

CLOSE-UPS OF JESUS THROUGH THE LENS OF MARK - Part one

Wednesday, June 24th, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

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Perhaps the greatest treasure we have in print is the record of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we want to be like Jesus, we need to know the details of how He lived His life on this earth. That is the reason for this series of studies. I wanted to unfold, in a simple, brief, devotional way, lessons from the life of Jesus. We're going to be using the gospel of Mark as a template for learning devotional Bible study. The idea is to show by example how to ***find spiritual food in the ordinary actions recorded in the Gospel of Mark.*** These are not sermonic studies. Nor are they complex. They are meant to be the kinds of things you would see as you simply read the text for yourself. I hope that the style and routine rub off - that you will find yourself more readily seeing the patterns and lessons from these priceless accounts of our blessed Savior.

MARK CHAPTER ONE:

- 1) **Mark 1:1 - *The introduction of the "Gospel"* - "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." - Mark stresses the importance of what he is about to disclose. We are not just dealing with another religion. He is not writing about mystical experience. He is introducing a person. The big news is that Jesus Christ was, in fact, ***"the Son of God."*** Significantly, the message starts with the one truth other religions find the hardest to accept. This was the stumbling block to the Jew, and this was the foolishness to the Greek. Yet, this is the cornerstone of authentic Christianity. That's why this is the first doctrinal truth served up by Mark. There is no side-stepping this truth. There is no softening its impact on other faiths.**

- 2) **Mark 1:2-8 - *John the Baptist* - "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:'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' [4] John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] 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. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. [7] 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. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

John had a great ministry before Jesus came on the scene (5). He had developed quite a following. He proclaimed the person of Christ faithfully before he ever had a chance to meet Him (great faith!). This is relevant because you and I, in somewhat the same way, point our lives and ministries to Jesus whom we have never yet met physically. Also, notice how John humbly bows off the scene when Jesus arrives. The principle of living for the glory of Another is laid. We need to remember John whenever our egos crave more attention than they deserve.

- 3) **Mark 1:9-11 - *The baptism of Jesus* - "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10] And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a**

dove. [11] And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Mark says John's baptism was for the remission of sins (4). Why then would Jesus have to be baptized? Here we see the depth of God's love and reach. Jesus completely identifies, not with mankind at its *best*, but with *sinful* mankind. He reaches out to us at our *worst*. Father God already has the Cross in His view here.

Notice also the *timing of the voice from heaven*. It's after Jesus fulfills this act of joining Himself to sinful man. God was pleased that His plan was being fulfilled. His love for the *Son* and His love for *you and me* are both included here in these words of acclamation about the person and ministry of Jesus.

- 4) **Mark 1:12-13 - *The temptation of Jesus*** - "The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. [13] And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him." Notice that the same Spirit who came like a gentle dove now sends Jesus into the wilderness. He has many roles in His plan for our lives. It's very important to remember *how wrong it is to think that trials and temptations are an indication that the Holy Spirit is no longer with us or in control*. He wants to fulfill His perfect plan. He is there to help us grow.
- 5) **Mark 1:14-31 - *Three areas of Christ's ministry*** - "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, [15] and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." [16] Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. [17] And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." [18] And immediately they left their nets and followed him. [19] And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. [20] And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. [21] And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. [22] And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. [23] And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, [24] "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God." [25] But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" [26] And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. [27] And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." [28] And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. [29] And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. [30] Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. [31] And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them."

Right away a pattern is established:

a) He came to proclaim a message - 14-15. An *urgent* message. All people (even religious people and sincere people) had to do two things: *repent* and *believe*.

b) He came to call out followers - 16-20. His Kingdom wouldn't be brought about by mass campaigns and promotional gimmicks. **People would be enlisted and trained one at a time.** The slow route would be the most effective in the long run (17).

c) He came to minister with deep compassion - 21-31. The Gospel may start with the giving out of the message but it must not end there. Truth must be fleshed out. Principles must be lived out in order to light up the dark world around us. Christ's Kingdom and His followers must be outward looking right from the start.

- 6) **Mark 1:32-39 - Personal renewal** - "That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. [33] And the whole city was gathered together at the door. [34] And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. [35] And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. [36] And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, [37] and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." [38] And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." [39] And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons."

We can be deeply grateful for the example Jesus left for all of us. Legalistic religion and big time evangelicalism can sometimes grind their followers into dust. Notice especially **verses 37-38**. Jesus intentionally left the needs to get away alone. Jesus knew that even His ministry needed **communion and prayer** if the times of **public teaching and ministry** were to remain fruitful. In fact, as you proceed through this Gospel you will see the emphasis on private prayer becoming more and more prominent.