

# Mark - the Beginning of the Gospel

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The Gospel of Mark is a unique perspective on the life and teachings of Jesus, written by John Mark based on the teachings of Peter, and it highlights the importance of the predictive message of the prophets and the role of John the Baptist in preparing the way for Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 50:51

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:1, Luke 3:7-14

**Topics:** "Gospel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the mission of John the Baptist as described in the book of Isaiah. John's mission was to prepare the way for Jesus, the Son of God, to come into the world and be recognized as the Savior. He did this by preaching repentance and exposing the extent of human sin. The sermon also discusses the first verse of Mark chapter 1, which introduces the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the good news about the Son of God.

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## Transcript

Everything in our Christian faith centers around the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing in scripture which is unimportant, but those things that point directly to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ are of cardinal significance. And on that score, the Gospels are essentially right at the heart of things.

No Christian can afford lightly to gloss over the Gospel records. Moreover, if there are those among us who are considering the claims of Christ, it is essential that you very deliberately set about reading and understanding who Jesus was and what he did as these things are laid out for us in the Gospel records. I have felt constrained, therefore, that we should start today a new series and the series is going to be based on the Gospel written by Mark.

And I invite you very prayerfully to come with us to try and see through the eyes of these evangelists who wrote the Gospels, to try and see what they sought. Perhaps even to try and feel something of what they felt. In order that we may experience something of what they experienced when they recognized that the person upon whom their eyes were gazed was none other than the Son of God.

The one who from all eternity had been appointed to be the Savior of the lost and who in the fullness of the time was sent into this world by God and was God as well as man. Now our meditation this morning is

going to be based on the first eight verses in Mark chapter 1 and we entitle it the beginning of the Gospel. I don't need to tell you we have four Gospels in the New Testament or more correctly one Gospel recorded by four different people Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Now the first three of these Matthew, Mark and Luke are often referred to as synoptic Gospels because they present the record very much from the same point of view. John's record is somewhat different. We are going to look today at Mark, one of the synoptic Gospels and we are going to follow through with this remarkable record of the life and death and resurrection of our Lord which we have in our hands.

Now Mark was not one of the outstanding subjects of the New Testament. As a matter of fact he only features in about 12 different scriptures at the most. There isn't very much evidence that we have about him.

There are some things we know. He was called John Mark, that's his full name. He was the son of a lady named Mary who had a home in Jerusalem.

You discover that in Acts chapter 12 and verse 12. He was a nephew of the very gracious Barnabas. We were thinking about Barnabas a few months ago and saw what a gigantic man he was.

Well now John Mark was a nephew of that gracious Barnabas as we discover from Colossians chapter 4 and verse 10. Then at the beginning and at the end of the New Testament period at any rate he was a friend of the Apostle Paul's and accompanied him. When Paul and Barnabas went out on their first missionary journey John Mark was with them.

And those of you who know the record from the book of the Acts of the Apostles will remember that at a certain point John Mark turned back and then there was what we may have to speak of as a little bit of a quarrel between the great Paul and the great Barnabas as to what was going to happen on the next missionary journey. Paul said I'm not taking John Mark with me. Barnabas said well I'm going to take him.

Paul therefore took Silas and the two main leaders divided. Barnabas taking John Mark with him again giving him another opportunity to prove himself in a missionary enterprise. Now the other reference is important.

I have already referred to Colossians chapter 4 and verse 10 and I want to refer to it again. It is necessary to see that before the end of the picture as portrayed in the New Testament John Mark is again not only on good terms with the Apostle Paul but the Apostle Paul commends him in the highest possible terms which means this. We do not know the reason why John Mark turned back on that first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas and himself.

We don't know. But one thing we do know that spiritually if he did lose out it was only a periodic affair, a momentary affair. He won his way back into the heart and into the affection of Paul.

I said that was the only scripture I wanted to refer to. There is another of course. In 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 13 we discover that John Mark was really a convert of Peter's.

Peter spoke of him as my son and he accompanied Peter quite a lot. Now the question that comes to us then is this. How could one whose importance does not appear to be as significant as so many others in the New Testament, how could one who is not among the twelve become the writer of a gospel that ranks with that of Matthew, Luke and John? And now the answer to that is reasonably simple although it perhaps

is not evident from the New Testament itself.

Papias, a presbyter or if you like a bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, he lived between the year 75 AD and 160 AD. That covers quite a period. We're not quite sure of the date.

He lived somewhere and wrote. He tells us that he had been in touch with a certain person whom he calls a presbyter and the context shows that he means not an elder in our presbyterian sense but an old man, a very old man. That he had been in touch with this very old man whom he calls the presbyter and he said this to Papias, I quote, Mark, on the one hand, being an interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately as many things as he remembered yet not in order the things which were either said or done by the Lord.

Now that's the end of the quote but Papias goes on to say this, for neither did he hear the Lord nor did he follow him but afterwards as I said he followed Peter who carried on his teaching as need required but not as though he were making an ordered account of the oracles of the Lord. What then we really have in the gospel according to Mark is virtually the record that Peter gave. Now this is very precious.

You find evidence of Peter's character in Mark. Now I don't want to go into this in detail. I'll just throw this out to you and you can follow it.

You know Peter was an impetuous man and he was swift moving, swift acting and you find that written into the gospel of Mark. You notice how Mark says for example immediately this happens, immediately that happens, suddenly this happens, suddenly that happens. And if you read carefully, this is really not within my province here this morning, but if you read carefully you can almost see the character of Peter written into this delightful gospel which comes from the pen of Mark.

Simon Peter's convert and then becoming Simon Peter's mouthpiece or amanuensis, writing down the gospel by the Spirit of God so that you and I have it here today. One other thing let me note before we come to our passage. I find it very precious to discover that John Mark had been so intimately related to both Peter and Paul.

You see there have been those in the course in the history of the Christian church who have wanted to divide between Peter and Paul and set the one at loggerheads over with the other. There was no cleavage between Peter and Paul and the fact that this one person John Mark was so intimate with both of them means that they preached the same gospel, they taught the same truth, they believed in the same Savior, they were loyal to the same Lord, so that there was no division as far as Mark was concerned. He could be himself loyal to his Lord and yet the friend of both these two great apostles.

Now the first verse in Mark chapter 1, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God, this first verse has been taken in different ways. Some people take it as a kind of heading for the whole gospel. Well, all right, it could well be that.

Other people take it as referring to the nature of the gospel, describing what is to follow. It is the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of God, it is that too. Yet other people take it as having special reference to the passage before us this morning, verses 2 to 8 or maybe verses 2 to 15 even, describing the very beginnings of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in history.

Now, without excluding the first two, I am going to approach it in the light of that third suggestion this morning. And there are two things that I want to stress. Examining this passage, we see that Mark places the gospel in this context.

He wants us to see behind the emergence of the Lord Jesus Christ into history, he wants us to see first of all the predictive message of the prophets. He did not come to a world that was unprepared. He came to a world that had already been addressed by the prophets who had predicted his coming.

The predictions of the prophets. And then secondly, the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist. The beginnings of the gospel then are traced back to the message of the prophets and to the ministry of John.

Now this is very important. Can I put it in a nutshell? Jesus does not come onto the scene as an upstart. He doesn't come as a man from nowhere.

He doesn't come as a person that, well, here he is for the first time and we can't make heads or tails out of him. We can. If we take trouble to acquaint ourselves of the historical preparation for which God made himself responsible, before God in the fullness of the time sends forth his Son, he prepares the way.

And Mark, for his part, signifies two aspects of that divine preparation. One, the predictive message of the prophets. Two, the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist.

Now there are my two points this morning then. There's a third missing, as some of you will say. All right.

The predictions of the prophets. Now will you look at verses 2 and 3. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, or other ancient versions have it as it is written in the prophets, in the plural. Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Now those of you who are familiar with the gospels will remember that Matthew and Luke trace the beginnings of the gospel only as far back as the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, or should I say the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin mother's womb, and then his birth. Mark goes further back.

The gospel didn't begin when Jesus was conceived in the womb. He goes further back and he says the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have to trace its roots at least as far back as the prophets. And that involves the ministry of John the Baptist.

John, of course, in his gospel goes further back still. With his own majestic sweep he says, in the beginning was the Word. When was the beginning? Well you and I don't know.

But whenever the beginning was the Word, the Logos, God the Son, over against the Father and the Spirit, God the Son was then, says John. John is not our theme today. Though Mark mentions Isaiah the prophet, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet according to our manuscript, before he quotes from Isaiah he actually quotes from Micah.

The words, behold I send my messenger before thy face who shall prepare thy way, those words come from Micah chapter 3 and verse 1. And then come the words from Isaiah chapter 40, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Now Jesus himself tells us, if you'd like to look it up I shall not go after it now, Jesus himself tells us that the reference to Malachi was quite clearly to John the Baptist. You will find that in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 10.

The reference in Malachi quoted here, behold I send my messenger before thy face, that refers, says Jesus, unequivocally to John the Baptist. Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that the passage from Isaiah refers to one and the same person. So that both of them quite evidently therefore refer to John the

Baptist's ministry.

Now think for a moment, just a brief moment, of the significance of all this. I'm sorry I have led you astray there, I refer to John the Baptist's ministry, I'm with the prophets not with John the Baptist, pardon me, that kind of thing happens. Think for a moment of the significance of this.

The prophets have foretold and prepared the way of the Lord, prepared the way for the Lord Jesus to come. I want you to notice three things and they must be brief. How could the prophets do that? Well they were only able to do that because God revealed certain things to them.

And that means in the first place that God foreknows what is to come. It points to the foreknowledge of God. Our God is a God who knows the end from the beginning.

And he knew that John the Baptist was coming and he knew that Jesus was coming. Foreknowledge, the foreknowledge of God. But we must go beyond that.

Not simply does the fact of prophecy, the prophecy of John's coming and the prophecy of Jesus' coming, not simply do they point to the fact that God knows the end from the beginning, they point to the fact that God had forethought and foreordained these things. You see when we come to ask a question like this, why was Jesus coming? Why was John the Baptist preparing the way for him? The only adequate answer is this, that God had so ordained things. And that John the Baptist was coming because God said, I will send my servant to prepare the way.

And that Jesus when he came is the servant of God. In other words, he came forth because God had ordained it, God had planned it. Not just simply knew that it would happen in and of itself, that is not so.

He could see the future, he foreknew the future because he had foreordained the future. Now there are many passages in scripture which bring us face to face with this wonderfully precious fact. Our God is a God who knows the end from the beginning and can determine the end from the beginning.

And certain things have been predetermined or they would never have happened. We read in scripture of the lamb slain before the foundations of the world. Or come back to John the Baptist, we read that John the Baptist was filled with the spirit of God from his mother's womb.

Men and women in all sincerity, if that means anything, how could it happen? It could only happen because God had planned it. God had purposed it and God executed what he purposed. Our God then is a God whose decree is final.

And there are certain things in history that he has planned. You see, the prophets could not foretell that anything was going to happen and do so accurately unless those things have been predetermined by God and revealed to them. Our God then is sovereign.

He is Lord of history and there are certain things that he has predetermined and here are two of them. Jesus is coming and before he comes John the Baptist is going to prepare the way for him and in his infinite goodness. You see, God wants us to know the Lord Jesus for who he is and what he is.

In his infinite goodness he's given us the record of this. He's caused a man like Mark, listening to Paul and listening to Peter, to put the facts on record because he wants us to get a view of Jesus as our real Savior and the only Savior. In presenting us with a background to the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of

God then Mark would have us see and appreciate the significance of the prediction of the prophets.

Now the preparation of John the baptizer. Look at verses four to six. John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and there went out to him all the country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and had a leather girdle around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. How? We are going to look first of all at the man and then his message.

Who was John the Baptist? Well Jesus speaks very highly of him. He is the greatest born among women. The man himself we are going to look at first of all.

The first thing that I want you to notice is that John was an ascetic. John had long broken away from the faithless and fruitless formalism of his nation's religion as well as from the gay and giddy frivolities of the sensuous age to which he belonged. And John stood apart.

John stood apart. His home at this point in time was very largely the wilderness. He stood apart.

Not hearing the voice of God in the temple when he went there and failing to sense the reality of God communicated by the priests and people of his day and age, John as it were separated himself at least a while from them and went into the wilderness of all places. Now this speaks volumes. In the vast ornate Jerusalem temple John did not hear the voice of God.

He went into the wilderness as if to say I can hear him better in the wilderness than I hear him here. He went into the chalky desert the south bank of Jordan not far from the Dead Sea. His diet and his garments were alike appropriate to the character of an ascetic making him somewhat wild fearless figure.

A complete contrast to the sensuous age in which he lived. John was an ascetic. He stood alone but mark you his aloneness his separation from men and even from the dead formalism of the of the religion of his day was with a view to hearing the voice of God and proclaiming his word.

Now out of that situation John gained an authoritative voice for his day and age. Ascetic or not John had a note of genuine authority about him. It seemed that the authentic voice of prophecy had come to life again.

For three or four hundred years now the authentic note in prophecy has been lost. Malachi was the last in the line of the prophets. There were other great men, good men, noble men.

There's no question about that and there is a whole wealth of excellent writing that comes from the period in between. But the authors rather those who formed our canon of scripture said they don't come into the same category as the prophets and they were right. The authentic note has been missing for three to four hundred years.

Then comes John and the remarkable thing was this. Even the profligates, even the most sensuous and even the most formally religious recognized in John an authoritative note they hadn't heard. They'd only heard their fathers talk about it but they themselves they knew nothing at all about it and then comes John and John has got it.

He spoke with authority. In the meantime pagan influences have crept into the life of the nation especially Greek influence with all its sensuousness and voluptuousness and it's well don't let me say any more about that. The life of the Jewish nation has become impregnated with paganism but with the emergence of John something happened.

Our new Elijah has come on the scene. He dressed like Elijah. We read in 2 Kings chapter 1 and verse 8 that Elijah wore a garment of hair cloth with a girdle of leather about his loins.

John the Baptist did not simply copy his dress in the manner of dress but he had the same authority. You remember how Elijah faced the hosts of Baal on Mount Carmel. John the Baptist is something similar.

He has this authoritative voice of God ringing out of his soul and not simply from his and we see the unusual happening. The countryside even from Jerusalem and they were very sophisticated in Jerusalem and very religious but even Jerusalem goes down to the wilderness to hear this crank as some of them called him preaching. Why? Not because of his asceticism but despite that because the ascetic heard the voice of God and because the ascetic communicated the message of God and even though they didn't like it he made them feel like worms.

They sensed the reality of it. Dare I say John became an attraction. Now this doesn't make sense I know but it seems unbelievable and yet the crowds went after John.

Though John's words cut the nation to the very quick multitudes hastened to hear him. His asceticism may have put men off but his authority his authority attracted and you know that is still the same. Great men of God may have many quirks and many idiosyncrasies and many many many odd things about them but where there is this note of authority men I believe in the world of today are looking for an authoritative voice who declare the word of the Lord.

That's the man. Now let's look at his message in more general terms. What was his message speaking in general terms not in detail? Well first of all the big thing that John came to do in preparing the way for the Lord was to expose the fact and the reality and the extent of sin.

John emerged on the scene as one who seemed determined to make a ruthless exposure of men's sins. It was as if a shaft of light had become incarnate in him and wherever he went he became the embodiment of light who showed up the dirt and the moral dross in high places and low. I didn't choose that hymn for the boys and girls this morning.

Jesus bids us shine but you know that's exactly it exactly fits. John was a burning and a shining light. His words and his works everything about him was like a beacon of light and wherever he went he showed up the moral filth and evil and iniquity.

It was John's contention that all men had grievously sinned and earned for themselves the disfavor and the judgment of God. The result of all this was Luke tells us in chapter 3 you'll read it up for yourself verses 7 to 14. Luke tells us that various groups from the community were so pricked so convicted of sin that they went to him as groups and they said what must we do? First of all the common people the multitudes the masses what shall we do? And he had some very very hard things to tell them but he told them what to do.

Then the tax collectors they went to John and they asked him John John if this is true what shall we do? He had a word for them he told them exactly what to do. So did the soldiers. They went and they said to John the Baptist what shall we do? What shall we do? You see they had sensed the shame of guilt and

then of course following upon the exposure of sin John summoned men to repent.

Now this this is going right at the heart of things. He says it is not simply enough for us as a people to be aware of the fact that we are sinners and things are wrong with us and between us and God but we've got to do something. Now this is always the rub.

I find many people who are prepared to confess that they're sinners but you ask them to do anything about it and well period full stop. John said look you've got to do something and I'm going to administer a right which signifies that you're repenting of your sin you're changing your mind about the correctness and propriety of your mode of behavior and you're doing that with a view to living a new life with a view to receiving the forgiveness of God. And so the people came and they went down into the river of Jordan and John baptized them with his baptism.

Now there are many things we cannot say dogmatically about John's baptism. What was the nature, what was the form of it? Did he immerse them or did he sprinkle them or pour water upon them? The first artistic representation is of John on a ledge in Jordan pouring water upon people as they come in. You have that in the catacombs in Rome but he may very well have immersed them.

I don't know don't let's go into that. It's neither here nor there. The volume of water doesn't mean anything here.

But John baptized them. Why did he baptize them? To symbolize something that they were forsaking a past way of living which was sinful and turning their faces toward an entirely different way of living which was not sinful. They were turning their backs upon something and they were facing in a new direction.

Now I don't think there is any historical basis for what I'm going to say next. You may question why I say it then. Well I like the thought even though it may not be true.

I've heard someone say, I can't find any basis for it in fact, but I've heard someone say that John the Baptist when he baptized people he got them coming into the Jordan from the one side and going out the other side. Now I don't know whether that's true or not but I'm quite sure that symbolically that's what John meant it to be. You come in and you go out facing a different life altogether.

Meaning to abandon the things that are wrong. Meaning to rectify that which has been wrong in your lives. Repentance is a change of mind with a view to a change of life.

Now then in the light of all this the man and his message what was John's mission? I'll summarize it for you. The mission given to John the baptizer was clearly laid down in the words quoted from Isaiah the prophet. He was to prepare the way for the sovereign son of God the only savior of men to come into the world and to be recognized as such by those whom God was calling to himself.

How did he do that? How really did John prepare the way? We've mentioned some things already. Now let's summarize. Well first of all John did that in this way by exposing the extremity of the human need.

You see John preached repentance, the need for repentance, not simply to the open profligates. That had been done by others. But John preached the need of repentance even to the scribes and the pharisees and the leaders in Jerusalem temple.

In fact he went so far as to call them a brood of vipers. A brood of vipers as if they come from satan himself. There is evil under their tongues and in their souls.

A brood of vipers unsafe to play with. Blind leaders of the blind as Jesus said. A brood of vipers who will slay you and lead you to loss and ruin rather than to life.

The leaders of religion. In other words he exposed the whole situation religious and irreligious in the church and in the state as desperately under the judgment of God and in need of a change. If you want me to put it to you in one picture, a common one, I put it to you like this.

John's ministry is something similar to that of the person who takes you in and puts you under an x-ray, gives you an x-ray. You go to the hospital complaining of something wrong and perhaps your own physician has told you that there's something that needs attention and sends you to the hospital and there you are but you have an x-ray. John is the man who in the name of the Lord puts the x-ray to work on the heart of the nation, high and low, men and women, rich and poor, the king in his castle and the priest in his temple.

And he puts the x-ray of God to work upon them and he brings out the x-ray plates and he tells them this is what you look like in the sight of God. Flee from the wrath which is to come. That's John.

That's not me, that's John. In other words he makes men aware of what's in their hearts and that was to prepare the way for the Lord. Did not Jesus say they that are whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick.

Can I put that differently and I believe our Lord Jesus would give me license to say this. They that are not aware of their sickness don't know that they need a physician. You see there may be someone in our service this morning who is absolutely under the judgment of God and if you die you go to hell but you don't know it.

You're unaware of it. You don't take it seriously. John's ministry is to make you look at the x-ray plate that God has taken of your soul and see your sin and see the coming judgment to prepare the way for the Lord that when the Savior comes on the scene you not only recognize him but appreciate him.

And that brings me to the other thing namely this the announcement of the divine provision. John announced him. Now in this context and according to Mark's record we only have the faintest disclosure of the way in which John announced the coming of the Lord Jesus or announced him to his day and age.

At the moment referred to by Mark Jesus was pending. He hasn't come actually onto the scene apparently. Later on John the Baptist announced him as the sin bearing lamb of God.

So John in his gospel tells us behold the lamb of God that is bearing away the sin of the world and then to come back to Mark's point and the spirit baptizing Lord. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit says Mark and says John and says John the Baptist. Now John the Baptist here is aware of course of the contrast between the baptism that Jesus is going to administer and the baptism that he has been administering.

It's very difficult for us rarely to fathom how John the Baptist thought of his own baptism. But I guess he must have been quite clear about the fact that the water was a very cold thing and it was external the right was external and had very little power in and of itself if any. To do anything it was purely symbolic.

But you see this man who would listen to the voice of God knew now that there was another one coming. He too had a baptism and his baptism was not going to be baptism with a symbol but with reality. He shall baptize you says John the Baptist not with water but with the Holy Spirit.

You say what's the difference between the baptism with the spirit and the baptism with water? Well the spirit is the reality of which water at best is but a symbol. You can be baptized in the deepest pool or in the deepest sea and you can even be plunged right under for as long as you can bear it. That doesn't take away your sin.

That doesn't change a man's heart. Water doesn't change a man's heart. But the blessed Holy Spirit with whom John would baptize men and women changes the heart.

It directs the life. It imparts grace and much else. And you see no wonder John was excited.

He knew that he was coming. God has communicated with him. Here's the message for our day and age.

Prepare in your hearts a home for him he says but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. I like the way Matthew fills it in when he says even with fire. Even with fire.

You see he's bringing out Matthew is bringing out the concept of the potency of the spirit. I remember traveling some years ago in the UK in England in a train from north to south and going through a particular city where they used to make steam engines. I'd never seen so many of them.

I didn't count them because we were passing through. But there must have been a couple of hundred steam engines some of them looking massively big. And there they were all lined up on this yard.

They'd been laid there you see. But not one of them had a puff and not one of them moving. And then I remember thinking of the one that was taking us through at about 60 70 miles per hour whatever it was I don't remember and seeing the difference.

And the difference of course was a very simple one. But the engine that was pulling my train had fire in the engine. Fire in the boiler.

Fire in the boiler. Oh my good friends that's exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost. Those unitary disciples not very much of a cohesive force as yet.

They had the truth. They knew that Jesus was alive from the dead. They knew that he had died for sin.

They had the message. They had the message. They didn't have the power to unite them as a cohesive army as the body of Christ.

They did not have the power to go out into the world a pagan unbelieving Roman Greek Jewish world. Ye shall receive power. Fire brings power.

And fire purges. There is no purgative like fire. I heard someone referring over this last 10 days to the fact that when the great plague overtook London last century the thing that really saved the country from devastation was the fact that immediately after the great plague you had the great fire of London.

You historians know the details. The great fire of London. And everybody said this is a second disaster.

What is the Almighty doing with us? And people wondered in their churches what is really happening here. We've had this great disaster the great plague and now the great fire. Till some medical voice was heard to say that really the great fire of London was the great salvation of London.

It purged the city of the germs or whatever they were. And the great plague was stayed. It did not spread through the countryside.

Fire purges men and women when the fire of God comes into our churches it will purge as it did the early church. Ananias and Sapphira won't be able to live in the atmosphere. Hypocrites won't be able to dwell in the house of the Lord.

He will baptize with the Holy Spirit says John the baptizer. Now I'm through. Just one word of application.

This is John preparing the way. This is Mark declaring the fact. But listen my friend a lot has happened since then.

The Deliverer has come. First of all John the Baptist came onto the scene and he performed his work. Then Jesus came and John introduced him.

Then Jesus bore our sins on the cross and rose again and ascended to the Father. And when he ascended to the Father he did exactly what he told the disciples he would do. I will ask the Father and will send forth another counselor.

And on the day of Pentecost he came and the mighty baptism of the Spirit took place. His unitary believers became a cohesive force empowered to do the will of God and to propagate the gospel. And you and I if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are heirs to all that so that though as far as I can read my New Testament we are nowhere told to seek the baptism of the Spirit.

We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit and we may. The fullness of the Spirit and all his grace and all his glory and all his gifts whatever he has to give us. The whole thing is ours.

Because the one promised and prophesied and introduced by John the Baptist has duly arrived, performed his saving ministry, is alive and is the living Lord of glory. Being at God's right hand says Peter on the day of Pentecost he has done this. Now if you have not done so before I bid you look at this picture this morning.

Does it not inspire confidence in Jesus Christ? Was your Buddha foretold seven, eight centuries before he arrived? And was there a divinely appointed person of unique character and gift sent to prepare the way before him in accordance with the scriptures? Or any other person? Don't let me simply refer to the Buddha. No, no, no, no. This is something which is wholly unique.

Because God wants you to make no mistake the Savior for your soul and mine is the solitary seed of the woman promised in Genesis. Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ the Son of God. I want to invite you to trust him today.

Could there be anyone here in our morning service that has never really trusted Jesus Christ as such and seen him against the background of this kind of context? Don't you feel something in your soul tugging you to trust him? Assuring you that he's trustworthy. Trust him today. Put your whole being into his hands and say, Lord Jesus, I trust you as my Savior and my Lord and I will follow you in the way.

And what about some of us that have our doubts? Many of our doubts arise only because we do not read the scriptures or take pains to understand them. Men and women of God, see again. Your Savior was no upstart from nowhere.

He was the promised deliverer. Worship him. Serve him.

Don't be afraid to tell the world about him. Be proud of him and let the world know that he has arrived and he's finished the work of redemption and there is for all men in this vast and lost world a salvation which is big enough to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, thank you for the gospel message. Thank you for the writer of this particular gospel we've been looking at in brief this morning. Thank you for the Holy Spirit taking hold of men like this so that out of their experience such as Mark's experience with Paul and with Peter and out of such a relationship he could record this authoritative word for our benefit.

O Lord, we thank you for it. But now we want grace to honor you, the giver of this gospel written and of the message it contains. Help us, O Lord, to see your Son as worthy of faith today.

Save us from being hesitant in the light of what you have said about him. Lead us by your Spirit therefore in our response this day. In this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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