

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

FIRST DIVISION

I. 1:1-13 *WHO IS ARRIVING?*

LORD OF THE PROPHETS AND SON OF GOD

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

FIRST DIVISION

I. 1:1-13 WHO IS THIS GOSPEL ABOUT?

ANNOUNCED (By Prophets)	APPROVED (By God)
<p>1:1-3 MARK'S TITLE AND THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS ABOUT JESUS THE LORD</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Title <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Good - something of positive value b. News - something to announce c. Jesus - "the Savior" d. Christ - "the Anointed One" (the Messiah) e. (Son - family relationship of God - belonging to God) 2. The prophets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Isaiah, Malachi and Moses announced b. the coming of the Lord c. the prophet who would announce his imminent arrival <p><i>A voice in the desert was human. Often God uses human voices to communicate his message</i></p>	<p>1:9-11 BAPTISM, ANOINTING & IDENTIFICATION AS THE SON OF GOD</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John – Jesus identified with sinners 2. When he came up out of the water: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. he saw the heavens open b. the Spirit like a dove descended on him c. a voice from heaven said: "You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased" NASB-u– God identified with Jesus <p><i>A voice from heaven was that of God. Throughout biblical history God spoke relatively few times in an audible way</i></p>
<p>1:4-8 THE PROPHETIC PREACHING OF JOHN THAT JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE BAPTIST</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John's preaching – John baptized in the desert and preached the baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The response – they came from Judea and Jerusalem b. His clothing – coat of camel hair and belt of leather c. His food - locust and wild honey 2. John's preaching (announcement): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. One comes b. "... more powerful than I ..." NIV c. "I am not worthy ..." NIV d. "... but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." NASB-u <p><i>Confession and repentance of sin</i></p>	<p>1:12,13 GUIDANCE BY THE SPIRIT, TEMPTATION BY SATAN, SERVICE BY ANGELS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Spirit sent him into the desert – He was in the desert 40 days 2. Satan tempted him – Jesus' had an enemy, Satan, the most powerful angel created 3. The wild beasts were with him – Peace with the animals is implied 4. Angels served him – Jesus was served by the angels who remained faithful to God in Satan's rebellion <p><i>Temptation to sin</i></p>

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I. 1:1-13 WHO IS ARRIVING?

LORD OF THE PROPHETS AND SON OF GOD

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The Outline:

The beginning of the gospel just as John Mark presented it

Good News! There's too much of the bad!

The main players are identified

Extraterrestrials

The identity of the Messiah

I. The prophetic writings about Jesus the *Lord* 1:1-3

The *Lord* of the prophets

The *sending* God

II. The prophetic preaching of John that Jesus is greater than the Baptist 1:4-8

The two aspects of the preaching of John

How would Jesus come?

III. Baptism, anointing and identification as the Son of God 1:9-11

The way in which Jesus was personally introduced

Blessing on top of blessing in the Holy Spirit! (List of New Testament verses about the Holy Spirit)

IV. Guidance by the Spirit, temptation by Satan, service by angels 1:12, 13

Driven by the Spirit

A summary: Who is Jesus Christ?

V. Two other themes: voices and sin

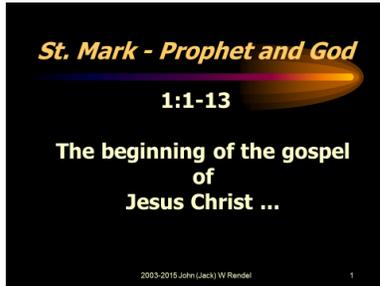
Two voices

Confession of sin and temptation to sin

The importance of preaching and teaching

Questions to aid in the study of this section, Mark 1:1-13

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL



The beginning of the gospel just as John Mark presented it

In verse one of this gospel the evangelist used the word "beginning". I don't think that he used this word simply because he begins his writing here, but because the evangelist chose to begin with the ministry of John the Baptist, which the other two evangelists Matthew and Luke do not do. He did not follow the approach of those two gospel writers in the first part of his gospel, with the genealogies of Jesus and the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

There was a reason for this. In Greco-Roman civilization, the fulfillment of oracles and prophecies would have more impact than a Jewish genealogy. In fact the human ancestors of Jesus would interest them very little. However, the fulfillment of prophecies given centuries before—yes, that would get their attention! That is exactly what John Mark did. But he was careful to not overwhelm the Gentile readers with a great number of Old Testament prophetic quotes.

Good News! There's too much of the bad!

The evangelist begins by telling us his theme is the "gospel", or the good news, of Jesus Christ. It is of enormous importance to share with everyone that good news. The newspapers come loaded with terrible events: murders, wars, hunger, refugees, robberies, deaths, the wounded, and crimes of hatred, envy, lust, and greed. It is good to know that what we have before us in this gospel is good news! Later the author describes highlights of Jesus' life: calming the sea, casting out legions of demons, raising the dead, healing the sick, feeding thousands, blessing the children, teaching the multitudes, and coaching his disciples.

As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 15:8, *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs ... (ESV)*. Christ served the Jews and converts to Judaism, who were called the "circumcision", the physical children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Here was someone who truly served his own people! Politicians may promise and religious teachers may uphold ideals, but Jesus truly lived out his life in service to his people.

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL



The main players are identified

This first portion identifies the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who will play the main part in the gospel. Although this first division of the gospel, 1:1 to 13, is very brief, it presents all the main players of all of spiritual history. Here we see the prophets, the people, the Holy Spirit, God the Father, God the Son in the person of Jesus Christ, Satan, and the angels.

It is important to notice that the religions of the world have problems with what we find in the gospel. They do not recognize all these beings in the same form in which the gospel presents them. Some religions say that God cannot have a son, believing that the only way to have a son is physically. Other religions elevate mere men and women, virgins and saints, or mythological personalities, to the same level as Jesus, the beloved and perfect Son of God. People venerate saints and virgins, and pray to them, forgetting or not realizing that Jesus Christ is the ONLY mediator between God and man. (1 Timothy 2:1-5) And what a wonderful mediator He is according to his own words in the Gospel of John, chapter 16, verses 23 and 24,

23 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (ESV).

Don't just play theological "games" with this passage but believe Jesus' words and ask in his name!

There are religious traditions that deny the existence of the distinct person of the Holy Spirit. Others, with a secular and materialistic mind set, deny the existence of the person of Satan. They prefer to identify evil as a principle only, and never as an "intelligent being". In the 1990 and 2000s pop culture has popularized angels; there are even television programs about them. In mainstream pop culture, angels usually appear either as sympathetic human beings, or as beings of glowing light and poetic white costumes who appear to humans to warn or bless them. But we should remember that there is more than one group of angels and each has different characteristics. Satan, for example, is an angel. He was the most privileged among these beings. He was in charge of guarding the holiness of God, until the day in which iniquity was discovered in his heart. He wanted to be like the most High and to take his place over all things (Ezekiel 28:11-19).

A young man on our evangelistic team one summer continually talked about angels. We had decided as a team to study the Letter to the Hebrews in the afternoons after the siesta. The first chapter of Hebrews speaks a lot about angels. He took the opportunity to harangue us with talks on his favorite theme, his experiences with angels. He told us of several contacts with angels,

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

and little by little we realized that he said more about angels than he said about Jesus. We began to make an effort to avoid the topic in the studies and devotionals of the team. Please understand that I am not against biblical studies about angels, but when the central figure of Hebrews is Jesus Christ, to talk so much about angels is a side track.

When we analyze what the Bible says regarding these diverse beings, we see that God says that there are three levels, and that at the same time they are divided into groups. First, and far above all, is God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Isaiah 40:28, Colossians 1:12-17). Then we have created beings, for example, Satan and the other angels, in second rank. The angels are divided between the ones that remained faithful to God (Genesis 28:12, Psalm 68:17) and the angels that obeyed Satan, those referred to as demons (Matthew 25:41). In third place are human beings (Psalm 8:5) divided between those who respond to the God revealed in the Scriptures, and those who do not respond to him (Matthew 13:49). Among those that respond to the God of the Bible are the prophets or messengers of God.

Some religious traditions change this hierarchy and rearrange the parts being played out on the stage of the universe. They teach that Jesus and Satan are equals in rank, or that some other human being is equal to Jesus. Others say that Jesus is less than God or that he is an angel, similar to those who say that Jesus and Satan are equals. Others teach that we are all equals and that someday we will all be gods. They say that essentially there is no difference among Jesus, God the Father, the angels and human beings in category. Some religious traditions in the world even deny some of the main players presented in the Bible, and then there are those that add other players.

Extraterrestrials

We should understand that God, as well as the angels, and human beings, all have personality, and we can communicate amongst ourselves as persons. We are not eternal and infinite as God is. However, we were not created in the same way as the angels. We procreate children but the angels do not. They were all created directly. There are those who speculate that other beings exist in the universe. They theorize that these are intelligent beings, of distinct ranks and origins, who may live on other planets, with different forms of being. Some people would give us to understand that the universe is full of those creatures. E.T. is a popular film about such beings. The Bible does not tell us that such creatures exist, unless angelic appearances to people are a form of this. Satan seems to take different forms in his appearances. In Genesis chapter 3 he came to Eve in the form of a serpent or snake, at that time one of the most beautiful, or more subtle of the animals. He also appears as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). He appeared to Jesus in the desert but the Bible does not say in what form (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13).

The identity of the Messiah

In these first scenes there are several things to remember about Jesus. First we must note his *lineage*, both prophetic and divine. Then, we note his *names*: Jesus Christ, the Lord, and Son of God. One must note the descriptions of his *person* and *character*, Such as, "*mightier than I [John the Baptist]*" (1:7 NASB-u) and "*You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.*" (1:11 NASV-u). His ministry is to baptize with the Holy Spirit. The anointing by the Holy Spirit, in the

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

form of a dove, was crucial to that ministry. Finally we read about the Spirit “*driving*”, or *vigorously guiding* him into the wilderness, his *temptation* by Satan, and *service* rendered to him on the part of the angels.

Jesus occupies the center stage in the introduction to the gospel. In modern parlance we can say that Jesus is the Good Guy in the film, or the true Hero. These four scenes in the introduction do not give a great deal of commentary on the names, titles and characteristics of the person of the Messiah (anointed One). The commentary comes later, throughout the gospel. We should not be surprised by that. Just as in a film, we learn more about the main character by observing how he acts and reacts to events, and what other characters say about him throughout the film.

Jesus’ genealogy

As I said before Mark does not give us Jesus' human genealogy, nor tells us about his birth, as do Matthew and Luke. There is another reason for that. Who amongst the Gentiles would be concerned about a Jewish lineage? No one. They would be more concerned about his capacity to do what he claimed.

The Gospel according to Saint Mark is a gospel full of activity, as some have noted with a great deal of reason. This is the story of someone who carries out effectively and efficiently all his work. He would impress the hard working empire building Roman soldier!

Jesus’ genealogy is also a “genealogy of prophets” who came before him announcing his arrival. These prophets would include Moses, Isaiah, Zechariah, Malachi, and many others, finally culminating in John the Baptist. The prophets of the Old Testament were recognized as legitimate prophets from God. The Jews knew the difference between the true prophets and the false prophets. They had seen the 400 prophets of Baal supported by Jezebel but beyond that, those who claimed to be prophets of Jehovah and were not. In 1 Kings 22:24 God’s prophet Micaiah, whose words from the Lord actually took place, was smacked across the face by Zedekiah one of the false prophets of Ahab’s court. Zedekiah’s prophecy was a lie and was never fulfilled! In Jeremiah 28:10 and following verses Hananiah, a false prophet, challenged Jeremiah and said that the Lord would break the power of Babylon in 2 years. That never took place. Jerusalem was overwhelmed by the Babylonians and carried into captivity just as Jeremiah had said! Israel knew who her true prophets were even when she would not listen to them!

I. The prophetic writings about Jesus the *Lord* 1:1-3



The *Lord* of the prophets

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

John Mark begins his gospel with another focus, that of Jesus as the Lord of the prophets. Verses 1 to 8 of chapter one describe this focus.

We note some important things in verses 2 and 3.

2 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 ... (ESV).'"

In some versions of the Bible Isaiah is mentioned specifically here, as the prophet being quoted. In any case the quote is from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. The Old Testament prophets were announcing another prophet to come. They had been messengers of the Lord and the one that they were presenting would also be a messenger of God almighty.

Then John the Baptist, the messenger to be sent before the Lord, said he was not worthy to even stoop down and untie the sandals of the One who was coming. This Lord who was to come after John was mightier than John and would baptize in the Holy Spirit, not simply in water, as John had (1:4-8).

The *sending* God

Before concentrating on the theme of messenger, let's think about the word "sent". Malachi 3:1 tells us that Jehovah of Hosts directs these words to his own people. It is God who *sends* his messengers, the prophets.

In 490 BC a man was *sent* by the Greek army to Athens, with an encouraging message. He covered that distance of about 26 kilometers from a battleground, near the city of Marathon. He ran all the way to Athens, and delivered the news of the rout of the Persian army of Darius I. With his last breath he announced to the city of Athens, the victory of General Milciades over its enemies. The man that was *sent* ran in such a way that when he arrived at his destination, after having delivered his news of the victory over the Persians, he collapsed and died. He was *sent* by the Greek army to give the news of the victory.

Throughout the Bible we see that God is a *sending* God. He *sent* Abraham; he *sent* Joseph, he *sent* Moses; he *sent* the judges; he *sent* Samuel; he *sent* the prophets, one by one to Israel. He *sent* an Israelite girl to be a testimony to Naaman, the general of the armies of Syria, a man greatly respected, but at the same time a leper. He *sent* Jonah, to the great city of Nineveh; he *sent* John the Baptist; *sent* his Son; *sent* the apostles; and now he *sends* us, to serve the nations preaching the gospel to them.

1996 was an Olympic year, in fact the centennial year of the modern Olympic Games, restarted in 1896. Before the games various athletes were *sent* with the Olympic torch throughout the United States, the host country, to announce the next Olympics in the city of Atlanta. In a similar way the Lord sends us to the cities, towns and villages amongst the nations to announce his arrival.

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

But as the Apostle Paul says, the news that we, the people of God, carry is so big, that it leaves the news about the Olympics in the shadows. They, the Olympic athletes, run to gain a prize, or corruptible crown, but we run to gain an eternal prize.

II. The prophetic preaching of John that Jesus is greater than the Baptist 1:4-8



The two aspects of the preaching of John

John presented two messages in his preaching. On the one hand he directed part of his message to the spiritual needs of his hearers, the ones that came from all over that region to listen to him. He spoke to them of their sins. He preached to them the repentance of sins, so the people came and confessed their sins. And that is amazing! That generation responded to the message of the prophet. Centuries before, before exiling the Jews to Assyria and to Babylonia as punishment for their sins, the Lord sent prophet after prophet but they would not listen to them. Zechariah describes the case of Israel, in chapter 7, of his prophecy.

9 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, 10 do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." 11 But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. 12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. 13 "As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the LORD of hosts, 14 "and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate (ESV)."

But that generation that responded to the preaching of John recognized its sin and its bankruptcy before the Lord. They confessed their sins and they were baptized by John.

All this seems clear-cut but in reality John was preparing the people for the second part of his message, the announcement of the Messiah. He said that someone would come after him who would be more powerful than he was. Here we should stop to think about the importance of this first step of repentance. One of the greatest events of sacred history was the occasion in which God communicated through Moses his law, among those laws the 10 commandments, the Biblical basis of morality.

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

Until a person recognizes his state of moral and spiritual bankruptcy he will not be inclined to feel his need of the Savior. John prepared the way for the Lord not only announcing the arrival of his person but also proclaiming our moral need for God. How many times have we read or heard missionaries explain that where they work it seems that the people do not have a true biblical concept of sin, and therefore do not have any sense of being sinners. It is clear that if they do not have a consciousness of sin, they will feel no need of the Savior. Human beings, you and I, have to recognize our responsibility before God, our creator, before being able to recognize him as the Savior.

Thousands came to confess their sins and to be baptized, and John shared the fact that another was coming after him more powerful than he was. In the first 8 verses of chapter 1, John Mark announces the Messiah. He has been announced through a line of Israelite prophets, the people chosen of God.

How would Jesus come?

It is clear in this passage that the Messiah is the Lord of the prophets (v. 3), more powerful than John (v. 7), worthy of our adoration (v. 7), and He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit (v. 8). The quote from Isaiah and the prophets reveals that the person that John announced is not just simply another prophet, but that he is the Lord. There is a short description of John and his ministry. The passage impresses us that John lived a very unusual life. He survived on wild foods and rough clothes, not a comfortable life. God worked in him, and many responded to his preaching. Although John exercised a very high influence upon the people, he assured the multitudes that He who was coming after him was more powerful, more worthy, and more spiritual.

How would the person come that John announced? Would he arrive with a legion of angels, decked out in shining armor, with wings of gold, with trumpets, and with voices of thunder? Would he come announced and approved by all the present leaders, King Herod, the chief priests, the doctors of the law, and the Roman governor? Would there be a coronation ceremony in which all these authorities submitted to Jesus and rendered him homage? Or would Jesus arrive with a great army and with a sword to destroy his enemies and take the reins of control, not only of Israel, but also of the Roman Empire, and of the universe? All these things were not in his plans, at least for the moment.

III. Baptism, anointing & identification as the Son of God 1:9-11



The way in which Jesus was personally introduced

Jesus was not introduced at the Jordan, where John baptized, in the way described above. He came as one more in the crowd, almost imperceptible. He was identified with the people being

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

baptized by John, but at the same time approved by the Father, through the voice that spoke from heaven, “You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased”.

At that moment, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit, as explained by the Apostle Peter in his message to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:36-38).

36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him (ESV).

We have said that at the end of this gospel the evangelist explains to us that when the disciples were left behind, they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord helping them. It is clear from other references in the New Testament that their preaching was done with the help of the Holy Spirit. The last words of Jesus make it clear that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and would make them his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Act 1:8 ESV).

Blessing on top of blessing in the Holy Spirit!

Following is a partial list of Bible passages about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. I hope these passages will be of help in your personal study. The Holy Spirit has such an extensive and wonderful ministry to each of us and to all of God’s church. Meditate on the glories and grace that he brings to us. Rejoice in him and ask the Lord to help you hold your tongue when you are tempted to condemn other believers if you think they have not quite “caught up” to your understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Remember Romans 5:5 which says, ... *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (ESV).*

Matthew 1:18-20 Jesus was conceived by the H.S.;

Mark 13:11 and Luke 12:11, 12 The help of the H. S. when on trial;

John 14:26 The H.S. will remind us of the things taught by Jesus;

Acts 2:4 The H.S. gives the ability to speak the message in different languages;

Acts 4:8 Peter, full of the H.S., receives the boldness to speak the word to the leaders of the people;

Acts 4:31 Full of the H.S., they spoke the word with boldness;

Acts 6:3 The H.S. helped the ministers in their tasks;

Acts 8:18 and 9:31 The authority and power of the H. S.;

Acts 10:44 The H.S. helps Peter in evangelization;

Acts 10:45 The H.S. crosses barriers and breaks down prejudices, in this case between Jew and Gentile;

Acts 13:2 The H.S. guided them in evangelistic and missionary work;

Acts 13:4 The H.S. sent them;

Acts 15:28 The H.S. made them sensitive to the needs of the Gentile church;

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

Acts 16:6 The H.S. guided them by closing doors;
Acts 20:23 The H.S. told Paul to expect suffering;
Acts 20:28 The H.S. made some bishops to oversee his church;
Romans 5:5 Through the H.S. the love of God has been poured out in our hearts;
Romans 5:5 The H.S. has been given to us. He is a gift.
Romans 15:16 The H.S. sanctifies the believers;
1 Corinthians 12:3 By the H.S. we say that Jesus is Lord;
2 Corinthians 6:6 Paul did what he did in the H.S.; the ones that believe our message of the gospel are sealed by the H. S.;
1 Thessalonians 1:5 The gospel came to them not in word only, but also in the H.S.;
2 Timothy 1:14 The H.S. commits to us the treasure that God gives us (gifts);
Hebrews 2:4 God testified to the gospel preached by the apostles by signs, miracles, and gifts of the H.S.;
1 Peter 1:12 They preached the gospel by the H.S. sent from heaven;
Jude 20 We pray in the H.S.

IV. Guidance by the Spirit, temptation by Satan, service by angels 1:12, 13



Driven by the Spirit

The Spirit "pushed", or drove, Jesus into the desert. He submitted to suffering and temptation. As well as coming humbly and identifying with the people, at the Jordan, he also identified with us in our sufferings, typified by the harshness of the desert and temptation by the devil. The Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 2:14-18, helps us on this issue:

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (ESV).

The last act we find in this passage in Mark 1:12-13 is the service of the angels. The angels did not all clash with God in Satan's rebellion. The majority of the angels were faithful to their Creator. As Hebrews chapter one explains, the angels minister to those who will inherit

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

salvation. The angels help us. But let's remember that he who sends the angels and is responsible for the angels is the Lord, and not we.

We see then, that the second scene and the fourth scene touch on the topic of sin, the second scene the confession of sins, and the fourth the temptation to sin. As we have emphasized before, if it were not for the problem of sin, the gospel would not have had to be written.

A summary: Who is Jesus Christ?

We have been able to learn something of Jesus' identity.

- 1) He is the Lord of the prophets.
- 2) He is more powerful than John and baptizes in the Holy Spirit.
- 3) He is the beloved, well pleasing and anointed Son of God.
- 4) He was guided by the Holy Spirit and served by the angels.

V. Two other themes: voices and sin



Two voices

Now we move on to two other themes that we are going to study, the topic of “voice” and the topic of “sin”. The theme of “voice” has to do with the communication between God and people, and the theme of “sin” has to do with the great insurmountable problem that people have in their relationships with God and with other human beings.

We find the word “voice” in 1:3.

3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight ... (ESV)'

And in 1:11

11 And a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased (ESV).

Please note that these two references are in the first scene and in the third scene, the parallel scenes according to our chart. Please also note that the two voices mentioned are of two distinct persons. In the first case, the voice is the voice of the one that preaches in the desert, the voice of John the Baptist, a human voice. In the second case the voice is the voice of God the Father, speaking from heaven to his Son.

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

Has anyone ever asked you why God does not speak directly from heaven to all of humanity? Why does God seem to be silent? If God is so powerful he would have no problem communicating with us directly from the sky with a booming, thundering voice. The following passages tell us about the power of God's voice:

Job 37:2, 4, 5

Psalms 29:3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters (ESV).

Psalms 29:4, 5, 7, 8

Psalms 29:9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory (ESV)!"

Psalms 68:33

But something occurred in Mount Sinai centuries ago that dictated how God would speak with people (Deuteronomy chapters 4 and 5). Israel did not want to hear God directly. When they saw the mountain covered with smoke, saw the lightning and heard the thunder, they were afraid and asked that Moses be the mediator between themselves and God. God agreed to what the people asked and told them that he would send them prophets and speak to them through the prophets (Deuteronomy 4:33, 34; 5:22-31; 18:16-18).

Since then God has spoken with people through the prophets. God's voice is so powerful and so great that it frightens people. He has determined to use our human voices to communicate to people his good news.

Sadly the Lord spoke to them many times by the prophets and they refused to listen to him (2 Kings 18:12). It seems that in the time of the prophet Ezekiel the people went to him to hear the word of the prophet out of curiosity, but with no intention of obeying the voice of God through him (Ezekiel 33:30-33).

But there was a generation that did obey the voice of the Lord through his prophets, the generation that entered Canaan.

(Joshua) ... said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you (Joshua 22:2 ESV).

As well as speaking by the prophets God would also speak through the voice of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street (Isaiah 42:2 KJV)*. The Son of God lived here amongst us but he did not speak with a voice of thunder, but rather with a human voice. He would not frighten anyone with his voice. The people would listen to him without fear. The same principle should be applied to our testimony. No one should be frightened by listening to us. They should be able to concentrate on the message of the gospel without being frightened by the messenger.

Confession of sin and temptation to sin

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

There is another theme here that appears in the second scene and the fourth scene of this first division. It is the topic of sin. There are two aspects to this theme, first the confession of sin, and second, the temptation to sin.

- 1) *Mark 1:5 ... And all ... were going out to him (John) ... **confessing** their sins (ESV).*
- 2) *Mark 1:13 ... and he [Jesus] was... being **tempted** of Satan ... (ESV).*

These two passages remind us that the human race fell under the temptation of the tempter, Satan. Since the events of chapter 3 of Genesis, where we find the historic facts of the spiritual and moral fall of man, until the days of John the Baptist, even up to our days, people continue to sin, in defiance of our Creator.

The facts given here are brief but sufficient enough to focus the light of God on our main problem. The remainder of this gospel explains more about the problem, but for now it is sufficient to point out what our greatest problem is. If it were not for this problem the Savior would not have had to appear. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and rescue us from our sins.

1. The Works of the Devil: *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (1John 3:8 ESV).*
2. Jesus, the Savior: *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45 ESV) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9 ESV).*

And what are the works of the devil? Sometimes we may get the impression that the most powerful tool of the devil is terror, that the devil comes to frighten us. I think that that impression may be wrong. Here it says that Jesus was tempted, not frightened. Genesis chapter 3 does not say that the serpent frightened Eve but rather deceived her. When Achan stole and hid a bar of gold and a Babylonian garment under his tent, he was tempted, not frightened. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba he was tempted, not frightened.

There is something very interesting to note in God's dealings with people. While God is all powerful and could easily frighten us he often deals with human beings in a more appealing and quiet way. Maybe Satan had noticed this and so approached our forefathers in the Garden of Eden, not in a frightening way but in a quiet subtle manner. He did not scare Eve. He just spoke to her with sly tempting words.

There is the case of the servant of Elisha (2 Kings 5:20-21):

20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him." 21 So Gehazi followed Naaman. And

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well (2Ki 5:20-21 ESV)?"

Here the servant lies saying 2 sons of the prophets have arrived and have needs.

22 And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" 23 And Naaman said, "Be pleased to accept two talents." And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi. 24 And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed. 25 He went in and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant went nowhere." 26 But he said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? 27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow (2 Kings 5:22-27 ESV).

Something similar happened in Jerusalem when the believers shared their goods and gave to the ones that had needs. Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the leaders about the price of a field that they sold.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God (Act 5:3-4)."

It is important to note here that every sin against people is also, and above all, sin against God. We should keep God in mind in all our relationships. Two very great men said the same thing in two different contexts. Joseph, who became the governor of Egypt, while still serving in the home of Potiphar and when Potiphar's wife tempted him to come to bed with her, said that to commit adultery with her would be a sin against God.

7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8. But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. 9. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God (Gen 39:7-9 ESV)?"

After sinning with Bathsheba, and having killed her husband Uriah, David expressed his repentance in Psalm 51 and amongst other things said: *Against you, you only, have I sinned and*

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment (Psalms 51:4 ESV).

It is clear that David had sinned against Uriah and his family, and in reality against everyone in Israel, but this is a prayer to God, and David recognizes before God, that at the heart of the matter, every sin is first against God. Other leaders and rulers of nations of his time would in fact do what he did without compunction and never ever consider repentance. Some kings were considered to be a god, or the son of a god, and therefore did whatever they pleased.

In Daniel chapter 2 we find that Nebuchadnezzar was going to destroy to all the wise men and magicians of his kingdom because they could not recount to him a dream that had worried him, but which he could not remember. In protest they said that there was never any king who asked such a thing of his magicians and wise men. This protest, however, did not stop Nebuchadnezzar's plan to kill them. He made a decree that all the wise men and magicians of his kingdom would be destroyed. He exercised the power of a god upon his people. It was different with David. He knew that the God of heaven had given him his law and that the king over God's people had to be an example to them. He did not have the right to do whatever he pleased. He had to obey God first. Every rebellion and sin was first of all against God.

The two themes of "voice" and "sin" fit perfectly into the message of this gospel. This is a gospel of prophets and preachers, of servants and of the Savior. The prophets and preachers use their voices. The Savior saves us from sin.

The importance of preaching and teaching

Both at the beginning of this gospel and at the end, as well as throughout, an important place is given to preaching and teaching.

At the end of this gospel the evangelist writes that they (the eleven disciples, see 16:14) went out and *preached* everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with the signs that followed (16:20). One of the main activities of the apostles was *preaching*, but even after leaving them, Jesus accompanied them, helping them, working with them to support the *preaching* that they did.

The gospel opens describing the ministry of John the Baptist, as a ministry of preaching. Verse two announces a *messenger*. Verse 4 says, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and *preach*" Verse 7 says, "... and *preached*, 'Saying'"

We often find Jesus preaching and teaching throughout the gospel. He preached in the synagogue, by the seaside, in the temple, and elsewhere (Mark 1:14, 21, 38, 39; 2:2; 3:14, 23; 4:1; etc.).

I remember that at 12 or 13 years of age the Lord "spoke to me", in my heart, about his "plan" for me to preach the Bible. It was not an audible voice but a sense of urgency in heart. At that time I didn't even read the Bible! How was I going to preach the word of God if I didn't read it? The Lord would have to do something in me to prepare me to preach. He did bring me to the point where I would read and study his word. I listened to very good preaching and teaching

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

through the years. My parents taught me the word of God. In Kent Academy, a school in Africa where I spent many years, we students studied the tabernacle and the life of Christ, among others biblical themes. A teacher taught us to memorize entire chapters of the Bible. We reviewed many Bible stories and doctrines in the Sunday schools of several churches. We heard many sermons from different pastors, evangelists and preachers.

We attended many Bible conferences and summer camps. Some years later I had the privilege of attending one of the best known Bible schools in the world, the Moody Bible Institute. In the first years of training as a missionary I began to preach. We listened to many preachers who came to share the word of God with us during my first years as a missionary.

Prophetic	Divine
• Written in Isaiah 1:1-3 The Lord	• Baptized, Anointed 1:9-11 My Beloved Son
• John Preached 1:4-8 Greater than John	• Guided, Tempted, Served 1:12-13 Greater than angels

Something more about the structure of the first division, Mark 1:1-13

This analysis could serve as an outline for sermons.

1:2-3, the first portion, or scene, with two parts:

1a) 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way ... (ESV)

1b) 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight ... (ESV).'"

1:4-8, the second portion, or scene, with 2 parts:

2b) 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 (ESV).

2a) 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 (ESV)."

You will notice that Mark, being a Jew, repeated in the 2 second parts what he had written in the 2 first parts. The poets and prophets of Israel repeated a central idea in different words as a

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

means of emphasis. The themes “prepare the way” and “preach” are repeated, in their respective portions.

We also see that in the first part of the first portion (v. 2) and in the second part of the second portion (vv. 7, 8) we have an emphasis upon the person of the Messiah. In the second part of the first portion (v. 3) and in the first part of the second portion (vv. 4-6) an emphasis upon the straightness of the way and the repentance of sins.

We find something similar in the two following scenes, 1:9-13.

1:9-11, the first scene:

1a) 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan (ESV).

1b) 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open 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 (ESV)."

1:12-13, the second scene:

2b) 12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness (ESV).

2a) 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 (ESV).

In these two portions we see in parallel the identification of Jesus with the people, being baptized by John, and tempted by Satan. We also see that heaven identifies with Jesus, anointing and guiding him. Jesus is approved by God and tested by Satan. It is of great interest to us to know if this “Lord Jesus Christ” can identify with the people, among whom he has come to serve, and if he has the strength from God to carry out his work. We can respond in the positive when it comes to these two questions.

In that case we can go on to look at the remainder of the gospel with the confidence that this is the ideal Messiah to accomplish the work of God in the world, and to help his people with what remains of his work until He returns.

Questions to aid in the study of this section, Mark 1:1-13

1. Draw up a list of 4 facts about Jesus, that help us identify him, as they are presented in this first part of the gospel, 1:1-13.
2. Which religions or philosophies would have teachings opposed to the ones that we find here in this part of the gospel?
3. What have you heard about extraterrestrial beings? In light of what we read in this portion of Mark, what do you think?

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

4. At your job or in your school or university studies have they ever sent you to accomplish some project or communicate some message? What was it they asked? Who asked you to do it? To whom did you have to communicate? Could you accomplish the task? Was it difficult?
5. Jesus was identified with the people, being baptized with them and tempted by Satan. Have you been able to identify with other people in their problems and needs? Who were they? What did you do to help them?
6. On whom do you depend every day for the power that you need to be of help to others and a good testimony in this world? What have you been able to do in his power?
7. Make a list of several ways of preaching the gospel with our human voice. Which way do you find best to preach the gospel with your voice?
8. What temptations do you face daily? Make a list and ask God to help you against temptation. Next to each temptation in that list put a couple of verses that will help you resist the temptation.