

1. The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God
 - a. Mark's gospel opens with the line: The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - i. While we have this listed as the first verse, it is likely more akin to the title of the work, or at least of this part of the work.
 - b. The term gospel comes from this phrase "good news." Gospel literally means good news or good message. So Mark begins his gospel by making clear that what it contains is most certainly to be received as good news.
 - c. It isn't just good news. It is good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is a proper name. It is Greek for the Hebrew Joshua, which would be pronounced Yeshua because they had no "j" sound. (Technically Greek didn't have a "j" sound either, so the name was Iesous.) The name Jesus means "the Lord is salvation."
 - d. Christ isn't not Jesus' last name but it is a title. It is the Greek form of the word Messiah, meaning "anointed one." Jesus was *the* Greek, the chosen or anointed of God.
 - e. The phrase Son of God shows that this Jesus, the Christ, was more than just a man. He wasn't just the next great prophet. He wasn't merely the human anointed one. He had divine origins, being the Son of God himself. It is a statement of the deity of Jesus.
 - f. In this brief, single verse introduction to his work, Mark has told us so much. It is a book of good news about the Messiah- the Christ- God's anointed one, who is more than just a man, but bears the fullness of deity as well.
 - g. This is important to remember, especially as you read through the rest of the gospel. When we get to parts such as the crucifixion, it is important to remember that Mark characterizes this whole work as good news.
2. John the Baptist, the last Prophet
 - a. Immediately after this introduction, Mark goes right into talking about John the Baptist. This seems strange considering he just told us that the book is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - b. But John the Baptist is important. He fulfills an expectation of a messenger preceding the Messiah. Verse 2 says, "As it is written in the prophet Isaiah." However Mark actually quotes both Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.
 - i. "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
`Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"
 - c. John preceded Jesus by calling Israel to repentance. His baptism was a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He was calling Israel to recognize that they weren't good enough just because they were children of the covenant. They were sinners who had offended against God. And John McArthur notes that clearly many of

the Jews understood that the covenant wasn't enough because they did indeed go to John for this baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

- d. Of course we all know that the act of baptism itself won't forgive people for their sins. We don't believe in magic and neither did John the Baptist. Instead, baptism was about the contrite heart that was already sorry for their sins. The act of baptism was a symbol of a reality that had already taken place within.
 - e. John McArthur also notes, in reference to the Jews coming to John confessing their sins, that confessing sin in baptism is to agree with God about their sins. In other words, it was a recognition that they knew they had offended against God. They confessed what they knew they were guilty of.
3. John inferior to Jesus
- a. In addition to baptizing people who confessed their sins, John also proclaimed the good news of the coming Messiah. This was his primary role as Prophet. John was the last of the Prophets, and he was the first prophetic voice in almost four hundred years, since the time of Malachi.
 - b. Prophets generally called Israel to repent and then explained what would happen if they failed to do so. Thus they weren't usually very popular. John had a better message, however.
 - i. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
 - ii. Instead of proclaiming dread, doom and gloom, John was able to point to one who was coming after him who would do greater things than he. He offered a message of hope and expectation.
 - iii. We don't know how long he preached this message, but Mark goes from telling us that this is what John did, to having Jesus show up and be baptized in the next verse.
 - c. What is so important here is that John served the role of pointing Israel toward Jesus. As the messenger talked about in the OT, John came to prepare the way for Jesus and get the people ready for his ministry. John fulfilled his duty but in no way saw himself as equal to Jesus. He understood that this wasn't about one prophet passing the torch to the next. It was about a mere man preparing the way for the Messiah, the Son of God.
 - d. John said that he wasn't even fit to untie the strap of Jesus' sandals. This would have been the most menial task of the lowliest of slaves. John, the prophet of the Lord Most High, saw himself as lower than the lowest slave in comparison to Christ.
 - e. Even of his own ministry he acknowledged that he only baptized with water, while Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was about a person recognizing their sins and confessing them before God. Jesus' baptism of the Holy Spirit is about coming to faith in Jesus as the Christ and savior for our sins. It provides the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the believer.
 - i. John's baptism spoke of one's recognition of their own sin and a desire to be forgiven. Jesus' baptism of the Holy Spirit makes believers into new creations, living with the Holy Spirit within, and capable of being

conformed to the likeness of Christ and actually turning from their sin towards God.

- f. Mark starts off his gospel account of Jesus by telling us that he has great news for us about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And then he immediately shows how great this news is by showing how superior Jesus is even to a Prophet of God.
- g. This introduction should fill us with anticipation for just how great the news is in the rest of the gospel. As we celebrate Advent, a season of anticipation of the birth of Jesus, the beginning of Mark's gospel gives us anticipation of all the promises of God throughout the OT all coming to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.