

## The Mind of Christ Class Week 11

April 3, 2019

We're going to start out tonight in the next section which is Mark 1 verse 1, and just ask some questions about it. We're not going to go in depth about this ... it will unfold as the time goes on in "The Mind of Christ".

Mark 1:1 says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark is the second gospel that begins with the word "beginning" in the first line as John does in John 1:1. All of them deal in origins in some way or another; the lineage of Jesus in Matthew and Luke and in John, "In the beginning WAS the Word" and here in Mark.

So the question comes to my mind:

As I think about the fact that we have been given the commission to go preach the gospel to the entire world, and therefore, people don't know it unless we tell them ... I listened to a man who with me is on the board of the Ministerial Association, Jim Pierson. Jim has many hats. He is chaplain for the Bradenton Police Department and he has a ministry to nursing homes where he will go in and do services in multiple nursing homes in Sarasota/Manatee County. But he talked about the ministry to the nursing homes dealing with the elderly who are near 'end of life' situations.

He made a point that you might assume that most of them would know what the Gospel is, but that is not a good assumption. Many of them in their 70s, 80s, maybe 90 years of age, really if you ask them what the gospel is, they have no clue. They don't know what the gospel is. The word doesn't mean much to them.

You would think, being raised in America, at least the word 'gospel' would be a fairly common word that most people would know kind of what it means.

**Brian Smith:** Especially for the time period they were born in.

**Rod:** Yes, but he finds that you don't make that assumption. You have to explain it to them. You have to tell them what it is. He said that many of them have very little concept of personal sin, or the consequences of their sin. They just don't think in those terms. It's just not something that's important to them ... and I am sure you find people in all kinds of states of mind. But that was an interesting comment, particularly with regard to the questions I am going to raise here.

Mark begins, "**The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**" John began with "In the beginning". He gave us a picture of the preexistent Jesus. Mark is focusing on the beginning of the **gospel**. The identity of Jesus, of which he was aware certainly by the beginning of the gospel ministry, was established. In the very beginning there were terms that were used about Jesus such as *Christ, Messiah, King or Son of God*. All of these were terms that became firmly established in the ministry of Jesus.

But from this identity, he turned to the message he came to preach - the Gospel. This word was very important with regards to our vocabulary and our thinking. Euangelion (εὐαγγέλιου) is the word in the Greek; the 'good message' or the 'good news'; and something as simple as 'good news' must be understood properly.

For instance, we can define this in such a way that anything one might be considered to be "bad news" would be excluded. In other words, "Good news" is the correspondent to the "Bad news". So what anybody to be considered 'bad news'; — if you go to the opposite of that, it would be 'good news'—or it could be interpreted that way.

Telling people of their sin and their need to repent, the exclusive commitment to their faith in Jesus, all in our current PC world do not seem to be positive to people today. It doesn't seem like good news today. You start talking about sin, and repentance, and the exclusive nature of Jesus being the only way to God; people in our world tend to think of that as 'not' good news. That's bad news. That is not 'positive'—it's negative.

Good must be defined by the only One who **is** good...the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So when you think of words that are relative like 'good' or 'bad' there has to be someone who defines that definitively, because to be left to just what **we** consider to be good or bad in terms of the message, people are all over the page with that. So not knowing the gospel and what it is, we might be all excited about it and saying, "I want to tell you some good news" and then we include in that "you're a sinner and you're on your way to Hell if you don't repent, and if you don't turn to Jesus, and he is the only way to God" and people may be thinking, "When is the good news going to come because I'm not hearing ... this is not computing with me as being good news."

True, there was no ambiguity in the mind of Christ regarding the nature and the content of the gospel. If **anybody** understood the gospel, it was Jesus. But that raises some questions. The only person who truly and absolutely understood the gospel was the One who embodied the gospel. Jesus **was** good news. Everyone else, including me, simply proclaims it and incorporates the truth of the gospel into our lives as best we can. But Jesus **WAS** the good news, and since He was good, through and through, He was the only "really" good news.

As we will see, this gospel did not merely include Jesus' ministry, but also that of the forerunner, John the Baptist because he proclaimed the gospel as well.

So my question is:

How did Jesus, by the time He was thirty, how did He come to know and understand the gospel? Now I'm assuming, again, a maturation process that Jesus went through. I'm asking about the maturation process that Jesus went through. I am not assuming that when He was born and He was two days old, He understood the gospel. I'm not even assuming He understood how to ... He wasn't potty trained, He didn't know how to feed Himself. There were so many things that no one would understand at two days old or ten days old or two years old... there was a maturation process He went through, but at what point did He fully understand the gospel, because by the time He started preaching it, He fully understood it. How did that come about?

How did He formulate it in His mind? And so I have more questions. Questions raise questions. What was the learning process? Was it aided by men? Did He get any part of the gospel from His parents, from teachers of the Law, from maybe neighbors, from the Synagogue because aren't truths of the gospel imbedded in the Old Testament? So was He aided in His understanding the gospel by all of these human influences in His life? Did that contribute anything to His understanding of the gospel?

People's understanding of God's plan was corrupted because any one of them, including His parents; there is no single individual who understood the gospel as well as Him, so anything He got from them was going to be something of a corrupted gospel. It wasn't going to be the fullness of the gospel that **He** understood by the time He started preaching it.

How did Jesus avoid the distortion of man and gain a clear, precise understanding of the gospel? Did He learn it like Paul? Paul made a big point in Galatians 1:13-2:2.

<sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. <sup>15</sup> But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was **not to consult any human being**. <sup>17</sup> I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

<sup>18</sup> Then **after three years, I went up to Jerusalem** to get acquainted with Cephas[b] and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

<sup>21</sup> Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup> I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup> They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup> And they praised God because of me.

2:2-3 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. <sup>2</sup> I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with **those esteemed as leaders**, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

Paul says, "I didn't learn it from anybody. It was revealed to me by Jesus. It was a revelation of Jesus Christ. He made a big point: I didn't go up to Jerusalem. I didn't talk to Peter. I didn't talk to the other apostles; that I gained it by revelation of Jesus Christ.

So did God, Himself, pour the gospel into Jesus' head through a special revelation?

**Jean:** I think that might have been it because He learned to do what God told Him to do. He was very obedient to His Father so maybe God told Him to do this and He obeyed.

**Rod:** Okay, And certainly God was inspiring men to write the New Testament, which is the essence of the gospel, and Jesus was a living, breathing, inspired person of God, but at what point did that happen?

**Sandie:** I'm thinking of the beginning of John, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God". Jesus was "in the beginning with God". So are we agreeing that when He became a human, that His human mind could recall that pre-humanity?

**Rod:** I guess what I'm assuming is that, as a small child, at least, He didn't have the fullness of the understanding. He had to mature in the wisdom and knowledge and understanding. We've looked at passages that said as much.

So, I'm questioning at what point did this fullness of this knowledge of the gospel—when did He become fully aware of that. Because He divested Himself of His deity according to **Phil. 2:6-7**

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

So again, raising our questions here...

**Carole:** To use your expression, "Holy imagination" (I think I'm keyed in there right now): From the time He was born to the time he came out to the public and preached in the synagogue, He had been in the synagogue, or the temple, several times a year for 5, 10, 12, 15, 18, 20, 2 or 30 years. And hearing things, and the Holy Spirit helping Him to interpret—it may have been bits and pieces at a time ... but I can imagine Him thinking, "...it's Me. It's about me. The way it all fits together ..." So, He's got thirty years to...

**Rod:** Yes. I mean, I know for me if you had asked me at ten years old if I'd understood the gospel, I'd have said, "Yes." I **did** understand it enough to obey it. But if you had asked me after Jimmy Allen's Roman's Class, if I understood the gospel, I would have said, "Well, I understand a whole lot more than I did before I took this class. But I got a whole lot of questions that were raised in this class. Paul definitely wrote some things that were hard to understand." And so, it not only enlightened me at 18 or 19 years old, but it also raised a whole bunch of other questions that I still struggle with today about some of the aspects of the gospel and how it's put together.

**Jean:** It sounds like He knew that God was His Father.

**Rod:** Yes... at twelve, at least. For He said He had to be about His Father's "whatever" (business or house) ... the word that's not there. {See last week's lesson}

There's no evidence of this, and you have to piece together some things from Galatians 1 and 2, with Paul's laying out things, he spent three years in Arabia. Paul said he spent three years in the Arabian Desert which is interesting because that's where Moses received the Law—in the Arabian Desert.

Was that where Paul spent a profitable time with Jesus in the desert as the other apostles did with Jesus in Judea, Galilee? I think that's possible; even likely. He may have had some kind of three-year course directly from God Himself. And Paul also had the experience of going into the third heaven and seeing things that he couldn't tell us about.

## **2 Cor. 12:1-4**

I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. <sup>3</sup> And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—<sup>4</sup> was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

So there are many ways which Jesus, supernaturally, could have gained His knowledge of the gospel itself other than just simply the human ways we gain that knowledge. It's a mystery that we might not know on this side but somehow from newborn to thirty, He came to the gospel and His words will be the clearest understanding of it in the mind of Christ. So, that's really what I want to introduce you to here, is that the clearest understanding of the gospel was in the mind of Jesus Christ. If anybody knew what the gospel was, He knew what the gospel was.

Some have said, "Can we learn the gospel if we only read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?" And since it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes it, if that was all we had (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), or any **one** of them, would there be enough information for us to not only obey the gospel and become a Christian, but to be able to have enough of a message to go out and preach to the entire world? Now, of course, that is a moot question because we do have a few other books to pull from.

Alright, we're going to turn to something that's in some ways more complicated. This is interesting here. We are going to go to Mark 1:2-6 and the other passages that go along with this: Matthew 3:1-6 and Luke 3:3-6, from the Isaiah prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-5.

We're going to be talking about the message of John the Baptist. There are four parts to the message of the synoptics of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

First is Isaiah's prophecy. Second is John the Baptist's basic message of the gospel he preached. Third is John the Baptist's baptism in the Jordan. Fourth is John the Baptist's clothing and food. Then we will talk about how these may relate to the mind of Christ.

## **Isaiah 40:3-5**

A voice of one calling:

"In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

### Mark 1:2-6

...as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”—<sup>3</sup> “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” <sup>4</sup> And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

### Matthew 3:1-6

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea <sup>2</sup> and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” <sup>3</sup> This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.” <sup>4</sup> John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

### Luke 3:3-6

He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>4</sup> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. <sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. <sup>6</sup> And all people will see God’s salvation.”

(Now I didn’t plan it this way, but it just so happens that *that* will be the text that I will be preaching on Sunday... mounted on the wings of Eagles.) I am going to go back and give a context to that which will include this section.

You may not realize unless you get the transcript of this, but Mark has verse 3 of Isaiah 40, Matthew has verse 3, Luke has verses 3 through 5a. So he’s quoting Isaiah, but all of them do not quote all of it. But Mark also throws in a bit of a curve ball in the exegesis of the passage by beginning with a line from **Malachi 3:1**.

Mark begins his message with **Malachi 3:1** although he says he’s quoting from Isaiah. Malachi’s statement is, “Behold. I will send my messenger [a], who will prepare the way before me.” But **Mark** doesn’t quote it the same way Malachi does. He says, “Behold I send my messenger *before your face* who will prepare your way.”

Mark adds, “**Before your face**” into the mix. They are essentially the same except for “before your face”. This raises the question that ‘if you are going to quote someone, it’s always good practice to, you know, with references, to quote it accurately. You quote someone “as is”. Even if there is a misspelling in there, you can put that little notice in there – that (sic). I don’t even know what (sic) actually means. (Sic) means, I didn’t misquote it... the original guy did. Don’t be (sic’d) on me because I didn’t do it. It’s what he said, okay? (giggles)

<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/what-does-sic-mean/>

**Sic** is a Latin word meaning “thus”, “so”, “as such”, or “in such a manner”

<https://www.google.com/search?q=%3A%22sic%22&oq=%3A%22sic%22&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.4104j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

(sic) used in brackets after a copied or quoted word that appears odd or erroneous to show that the word is quoted exactly as it stands in the original, as in *a story must hold a child's interest and “enrich his [ sic ] life.”* }

There are only two possible explanations for this addition. Although I cannot find this phrase in any context associated with John the Baptist. So, adding the phrase, “before your face” – anything having to do with John the Baptist – I can’t find anything that relates to that.

So in Isaiah 40:5 he speaks of the glory of the Lord who will be revealed, and all flesh seeing Him. In Malachi he mentions, “The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple”.

It reminded me of Psalm 27:4 where His face is mentioned. “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.”

But this idea of the glory of the Lord being mentioned ... Remember, as far back as Moses who wanted to see the glory of the Lord. Moses was not able to see “what?” He was not able to see the face of God because ‘no man can see God and live’. God passed by so Moses could see his back side, because “no man can see God’s face and live”

### **Exodus 33:18-20**

<sup>19</sup> And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>20</sup> But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

But somehow, in this passage, Mark inserted, “before your face”. Again, if you go back, “And behold I will send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way.”

Now I don’t think I have this even in my notes, but in **2 Corinthians 4:6** it says, “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,”[a] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed **in the face** of Christ.”

And in 2 Corinthians 3:7-8 Paul says, “Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, <sup>8</sup> will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?”

When we turn to the Lord we begin to be transformed from one degree of glory to another.

There is something about us seeing the face of Christ that is associated with the glory of God. The “glory of God” is in the passage ... it’s just not in terms of that phrase “in the face” being there. So perhaps John, (or Mark) who wrote this, took some liberties with the passage and inserted a truth, but yet did not accurately quote the Old Testament passage as it was written. That may raise issues for some people about the validity or reliability of the Bible.

I don’t know... this isn’t the day to talk about “alleged discrepancies of the Bible” but I do **raise** that because we can’t be honest with the text and then point out that there are some things that are hard to understand about this, why it got said that way it did. So not mentioning Malachi, only quoting from Isaiah, and inserting this phrase about “before your face” is questionable. Why did that happen?

The word “messenger” in the text here is the same word from which we get the word “angel”. {The word is angelos, (αγγελιον)}. One sent to announce or to proclaim God has often, in the Old Testament and the birth of Christ, it has often been “angels” coming to announce God’s plan. But now we have another messenger who is announcing God’s plan ... and that is John the Baptist. So here we have a man sent for the unique role of introducing Jesus to the world.

Introductions were in order, I mean, we are talking about the most important person who ever lived. Normally, if we have important people, those people get introduced, and sometimes very lavishly. Introductions can go quite extensively, particularly if you are the one being introduced and you advised them what to say about you. “The Bridegroom Cometh” must be announced. There is an announcement about the Bridegroom. This is one more thing that God did to make sure Jesus was pointed out as the long-awaited Messiah. In the mind of God, at least, God, in His wisdom and in His plan, said I am going to put someone to go before Jesus and prepare people for the way. Because God put that into prophecy, when John came, it certainly got people’s attention because they immediately associated this with a Messianic introduction and with a Messianic gauge, even thinking that John himself might be the Messiah.

The word “prepare” here means to put in readiness, to construct, to form or to build. John the Baptist was a ‘construction worker’ preparing hearts for the Lord. Here, Isaiah talks about the idea of preparing the way or the road...a place where they could make progress . . . a mode; means, journey or way. In this place, it is a road taken by a king so it needed some construction work. Jesus was surely aware of John the Baptist’s work and that it was for Him. I wonder, had they talked about this ahead of time? Did they meet prior to John the Baptist starting to preach? See, these are things that we don’t know. Did they discuss where John would position himself? Did they talk strategy or timing?

**Brian Smith:** It doesn’t sound like it because they barely knew each other when they finally met. It seems that John had some spiritual revelation. It sounds like he knew who He was when he baptized Him, and he had to tell his disciples to go to Jesus later on and ask Him if He was the One.

**Rod:** Yes, but I have a theory about that too. I don't really think that John was curious about that. I think in that particular case, it was his disciples because they were trying to protect John wanting to be very, very sure that "it was worth it". So John said, "Go ask Him. Go ask Him. Go satisfy your curiosity." I don't think it was for John at all."

**Brian:** That makes sense.

**Rod:** I think when that dove came out of heaven and the voice came out of heaven, I think John was absolutely convinced.

But again, did Jesus have a problem with John's clothing? This may sound like a crazy question, but John, do you think you could have dressed up a little bit? I mean, I'm the Son of God here – okay? Come on – clean up a little bit. Did they eat locusts and wild honey together? We don't know.

But John's work was part of the thinking of Jesus because He knew that there was going to be "one coming before Him" and He had to know what the nature of that was all about. So I think they may have called John the Baptist 'the voice' . . . the **real** voice . . . of one crying in the wilderness. I guess I thought of this as one crying where a few people could or would hear. If you are crying out in the middle of the wilderness, there is nobody to hear you. There is a guy who stands on the side of Fruitville Road sometimes, around Honore, and he holds up a sign that says "The end the world – Repent of your sins and he waves his sign. He seems like a nice guy, but it seems like one crying a little bit in the wilderness. I don't know how effective that is.

Wilderness sounds like a desolate unpopulated area although the two places they took me to...us to...when we went to the Holy Lands was not exactly a desert. And it couldn't have been a total desert...it was right by the river. The Jordan River at that point is not really impressive. It's not the Mississippi, for sure. It's just a muddy, narrow little river. I mean, at the point where they think it may have happened, I could have thrown a stone across the river easily.

**Carole:** But you might get shot!

**Rod:** Yes. I might get shot because Jordan was on the other side. Jordan and Israel have armed guards on both sides.

"The voice" is also used in Matthew 2:18 about weeping in Bethlehem. "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." It was used again in 3:17 for the voice of God, "And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." So there are three voices that are used here in a very short period of time – the voice of John the Baptist, the voices of the women who were weeping over their dead children, and the voice of God from heaven saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." So Rachel, John the Baptist and God all give voices to the event of Jesus' introduction. The word is "phone" (φωνε) meaning sound or tone.

They are out in the “desert” or “wilderness”. It means a waste, an uninhabited or desolate place. Why choose an area to interview Jesus far from where people lived? There was water there. Did the remoteness add to the mystery of John the Baptist’s ministry? Did the distance of travel attract those who would truly be interested? Isaiah said it would be a voice **in** the wilderness so when it happened, people recognized it as a fulfillment of the prophecy.

But I think that there is a little bit more. I think that in the prophecies God gave, He gave people “markers” – He gave them some very distinct markers. And one of those markers is “the voice isn’t going to be in Jerusalem.” It is not going to be in a metropolitan area. So if you are tracking when the Messiah is coming, don’t listen for the few preachers in Jerusalem because that’s not where it’s going to originate. That is where most people would go if they want to gain a following. They would go where the population centers are. But God says I have to do something that will set this apart from all the shahs (?) in South Judea. We need to have a place where this will be somewhat unique and it’s going to be in the wilderness; it’s going to be in a remote area. It would have to be by water because he would also perform baptisms.

This is a side-note: In John chapter 1 God had already told John the pre-arranged signal to know exactly who the Messiah would be. He knew what to look for. When John was out there baptizing people, he may not have known exactly who the messiah was at that time, I think every time he baptized someone – a Jewish man, he looked up to heaven and thought, “Is this the one?” But he just kept baptizing. “Is this the one?” Because, I think God told him that when you get the right one, something will happen and you are going to see the Holy Spirit come down in the form of a dove, and He is going to light on His head, and that is going to be my signal. You cannot miss it, John ... You will know exactly who the Messiah is. It couldn’t be more clear if a finger had come out of heaven and pointed at Jesus and said, “This is Him!”

### **John 1:32-34**

Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

John knew exactly what to look for and knew that that was the pre-arranged signal that God had given him. I believe that the wilderness contributed to that in prophecy, so that people, when they heard ‘there’s some really crazy guy out there’ and they had already associated him with Elijah because Elijah was a little eccentric too, and it was when all the images in their minds were coming together. So John cried out in the wilderness proclaiming it, exclaiming it, provoking it. There is some urgency in John’s cry. “You need to hear this!” The urgency was that the Lord was near and the way had to be prepared for Him. He’s coming. We’ve got to get ready. We’ve got to make the preparation. There is an urgency here.

The way is prepared by making His path straight. The word there means to make it right, to make it upright, to make a true path for Him. Jesus travels on true and right paths. The only place Jesus can travel is on true and right paths. If He is going to travel in our lives, He has to travel into a life that is true in the sense of being sincere, honest and willing to accept Him for who He is. That is why when they went into the villages they looked for people who were worthy. Matthew 10:11, [“Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave.”](#) You knock on doors until you find a worthy person. You will find a true and right path, and you go into that house and stay there and share the gospel there. If people don’t receive you, shake the dust off your feet, you know you haven’t found a true and right path, you look for that and share the gospel with people.

**Jean:** How did John make the path straight?

**Rod:** We’re going to see that. He did that through his preaching. We will get to all that.

He does not follow crooked paths. Jesus doesn’t follow crooked paths. Now he may go into lives of people who are **on** crooked paths, but He is not going to follow those crooked paths. We have phrases about abhorrent behavior. We say they should be straightened out, or they need to be scared straight. Or we tell kids to “straighten up”.

They had to know how to do that. So the metaphor “the road is prepared for a king” is where this comes from. It means filling in the ravines and the valleys and bringing the mountains and the hills low. He improves the way. He grades the roads. The image is bold. It makes Jesus’ way easier, faster, and more productive. The crooked places must be straightened. The word for straightened here is the word ‘ευθειασ’ meaning to straighten – to smooth out. {The opposite is ‘skolia’ meaning bent or crooked where we get the term scoliosis from.} - (Luke 3:5). The rough and the uneven have to become smooth. The idea of “smoothing it out” comes from the word Leios (λειος) meaning to lay, to arrange or to put together in some kind of order.

Isaiah’s quote continues in Luke to encourage: and all flesh will see the salvation of God. The word for flesh is ‘sark’ (σαρξ). It is the same word that describes Jesus as becoming flesh in John Chapter 1. This reminds me of the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh or all mankind (Acts 2:17 - [‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.’](#))

This is interesting for two reasons. God made His salvation or His Spirit **visible** – able to be seen. They are going to “**see**” the salvation of God. They are not going to just “**hear**” the salvation of God, but they are going to “**see**” it. God makes salvation visible. One way He did that was to make it visible in Jesus Himself, because Jesus is the embodiment of salvation ...able to be seen or revealed.

If man is to participate in salvation, he must understand it – he must “see” it, which again, goes back to the theological argument: how can a little baby “see” the salvation of the Lord? How can they understand it? How can they grasp it? It must be “seen”.

This salvation is available to all flesh – Jew and Gentile. This is interesting here because it is one of the first New Testament references regarding the mystery of salvation to all mankind and the breaking down of the walls of hostility in Ephesians chapter 2 and 3. He says that the “mystery” of the gospel is that Jews and Gentiles will all be under one head - Christ. That is the manifold wisdom of God is to pull all this together so that everyone together will come under the headship of Christ. There will be oneness on the earth. Here is where that is introduced because salvation will be seen by *all* flesh. This is now the first indicator that this isn't just for the Jews, but this was Isaiah's prophecy way back when. This wasn't really new, but the Jews had made an exclusive nature of salvation. They thought it was exclusive just for themselves. But it was always supposed to be for all flesh...for everyone.

Of course this teaching was in the Old Testament in prophecy all along. It's **now** being made clear. There will be incidents in the life of Jesus where He reaches out to the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles. The Mind of Christ was firmly set on the salvation being for all men. If you want to get a major impact on the mind of Christ very early on, from the beginning, even as the way was being prepared for Him, He understood the gospel is for all. The Gospel **is** for all.

Now that might not sound like a really major idea to us because we've lived with that for over two thousand years, many of us all of our lives, but that was a major deal for the Jewish people. Jesus, in His mission, was inclusive in that He wanted all men to know His Father.

What **is** this salvation? The word is “soterion” (σωτηριον) meaning a “soter”, a savior, or a deliverer. It is spoken of as God and as Christ, as the One who saves from the danger of destruction. It brings someone into a state of prosperity and happiness. The deliverer is the benefactor of the estate. It also delivers from slavery or imprisonment. For Christians it is the deliverance from sin and the consequences of sin.

So why was John called “the Baptist”? I always was a little bit jealous that the Baptists had John. I thought, “Good night. The Church of Christ should have had John but I learned later on that we can give the Baptists John and we'll have Jesus. We're good. We're good here. We'll get to John a little later on.

John was called “the Baptist” because he was the one who made people fully wet. He is simply a baptizer. Was this designation from God? Did God call him “John the Baptist” to keep him straight from John the apostle? Or did the people call him that. Come on, let's go out and see the baptizer ... it was likely from the people who were going out and being baptized by him. Did Jesus pick up the designation, or didn't He? Did Jesus ever call John “the baptist”? That would be a good argument for the Baptists. Jesus never called him the baptist...the people did. Anyway...It's like “the Nazarene.” The Nazarene church claims that.

Before John Baptized people he preached. The word is “kerusso” or (κηρυσσω) - a ‘herald’. He was a public “crier” – especially of divine truth. Now remember, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. John had to get the attention of the people so the way could be “smooth” for Jesus. There was no Madison Avenue Ad campaign – just

preaching. The word was rich and has found much in the way of application. John does not appear to have had any formal training. He simply had a job to do, and his heart was inflamed with a passion to be obedient. How did all of this affect the thinking of Jesus? He too, in a short time, would begin preaching publically. So He is seeing the introduction and sees the preaching of John the Baptist. He knows that in just a few short days or weeks, He too will follow John onto the stage of public preaching.