

The Gospel of Mark - Part 1: Preparing the People (1:1-11)

In our introduction to Mark, we discussed how the early Christian writers attested that this gospel is the faithful preservation of Peter's oral testimonies. The internal evidence supports this, such as the vivid descriptive style and its focus on the actions of Christ's ministry rather than lengthy teachings or parables. This emphasis on works gives the Gospel of Mark a fast-paced and dynamic narrative compared to the other accounts.

The other gospels each begin with a prologue of some kind, Matthew and Luke both give genealogies and accounts of Christ's birth, while John provides a detailed explanation that Yahshua Christ is Yahweh come in the flesh. Mark has no such prologue, rather it immediately opens with an account of John the Baptist which is also the most concise of the four gospels, and then quickly proceeds from there to the ministry of Christ. This should not be surprising to us when we consider the background of Mark's gospel.

Longer dialogues and genealogies are more suited for literary gospels, so Peter evidently gave less attention to them in his oral speaking. Reading Mark one could conjecture that Peter focuses most primarily on what he himself witnessed, and that would align with his public speaking style as it is recorded in Acts. Therefore the lack of any infancy story is exactly what we should expect to find, and the very brief account of the temptation in the wilderness is also telling.

Nearly the entirety of the Gospel of Mark is preserved in each of the 4th and 5th-century codices, while the earliest surviving papyri include the 3rd-century Papyrus P45, containing fragments from chapters 4-9 and 11-12, and the late 2nd or early 3rd-century P137, which includes a fragment from Mark 1:7-9 and 16-18. Additionally, the 4th-century P88 preserves most of the gospel's second chapter.

Throughout this commentary, we will be reading from the Christogenea New Testament, translated by William Finck of christogenea.org, which prioritizes the earliest surviving manuscripts.

1:1 The beginning of the good message of Yahshua Christ, Son of Yahweh.¹

The word for *beginning* is ἀρχή, which can also be interpreted as *origin* or *source*,² and that is probably the intention of Mark here considering that the gospel is about to focus on the many wonderful works of Christ. Those works were the *source* for the oral testimonies spreading like wildfire at the time, and Peter testified that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to these things from the immersion of John until the day Christ was taken up.³ And as Luke wrote at the beginning of his report, “[just as they who from the beginning \[ἀρχή\] having been eyewitnesses and attendants of the Word transmitted them to us](#)”⁴

The good message which the apostles transmitted is the good news of reconciliation for the children of Israel, and we discussed its purpose and scope in our recent presentation “[The Gospel for Whom? The Gospel for White Israel](#)”. An understanding of the Scriptures reveals that the good message is by its very nature exclusive, as only the children of Israel were in need of redemption and reconciliation under the law.

This is the beginning or source of that good message for the children of Israel, starting with the ministry of John the Baptist who prepared the people for Christ. Mark proceeds by showing us that the fruits of John the Baptist's ministry were precisely prophesied of in the writings:

¹ It can be conjectured that this opening clause is Mark's own preface to the gospel, as the narrative does not begin until verse four, and that might be where his preservation of Peter's oral testimony begins. It cannot be said for certain, but neither is it important.

² As William Finck wrote in his commentary on Mark, this use of the word ἀρχή is evident in Strabo, where he considered Homer the beginning (ἀρχή) of the knowledge which the Greeks had concerning the society.

³ Acts 1:22

⁴ Luke 1:2

1:2 Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold! I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way! 3 A voice crying out in the wilderness: Make ready the way of Yahweh, make straight His paths!"

It's not immediately obvious in the text, but these are actually two quotations being conflated into one, and the first is from Malachi, even though they are both attributed to Isaiah in the 4th century codices.

The quote "Behold! I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way!" is from Malachi 3:1. The quote which follows, "A voice crying out in the wilderness: Make ready the way of Yahweh, make straight His paths!" is from Isaiah 40:3. This discrepancy was noted as early as Jerome, and the codex Alexandrinus apparently attempted to correct the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus by omitting the mention of Isaiah and writing "prophets" instead. The King James follows that reading, which isn't surprising since the Majority Text often favors the Alexandrian tradition. (The placing of Malachi first here may also be another one of the chiasmus found in Mark.)

Why exactly Mark chose to attribute both these quotations to Isaiah is difficult to answer in the Septuagint and Masoretic, and while Isaiah is excellently preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls, there doesn't appear to be anything in the surrounding passages there which supports this attribution. So perhaps there are missing or corrupt passages common to all of the surviving Old Testament manuscripts, but we won't rest our laurels on that conclusion.

The minor prophets were often appended to longer scrolls so that the valuable space would be used efficiently, otherwise shorter prophetic works would wastefully require entire scrolls. Some have suggested that Matthew's attribution of a prophecy in Zechariah to Jeremiah may stem from the fact that Jeremiah often appeared first on these scrolls, and a similar explanation might resolve the apparent discrepancy in Mark, assuming that some scrolls placed Isaiah before Jeremiah. However, I'm not aware of any evidence in the ancient manuscripts supporting this specific ordering, so therefore this explanation is only somewhat satisfactory, but there is another possibility.

The rhetorical device sometimes referred to as *composite citation* can be found in the literature of antiquity, where two or more sources are quoted but only the more prolific or relevant is named. An example of this can be found in the contemporary 1st century writer Plutarch, where he wrote: "*as Demosthenes says, 'stop the tongue, block up the mouth, choke people, and make them silent. Be better than the bad: 'tis in your power'*"⁵ Plutarch attributes the statement to Demosthenes, but the second sentence is from Euripides.

The idea is that through the merging of two or more quotations a greater lesson or theme can be conveyed to the reader, and we could conjecture that Mark and Matthew were seeking to illustrate the synergy of the scriptures, which a compounding of the associated passages in Isaiah with Malachi and Jeremiah with Zechariah certainly do demonstrate.⁶ Christ is also recorded as having composited the scriptures in a similar way.⁷

It is difficult to reach a decisive conclusion on this as nothing can be definitively proven. Whatever the case may be no man has any right to tamper with the text, and the later Byzantine manuscripts do wrong by attempting to "correct" Mark.

Now we can actually talk about the prophecies in question, which both certainly apply to John the Baptist, who testified that he was this *voice crying in the wilderness* prophesied of in Isaiah (John 1:23), and Christ later confirmed that John was this specific *messenger* spoken of in the prophet Malachi. (Matthew 11:10-11, Luke 7:27-28)

Whenever the Old Testament is quoted it is important for us to go back and examine the context of the scriptures as they are written, and our interpretation must be in harmony with that context, as the

⁵ Plutarch's *Moralia*, 205, translated by Arthur Richard Shilleto

⁶ The field at Anathoth in Jeremiah certainly seems to be a type for the redemption of Israel.

⁷ Compare Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, and Luke 19:46 to Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Another example is found in Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24-25, which appear to be a blending of prophecies found in Isaiah 13:10, 34:4 (LXX), Joel 3:16, and Haggai 2.

writers of the New Testament were not attempting to contradict or twist the writings. If we do not understand why these passages are being quoted then we cannot understand the context of the Bible at all.

Therefore we will read these quotations again and discuss the prophets in detail:

1:2 Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold! I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way!"

This prophecy of Malachi is confirmed by Christ to have been fulfilled in John the Baptist at Matthew 11:10-11 and Luke 7:27-28.

The specific quote is found at Malachi 3:1, and we will read the context:

Malachi 3:1-4: Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

The first *messenger* being spoken of is John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the *messenger of the covenant*, who is Yahshua Christ, mediator of the New Covenant. Yahweh refers to that second messenger as *Me* in the opening of the chapter, and the use of the first person shows once again that Yahshua Christ is Yahweh God. (It should be mentioned that the name of the prophet Malachi itself means *messenger*, which is descriptive of the book's major themes.)

Both Malachi and Isaiah describe this *messenger* or *voice in the wilderness* as preparing the way for Yahweh, though they focus on different aspects of how this was accomplished. In Malachi we see that to prepare the way the first messenger was to "[purify the sons of Levi](#)" so that "[they may offer unto Yahweh an offering in righteousness](#)".

This offering in righteousness was Yahshua Christ Himself, whom John the Baptist described as "[the lamb of Yahweh](#)",⁸ as that is the only sacrifice which was pleasant to Yahweh in Malachi's future. As Paul wrote in his epistle to the Hebrews "[Saying above "sacrifices and offerings" and "burnt offerings also for errors You have not desired nor have You been pleased with," which are offered in accordance with the law; then He said "Behold, I come that I will do Your will," He takes away the first that He may establish the second](#) [the covenant associated with the second messenger of Malachi - Yahshua Christ]. [In which will we are sanctified through the offering](#) [the offering in righteousness described in Malachi] [of the body of Yahshua Christ once for all.](#)"⁹

Malachi stated that the sons of Levi would have to be purified before this offering of the body of Christ could be made, which must mean it is found in the law concerning such sacrifices. Christ Himself said that He came to "[fulfill the law](#)", and in the law we see that the priests were to wash their bodies before entering the temple for service and sacrifice.

Leviticus 8:1-7 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the LORD commanded to be done.

And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, **and washed them with water**. And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith.

⁸ John 1:29

⁹ Hebrews 10:8-11

Numbers 8:19-22 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. [that there be no plague - reminiscent of Malachi 4:6]

And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. **And the Levites were purified**, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

Aside from cleansings for those exposed to unclean substances or circumstances, these are the only mandated ritual cleansings in the law, and the passage in Numbers is the sole mention in the law of a *purification* for Levites. It can be seen in Luke's gospel that John the Baptist was himself a Levite just like Moses before him, and both men were instructed by Yahweh to cleanse men with water.¹⁰

So these laws were necessary for Christ to be an acceptable sacrifice to Yahweh God, as the Levites were required to be purified before they could lawfully give an offering. All of this was absolutely compulsory for Christ to be made manifest to Israel. Therefore John said, "**in order that He would be made manifest to Israel, for this reason I came immersing in water.**"¹¹

We will now continue to the prophecy from Isaiah and see another aspect as to how John the Baptist was to prepare the way:

1:3 A voice crying out in the wilderness: Make ready the way of Yahweh, make straight His paths!"

This prophecy is quoted in reference to John the Baptist in all three synoptic gospels at Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, and finally Luke 3:4 who also cites the two verses which come afterwards.¹² In addition, John the Baptist identified himself as this *voice crying in the wilderness* at John 1:23.

The specific quote is from Isaiah 40:3, and the citation here in Mark is near identical to how the clause is rendered in the Septuagint. Just as we did with Malachi, we will read the context:

Isaiah 40:3-5 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Whenever we see LORD in capital letters this signifies that the tetragrammaton YHWH is present in the Hebrew, and the substitution for His name is never justified. It is therefore plainly evident where it says "prepare ye the way of Yahweh" that Yahshua Christ must be Yahweh God, just as it was evident where Yahweh said in Malachi that the messenger was preparing the way "before Me".

The reference to the smoothing of the rough places and straightening of the crooked ways is symbolic of the repentance and obedience of the people. It is written later in the prophet Isaiah that the wrongdoers did not know the way of peace, but had "**made them crooked paths**",¹³ but by turning these crooked paths straight, John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ and a highway for our God. It is not surprising that the Hebrew word for *straight* in Isaiah 40:4 can be used in a figurative sense to refer to justice.¹⁴

Another prophecy of this smoothing into plains is found in Zechariah:

Zechariah 4:6-7 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain?

¹⁰ Numbers 8:5-7, John 1:33

¹¹ John 1:31 [...]

¹² Luke 3:4-6

¹³ Isaiah 59:8

¹⁴ H4334, Psalm 45:6, Malachi 2:6

before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

In this passage from Zechariah, the mountain symbolizes Zion, the children of Israel, while the headstone unmistakably refers to Christ, the chief cornerstone. Through the power of Yahweh's Spirit, the people were prepared and brought into obedience, enabling the headstone to fulfill its purpose and provide the gift of grace to the nation.

If there had been no remnant of Israelites who repented from their Pharisaical doctrines and were ready to receive Christ, no one would have accepted Him. John the baptist prepared a willing people, and therefore the Messianic prophecy in Psalm 26 was fulfilled, as it is written: "My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD" (Psalm 26:12). This passage closely mirrors Psalm 22:22, which Paul quoted in reference to Christ at Hebrews 2:12.

We are witnessing a similar pattern today, as the third ministry of Elijah works to prepare and guide those who have been disenfranchised by the Pharisaical churches. Even many elements of Isaiah 40 seem to point toward a future fulfillment in our present time.

(NASB) **Isaiah 57:14** And it will be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle from the way of My people."¹⁵

Continuing with Mark, we will see the immediate fulfillment of these prophecies expressed:

1:4 Iohannes the Baptist was in the desert proclaiming an immersion of repentance for a remission of errors. 5 And all the land of Judaea and all those in Jerusalem went out to him, and they were immersed by him in the river Jordan, acknowledging their errors.

This marks the beginning of the narrative in the Gospel of Mark, with our journey starting alongside John the Baptist. Peter's brother, Andrew, witnessed the immersion of Christ, while Peter himself did not begin to follow Christ until the following day. This could explain why Peter's account of the immersion is the briefest, though it is no less significant.

We will read this description of John's mission and accomplishments again and see how through the will of Yahweh he truly embodied his role as it was foretold by Isaiah and Malachi:

"Iohannes the Baptist [the messenger] was in the desert [wilderness] proclaiming an immersion of repentance for a remission of errors [making straight His paths]. And all the land of Judaea and all those in Jerusalem went out to him, and they were immersed by him [purifying the sons of Levi] in the river Jordan, acknowledging their errors [making straight His paths]."

With the people coming to John and acknowledging their errors, the rough and ragged Mount Zion was smoothed into a plain and prepared for Christ's coming. This would not have happened without a voice in the wilderness, as the voices of the Pharisees in the cities and villages were vainly teaching the traditions of their elders. If they were teaching the law then there would have been no need for John.

Those who were disillusioned with the assembly halls would have sought refuge in the wilderness, as it was an ancient Israelite custom to pray by the rivers,¹⁶ and we are told here in Mark that many came to John from all the land of Judaea and Jerusalem. It is evident both in the gospels and in Josephus that John the Baptist was incredibly popular, enough so that many were persuaded that he was the Christ, something which he consistently denied.

Luke's gospel gives a brief example of how all these people were able to acknowledge their errors, as John the Baptist's advice was in harmony with the spirit of the law, contrasting sharply with the Pharisees and the traditions of their elders:

Luke 3:10-14: Then the crowd questioned him, saying "So what should we do?" And replying he said to them: "He having two shirts must share with he who has not, and he having food must do likewise." Then also the tax-collectors came to be immersed, and they said to him "Teacher, what should we do?"

¹⁵ Isaiah 57:14 (NASB). Paul of Tarsus cited Isaiah 57:19 as being fulfilled in the gospel message at Ephesians 2:17.

¹⁶ Ezekiel 1:1, 3:15, Daniel 8:2, Acts 16:3

And he said to them "Do not exact any more than that which is appointed to you." So those who were soldiers also asked him, saying: "And what should we do?" And he said to them: "You should not cause any agitation, nor make false accusations, and be satisfied with your provisions".

(We may jest that if the people had gone to the Pharisees for advice instead, they would have been told that the law was done away with, that Jesus had broken all His promises and came for everyone, and that they should go frolic with beasts after completing their compulsory rituals of salvation—but we digress.)

John's advice is in line with the law, but the Pharisees in their pretense disregarded the weightier matters of the law. Because of their disregard many of the children of Israel stumbled at the stumbling-stone alongside the Pharisees, just as the so-called churches have pulled men into committing wrongdoing today as they worship the "morals" of the society. But as James wrote, "[Adulterers! Do you not know that the love of Society is hatred for Yahweh?](#)"¹⁷

The Pharisees did not condemn certain grievous sins which God hates but the society loves, such as racemixing fornication, and neither do today's so-called churches. Instead the Judaized Christians of today go around the desert and the sea making proselytes just like the Pharisees before them, and then wonder why they are torn to shreds by the swine they feed.

We can't emphasize enough how John's ministry foreshadowed what is happening today with the third ministry of Elijah, as the churches refuse to teach the law but instead teach men the traditions of their pagan church elders. And we didn't even mention how John the Baptist racially exposed many of the Pharisees and scribes as a race of vipers! There is nothing new under the sun, and the identical circumstances are a matter of prophecy.

1:6 And Iohannes was clothed in camel's hair and a belt of skin around his loins, and eating locusts and wild honey.

It is written in Kings that the messengers of Ahaziah described Elijah the Tishbite as being girt with a girdle of leather:

2 Kings 1:8 [And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.](#)

John was the second Elijah ministry, as the messenger Gabriel and Christ Himself confirmed. Every word of the Bible counts.

It has been theorized by some scattered individuals that John did not eat literal locusts, but rather the carob fruit. There is no evidence for this claim, which is mostly only upheld by Pharisaical people who think their ideas of vegetarianism provide them some sort of righteousness. The law disagrees with their philosophy. The Greek word ἄκρις clearly refers to the insect, and locusts are confirmed by Yahweh to be permissible for us to eat, even if they are not appetizing:

Leviticus 11:21-22 [Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.](#)

The wild honey here is certainly literal as well, but it doesn't hurt to mention that honey and milk are often types for the spiritual sustenance which comes from a conformance to Yahweh's words:

Psalms 119:103 [How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!](#)

Proverbs 16:24 [Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.](#)

Ezekiel 3:1-3 [Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause](#)

¹⁷ James 4:4

thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

Revelation 10:9-10 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

John's rough garment of camel hair and his sustenance on locusts and honey are representative of debasement. Christ compared John's lifestyle to a period of mourning:

Matthew 11:16-19 But to what shall I compare this race? It is like children sitting in the markets calling out to others things which say 'We piped for you and you did not dance. We sang dirges and you did not mourn!' For Iohannes had come neither eating nor drinking, and they say: 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and they say: 'Behold, the man is a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of tax-collectors and wrongdoers!' And Wisdom is justified by her works!"

The children of Israel themselves were certainly in a mournful and spiritually impoverished state before Christ came, but John proclaimed words of hope:

1:7 And he proclaimed, saying "He who is more powerful than me comes after me, of whom I am not worthy bending over to loosen the straps of His sandals!"

This saying of John the Baptist is recorded five times in the New Testament, once in each gospel and then once also in Acts, where Paul is recorded as having quoted it while in Antioch of Pisidia. We could imagine that John the Baptist said this often, and that the quote became synonymous with his ministry.

The purpose of John's ministry was to prepare the people for Christ but in doing so many began to speculate he that was the very Messiah he was preparing them for. An instance of this is recorded in Luke 3:15-16, where John responds to the curious crowds with the same statement recorded here in Mark. His response would have been impactful, as bending over to loosen the straps of a man's sandals would have been seen as a demeaning or even humiliating gesture reserved for servants or slaves. Yet, John emphasizes that the One to come is so mighty and exalted that even this humble act would be too great an honor for him to be worthy to perform.

The language in Mark's account is slightly more descriptive than the other gospels, where the *unique* detail of *bending over* is mentioned. The Greek word is κούπτω and only appears here in the New Testament, as its appearance in the spurious interpolation of the adulterous woman in John 8 should not be counted among the authentic scriptures. While the detail could be seen as unnecessary to mention in a more literary gospel, the unique detail is comfortably at home in Peter's consistently evocative oral account.

There is a clear implication where John describes the One whom he is preparing the people for as more powerful than himself, since men are dust and we are but grasshoppers before the Almighty. When Cornelius fell at the feet of Peter and worshiped, he responded by saying "**Stand up! I myself also am a man!**"¹⁸ Indeed Yahshua came as one of the brethren and walked the earth as a son of Adam, so for Him to be this powerful and dignified then He must be Yahweh God Himself. Otherwise, John would be placing Yahshua in a position which only belongs to God. As it is written: "**I am the LORD: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another**"¹⁹ And as John later said concerning Christ: "**He coming from above is above all. He being from the earth is of the earth and speaks from of the earth. He coming from heaven is above all.**"²⁰

Yet despite being the God who furnished the stars and the earth, He whom is worthy of all praise and honor for the ages, He would later wash the feet of His ambassadors. In doing this He taught them that He who serves his brethren and makes himself least is greatest of all. That is a lesson which all Christians should learn and live.

¹⁸ Acts 10:26

¹⁹ Isaiah 42:8

²⁰ John 3:31

1:8 I have immersed you in water, but He shall immerse you in the Holy Spirit!"

This is a part of the previous statement and the two thoughts are also joined together in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16, both recording parts of the quote which were not recorded in Mark.

We have discussed the purpose of John the Baptist's ministry - that he was to prepare the people for Christ by smoothing the plains through repentance and purifying the sons of Levi with a water immersion. There would be no more need for water immersion after the completion of these tasks, it was meant to begin and end with John, and here John himself gives witness to that fact.

As our beloved sleeping brother Clifton Emahiser used to write in his essays: the book of Acts records a transition of understanding from the Old to New Covenant. Since the majority of the ambassadors were students of John the Baptist before following Christ, they retained water immersion for a time, even though Christ testified to them that "[Iohannes immersed in water, but you shall be immersed in the Holy Spirit after not many days hence](#)". The ambassadors were ordinary humble men like us and it took them time to understand the extent of Yahshua's words.

The epiphany was gifted to Peter after he witnessed the household of Cornelius being immersed in the Holy Spirit, and he later reported to the brethren that upon seeing this "[I remembered the saying of the Prince as He spoke: 'Indeed Iohannes immersed in water, but you shall be immersed in the Holy Spirit.'](#)"²¹ These events are recorded in Acts 10-11, and from then on forward there is no water immersion in the Bible. The ambassadors had transitioned in their understanding.

But even after this the water immersion of John still remained popular among many other people and they would require that the better way be exhibited to them. We see an example of this with Apollos:

[Acts 18:24-26](#) And a certain Judaeon name Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, a learned man, arrived in Ephesos, who was capable in the writings. He was instructed in the way of the Prince and being fervent in spirit he spoke and taught precisely the things concerning Yahshua, knowing only the immersion of Iohannes. And he began to speak openly in the assembly hall. And Priskilla and Akulas hearing him took him aside and more precisely exhibited the way of Yahweh to him.

The way of Yahweh was the immersion of the Holy Spirit, and we see shortly afterwards in Acts that Paul like the other ambassadors had long understood this by now:

[Acts 19:1-3](#) And it came to pass, with Apollos being in Korinth, Paul had passed through the highlands to come down into Ephesos and finding certain students then said to them "So believing have you received the Holy Spirit?" And they to him "Rather we have not heard if there is a Holy Spirit." And he said "In what have you been immersed?" And they said "In the immersion of Iohannes."

Paul did not see any legitimate immersion apart from the immersion of the Holy Spirit, and this is the context of his words to the Ephesians where he wrote that there is "[One Prince, one faith, one immersion](#)"²² He did not write that there are two immersions. Understanding that his readers could become confused, Peter clarified that the immersion he spoke of was of the conscience and not the body, writing "[Not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but a demand of a good conscience for Yahweh](#)"²³

The transition from the Old to the New Covenant was a shift from rituals to selfless sacrifice and care for our kin. But the opponents of the ambassadors sought to enslave men through ritualism, and the ambassadors warned us often of their tactics. While these Judaizers couldn't subdue men with the old traditions, they found it easy to deceive people by transforming early Christian practices into rigid rites, thereby exerting control over them in their organized religion. Even today, many argue that their holy tap water is stronger than the blood of Christ, claiming that without the special sprinkling of state-fed sewage, there can be no salvation. In doing so, they conquer the minds of those who now believe they are dependent on a man in a robe for their salvation, and they snatch away men's liberty in Christ.

²¹ Acts 11:16

²² Ephesians 4:5

²³ 1 Peter 3:21 [...]

These are deeds of Nicolaitans—literally, "people conquerors"—which Christ declares He hates in His Revelation.

The Holy Spirit should not be confused with the Spirit breathed into Adam and passed onto his descendants genetically. The Adamic Spirit is inherent upon one's race and can never be lost through disobedience.

In contrast, the Holy Spirit is an expression of Yahweh dwelling with men when they are obedient to Him. This is how Christ described it to His ambassadors:

John 14:22-23 Iouda (not Iskarioth) says to Him: "Prince, what comes to pass that You are going to make Yourself manifest to us and not to Society?" Yahshua replied and said to him: "If one would love Me he shall keep My word, and My Father shall love him and We shall come to him and We shall make an abode with him.

Christ would say concerning the Spirit "I shall not leave you fatherless: I come to you.",²⁴ expressing in one single statement that He is both Yahweh and the Holy Spirit. One.

1:9 And it happened in those days that Yahshua had come from Nazaret of Galilaia and was immersed in the Jordan by Iohannes.

Mark contains no account of Christ's infancy, the summary of John the Baptist is notably brief compared to the other gospels, and now after only eight opening verses the focus shifts to the ministry of Christ. There is no background given on Yahshua, as Mark's purpose was not to write a historical treatise on the Messiah but to faithfully preserve Peter's oral testimonies in written form.

It happened in those days - there is a way to roughly determine how long John was crying out in the wilderness before Yahshua came to be immersed by him. John, being a Levite, would have most likely adhered to the requirement for temple service found in Numbers 4, which set the age of thirty as a prerequisite. We can make this assumption since Christ testified that His body was a temple, and if we continue reading from where Malachi was quoted in Mark, it says, "[And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant.](#)" Therefore if we assume that John adhered to the age requirement in Numbers 4, and then follow that Christ began His ministry around the time of His 30th birthday,²⁵ it would suggest that John began his ministry at most six months before Christ's immersion.

Luke notes that Christ was immersed in the "[fifteenth year of the emperorship of Tiberius Caesar](#)" (Luke 3:1-2), which started in August or September, depending on if one counts from the death of Augustus or Tiberius' official confirmation by the Roman Senate.

Earlier in the gospel we read that Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, served in the "[division of Abia](#)" (Luke 1:5), a priestly division that typically served in late spring, and that he received the message of John's imminent conception at that time. So after Zechariah's service, John would have been conceived around June. Yahshua's conception was announced to Mariam six months later, which would have been around December. If we assume that Elizabeth and Mariam both had full length pregnancies, then John would have been born around April or May, and Christ would have been born around September.

Yahshua's immersion was around His 30th birthday, as Luke 3:23 notes. Therefore if Yahshua was born in September, then His immersion was in September of 28 AD, which would have been the beginning of the 15th year from Tiberius' official confirmation by the Roman Senate, fitting perfectly with the timeline provided in Luke's account.

So the date of Yahshua's immersion is September of 28 AD, and John's ministry lasted at most six months before this time. The success of John the Baptist's ministry, despite its short duration, attests to the support of Yahweh God. As Paul noted, it is Yahweh who "[makes to grow](#)" (1 Corinthians 3:7). Likewise, Paul's former teacher, Gamaliel, remarked about the acts of the ambassadors, saying: "[if this](#)

²⁴ John 14:18

²⁵ Luke 2:23

counsel or this work should be of men, it shall be broken up, but if it is from Yahweh, you shall not be able to break them up, lest then you are found fighting Yahweh.” (Acts 5:38-39).

There’s a unique detail here in Mark’s gospel that can be discussed: which is where he notes that Yahshua came from Nazareth to be immersed. There is no evidence that Christ ever lived outside of Palestine, despite the theories put forth by some. Luke records in his gospel that it was custom for Christ to read in the assembly hall of Nazareth during the Sabbath,²⁶ indicating that He was well respected in the community. Luke illustrated this earlier in the second chapter of his gospel, where he wrote “**And He descended with them and went to Nazareth, and was keeping Himself subject to them. And His mother maintained all of these words in her heart. And Yahshua advanced in wisdom and in stature and in favor before Yahweh and men.**” (Luke 2:51-52).

The people of Nazareth were very familiar with Yahshua and His family. It is important to note that Mark uniquely shows us that Yahshua was known for His trade among the people of Nazareth, where he recorded them as saying, “**Is this not the craftsman, the son of Maria and brother of Iakobos and Ioses and Iouda and Simon? And are His brethren not here with us?**”²⁷ In response to their being incredulous, Christ said, “**A prophet is not without honor except in his own fatherland**”,²⁸ a statement that would be less meaningful if He had spent significant time elsewhere, such as at tin mines in Cornwall. The reason the people of Nazareth doubted Him is because they thought they knew Him very well.

These accounts strongly suggest that Yahshua lived His earthly life in Palestine, and there is no credible evidence for the claims to the contrary. We must remain faithful solely to what the Scriptures tell us concerning Yahshua’s life, and remain immensely skeptical of everything else.

Now there may be a type for Christ’s immersion in the Jordan found in the book of Joshua. Just as Paul wrote that Moses and those with him were “immersed” in the Red Sea, we can consider also that Joshua and those with him were later immersed in the Jordan when they went to settle the land of Canaan, as the waters of the Jordan were parted in much the same manner. Of course, Yahshua Christ and Joshua son of Nun share the same Hebrew name. Therefore the first Joshua was immersed in the Jordan, and so was the second Joshua.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 Now I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all had passed through the sea. And all up to Moses had immersed themselves in the cloud and in the sea. [the Corinthians as Dorian Greeks were descendants of the ancient Israelites, and this can be proven by comparing Classical History with the testimony of Scripture; and of course, Paul wouldn’t have written to them otherwise]

Joshua 3:15-17 And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

1:10 And immediately upon ascending out of the water he saw the heavens dividing and the Spirit as a dove descending to Him.

When Christ ascends out of the water Mark uses the word εὐθέως (immediately), its first of forty appearances in this fast-paced oral gospel. Furthermore, the unique description of the heavens *dividing*

²⁶ Luke 4:16

²⁷ Mark 6:3

²⁸ Mark 6:4

(σχιζω) here in Mark as opposed to *opening* (ἀνοίγω)²⁹ as it is in the other gospels is the type of evocative language we would expect to see in Peter's oral account.

As John the Baptist said, “in order that He would be made manifest to Israel, for this reason I came immersing in water”.³⁰ Now Yahshua is manifest to Israel with two distinct witnesses during His immersion that He is the Messiah, that being the Spirit resting upon Him and the proclamation from heaven which we'll see in the next verse, “You are My beloved Son”. This is indeed the pinnacle moment of John's ministry and the culmination of everything which he prepared the people for. Through repentance John had made Zion's rugged paths smooth and ready to receive Christ, and now that he has fulfilled his course, John's role will hereafter begin to fade, just as he declared: “It is necessary for Him to be augmented, and for me to be diminished.”³¹

We have already explored the significance of John purifying the Levites, but Christ Himself is not a Levite. So why does He undergo immersion? The answer lies in the very same prophecy of Malachi:

Malachi 3:3-4 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

The Levites are purified first and then they “offer unto Yahweh an offering in righteousness.”, and that offering is the body of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ fulfilled the offerings such as those for sin and peace, as well as being our Passover lamb, and for this offering to be pleasant and offered in righteousness, it would have to fulfill all of the necessary laws. Turning to the law which Christ came to fulfill, we see it written that a burnt offering has to be cleansed before it can be lawfully offered to Yahweh, and therefore this water immersion of Christ was absolutely necessary to fulfill all righteousness:

Leviticus 1:13 But he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water: and the priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

It is indeed righteousness to fulfill the law of Yahweh God:

Deuteronomy 6:25 And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

Therefore Yahshua said to John as it is recorded in Matthew's account:

Matthew 3:14-15 But Iohannes prevented Him, saying: "I have need to be immersed by You, and You should come to me?" Then responding Yahshua said to him: "Allow it for now, for thusly it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

Yahshua was that “offering in righteousness” prophesied of in Malachi, and the sacrifice would have to be washed in order for it to be offered righteously.

The depth of Christ's adherence to His laws regarding sacrifices and offerings is evident in His encounter with Mary Magdalene after His resurrection. When she saw her Teacher alive, she was filled with joy and rushed towards Him, but He stopped her, saying, “You must not touch Me! For not yet have I gone up to the Father.”³² A sacrifice is not complete until it is entirely consumed, and its essence—symbolized by the ascending smoke—rises to Yahweh as a pleasing aroma. Those touching a peace offering with profane hands would be cut off from the people,³³ so evidently, Christ had presented Himself to Yahweh before His later interaction with the ambassadors, when they grasped His wounds.

²⁹ Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:21, John 1:51

³⁰ John 1:31 [...]

³¹ John 3:30

³² John 20:17

³³ Leviticus 7

Now after using water to purify the offering of Yahshua's body in righteousness, Mark writes that John the Baptist "saw the heavens dividing and the Spirit as a dove descending to Him". We can read this in more detail from John the Baptist's very own testimony:

John 1:32-34 And Iohannes testified, saying that: "I observed the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven and it abode upon Him. And I did not know Him,³⁴ but He who has sent me to immerse in water, He said to me: 'Upon whom you should see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, it is He who immerses in the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have testified that He is the Son of Yahweh!"

The description of the Holy Spirit descending "as a dove" is often understood to mean that the Spirit took on the literal form of a dove as it descended upon Christ. However, there is no Scriptural precedent for the Holy Spirit being represented with the physical manifestation of a dove, such as in the anointing of David by Samuel.³⁵ In fact, the immersion of Christ is the only instance where a comparison to a dove is made, and as for when the ambassadors and those with them were immersed with the Holy Spirit during the first Christian Pentecost, the immersion was made physically manifest with tongues of fire and not with doves.³⁶

So perhaps the phrase "as a dove" in Matthew, Mark, and John could be understood as a simile, emphasizing the gentle and peaceful manner of the Spirit's descent rather than implying a physical manifestation as a dove. Luke's use of the word *σωματικός*,³⁷ where he writes that the Spirit descended "bodily as a dove," does not contradict this interpretation. Rather, the statement would be interpreted as meaning that the Spirit was tangible and observable (which is why John saw it), while its movement was "as a dove" - gentle and deliberate.

The synoptic gospels are grounded in a strong oral tradition, passed down by eyewitnesses, as we discussed in our introduction to Mark. We noted earlier that John the Baptist himself testified to seeing the Spirit "descending as a dove.", and it's possible that John's choice of simile became closely associated with the event among other eyewitnesses. Many if not all of the apostles were former students of John after all, and by reiterating his language, they hearken back to their former teacher's testimony.

Christ described the Holy Spirit as an expression of God's union with man and not a distinct entity apart from Himself; therefore the physical manifestation of the Spirit is for the sake of those watching, as a witness to them that Yahshua is the Christ. It was also a witness for John's sake, for he was told by Yahweh that "Upon whom you should see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, it is He who immerses in the Holy Spirit,"³⁸

The prophet Ezekiel watched the glory of Yahweh depart from the temple of Solomon,³⁹ and now John observes it descend upon a greater temple in the body of Christ. The crowds witnessing this incredible event would recognize this as a sign that Yahshua is the Messiah, remembering the prophet Isaiah where it is written, "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him."⁴⁰ and also "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgement to the Nations"⁴¹

And just as the physical manifestation of the Spirit descending on Yahshua as a dove was for the sake of the people watching, so is the proclamation which is about to follow for the sake of the people hearing:

³⁴ Where John said "I did not know Him" despite the fact that they were cousins, this can be reconciled when we consider the fact that John dwelt in the wilderness from an early time in his life. Perhaps this was prophetic of the fact that today many White-European Israelites do not know that they are cousins of Christ, as it is written, "and who shall declare his generation? [race] For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

³⁵ 1 Samuel 16:13

³⁶ Acts 2:3

³⁷ somatikos - #4984

³⁸ John 1:32-34

³⁹ Ezekiel 10:18, 11:23

⁴⁰ Isaiah 11:2 [...]

⁴¹ Isaiah 42:1

1:11 And a voice came from out of heaven: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am satisfied!"

In his opening to the gospel Mark referred to Yahshua as the Son of Yahweh, and perhaps he was foreshadowing this revelation. John the Baptist's testimony of this voice from heaven is recorded in the apostle John's gospel, where he said "[And I have seen and have testified that He is the Son of Yahweh!](#)"⁴²

The voice from heaven is a witness for men that Yahshua is the Christ, as it evokes language from the second Psalm, where it is written:

Psalm 2:6-8 [Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen \[nations\] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.](#)

Therefore when men such as Peter testified that Yahshua was the Son of Yahweh, or when His adversaries questioned if He was indeed the Anointed Son,⁴³ they were hearkening back to the promise of the Messiah found in the second Psalm. This Psalm of David directly incorporates the word Messiah (#H4899), and it was a pillar of Messianic understanding in Judaea at the time. The Psalm is quoted by the apostles in Acts 4:25-26, and Christ quotes it in reference to Himself in His Revelation at 2:26-27.

Matthew 16:16 [And replying Simon Petros said: "You are the Anointed Son of Yahweh who is living!"](#)

The reference to Christ as the Son of Yahweh is also related to the extraordinary circumstances of His birth. This is evident where Gabriel told Mariam that "[The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you, for which also the Holy One being born shall be called 'Son of Yahweh'.](#)"⁴⁴ The only other man whose birth directly involved the intervention of Yahweh was Adam, which is why Paul called Yahshua the "[last Adam](#)"⁴⁵

However, during the three and a half years of Christ's ministry the people were unaware of the specifics of His birth,⁴⁶ and He was widely thought to be the son of Joseph.⁴⁷ The circumstances of His virgin birth became widely known later, so it wasn't what the early followers of Yahshua had in mind when they made their proclamations that He was the Son of Yahweh. Instead, their declarations would have been grounded in the second Psalm, and also other prophecies such as the one found in Isaiah, where it is written, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder"⁴⁸

[And while there was the prophecy of His virgin birth in Isaiah 7 - it was not directly tied there with the concept of His being the Son of Yahweh, and it's unclear how much Isaiah 7 was understood to be a Messianic prophecy at the time. The second Psalm and Isaiah 9:6 would have been the most fundamental writings men were referring to when they made their proclamations that Yahshua was the Son of Yahweh]

While this detail is not evident in Mark, Peter was called to follow Christ the day after His immersion, as it is recorded in John 1:35-42. This means he was not present to witness the immersion of Christ firsthand, which may explain the brevity of his retelling. In contrast, the apostles John and Andrew were present when Christ came to be immersed, which is why John's account of these events is far more detailed.

Yahweh willing, we will return to the Gospel of Mark next week, where we'll explore Peter's encounter with Yahshua by the Sea of Galilee—his second calling.

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⁴² John 1:34

⁴³ Mark 14:61

⁴⁴ Luke 1:35

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:45

⁴⁶ John 7:41-42

⁴⁷ Luke 3:23

⁴⁸ Isaiah 9:6