

John Appeared

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 October 2024

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] Let's go ahead and read Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 8.

Again, Mark chapter 1, verses 1 through 8. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness, and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locust and wild honey. And he preached, saying, After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The main idea for this lesson also is the main idea for the entire book.

[1 : 21] Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and the Son of God who fulfills Old and New Testament prophecy. So once again, Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and Son of God who fulfills Old and New Testament prophecy.

Whenever we start a new book in the Bible, we should take time to set the context. So we'll do that before we dig into the verses. Let's first consider who Mark is.

Mark appears several times in the book of Acts where his name is given as John, who was also called Mark. He was a cousin of Barnabas and his mother's home in Jerusalem served as a gathering place for the early church.

As a presumably young man, John, Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. You can read about that in Acts 12, 25 to 13, 5.

But Mark deserted them at Perga in Pamphylia. And as a result of Mark's inexcusable failure, Paul refused to take him on a subsequent trip. The issue sparked a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, causing them to part ways.

[2 : 28] Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus, while Paul embarked on a second missionary journey with Silas. Let's read a little bit about that in Acts 15, 36-40.

So here are Acts 15, 36-40. And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are.

Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John, called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

And there arose a sharp disagreement so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Though he betrayed Paul's trust on the first missionary journey, John Mark later became a valuable member of Paul's ministry team. In Colossians 4, 10, and 11, Paul instructed his readers to welcome Mark as one of his fellow workers for the kingdom who had been given to be an encouragement to him during his first Roman imprisonment.

[3 : 45] Some years later, near the end of his life, Paul asked Timothy to pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. That comes from 2 Timothy 4, 11.

You may hear some people refer to the gospel of Mark as the gospel of Peter, according to Mark. Peter likely is the source of most of Mark's material. Peter and Mark were very close, and most conservative scholars believe that Peter's mentorship of Mark is what restored Mark to the ministry.

The friendship between Peter and Mark was such that the apostle became a spiritual father figure to Mark. He even referred to him as my son in 1 Peter 5, 13.

If anyone understood the process of restoration after failure, it was Peter who was graciously restored by Christ after Peter denied Christ three times. Peter was killed under Nero in approximately 67 or 68 A.D.

Contemporary scholarship generally places a completion date for the gospel of Mark before A.D. 70, and that's because of Jesus' statement in Mark 13, 2. That statement strongly suggests that Mark's gospel was written before the temple was destroyed.

[5 : 05] So let's look at that Mark 13, 2 reference. In Mark 13, 1 of the disciples comments to Jesus about the grandeur of the temple, and Mark 13, 2 records Jesus' response.

In Mark 13, 2 we see this, And Jesus said to him, Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.

Mark probably completed his gospel either while accompanying Peter in Rome in the late 50s or early 60s, or shortly after Peter's death in the late 60s.

Mark was written for the Gentile believers of Rome. We know that Mark's audience was clearly non-Jewish for several reasons. He translates Aramaic terms for them that Jews would have known.

He provides explanations for Jewish customs. He omits certain elements of particular interest to Jewish readers, like Jesus' genealogical record.

[6 : 06] And he also includes fewer Old Testament references than the other synoptic gospels. We'll see that he calculates time according to the Roman system, and he uses Latin expressions in place of their Greek equivalents.

The early Roman Christians, who were the first recipients of this book, were in very difficult times. With Nero as the Roman emperor, the Roman Christians would have been enduring severe persecution.

When Nero came to power, he reigned in calmness for about five years. However, in AD 59, he changed and began to engage in radically cruel and immoral actions.

Then in the year 64, a great fire devastated Rome. When it broke out, the fire spread to seven wards of the city and raged for seven days.

No sooner did it appear to be brought under control than it broke out again. Ultimately, the fire destroyed nearly 80% of the city. Many suspected that Nero himself had set the fire, and to deflect suspicion, Nero chose to blame it on Christians.

[7 : 16] Word spread throughout the city that the destruction had been caused by those antisocial, anti-religious fanatics who bore the name of Jesus Christ. Nero sent his military out to round up every Christian that he could find.

When he arrested the Christians, he clothed them in the skins of wild animals. Then, in a public display of cruelty, he let wild dogs loose against them. Thinking that they were assaulting wild animals, the dogs attacked the Christians' garbage skins and killed them.

Nero dipped other Christians in pitcher tar and ignited their bodies, using them to illuminate his private gardens. And other Christians were brought into the Colosseum and fed to the lions for entertainment.

Those things, obviously, would have driven the early Roman Christians into hiding. R.C. Sproul said this, he said, Imagine that you are one of those Christians in first century Rome.

You are assembled with your congregation on the Lord's Day, but not in a church. The persecutions of the Emperor Nero are raging, and if the authorities discover that you are a believer, you will be arrested and subjected to the death penalty.

[8 : 33] So you and your fellow believers are gathered underneath the city in the catacombs, surrounded by skeletons and cadavers. If you were one of those early Christians, you would have wanted some good news.

You would have had many questions. And some of the more prominent questions probably were things like, Are the difficulties I am facing worth it? How can I continue to live as a Christian in a society as corrupt as this?

Or maybe even, Is my faith founded on facts? Or how do I know that what I believe is true? In many parts of the world, Christians today face severe persecution that caused them to ask similar questions.

We here in the United States have yet to face such severe persecution. However, you or someone you know may have asked similar questions or may be asking similar questions. Well, to those early Christians in Rome, to those severely persecuted Christians in the world today, and to us, the Gospel of Mark provided and still provides good news.

So let's dig into the first eight verses and find out why. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, beginning with verses one through three. And in those verses, we see the prophecies.

[9 : 56] So the prophecies is your first blank. Here are verses one through three again. The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

You grammar purists out there probably have noticed that verse one is an incomplete sentence. Verse one possibly was the book's original title. Whether it was a title or not, that sentence fragment summarizes some very important things.

First, we see that the verse represents the beginning of the Gospel. You probably know that the Gospel means good news. That's true, but the meaning goes deeper than that.

In the New Testament, the Gospel always refers to the message of salvation, and that's Mark's intended meaning here. First century Jews would have been familiar with the word translated as Gospel from its occurrence in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

[11 : 08] There it's used to speak of military victory, political triumph, or physical rescue.

Significantly, the term is also found in a Messianic context, where it points to the ultimate salvation of God's people through the Messianic king.

For one of those Messianic uses of the term, listen to Isaiah chapter 40, verses 9 through 11. Isaiah 40, verses 9 through 11 say, Go up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news.

Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news. Lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God.

Behold, the Lord comes with might, and his arm rules for him. Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd.

He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Later on in Isaiah, Isaiah 52, 7 uses the same term for good news.

[12 : 21] And here is Isaiah 52, 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns.

Significantly, Isaiah 52, 7 comes just before Isaiah's extended discussion of the suffering servant, the Messiah through whom this promised salvation would come.

And of course, you know that happens in Isaiah 52, 13 through 53, 12. The term translated as gospel also had special significance to those outside of Judaism.

Though largely ignorant of Jewish history, first century Romans would have similarly understood the term to refer to good tidings of a coming king. A Roman inscription dating back to 9 B.C.

provides insight into how the word gospel was understood in the ancient Gentile context. Speaking of the birth of Caesar Augustus, a portion of the inscription refers to good tidings.

[13 : 32] Going back to Mark 1, 1, we see that Mark 1, 1 also announces the subject of the gospel. And that subject is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This designation depicts Jesus in three ways.

First, we see Jesus as Savior. Jesus, His human name, means Savior. Jesus can save us from our sins, and only He can save us.

Second, Jesus is depicted as Messiah. Christ is not a name, it's a title. It means the Anointed One, and it refers to Israel's promised Messiah.

Third, Jesus is depicted as God, obviously by the term Son of God. Son of God expresses the deity of Christ. And we must be right on the identity of Christ, or we have no gospel to proclaim.

The words, the Son of God, conveyed far more to Jewish minds than they do to us. They were nothing less than an assertion of our Lord's divinity. They were a declaration that Jesus was Himself true God and equal with God.

[14 : 45] For Gentiles, the primary audience of the book of Mark, the word Son of God would have been significant too. Son of God speaks of Jesus' lineage and His right to rule.

He is one in nature with God, co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. For those Roman pagans who wrongly regarded Caesar as a god, Mark introduces them to the true divine king, the Lord Jesus Christ.

From just the first line of the text, any reader should recognize that the book of Mark is about more than just some good news. It's about the good news of salvation, fulfilled prophecy, and deliverance.

Think about how encouraging that news would have been to Mark's original readers who were hiding from the Roman persecution. Think about how encouraging that good news should be to us. The good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, still is the ultimate good news.

That was just the first phrase of the book. We still have seven additional verses to cover tonight and 16 chapters to study in the next several months. Look again at verses 2 and 3.

[15:54] As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight.

There was nothing unforeseen and suddenly contrived in the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. In the very beginning of Genesis, God in Genesis 3.15 predicted that the woman's offspring would crush the serpent's head.

All through the Old Testament, we find the same event foretold with constantly increasing clearness. It was a promise often renewed to the patriarchs and repeated by prophets that a deliverer and redeemer would one day come.

Jesus' birth, his character, his life, his death, his resurrection, and his forerunner were all prophesied long before he came. Redemption was worked out and accomplished in every step just as it was written.

Mark 1, verses 2 and 3 definitely quote from Malachi 3.1 and Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3. The Mark verses also could be alluding to Exodus 23, verse 20.

[17:11] So let's look at all three of those cross-references beginning with Exodus 23, 20. And here is that verse. Exodus 23, 20 says, Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.

Exodus 23, 20 took place centuries before Jesus when God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt during the Exodus. God declared that he was going to send a messenger before them.

In Mark 1, verses 2 and 3, is the first of many times in Mark that we hear a possible allusion to the Exodus deliverance. And of course, the Exodus deliverance portrayed the deliverance that Jesus brings as a new and ultimate Exodus.

The references to Malachi 3.1 and Isaiah 40, verse 3 are much clearer. Listen to Malachi 3.1.

Malachi 3.1 says, Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare 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. And now listen to Isaiah 40, verse 3.

[18:33] Isaiah 40, verse 3 says, A voice cries, In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

You might be wondering why verse 2 only mentions Isaiah when verses 2 and 3 also reference Malachi and probably Exodus. Common practice for the writing of that day was to mention only the most well-known prophet when referencing multiple prophets.

So Isaiah is the one mentioned there. Regardless, we see from these verses that multiple prophecies accurately predicted the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Before we move on, let's consider the last part of Mark 1.3. That's the part that says, Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his path straight. In ancient times, before a king visited any part of his realm, a messenger was sent before him to prepare the way.

This included both repairing the roads and preparing the people. We'll see in the next section that a messenger did prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ just as the Old Testament prophets had foretold.

[19:47] So let's go now to that second section of the passage. In verses 4 through 6, Mark introduces us to the preacher. So the preacher is your second blink.

Here are verses 4 through 6 again. John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locust and wild honey.

Mark's initial focus on John rather than Jesus might seem surprising to us as modern readers, but it's perfectly in keeping with Mark's purpose to present Jesus Christ as the divine king and it would have been expected by his first century audience.

The arrival of the divine king was preceded by a royal herald who clearly announced the king's coming. When John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, his actions also fulfilled prophecy.

[21 : 04] Turn to Luke chapter 1 and we'll look at a few verses there. We'll go ahead and read Luke chapter 1 verses 5 through 17. So here are Luke chapter 1 verses 5 through 17.

In the days of Herod, king of Judah, there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years.

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

[22 : 09] And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name John.

And you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great before the Lord and he must not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

Back in our text in Mark 1 we see that the baby John has grown up and now is the herald that the angel said John would be. Here's Mark 1.4 again.

It says, John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The appearance of John the Baptist in the wilderness was the most important event in the life of Israel for more than 300 years.

[23 : 31] It had been that long since Israel had heard a word from God. The desert region in which John started his ministry of baptism is estimated by scholars to be between Judea and the Dead Sea.

This area is known for its dark surroundings and its rugged terrain. In the Old Testament it is sometimes called by the word which means the devastation so that gives you an idea of what it was like.

John was no city dweller. He was a man of the wilderness and he performed his ministry in the wilderness to make a point. The wilderness in Israel's history symbolized rebellion and disobedience.

The nation of Israel after the deliverance of God and the exodus from Egypt disobeyed God by not going into the promised land. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before they entered the promised land as God's people.

By coming to the wilderness to be baptized the people were admitting their wandering from God, their rebellion toward God and their desire for a fresh start. John's preaching of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins was highly unusual for a Jew.

[24 : 44] Jews believed that only Gentile converts to Judaism needed to be baptized. The baptism of Gentiles was a ritual washing from all the defilement of their past.

The Jews were being asked to do something that they had never done before. To call all Israel to be baptized meant that in some way all of Israel was defiled and needed to be cleansed.

In Matthew 3.9 John criticized the people for presuming to be righteous and secure with God just because they were the children of Abraham. Of course, we know that Abraham was the father of the Jewish race but that didn't automatically make them right with God.

John warned the people in Luke 3.7-17 that the people would be purged and rejected if they did not bear fruits of repentance. John's baptism directly confronted the religious hypocrisy that permeated first century Judaism.

John challenged his listeners to consider the reality that neither being a physical descendant of Abraham nor being a fastidious observer of Pharisaical laws was sufficient grounds by which to gain admittance into God's kingdom.

[26 : 00] John told the people that what was required to gain admittance into God's kingdom was an internal change of the person's heart, mind, and will. The word repentance implies a genuine turning from sin and self toward God.

True repentance involves the transformation of the person's nature making it a gracious act of God. The fruit or subsequent evidence of that internal transformation is seen in changed behavior. An initial evidence of that genuine heart transformation was a willingness to be baptized. Those whose self-righteous pride remained would never undergo such a public humbling act. But those whose minds had truly turned to forsake their sin and pride would eagerly declare themselves to be no better than Gentiles, sinners who recognized their unworthiness and their need to walk rightly before God.

Baptism marked the outward profession of inward repentance. It did not generate repentance but was the result of that repentance. Additionally, the act of baptism did not produce the forgiveness of sin but served as an external symbol of the fact that through faith and repentance sinners are graciously forgiven by God.

[27 : 20] Forgiveness of sins always is an act of God. That forgiveness is made possible by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, becoming the sinless sacrifice who paid the debt that believers owe to God because of our sins.

Repentance alone never brings about forgiveness. God must grant that forgiveness. However, God graciously forgives only those who truly repent and who put their faith in Christ.

God saves those who trust in what Christ's sacrifice provided for them. For those who truly repent of our sins and trust by grace alone, in faith alone, in Christ alone, we have good news.

But we first must remember the bad news. The Bible tells us in Romans 3.23 that all people have sinned. Then in Romans 6.23 we hear that the penalty our sins deserve is death.

But for those who truly repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone, that's where we get to the good news. Romans 6.23 also says that the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[28 : 28] John was calling people to recognize their sin and to recognize the salvation that only the Messiah, Jesus Christ, can provide. John's call then still applies to non-believers today.

Only those who recognize their need for a Savior and truly repent put themselves in a position to be saved. Those who do repent and call upon the Lord have the wonderful promise of Romans 10.9.

We know Romans 10.9 tells us this fact, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

The Old Testament foretold that a deliverer would be coming. Now here in our text tonight, John the Baptist is telling the people that the promised deliverer has arrived.

That message from John had an impact. Look again at Mark 1.5. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him, talking about John, and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

[29 : 34] Scholars estimate that as many as 300,000 people came out to be baptized by John. Confessing their sins demonstrates their acknowledgement of disobedience and rebellion toward God.

The location of the baptism was the Jordan River, which was about 12 miles outside of Jerusalem. To us, 12 miles seems like a short distance.

Some of you may drive 12 miles to go home tonight or even to go eat tomorrow. But the people who came to see John had no car that they could use to get to the Jordan quickly. They either had to walk or ride an animal.

And back in that day, a 12-mile trip took some planning, especially when that trip would be a round trip. Mark 1.6 can sometimes seem to us like an afterthought, but it's significant as well.

Mark 1.6 says, Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locust and wild honey. Verse 6 connects John with the Old Testament prophets, particularly Elijah.

[30 : 41] Listen to 2 Kings 1, verses 7 and 8. In 2 Kings 1.7, King Ahaziah is speaking. And here are 2 Kings 1.7 and 8.

He said to them, What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things? They answered him, He wore a garment of hair with a belt of leather about his waist, and he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

That description of Elijah sounds like John the Baptist. We should make that connection.

Remember the verses we read earlier from Luke 1. Luke 1.16 and 17 is where the angel told John's father these words about John.

Those verses say again, And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

Lord their Lord. The last verses of the Old Testament, Malachi chapter 4, verses 5 and 6, predicted the same thing even before the angel spoke to John's father.

[31 : 59] Listen to Malachi chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. Here in these verses, God is speaking through Malachi, and he says, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes, and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

Then later on in Jesus' ministry, Jesus himself confirmed that John the Baptist was the Elijah promised in Malachi. Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew chapter 11, verses 13 and 14.

Here's what Jesus said in Matthew 11, 13 and 14. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

The heading of this lesson section is the preacher. John the Baptist was indeed that preacher, but scripture clearly shows that John was more than that. John was also the prophet promised in Malachi chapter 4, verses 5 and 6.

So far we've talked about the prophecies and the preacher who also was the prophet. In the final verses we will cover tonight, we'll see the proclamation.

[33 : 22] So the proclamation is your last section. Let's read Mark chapter 1, verses 7 and 8 again. And he preached, saying, After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The entire purpose behind John's proclaiming was to point his listeners to the one who was coming after him.

That's what it meant to be the forerunner or the herald who directed everyone's attention away from himself and toward the coming king. As John later explained to his disciples in John 3.30, He, meaning Jesus, must increase, but I must decrease.

John rightly understood and embraced his role as the Messiah's messenger. Untying the master's sandals and tending to his dusty feet were tasks performed by the lowest of slaves.

John's point, then, was that he did not consider himself worthy to be even the lowest slave of such an infinitely exalted king. Then in verse 8, John summarizes the big gap between his ministry and the coming Messiah's ministry.

[34 : 46] John made it clear that his ministry was only preparatory, symbolic, and temporary.

John's baptism was with water. John was administering an external rite that symbolized moral cleansing and a desire to break away from the sin that had separated people from God.

The one to follow him, Jesus, would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. John was pointing out that the Messiah's baptism would bring about lasting change.

The Messiah's baptism would be internal, changing a person from the inside out. Jesus' baptism would secure purity of heart and life, deliver his followers from the guilt of sin, and bring them into fellowship with God.

Let's dig a little deeper in what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Being baptized with the Holy Spirit refers to the transforming work of salvation.

It's the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit that occurs at the moment of salvation. This regeneration was prophesied in the Old Testament and confirmed in the New Testament.

[35 : 59] Listen to Ezekiel 36, verses 24-27. In Ezekiel 36, 24-27, God is speaking through Ezekiel and God says, I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Notice who did all the work there. God several times says, I will do this and I will do that. God says that he will do everything and once again we see that salvation is entirely a work of God.

In the New Testament, Jesus confirmed the Holy Spirit's work. Listen to part of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. That conversation takes place in John chapter 3 and here are John chapter 3 verses 1-6.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

[37 : 36] Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Later in that conversation, we come to perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible and that's John 3.16.

Jesus says these words to Nicodemus in John 3.16 through 18. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.

[38 : 52] That's why neither John the Baptist nor anyone else is worthy to even untie the sandals of Jesus Christ the son of God. That brings us back to the main idea of this passage.

Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and the son of God who fulfills old and new testament prophecy. J.C. Ryle said, Here lies the infinite value of the satisfaction Jesus made upon the cross. Here lies the particular merit of his atoning death for sinners. That death was not the death of a mere man like ourselves but of one who is God over all forever praised.

That comes from Romans 9.5 and if you look at Romans 9.5 in the ESV forever praised is translated as blessed forever. Ryle went on to say We need not wonder that the sufferings of one person were sufficient propitiation or satisfaction for the sin of a world when we remember that he who suffered was the son of God.

He then said, Let us ask ourselves as we leave this passage how much we know in our own experience of the truths which John preached. What do we think of Christ?

[40 : 10] Have we felt our need of him and fled to him for peace? Is he king over our hearts and all things to our souls? What do we think of the Holy Spirit?

Has the Holy Spirit done any work in our hearts? Has he renewed and changed them? Has he made us participate in the divine nature? Life or death depends on our answer to these questions. Those questions are sobering but what makes the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God such good news is that anyone can belong to him. If you have yet to feel the need for Christ or have yet to make him king of your heart you can do that tonight.

And when you make Christ the king of your heart the Holy Spirit will renew and change your heart and you will have eternal life. We looked at Romans 10 9 earlier but listen to that verse again.

If you have yet to be saved hear the promise of certain salvation for those who trust in Christ and for those of us who already have trusted in that Christ rejoice that the promise applies to you.

[41 : 18] Romans 10 9 says because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. Not might be but will be.

And that is the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. let's pray. Father we thank you for the reminder of how you sent a deliverer for us just as you promised.

Help us always be mindful of that and grateful for that. As we hear that more and more let us become even more grateful to you because of that and let us become even more willing to share that news with others.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.