



The Messenger of the King

Key idea:

John the Baptist was a messenger calling the people to the wilderness to be baptized in repentance for their sins, preparing for the coming of the King Who would usher in the Kingdom of God.

Key text:

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” — ³ “a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” ⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Key points:

1. Mark begins the story of the Gospel by linking it to its Old Testament roots, showing how the ministry of John the Baptist was prophesied.
2. Mark’s Old Testament quote is a combination of texts from Exodus, Malachi, and Isaiah, but he attributes them all to Isaiah because Isaiah gave a special emphasis to the Gospel and to the theme of the wilderness/desert.
3. John the Baptist was a man of the wilderness in his attire, food, and ministry, calling the people to come out to the wilderness to repent of their sins and be baptized.
4. John’s call for Jews to repent and be baptized was new and was a critical preparation for the Gospel which requires repentance and faith for everyone.

5. John's message pointed the way to the King Who was coming, Who was far greater than John, and Who would give the Holy Spirit to His people.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. How different is the beginning of Mark's Gospel from the other three Gospels? What does this tell me to expect in the way Mark will tell the story of Jesus?
3. Why does Mark begin his account of the story of Jesus with an Old Testament quote? Why does he attribute the quote (which comes from three different Old Testament books) to Isaiah?
4. How is John the Baptist a fulfillment of the Old Testament quote? How does his ministry prepare the way for the coming King, the Messiah?
5. Why was John's call for the people of Israel to repent of their sins and be baptized so radical? What did that communicate to the people about their status as the people of God? How did this specifically prepare the way for the New Covenant fulfillment of the Old Covenant?
6. The Greek word ἔρημος (EREMOS) is important in Mark's Gospel. It is translated as "desert", "wilderness", and "lonely place" at various times. What does each of these meanings communicate to me? Why is the "wilderness" important in John's ministry? How was it important in the history of Israel?
7. John says that the One coming after Him is far greater than John, and one key reason is that John only baptizes in water while the Coming One will baptize the people with the Spirit. What does this tell me about Jesus? Why is His baptizing His people in the Spirit an important clue to Who He is? What does it tell me about my privilege in the New Covenant?
8. Is there any area the Spirit is convicting me that I need to confess and repent? How can I turn it over to God and be empowered by the Spirit to follow Jesus?
9. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? How will I work to share life with them this week?