

WEEK 1



PREPARED FOR THE GOSPEL

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Week 1 - Prepared for the Gospel

Research

Welcome to Week 1 in the gospel of Mark. In the Research section each week, we will study an interesting aspect of the story in greater detail harkening back to the public library, Dewey Decimal system and note cards. Ok, not that far back, but we will look to analyze either the historical context or conduct a word study.

Historical Facts

Author: John Mark

John Mark is traditionally considered the author of the book of Mark, although scholars agree that John Mark is actually transcribing Simon Peter's account. Of course, God is the true author. [2 Peter 1:21](#) *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*

Mark was the first of the gospel accounts, likely written in the mid 50's, and was used by Matthew and Luke as source material for their gospels.

This week, we start our adventure with one of the most unique and inspiring characters in all of the Bible, John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a man with a mythical and mysterious character. Was he a prophet? Was he the Messiah?

This week, we dive into the life of John the Baptist.



John was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. What do you find interesting about John's parents from Luke 1 below?

[Luke 1:5-7](#) *In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. [6] And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. [7] But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*

Interesting facts:

- Both were advanced in age making you think back to Abraham and Sarah
 - Both were of priestly decent
 - Both were true followers of God, righteous, blameless

Zechariah first learned about God’s miraculous plan for his unborn son John, as he was burning incense in the temple. Zechariah was chosen by lot but not by accident. And then this happened:

Luke 1:13–17 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. [14] And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, [15] for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. [16] And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, [17] and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

What do we learn about the unborn John in these verses?

John the Baptist will soon burst upon the scene to prepare the way for the Lord. Throughout this week’s study, our hope is to learn from the example of John the Baptist and to apply those lessons to our lives.

We hope to answer this specific question:

- How can we make ready the path of the Lord? How would you answer this question?

Now that we have done some research, it is time to make a plan.

Making a Plan

Making a Plan is our bible story section where we will jump into the book of Mark and start to study the impact of Christ upon the world.

TRUTH:

John came into the world and he was different!

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Mark 1:1–8

[1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [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,’”

[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. [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.”

What was John’s purpose?

How was John unique?

Interesting fact: Locusts are 60% protein compared with

approximate 20% protein content of chicken and beef

How did John make the path straight for the Lord? John introduced a new idea to the Jewish people called baptism. What was the purpose of this baptism?

- **Matthew 3:11** *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*
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John instituted a baptism of repentance. It was a fresh new hope called grace. John was transitioning people from the Old Covenant of the sacrificial system to the New Covenant through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

This new baptism pointed people to Jesus!

Read Acts 19:4 below.

- **Acts 19:4** *And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”*

John’s life was meant to be a witness to the person of Jesus. How does a baptism of repentance point people to Jesus?

How can we live as a testimony?

Let's look at an exchange between John the Baptist and the priests that shows his testimony.

- **John 1:19–27** *And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” [20] He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” [21] And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” [22] So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” [23] He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” [24] (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) [25] They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” [26] John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, [27] even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”*

What can we learn from John about how to answer questions about our lives and motivations?

John quoted **Isaiah 40:3** *A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”* about himself in the passage above which is very bold, yet his humility shines through in verse 27 *even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.* John had both a confidence to answer the Pharisees, priests, Levites and scribes boldly, yet the humility to put down his agenda for the sake of God, pointing even his own followers to Jesus.

This is the idea of meekness. How would you define the word meek?

The Greek word for meekness is *praeis* meaning ‘gentleness of spirit’. Meekness is different from humility in the idea that you have the power to do something but choose not to, like a powerful horse that submits to the bridle and its rider. John the Baptist knew when to use his confidence in the calling of God and when to point people away from himself to Jesus. How does this compare to your definition above?

See if you can see this balance at work in the next passage.

John 3:22–36 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. [23] John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized [24] (for John had not yet been put in prison).

[25] Now a discussion arose between some of John’s disciples and a Jew over purification. [26] And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.” [27] John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. [28] You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ [29] The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease.”

[31] He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. [32] He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. [33] Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. [34] For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. [35] The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. [36] Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

What are your thoughts after the passage above?

What verses in the passage above point to John’s meekness?

Interesting thoughts:

All good things come from the Lord (verse 27)

John is full of joy because of who Jesus is even though Jesus is better (verse 29)

God gives the spirit without measure (verse 34)

Checking the List

Strive to be meek

What does meekness look like in 2020?

What are the side effects of living meek?

- *Psalm 37:11* But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.
- *Matthew 5:5* "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

We drop our agenda for the sake of Jesus

How does our agenda affect our walk with Jesus?

How does Romans 12:2 encourage you to lay down your agenda?

- *Romans 12:2* Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Our lives point to Him

Our lives will point to Him when there is less of us and more of Jesus. What does this look like daily?

- *John 3:30* He must increase, but I must decrease.

As we get set to go back into the world, let's look at some final thoughts about John the Baptist.

Jesus Himself set John the Baptist as an example for us.

Matthew 11:11–14 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ^[12] From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ^[13] For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ^[14] and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

John the Baptist was the Elijah prophesied to come before the Messiah! Jesus has also asked us to be His ambassadors to the world. He prayed for us and testified to who we should be in Him. What can we learn from the prayer of Jesus in John 17?

John 17:20–26 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ^[21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ^[22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ^[23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ^[24] Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ^[25] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ^[26] I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

1. Jesus calls us to unity with one another because of the unity of Jesus in God.

In your opinion, what is the key to lasting unity?

2. We are called to be a witness because of our likeness to Jesus through our unity.

How can unity be a witness to a lost world?

3. We can experience the love of God through Jesus.

What does it mean for us to experience the love of God?

What do we need to pack into our bags for the adventure that lies before us?

MEEKNESS

A DESIRE TO LIVE DIFFERENT

UNITY

DROP OUR AGENDA

LESS OF ME, MORE OF YOU

BOLDNESS

Throughout the weeks of this study we are going to pack up some attributes that we would like to have on hand for our walk-through life. So, each week we will be asking you to pick your top 2 from the list above. If you could only pick 2 of these phrases above to put into your heart and mind, which would you choose and why?

Choice 1: _____ Why?

Choice 2: _____ Why?

Finish your time together with a time of prayer. Pray for God to help us live out the attributes above so that we can be a witness for Him!