

Mark 1:2-3 - 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way; 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.'" NASB

Now as Mark begins his **good news** he tells us about that time when Jesus Christ enters His public ministry. This starts when Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be baptized. So also Mark tells us that John the Baptist was a figure that was spoken of hundreds of years before in the prophet Isaiah. John is that **"messenger"** that Isaiah wrote about some 700 years before he came to **"prepare the way of the Lord."** John is in fact **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight."** Actually, the quote here is not only from Isaiah, in fact the first part is a quote from Malachi.

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

Malachi tells of that day when a **forerunner** will come before Messiah. What is very profound about the quote in Malachi is that the forerunner comes before **"Me,"** that is, God Himself **IS** the Messiah who will come, He is, **"the Lord who will come to His temple."** He is also the **"messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold he is coming."** Malachi here emphasizes the **deity** of the Messiah actually being God Himself who comes to His temple and brings the long awaited New Covenant when God people will finally be forgiven and cleansed. The second part of the quote is the earlier quotation by Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:3-5 - 3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. 4 "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; 5 Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." NASB

Isaiah also speaks of the **forerunner**, but his emphasis is on the profound and lasting affect that Messiah will bring on the **whole world**, and the **glory of God** that will revealed through Messiah. But these are very profound matters that Mark mentions. Here see that when Messiah comes it will be in **fulfillment** of the **Word of God** in the Old Testament. The coming of the Savior is in accord with the **eternal plans** of God which He **promised long ago** through the mouths of His prophets and Mark wants us to make note here that when Jesus arrived, it happened **according** to the **True and Living Word of God**. Let us therefore note the

significance of Mark's quotes from the Bible, that this One who comes does indeed have the **promised forerunner**, just like God said in His Word. He is the **fulfillment** of the **promise of God** in His Word. Because God had promised in the Bible that when the Messiah comes, **He** will first be attended by a messenger who will prepare His way. And so here is John, a **preacher out in the wilderness** calling God's people to **prepare their hearts** and lives for the coming Messiah. And this was John's profound message which was to prepare our hearts in humble repentance so that we could receive the Lord not in haughty self-confidence, but with **lowly and contrite hearts**.

Mark 1:4-6 - 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. NASB

So just as Isaiah had prophesied, here **“John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”** It seems like a really odd thing, this man in the wilderness telling people to be **baptized in water to represent their repentance from sin**. But this is in fact what God wants us to do with our sins. He wants to acknowledge them publically, and show our need for the **“forgiveness of sins.”** And this really was **“preparing the way for the Lord,”** because Jesus also would be calling His followers to **acknowledge their sins publically**, and to be **baptized** as a commitment to follow Him. And here is a very important part of the Gospel, the **first step** in coming to Jesus to be saved is a **heartfelt** acknowledgment of the **personal guilt of sin**, and a lowly disposition of brokenness over that sin, which is how we **“prepare our hearts”** before the Lord to come and enter His temple. Let every heart that is lifted up with self-confidence make itself low and humble and needy, as we really are. This was John's message, **make your heart ready** for the Lord, for He now comes. And sure enough, God's people believed John message, and they flocked to hear him preach out in the wilderness, and obeyed him by being **“baptized”** and **“confess their sins.”** **“5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”** Imagine the scene, here is this preacher out in the middle of nowhere with a new religious ceremony never before never before so publicly practiced by the Jews, and they flock to him in the desert so he can **dunk** them in **water** and get them soaking wet, and calling each one to acknowledge and confess their own personal sins and guilt before God and

everybody. You see this is what you do in **baptism**, you say to the whole world, “I am dirty with the guilt of sin and I need to be washed and cleansed, so I here commit myself to repent of my sins, be washed by God, and be raised unto a new and clean way of living before God.” It is worth noting that the **people** were largely **humbling themselves** and being **baptized** and **repenting**, yet the religious leaders were rejecting John’s message, and neither were they willing to **acknowledge** the own **personal guilt** and humble themselves **IN** the waters of baptism. Jesus later confronts the religious leaders (the chief priests, the scribes and the elders) about this after His Triumphal Entry in chapter 11:27-33. He asked them whether John’s baptism was **from Heaven** or not, to which they replied, **11:33 “we do not know.”** These hard-hearted leaders weren’t interested in humbling themselves before God, and especially not before that outrageous and **confrontational preacher** dressed up like a wild man who was John the Baptist. And John was also confronting the leaders, and calling them to **repentance** and **faith in Jesus**.

Matthew 3:4-12 - 4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. **7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ' We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** 11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." NASB

Mark continues, “**6 And John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.**” John was unlike any of the contemporary religious leaders of Jesus day. He was much more like the **prophets of old**, living out in the wilderness, dressed like a wild man, and eating like one too. This man is one that God’s people recognized to be God’s **messenger** and **preparing the people** for something **very important**. This is what John was telling them, that a very important day was to arrive very soon, because