Mark 1:1 1The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Ever wonder what the purpose of the Gospel of Mark is? Actually, if you just pay attention to what Mark wrote, his purpose is quite clear. He wants you to grasp that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In grasping that Jesus is the Son of God, he then wants you to grasp why this is so all fired important. It is because souls are at stake. Yep, souls: your soul, my soul, the souls of all of those in this world, past, present and future.

Now, none of this matters if you are a person who has rejected the idea of God and the idea of an afterlife. I mean, seriously, if you don’t believe in an afterlife, if you believe that you are just going to die and that’s all folks, then clearly anything religious or spiritual you must consider pure mythology. By the way, if you reject the idea of an afterlife, then none of this communicating with the dead or none of this talk about ghosts, and frankly, I say, “Be consistent,” anything to do with anything “spiritual” needs to be rejected by you because the only point to anything spiritual is because people believe in some level in an afterlife.

Now if you reject anything to do with the idea of God, great, that is your privilege in our country. But again, let’s be consistent. If there is no God, then everything supposedly about God is pure fantasy. That includes any idea of the afterlife because the idea of an afterlife precludes another realm and precludes that in that realm there is God. Because in truth, the only reason to believe in an afterlife is because somewhere along the line God revealed it. That is the Bible. The Bible is the basis for belief in an afterlife for most of the world and for the very ancient world, the natural knowledge of God is the basis for that belief. Again, I just want you to be consistent in your insistence that there is no God and no cause for religion.

But, if you are concerned with the idea and truth of God, then the Gospel of Mark and the history of Jesus is a great place to start. I say that because you need to grasp that in the life of Jesus there are just too many coincidences with the Old Testament prophets. You’ve heard me say it before: most scholars would agree that the life of Jesus fits some 350 prophecies of the Old Testament. Me, I think that number way low. I think you can speak of well over a 1,000 such instances. So at what number of coincidences do you begin to suspect it is not coincidence but rather a plan?

There is a passage in the book of Hebrews (3:4) that says, **“For every house is built by someone, and God is the one who built everything.”** Now on the scale of the universe, a house is a relatively simple thing. If the simple house needs a plan and a builder, then what about the universe? And if I have a 4 bedroom, 2 bath, kitchen, living room, den and utility room house looking at a plan for a one room house will show there are coincidences in homes but looking at the architectural drawings for my home screams at you that this is a plan. That’s what happens when you look at the Bible, it just screams at you that this is God’s plan. Let’s jump in and consider the words of our text and its lesson. Our theme: **JESUS, THE SON OF GOD.**

The first thing to consider are the opening words of Mark. He says, **“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”** Mark is telling you this is where he is beginning. It is true, we could speak of the virgin birth of Jesus, the fact that Jesus was a descendent of David, born in Bethlehem, a visitor to Egypt because of the slaughter of the infant boys, and then raised in Nazareth. All of those thing were prophesies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. But that is not where Mark wishes to start. Mark wishes to start with John the Baptist. He does that by quoting the Old Testament.

He says, **“Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare the way for you. A voice of one calling out in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.’”** Isn’t it interesting that Mark appeals to the fact that the life and ministry of Jesus is surrounded by fulfilled prophesies of the Old Testament. Even John, the harbinger of Jesus had been foretold. John was the fulfillment of God’s Word, actually two portions of God’s Word. Mark’s quote is actually from both Malachi and Isaiah, it was very usual in that day when quoting to note the author of the larger quote, rather than mention both. But we recognize the two quotes. Quotes concerning the Messiah to come. Quotes about the messenger who would come to prepare the way, yes, that voice of one calling in the wilderness.

John the Baptist certainly fit that bill. Although John grew up in a priestly family, meaning he had the education and training of an Old Testament priest and the right and privilege when he reached age to serve in the Temple just like his father and other ancestors, yet it is clear John did not hold to that path. We find John in the wilderness, living off of locusts, wild honey and dressed in the cheapest clothing of the day. In other words, John had clearly separated himself from the Priesthood he was born to and was supposed to serve in.

I have no doubt that John took this path because of the Holy Spirit in him. That Holy Spirit had lead John to realize the tremendous errors and falsehoods perpetrated by the priesthood of this day. They were teaching works for salvation when in actuality the message of God was one of grace and God doing everything necessary for the salvation of souls. What is interesting is that the Gospels seem to indicate that pretty early on John went to the wilderness to live. And once John began his preaching he got everyone’s attention. Just listen to how Matthew describes John’s message.

**“Repent, because the kingdom of God is near...You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit in keeping with repentance! Do not think of saying to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones. Already the ax is ready to strike the root of the trees. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”** Pretty intense words. Words we are told were spoken to the Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious leaders of the Jews.

What is John doing? Exactly what God’s Word said he would! He would prepare the way for Jesus. He would get people ready for the revelation and excitement of the Messiah of God among his people. His job was to get hearts to see the depth of sin found there and in the horror of the law, to turn to God and seek his forgiveness. His job was to prepare for Jesus. That’s why John makes it clear: **“One more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals! 8I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”** It is clear that with these words John is telling us to look to Jesus and what He would do, for Jesus would bring the Holy Spirit, Jesus is the one salvation and eternal life is all about.

I am thinking we should not be shocked by such words. Isn’t Jesus the heart and core of our faith? After all, who is Jesus? Did you pay attention to what Mark said? First, Mark identifies Jesus as **“Christ.”** That, dear people, is a very important word.

It means that Jesus is the **“Anointed”** one. You see, the word for Christ is really the translation of the word **“Messiah.”** Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the one promised of God. I have no doubt there were those of this time who did realize that the Christ was coming. Look at how Jesus fulfilled again and again the prophecies concerning the Messiah to come. I believe there were those, from the time of the events surrounding John’s and Jesus’ births, who were paying attention to what was going on. John had been born after an angel had appeared to his father, up to that point Zechariah and his wife, well into old age, had been childless. Once Zechariah could speak again do you think he let anyone forget the miraculous nature of the events surrounding his son’s birth?

And six months after that there is a report of an angel appearing to a young girl from Nazareth. That angle even appeared to her fiancée to let him know that what she reported was true. Six months after John is born there is a ruckus in Bethlehem. Shepherds come to town with accounts of a multitude of angels singing the praise of God for the birth of a child that they found lying in a manger! And seriously, do you think no one from town saw the glow in the sky or heard nothing as that chorus of angels was singing. People, lots of people, knew that something big had gone down on that night. The shepherd’s told them what the angels had said, **“He is Christ, the Lord!”** I am telling you, people, maybe not a lot, but people knew something extraordinary was going on and if they had paid attention it is clear it was all about the Christ, the very Messiah promised again and again in God’s Old Testament revelation of salvation!

And did you notice the second point that Mark makes concerning Jesus. Not just the Messiah, but Mark also clearly identifies Jesus as **“The Son of God!”** Just let that sink in for a moment. Mark, at the time he wrote these words is utterly and absolutely convinced that Jesus is **“the Son of God.”**

Actually, this doesn’t surprise me. Remember Mark is an Evangelist, a companion of Paul and Silas and later in his life clearly a fellow minister with Paul in spreading the Gospel. I not only think Mark was an eye-witness to many of the events of the life of Jesus, but Mark also had the opportunity to speak with the other Apostles and be schooled in God’s truth through the Apostle Paul. But most important is that Mark is writing after some rather important events. He is writing after the resurrection of Jesus, after the 40 days of appearances by Jesus, after the events of the Ascension of Jesus and after the events of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What Mark is a witness to has totally convinced him that Jesus is nothing less than **“the Son of God!”**

He doesn’t identify Jesus as just a good guy. He doesn’t tell us that Jesus was a really good story teller and weaver of great religious truths. He doesn’t point to Jesus as “the champion of the weak and fighter for those downtrodden in the world. He comes right out and says point blank, “**Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**”

And that is what He wants you to grasp. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the promised one, the Deliverer, the Ancient of Days, the Lamb of God given for the sins of the world. He is the fullness of the deity in bodily form, God himself walking among us and working for our eternal good. He is the one who lived perfectly, without sin of any kind and He is the one who then became the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Yes, Jesus is the Son of God who went to the cross to pay for our sins, to offer us, by grace through faith, the gift of eternal life and salvation because of what He accomplished in accord with the purpose and will of His Father in heaven. And we know all of this is true because Jesus rose from the dead.

Peter would declare on the day of Pentecost: **“This Jesus is the one God has raised up. We are all witnesses of that…Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”** Paul would declare in Romans: **“This gospel is about his Son—who in the flesh was born a descendant of David, who in the spirit of holiness was declared to be God’s powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead—Jesus Christ, our Lord.”** It is the message of the entire New Testament. Jesus is the Christ, our Lord, the Son of God.

And that is the heart of our faith. Pure and simple, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord, the Savior from sin promised and given by the Father for our eternal life. That’s the message to believe. Nothing else. Nothing less. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and our Savior. Amen.