

# Explore the Bible: September 3

*Introduced! • Mark 1:1-13*

*By Rick Henson*



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Early writings in the first century state that the Peter was the source of much of the content of Mark. Since this Gospel

contains many personal accounts of which only Peter would know the details, this sounds reasonable. Also, Peter refers to Mark as "his son" in 1 Peter 5:13 (KJV).

Mark began with a powerful statement: *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1 KJV)*. This echoes Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 which both used the term, "Beginning."

"Gospel" refers to an announcement of good news. Our word, "Christ," is the Greek form of the Hebrew term, "Messiah," which means "the anointed one."

Mark changed scenes frequently in his Gospel. In verses two and three, he quoted the Old Testament books of Malachi and Isaiah as he shared their prophecies of the forerunner of the Messiah.

Many Old Testament passages predicted the coming Savior and also the predecessor, John the Baptist. When we consider the centuries involved in these prophecies and their fulfillments, we understand the magnificence of God's grand work of salvation.

Jesus was not "Plan B" because the sacrificial system failed, but was God's plan from the beginning. According to the book of Hebrews, the sacrificial system was a dim picture of what God would do in Christ.

Since no prophet of God had spoken to Israel in over 400 years, the arrival of John the Baptist caused quite a commotion. All four Gospel accounts mention John the Baptist and state that large crowds traveled from Jerusalem to the Jordan River to be baptized by him.

John the Baptist admonished all to repent and be baptized in preparation for the coming Messiah. At that time, non-Jews were baptized as part of their conversion to Judaism and Jews self-baptized to prepare themselves to enter the Temple.

John added repentance and preparation for the Messiah as a new reason to be baptized.

Even the religious leaders of the day journeyed to witness this. John confronted them for their self-righteous pride. As John prepared many for the Messiah, he prepared the religious leaders for the confrontation coming from Jesus.

As John pointed others to Jesus by preparing their hearts, so are we commanded to share the Good News by pointing people to Jesus. When we share what we have experienced, God uses this witness to change the hearts of the lost.

As John could not save but pointed others to the coming Messiah, so we cannot save but can point others to the reigning Lord.

John spoke of the coming Savior and must have been surprised to see his cousin Jesus in line for baptism. Matthew's Gospel reveals that John protested, saying he should be baptized by Jesus. Jesus insisted that this was preparing Him for ministry. John baptized Jesus in obedience.

All four Gospels share that as Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God landed on Jesus, "like a dove," (Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:22, John 1:32 KJV). Matthew, Mark, and Luke then reported that God spoke from heaven saying that Jesus is His beloved Son with whom He is well pleased.

God announced publicly that Jesus is His Son and spoke His seal of approval on His earthly ministry. Jesus was already the Son of God, "before the foundation of the world," (John 17:24 KJV).

As the Spirit descended on the Son and the Father spoke, Jesus was confirmed as the Messiah to all who witnessed the events. While the concept of the Trinity is difficult to grasp, it was wonderfully demonstrated in this event.

The Father spoke, the Son was baptized, and the Spirit descended – all three in unity and agreement. Twice more, God the Father spoke aloud during the ministry of Jesus. In Matthew 17:5, God spoke audibly at the Transfiguration of Jesus, and again in John 12:28 when Jesus was praying (KJV).

After this amazing event, Jesus was compelled by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan. This trial of testing followed the high of baptism.

Serving the Lord does not exempt any from undergoing temptation, tests, or trials. As Jesus did, we can overcome temptation by the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

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