camel like you'd shear a sheep. And they'd weave the camel's hair into this rough cloth. That's what John wore all the time.

Now, wearing sackcloth was an established emblem of repentance in the Old Testament. People would repent in sackcloth and ashes. When they were repenting, they would put on sackcloth, which made them uncomfortable.

It was like saying, OK, I don't really feel like I'm really sorry but I'm still wearing my nice clothes and comfortable stuff. I'm going to really make it uncomfortable for myself. I'm going to wear the sackcloth.

And that was an established way of saying, I repent. Now, John, therefore, was wearing this, like, sackcloth all the time. And his message was calling people to repent.

Everything about his message, whether you heard it from his mouth or whether you watched him and looked at him, was the same message. He said, repent, and he wore camel's hair sackcloth all the time. He said he's a voice crying in the wilderness, and he's out in the wilderness living there.

He also, we're told he subsisted on a diet of locusts and wild honey. Now, locusts were one of the few insects that the law said was a clean food. If you go to Leviticus and read the list of clean and unclean animals, most insects were unclean.

The Jews were not allowed to eat most insects. But there was one class of insects they could eat, and that was those who had a hinged hind leg that bends above their back. And there was a hopping, you know, like a cricket, a grasshopper.

That'd be clean. And therefore, eating locusts was something that Jews could do and no doubt did when they needed to. Some people like eating locusts.

In some third world countries, you can order them. It sounds kind of gross to us genteel westerners perhaps, but it wasn't really, you know, yucky or loathsome. It was just, it was the food that came to hand.

In others, he ate wild food. Now, if I was going to go live out in the desert, where there's no towns, there's no 7-Eleven, there's no anything, no convenience stores, how am I going to eat? Well, if God called me to live out there, I'd just have to trust Him to provide, wouldn't I? I mean, if I could find a locust, I guess I'd have to munch on that. And he ate wild honey too.

That's just wherever he'd come across a tree that had a hive in it. Wild, uncultivated bees make honey, so he'd get his carbs that way and he'd get his protein from locusts. He probably prayed for them as for a locust plague, you know, and then he'd really feast.

No one else wanted one, but that's what he ate. Now, whether he ate anything else or



not, we don't know, but that's primarily what he ate. And what that means is, he just, he lived by faith.

He had to depend on God to give him his sustenance. He had to, you're out in the desert, there's not much there. You can't grow stuff.

What are you going to eat? Well, whatever God provides. Oh, here's a bug. Oh, here's a tree with some honey in it.

I don't think he had decided, as a matter of principle, I'm only going to eat insects and honey from trees. But it's the idea that he ate what he found. He ate what the Lord provided.

And in the desert, that's pretty slim thickets. But he lived by faith, in other words. Most Jews were out fishing or doing work and trading in this marketplace, and that's how they ate.

That's how they fed their families. He went out where he couldn't hold a job, he couldn't farm, and he just had to trust God. He lived by faith.

So, John is a really, a good, you know, messenger of God that his life, he lived what he said. He practiced what he preached. And he was humble about it, although he was an extremely successful preacher by today's standards, of course.

Probably by any day's standards. If you get the whole town, you get everyone in town coming out to be baptized by you and hear you preach. You've had a good day.

You're a successful preacher. There was a small town called Applegate, Oregon, that I think had 2,000 people in it. And John Corson, who's a well-known Calvary Chapel pastor now, he went and started a Calvary Chapel in that town.

And his Calvary Chapel had 3,000 people in it. The town had 2,000. You know, he had more people in his church in that town than the town had.

Now, that's successful preaching. That's a successful pastor. And yet, John, as successful as he was, was not an egotist about it at all.

It didn't really, it didn't go to his head. He said, you know, Jesus is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to stoop down and take his sandals off.

Which, of course, is what the lowest servants in the household did, is take your sandals off and wash your feet for you. When you come into the house, you had to get your shoes on, as is still done in many Asian countries today. You take off your shoes when you go in the house.

But you also, thank you, you also have to have, you know, your feet washed. And that

was a dirty business. That was something that most people didn't want to do, didn't want to wash someone else's feet.

There was bad stuff on the streets, and therefore on the feet of the people who came in. And so, they picked kind of the lowest ranking servant to wash the feet and take off the sandals. And when John said, the one who's coming after me is mightier than I, I'm not even worthy to stoop down and take his sandals off.

He's saying, if I was in his household, I don't even rank high enough to be the lowest ranking servant there. Now, that's pretty humble. If you want to see a wonderful manifestation of John's humility in this area, look at John chapter 3, the Gospel of John.

In John chapter 3, it says in verse 25, Then there arose a dispute between some of John's, that's the Baptist's, disciples and the Jews about purification. That'd be about washing, ceremonial washing. And apparently in the course of this argument between John's disciples and some of the Jews, they must have talked about baptism, which would be viewed as a sort of purification washing.

And then, I guess, in order to needle the disciples of John, some of the people arguing with him said, well, you know that Jesus over there, he's baptizing more than John is anyway. In other words, this guy you're following, he that has been. Everyone used to come to him, but now more people are going to Jesus.

The idea is, you had the biggest church in town before, but now this other guy has the biggest church. What are you going to do about that? And that bothered John's disciples. And they came to John and said, Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, he is baptizing and all are coming to hear him.

So here's a pastor of a church who had the revival going on in his church a year ago. And all the people are coming to hear him preach. And now no one's coming to hear him preach.

He's got a few loyal disciples who still doggedly kind of travel around with him. But now the crowd is the new pastor. And the disciples, John, are kind of jealous.

I remember when I was an elder at Calvary Chapel in Santa Cruz, we had a good-sized church for a while there. And then another church came to town from, it was a four-square church that came up a branch off of Jackie Hayford's church in L.A., came up to Santa Cruz and started up. And I remember a lot of the people in our church started going over to that church.

And it became the next big church in town. And that didn't bother me, but one of our deacons complained about that. And he actually said, we need to tell our people not to go over to that church.

And I thought, why? You know, if they're getting more from that church than ours, why should we try to keep them here? You know, if they're not getting more from that church than ours, then they won't go there and won't stay there. People will go to the restaurant that serves the best food. If they're serving better food than we are, then we shouldn't begrudge them that.

If we can't meet their needs as much as these people can, then they should go there, shouldn't they? I mean, but this deacon, you know, when you're in church leadership, you get a little concerned if your church looks like it's shrinking. Especially if it used to be the happening thing. If you used to be riding the wave, you know, of popularity.

And now suddenly your church is going down, and someone else has got the big church. That's what happened to John. And it says, the disciples of John were not all that happy about it.

But they brought it to John, and he said, in verse 27 of John 3, a man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. That means from God. You yourselves bear me witness that I said I'm not the Christ, but I've been sent before him.

He who has the bride is the bridegroom. Now the people are the bride. They go to the bridegroom.

Jesus. That's what John said. That's how it's supposed to be, isn't it? The bridegroom is supposed to have the bride, as I recall.

He says, the friend of the bridegroom, which was actually, in a Jewish wedding there was, of course, a bridegroom and a bride, but there was a person who was called the friend of the bridegroom. He was generally the matchmaker who had made the arrangements between the two families, and he was kind of responsible to make sure that the wedding, you know, happened. He was like the administrator and so forth.

There was this role called the friend of the bridegroom, and John's referring to himself as being in that role with reference to Christ. Christ is the bridegroom. John's just the matchmaker.

He's just the friend of the bridegroom. He's there to introduce the bride to the bridegroom. He says, it's the bride who has the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.

Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. So, John says, my church is shrinking and his is growing, and that's exactly how it ought to be.

No one can receive anything except what God gives them. God is giving Jesus that congregation, and therefore I should rejoice in it. I do.

That's a good attitude for a pastor to have, you know, if his church shrinks and people are going somewhere else. I remember hearing a story about a pastor whose church was kind of going through hard times, and he was losing some members, and he looked out his window across the street at the church across the street and said, well, at least they're losing members, too. That was some consolation.

None of the church was doing well, praise God. No one's doing better than I. But John, he was wildly successful. And yet, he was very humble.

He was the right man for the job. And he said, I have only come to baptize with water, but he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Now, I might say before we leave that point, that John's baptism is not to be confused with Christian baptism.

We know this because Paul made a clear distinction between the two. In Acts, chapter 19, Paul ran into some people who had been exposed to John's teaching and had been baptized with John's baptism. And Paul said that wasn't good enough.

Because after Pentecost, John's prediction came true. He said, Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I'm only baptizing with water.

That's not going to always be good enough. You need more than this baptism that I have. You need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, too.

And so Paul, in Acts, chapter 19, comes to Ephesus, and he finds there some disciples. It doesn't say in verse 1 whose disciples they were, but it becomes clear they were John's disciples in Ephesus. In all likelihood, they were Apollos' disciples, because Apollos, in the previous chapter, had just passed through Ephesus, and he only knew about John's baptism.

And that's all these people knew. So they probably had been influenced by Apollos and been baptized by Apollos before Priscilla and Aquila improved Apollos' understanding of those things. That's all described at the end of chapter 18.

But here, Apollos is gone from Ephesus. He's gone on to Corinth. Paul comes to Ephesus right behind Apollos, finds these 12 disciples.

There are 12 of them, we're told that in verse 7. And in verse 2 he said, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Interesting that he'd ask that question. There was something about them. They seemed like disciples, sort of, but there was something about them he wondered, You guys don't have the Holy Spirit, do you? Didn't you receive the Holy Spirit? And they said, We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.

We never heard such a thing as that. What are you talking about? And Paul said, Into what then were you baptized? They said, into John's baptism. Well, what was John's

baptism? John's baptism, as Paul would point out, is simply an emblem of repentance.

Paul said in verse 4, John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who would come after him. That is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of Jesus.

Now, they had been baptized already, and they didn't know that wasn't good enough, but Paul said, There's something missing from your lives. You're not like most of the disciples I know. You know, I know what it is.

You don't have the Holy Spirit, do you? And they said, Well, I guess not. We never heard of such a thing as that. And when they said, We were baptized with John's baptism, Paul said, Oh, well, that explains it.

John's baptism only called people to repentance. Now, repentance is a good thing, but all prophets throughout history before Jesus' time called people to repentance. Repenting can be done at any time, but John didn't only want people to stop there.

He wanted them further to believe on Christ. And obviously, in Paul's mind, that meant, and receive the Holy Spirit, because that's what got this conversation started in the first place. You guys don't have the Holy Spirit? Weren't you baptized into Christ? Oh, you were baptized with John's baptism? Well, you need to be baptized in Christ's name, and then you receive the Holy Spirit.

That's why you don't have the Holy Spirit. And we read then that they agreed, and they said, Then they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And look at verse 6, And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Now, that's the difference between Christian baptism and John's baptism. John came and lived and ministered and died before the Holy Spirit was given. His ministry was great insofar as it went, but it didn't really go that much further than any prophet in the Old Testament.

Elijah the prophet called people to repentance. Some people did repent. Prophets could call people to repentance, and they'd come to repentance.

That's what John did. But John said, Ah, but there's more to it, because there's something coming right after me. Jesus is coming.

The Messiah is coming. And he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Then from then on, baptism takes on a different significance.

Yes, it still is about repentance, but it is the entryway into receiving the Holy Spirit. So we read in Acts chapter 2, the very first time Peter preached a sermon after the Spirit had been given at Pentecost. And this actually is on the occasion of Pentecost.

Peter preaches, and people come and say, What must we do? In verse 37, When they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter's answer in verse 38 is, 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. So as of Pentecost and following, the giving of the Holy Spirit came along with baptism. And therefore, Christian baptism was more than just a profession of repentance.

Yes, when you become a Christian, you must repent. That's one of the first things you have to do to become a Christian, is repent. But you can do that without becoming a Christian, in a sense.

I mean, before Jesus came, people repented. But what was new in the time of Jesus, and John was seeing it coming soon, was that people who would repent would receive the Holy Spirit. And the remission of sins.

And at Pentecost, when that really happened, Peter announced it that way. You're now baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and to receive the Holy Spirit. So John's baptism was, you know, it was the cutting-edge thing to do if you wanted to be on good terms with God.

In fact, this is brought out by the fact that Jesus even came to be baptized by him. And that's the next thing we read about in verse 9. Mark 1.9. It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Now, this is passed over very briefly by Mark, sort of in his characteristic way.

But as we know from the parallel accounts in both Matthew 3 and Luke 3, a conversation arose. This is Matthew, gives the most detail. When Jesus came to be baptized by John, John's objective.

He said, I believe you should baptize me, not me baptize you. And Jesus said, let it be so now, for thus it behooves us to fulfill all righteousness. What's that mean? Well, we need to know what that means because thinking people have always wondered, why did Jesus come and get baptized by John? It's clear that John's baptism was a confession of sin and an emblem of repentance.

But Jesus had no sins to confess and no repentance to do. And John himself saw it was incongruous for him to baptize Jesus. Jesus wasn't like other people.

Jesus didn't need to repent. He didn't need to be baptized, John thought. John had the same question we have.

Why should Jesus be baptized? And Jesus gives the answer. He says, it's important for me to fulfill all righteousness. And what that means is for me to do all the things God is requiring people to do.

Whether I need it for the same reasons they do or not, the Father wants me to go through the steps of full identification with the people I'm here to save and to do everything that they are required to do. You see, he was the shepherd, and the shepherd goes ahead of the sheep. Jesus would eventually command people to be baptized, or at least his disciples would in the book of Acts, but a shepherd will not go, will not send the sheep where he has not gone himself.

Jesus was going to call people to follow him, but he can't have them follow him unless he's going first where he wants them to go. So he, who would require others to be baptized, himself was baptized. Some people think that as Christian baptism at a later date is a looking back at the, you know, we've been buried with Christ and resurrected with Christ.

That's one of the main meanings of Christian baptism at a later time, is that we have been buried in baptism and raised to newness of life, coming out of the water. That's stated in Romans 6 and verse 6. It's stated in Colossians 2 and verses 11 and 12. Christian baptism commemorates our having died and risen again with Christ.

Some say that when Jesus was baptized, it may have been sort of a foreblitz or an anticipation of his death and resurrection, but that would be entirely a speculation. We don't know that it would be that. Jesus said he did it because he wanted to fulfill all righteousness, which means all the things that God wants people to do in order to be righteous.

Well, God wanted people to repent and be baptized. Jesus didn't have to repent, but he could be baptized and he could then walk ahead of his sheep, walk ahead of his disciples. He wants them to go through the waters of baptism, he'll go through it too.

And so Jesus came to be baptized and it says in verse 10, immediately coming up from the water, he saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. Now, John said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, but here we see Jesus first getting himself baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes down upon him.

The expression, the Spirit coming upon somebody is synonymous with being baptized in the Spirit. We know that because Jesus used those terms synonymously in Acts chapter 1. In Acts 1.5, Jesus said to the disciples, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. But then three verses later, in Acts 1.8, Jesus says, and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

So Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit coming upon you and being baptized in the Holy Spirit in Acts 1.5 and Acts 1.8. So these are synonymous. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you are baptized in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism in water.

And we see that that became normative for his disciples too. Jesus was going ahead of the disciples. The disciples would do the same thing.

So that we see Peter telling people, repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. Paul finds these men in Ephesus. He preaches to them.

Apparently they repent. He baptizes them in water. He lays hands on them and they get filled with the Spirit.

This was the standard procedure. Jesus experienced it and others did. So that in the biblical times, from Jesus on, when people got baptized, at least with Christian baptism, in the name of Jesus, they also received the Holy Spirit.

But not automatically. Because there were some people who got baptized and didn't receive the Holy Spirit, but it wasn't normative. In Acts 8, Philip went down to Samaria and he preached there and people believed and came to Christ and were baptized in water.

But the Bible says the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them. And the apostles, John and Peter, came down from Jerusalem and laid hands on these people and they got filled with the Spirit. Now, I don't know why Philip didn't do that.

I don't know why that neglect was there. But we do see that people did, in this case, get baptized in water and they did not immediately receive the Holy Spirit. But that was abnormal.

So the apostles came down and rectified that. So, I think what we can say is that being baptized in the Holy Spirit, biblically, normatively, is to occur when people are baptized in water. Jesus was baptized in water, he received the baptism in the Spirit.

The apostles advocated being baptized in water and receiving the Holy Spirit at the same time. And yet it was not automatic, because we saw in Acts 19 a moment ago. Paul preached, Paul baptized these people in water, and then when he laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.

So, it's not just when they came out of the water they were filled with the Spirit. There was a separate act of Paul laying hands on them. And perhaps that's why some people, when they're baptized in water, don't get filled with the Spirit.

Because maybe the minister assumes that just by believing in Christ, just by being water baptized, that you automatically have the Holy Spirit. Paul didn't assume that. He did assume that they should and could receive the Holy Spirit at that moment.

But it was a separate act of laying hands upon them that made it happen. So, we can, I think, see that the normal experience in the early church was for people to believe,



repent, be baptized in water, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit at the same time. Though any of those things might be neglected if it's done wrong.

There are people who come to faith in Christ and they haven't been water baptized. That's not supposed to be happening. You're not supposed to be walking around as a believer in Christ not baptized in water.

And there are people who are baptized in water and they're not baptized in the Spirit. That's not normal either. But we do see what the norms are when we read the life of Jesus and the apostles and so forth.

And so Jesus has the Holy Spirit come upon Him. And by the way, this is when He was empowered, as near as we can tell. There's no evidence that Jesus ever did a supernatural act before this time in His life.

But His life began to be miraculous after this point. Because remember Jesus said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. In Acts 1.8. When you get baptized in the Spirit, that's when God's power comes upon you and you receive the power to do the kinds of things that Jesus and Christians do.

Then it says in verse 11, Then a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This is obviously the voice of the Father speaking and so many have observed that we have a Trinitarian passage here. It's not all that often in Scripture we see the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit distinctly represented in the same passage.

But we have Jesus, the Son, in the water. We've got the voice of the Father speaking from heaven about His Son. And we have the Holy Spirit visibly come in the form of a dove.

Now the statement that God said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. He said it here. He said, You are my beloved Son.

In one of the Gospels it says, This is my beloved Son. Apparently Jesus and John both heard the voice. Jesus heard His Father saying, You are my beloved Son.

John heard the Father's voice speaking about Jesus. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This statement that Jesus was God's Son was very significant in terms of Old Testament use of that term.

In the time of Christ, the Son of God was a designation for the Messiah. Based very largely on Psalm 2. In verse 7. Where the psalmist is speaking as if he is the Messiah and he says, The Lord said to me, You are my Son. Today I have begotten you.

And so this is a Messianic passage speaking about the Messiah. And God refers to the

Messiah as His Son. Likewise, God told David in 2 Samuel chapter 7. He said, when you have died, when you are sleeping with your fathers and you are buried.

He said, I will raise up your son to sit on your throne after you and he shall build a house under my name. He says, and I will be his father and he will be my son. Now this did happen with Solomon.

But the writer of Hebrews, in Hebrews 1.5 tells us that this is a reference to Christ. God said that David's son, the Messiah, would be God's son. And that's why Jesus had to call this attention to the Pharisees in the final week of his life, in the Passion week.

He said, what is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he? And they said, he's David's son. Well that's true, he was David's son. But then, wait a minute.

David referred to the Messiah as his Lord. And he quoted Solomon 110, verse 1, where David said, Yahweh said to my Lord, meaning to the Messiah, my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Jesus said, now David called the Messiah his Lord.

How could he be David's son? Your son is not your Lord. But of course what Jesus is pointing out is that the Messiah is the son of David, but also more, he is the son of God. That's a messianic privilege, to be identified as the son of God.

And so here there's a declaration by the Father verbally, that Jesus is the Messiah. How many people were around to hear it, I don't know. We know that John's ministry had been attended by large crowds prior to this, but they may have been gone.

We know that in one of the Gospels, I think it's in Matthew, or maybe Luke, I think it's in Luke, it says when everyone had been baptized by John, Jesus came to be baptized too. It's kind of worded in a way that sounds like maybe the crowds had died down by this time and Jesus came when there weren't so many people there. There was a public announcement by God the Father that Jesus was the Messiah, but there might not have been many there to hear it.

John did though, and John testified about it later. In fact, let's turn real quickly over to John chapter 1, and then we'll be done tonight. In John chapter 1, the Gospel of John actually omits the story of Jesus being baptized, skips over it.

It also skips over the temptation of Jesus, which happened immediately after his baptism. And John's story picks up when Jesus has already been baptized, has already been tempted, and now he's coming back from the wilderness, having been tempted, and John sees him and begins to testify to people about what he had seen with reference to Jesus on that earlier occasion. In John chapter 1, it says in verse 29, The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him.

Now, the chronology, as we compare it with the synoptic Gospels, this is after Jesus had been baptized and tempted in the wilderness. Now he's coming back to where John was baptizing after the temptation was finished. And he says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me. I did not know him, but that he should be revealed to Israel. Therefore I came baptizing with water.

And John bore witness, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he remained upon him. See, this is after the fact. John's referring back to the baptism, what had happened earlier.

He's testifying to it. He says, I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

Now, there's a slight discrepancy here that some people find and have difficulty with, and that is that John said, Until I saw the Spirit come down, I didn't know him. But the other Gospels say, Matthew in particular says, that when John saw Jesus coming to be baptized, initially he said, Oh, I should be baptized by you. He knew who he was.

He knew that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew that Jesus was his superior. He knew that Jesus didn't need to be baptized, and that John needed to be baptized more than Jesus did.

He knew that before the Spirit came down. He knew it before he baptized Jesus. And yet he says, I didn't know him.

All I knew was that the one who sent me to baptize said, You will see the Spirit come down on somebody, and that's the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And he says, I didn't know him. But notice he says now, And I have seen, verse 34, and testified that this is the Son of God.

Now, what I believe he's saying is this. I didn't know him to be the Son of God before the Spirit came down. And of course, that changed everything because there was also a voice that said, This is my beloved son.

It's not mentioned here. It's mentioned in the other Gospels. John said, when I first met him, I mean, he wasn't a stranger to me.

I mean, he's a cousin of mine after all. You know, we grew up knowing about each other. He was not a total stranger, but there's something I didn't know about him.

The most important thing I didn't even know. I didn't know he was the Son of God. And I learned that when I saw the Spirit come down upon him because, although John doesn't say it, we know it happened, a voice from heaven said, This is my son.

And John says, Now I can testify that this is the Son of God. That's what I didn't know until God said it. Well, what did John believe? John probably had believed very much like what the Jews in general believed about the Messiah.

A son of David, an important guy, a righteous leader, a man that God would use to deliver his people militarily and other ways, and that's what John expected the Messiah to be. He didn't know he'd be the Son of God. Most Jews didn't know that.

And John's own ideas about the Messiah were somewhat deficient until he learned like anyone else did. And in this case, he learned that Jesus was the Son of God apparently at the baptism, when the Spirit came down and perhaps even more when the voice spoke and said, This is my son. Now what happened next in Jesus' life is the temptation.

And Mark goes to that and he treats it very briefly, more than the other Gospels. And then he gets into the calling of the disciples and so forth, and the story progresses. But we'll have to wait until another time for that because it's getting late now.