

The Gospel Of Mark

Chapter One

After Malachi, there was a period of approximately 400 years, during which no major prophetic voice was recorded in Israel. This period is sometimes called the **400 years of silence** because there were no recorded prophets speaking directly from God as in earlier times.

When John the Baptist appeared, he was seen as a **renewal of the prophetic voice**, breaking the silence and announcing the imminent coming of the **Messiah**, Jesus Christ. In this way, John is considered the bridge between the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament fulfillment in Christ.

The prophetic message of Malachi addressed issues such as:

- The **spiritual lack of concern** of the Israelites.
- The corruption among the priests.
- The importance of genuine worship.
- The promise of the coming "**messenger**" who would prepare the way for the Lord (Malachi 3:1), a prophecy that Christians later understood to be fulfilled by **John the Baptist**.

Mark begins his gospel with the ministry of John the Baptist (1-8).

Mark 1:1-8 (NKJV) The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in the Prophets: "*Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.*" ³ "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'*" ⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. ⁸ I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Mark 1:1 (NKJV)

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

- **"The beginning"**: This signals the start of the good news, the Gospel, concerning Jesus Christ.
- **"Gospel"** means "good news" or "glad tidings." It is the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- **"Jesus Christ"**: Christ is the Greek word for "Messiah" or "Anointed One."
- **"Son of God"**: Mark is establishing from the outset that Jesus is not only the Messiah but also the divine Son of God.

Mark 1:2-3 (NKJV)

"As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.'"

- These verses are a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies from **Malachi 3:1** and **Isaiah 40:3**.
 - **Malachi 3:1**: God promises to send a messenger (John the Baptist) to prepare the way for the Lord.
 - **Isaiah 40:3**: This emphasizes John's role as the voice "crying in the wilderness," calling people to repentance and spiritual preparation for the coming of the Messiah.
- "**Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight**": John's role was to prepare the people's hearts for Jesus's coming by calling them to repentance and turning back to God.

What is Biblical repentance?

Biblical repentance is a profound and transformative change of heart and mind that leads a person to turn away from sin and turn toward God in faith and obedience.

It is a central theme throughout the Bible and is essential to the Christian life. Repentance involves both an **internal change of attitude** and an **external change of behavior**.

Key Elements of Biblical Repentance:

1. Acknowledge Sin (Confession)

- Repentance begins with a **recognition** and acknowledgment of one's sin. This includes understanding that sin is a violation of God's will and falling short of His holy standards.
- **Psalm 51:3-4**: David, after his sin with Bathsheba, confesses, "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned."
- **1 John 1:9**: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

2. Godly Sorrow Over Sin

- True biblical repentance is marked by **godly sorrow**—not merely feeling bad about the consequences of sin but feeling deep regret over having offended God and broken His commandments.
- **2 Corinthians 7:10**: "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."
- This godly sorrow leads to a heartfelt desire to change, in contrast to mere regret or fear of punishment.

3. Turning from Sin (A Change of Mind and Direction)

- The Greek word for repentance in the New Testament is **metanoia**, which means a "change of mind." This implies a complete **reorientation of one's heart**—turning from sinful attitudes, behaviors, and desires, and turning toward God.

- **Acts 3:19:** "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."
- Repentance involves not just a mental acknowledgment of sin but a **turning away** from it, with the intention of pursuing holiness and righteousness.

4. Turning to God and Trusting in Christ

- Repentance is not just about turning away from sin; it is also about turning **to God**. In the New Testament, repentance is closely tied to **faith in Jesus Christ**. It involves not only leaving behind old ways but also embracing God's forgiveness and salvation through Jesus.
- **Acts 20:21:** Paul speaks of "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Luke 15:7:** Jesus teaches that "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." This shows that turning to God is at the heart of repentance.

5. A Commitment to Obedience and New Life

- True repentance is demonstrated by a life of **obedience** and **good works**. While repentance does not earn salvation, it is a **fruit of salvation**, showing a genuine change in the heart.
- **Matthew 3:8:** John the Baptist says, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance," indicating that true repentance will be evident in a transformed life.
- **Acts 26:20:** Paul speaks of how people "should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance."

6. Restoration and Renewal

- Biblical repentance leads to **forgiveness** and **restoration**. God is merciful and promises to forgive those who genuinely repent and seek His grace.
- **Isaiah 55:7:** "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."
- **1 John 1:9** reminds believers of God's faithfulness to forgive and cleanse them when they confess and turn from their sins.

Old Testament Examples of Repentance:

- **David (Psalm 51):** After committing adultery and murder, David repented with deep sorrow and asked God for forgiveness. His prayer in **Psalm 51** is a model of genuine repentance, showing his acknowledgment of sin, sorrow for offending God, and desire for a renewed heart.
- **Jonah and the People of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10):** The people of Nineveh repented after Jonah warned them of God's coming judgment. They showed their repentance by fasting, praying, and turning from their evil ways, and God relented from destroying them.

New Testament Teaching on Repentance:

- **John the Baptist** preached a message of repentance, calling people to prepare for the

coming of the Messiah. **Matthew 3:2**: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

- **Jesus** began His ministry with a call to repentance. **Mark 1:15**: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."
- **Peter** called for repentance in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. **Acts 2:38**: "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Distinction Between Worldly Sorrow and Godly Repentance:

- **Worldly sorrow** is regret or remorse over the consequences of sin, not the sin itself. It is focused on **self** and the personal fallout from actions (e.g., loss, shame, punishment).
- **Godly sorrow** is sorrow over how sin has offended God. It leads to true repentance because it recognizes the **holiness of God** and the need for reconciliation with Him.

Conclusion:

Biblical repentance is a deep and sincere turning away from sin and turning toward God. It involves acknowledging one's sins, feeling godly sorrow, changing one's heart and behavior, and seeking God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Repentance is an essential part of the Christian life and the path to spiritual renewal and growth in holiness.

Mark 1:4 (NKJV)

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

- **John the Baptist** was the prophesied messenger who came baptizing in the wilderness. His message was centered on **repentance**—calling people to turn from their sins and seek God's forgiveness.
- **"Baptism of repentance"**: John's baptism was an outward symbol of an inward commitment to change one's heart and actions.
- **"For the remission of sins"**: John's baptism was associated with forgiveness. It was not the same as Christian baptism after Jesus' death and resurrection, but it pointed forward to the need for a deeper spiritual renewal.

Mark 1:5 (NKJV)

"Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."

- **Large crowds** from **Judea and Jerusalem** came to hear John preach and to be baptized in the Jordan River.
- **"Confessing their sins"**: This act of confession was part of the process of repentance. People publicly acknowledged their sins and sought forgiveness through John's baptism.

Mark 1:6 (NKJV)

"Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey."

- **John's clothing and diet**: His appearance and lifestyle were reminiscent of the prophet **Elijah**, who is described similarly in **2 Kings 1:8**. John lived a simple, austere life in the wilderness, wearing rough clothes and eating a simple diet of locusts and wild honey, signifying his dedication to God and his prophetic role.

- His appearance also emphasized that his message and mission were not tied to worldly comfort or status, but rather to calling people back to God.

Mark 1:7 (NKJV)

"And he preached, saying, 'There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.'"

- **John's humility:** John acknowledges that **Jesus**, who will come after him, is far greater than he is.
- **"Not worthy to stoop down and loose":** Unfastening sandals was a task reserved for the lowest servant. By saying he is unworthy even to perform this act, John is expressing deep humility and reverence for Jesus.

Mark 1:8 (NKJV)

"I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- **Water baptism:** John's baptism symbolized repentance and was an outward act.
- **Baptism with the Holy Spirit:** John points to the superior baptism that Jesus will bring, where people will be baptized with the **Holy Spirit. This signifies a deeper spiritual transformation and renewal that only Jesus can provide. The Holy Spirit empowers and indwells believers**, bringing them into a new relationship with God.

Baptism is a Christian ceremony and ordinance that involves the ritual use of water as an outward sign of inward faith and spiritual transformation. Depending on the tradition, it is performed by immersing, pouring, or sprinkling water on the individual. The practice is rooted in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles and is a significant part of the Christian faith across various denominations.

We believe in Immersion, going under the water, because this is how Jesus was Baptized: **Mark 1:10 (NKJV)** And **immediately, coming up from the water**, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

Purpose and Meaning of Baptism

1. Public Declaration of Faith:

- **Baptism** is a **public testimony** of one's faith in Jesus Christ. It is an outward symbol of an inner transformation, where the person declares their belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior and their commitment to following Him.
- In the early Christian community, it marked a person's **entrance into the community of believers**.

2. Identification with Christ's Death, Burial, and Resurrection:

- **Romans 6:3-4** teaches that baptism symbolizes the believer's identification with **Christ's death, burial, and resurrection**. Going under the water represents dying and being buried with Christ, while emerging from the water symbolizes being raised to new life in Him.
- This connection underscores the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice, and the believer's participation in this new life through faith.

3. Cleansing from Sin:

- In baptism, water represents **spiritual cleansing**. The act symbolizes the washing

away of sins, though the water itself does not accomplish this—it is a **symbol of the believer's repentance** and the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus.

- **Acts 2:38:** Peter tells the crowd to "repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Baptism signifies that one has been spiritually cleansed.

4. **Receiving the Holy Spirit:**

- In many passages, baptism is associated with receiving the **Holy Spirit**. While the actual moment of receiving the Spirit may not always coincide with baptism itself, the act symbolizes the believer's acceptance into God's family and the indwelling presence of the Spirit (e.g., **Acts 2:38**).

5. **Obedience to Christ's Command:**

- **Jesus commanded baptism** as a part of the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19**, saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
- For Christians, baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus' command to His followers and an essential step in discipleship.

6. **Symbol of New Birth:**

- Baptism also represents being "born again" spiritually. **John 3:5:** Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This emphasizes that baptism is linked to spiritual rebirth, a fresh start, and entry into the life of faith.

7. **Incorporation into the Body of Christ:**

- Baptism symbolizes entry into the **body of Christ**, the Church. In **1 Corinthians 12:13**, Paul says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Baptism marks a person's inclusion in the community of believers and a unity with the Church.

Types of Baptism in Christian Traditions

1. **Believer's Baptism (Credobaptism):**

- Practiced in denominations like Baptists, Pentecostals, and non-denominational churches, **believer's baptism** is for those who consciously profess faith in Jesus. It is typically done by full immersion in water and reflects the individual's personal decision to follow Christ.

2. **Infant Baptism:**

- Many traditions like Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and some Protestants baptize infants. This practice is seen as a sign of God's covenant with the child, similar to circumcision in the Old Testament. The child is later expected to confirm their faith when they are older, often in the sacrament of **confirmation**.

3. **Modes of Baptism:**

- **Immersion:** The person is fully submerged in water, symbolizing death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.
- **Pouring (Affusion):** Water is poured over the head, signifying cleansing and the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

- **Sprinkling (Aspersion):** Water is sprinkled over the individual, often used in infant baptism or when immersion is not feasible.
- **Age of Accountability:**
 - Believer's baptism is reserved for those who have reached an age where they can make an informed decision about their faith—often called the age of accountability. While the age varies depending on the child's maturity and understanding, young children are generally not baptized until they demonstrate a clear, personal faith.
- **Parental Responsibility and Dedication:**
 - Instead of infant baptism, many churches that practice believer's baptism offer a dedication ceremony for infants or young children. This is a time when parents commit to raising their child in a Christian home, teaching them the faith, and guiding them until they are ready to make their own decision to follow Christ.

Considerations for Baptizing Young Children

For those who practice believer's baptism, the question of baptizing young children depends on several factors:

1. **Understanding of Faith:** Can the child articulate a clear understanding of who Jesus is and what baptism represents?
2. **Genuine Personal Faith:** Has the child expressed a genuine, personal faith in Jesus Christ? Are they ready to commit to following Him?
3. **Maturity:** Does the child understand the seriousness of baptism and its lifelong implications as a follower of Christ?

In many churches, there is no specific age, but church leaders may work with the family to ensure the child is ready. Some children as young as 7 or 8 may be baptized if they show a clear understanding, while others may wait until their teenage years.

Conclusion:

- In traditions that practice infant baptism (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, etc.), children are baptized as infants based on the faith of the parents, with the expectation that they will later confirm their faith as they grow.
- In traditions that practice believer's baptism (Baptists, Pentecostals, etc.), children are baptized when they reach an age where they can personally profess faith in Jesus Christ, with the understanding and maturity to make that decision.

Ultimately, the question of whether a young child should be baptized depends on the theology of the denomination and the child's understanding of faith.

Conclusion

Baptism is an important ceremony or ordinance in Christianity, symbolizing repentance, forgiveness of sins, spiritual rebirth, and identification with Christ's death and resurrection. While the practices vary across Christian traditions, the core purpose remains a profound spiritual declaration and commitment to living in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

Summary:

- These verses introduce John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus Christ, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. John's mission was to prepare the way for Jesus by calling people to repentance and baptism. He lived simply and preached boldly, emphasizing that while his role was significant, the One coming after him (Jesus) would be far greater, offering not just repentance but the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Next, we will look at Jesus' baptism by John and temptation by Satan (9-11).