

This Epiphany season we are going to follow Mark's Gospel to see how He reveals Jesus as the Son of God. Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark does not begin his account with Jesus' birth. He begins with Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist which marks the beginning of His public ministry. That is when Jesus began to reveal Himself to the world as the Son of God. We will start with the very first chapter, **Mark 1:1-11**.

“1 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.”

9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. 11 Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Mark begins his account with a simple statement, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” That is basically his theme for his whole book. He sets out to demonstrate beyond a doubt that Jesus is the Son of God.

In these first 11 verses Mark shows that God Himself has given His testimony that Jesus is “the Son of God” in three ways. First of all God testified about Jesus through His prophets. Matthew really emphasizes how Jesus is the fulfillment of many prophecies of the Old Testament. That is a powerful proof. There are over 300 prophecies about the Saviour over a period of about 4000 years. Jesus perfectly fulfilled every one of them. Mark quotes two prophets, Malachi and Isaiah, who foretold that God would send a messenger to prepare the way before Him. And, according to God's promise, John the Baptist came preparing the way for Jesus. Those prophecies testify that Jesus is the LORD, Jehovah. For John the Baptist was the “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD.’” So we have that testimony that Jesus is the LORD, Jehovah.

Then John the Baptist, who was the fulfillment of those prophecies, also testifies that Jesus is the Son of God. He proclaimed for all to hear, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.” John was a powerful preacher and people were flocking to hear him. But John was pointing people to Jesus, saying that Jesus is mightier than him. The Apostle John also records that John the Baptist said, “After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.” John 1:30 Jesus came after John in that He was born six months after John was born. Yet John says that Jesus was preferred before him because He was before Him, He existed long before John as the eternal, almighty Son of God.

Finally, when Jesus came to be baptized by John the Baptist, God the Father and the Holy Spirit personally, directly testify that Jesus is the Son of God. The Holy Spirit came down upon Him in the visible form of a dove, and God the Father spoke from heaven for all to hear, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

These are powerful testimonies from God that Jesus is God's one and only Son. In the rest of Mark's Gospel, he shows how Jesus Himself proves that those testimonies are true with his miracles. Jesus often said that His works testify to the fact that He is the Son of God. In John 10:25 He said,

“I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.” Then He added a few verses later, “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.” (Vs. 37-38). A few chapters later He says again, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:10-11

Mark, more than any other Gospel account, focuses on the miracles of Jesus which powerfully demonstrate that He really is the Son of God. In the weeks to come we will be following through Mark's Gospel to witness for ourselves, once again, the works of Jesus that confirm in our hearts that He is the Son of God.

However, today I would like to think a little bit more about the statement of John the Baptist. “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.” All four Gospels quote those words of John the Baptist, so they must be important, but I wonder if we fully appreciate what John was saying. As we said already, John was clearly stating that Jesus was the Son of God. He knew he wasn't worthy to do even the most menial task for Jesus. Even being a lowly servant of the Son of God would be an honour that none of us are worthy of. But John is saying something else about Jesus that is truly incredible. It's so obvious that we pass right over it without giving it a thought, yet it is really the most remarkable thing. **Jesus wore sandals!**

You say, “Of course, those were the shoes that everyone wore in Israel at that time.” But that's the point! That is what is so remarkable. We have been saying that Jesus is the Almighty, Eternal Son of God. As such He is the Creator of all things, yet here He is, on earth, wearing sandals like everyone else. Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, has lowered Himself to our level, to live like one of us; to be our substitute. So as we follow through the Gospel of Mark in the weeks to come, we will be observing:

When the Creator Wore Sandals!

This text demonstrates that humility of our God in another dramatic way. Jesus came to be baptized by John with a baptism for the remission of sins. Jesus was the holy, righteous, Son of God. Why would He be baptized for the remission of sin, He didn't have any sins. John the Baptist understood that and was puzzled why Jesus was coming to him to be baptized. He said, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” Jesus simply said, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus was baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness for us. He submitted to a sinners baptism in order to connect with sinners as their redeemer.

John's words show us how wonderful that is for us, “I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Jesus was baptized to connect Himself with sinners, so that He could baptize us to connect us with God Himself. The Holy Spirit comes to us through baptism, works faith in our heart and gives us the righteousness of Christ. Our baptism connects us with Christ in His death and resurrection so that we become children of God.

The true God became a true Man in the person of Jesus Christ. What great comfort that gives. As God, He has the power, the wisdom and the holiness to save us from all our sins. As a true man, He could be our substitute to take our place under the law. As Paul said in Galatians 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” As a true man, walking in our sandals, He can relate to us. It has been said that you shouldn't criticize anyone until you have walked a mile in their shoes. Jesus has walked much more than a mile in our shoes. He understands our life. As we read in Hebrews 4:15 Jesus can sympathize with our weakness because He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Treasure in your heart that **the Creator Wore Sandals**. He became one with us so that we can be one with God forever.

Finally, this view of our Saviour move us to a life of genuine humility to love and to serve one another. Think about it, if the Almighty, Eternal, Holy God humbled Himself to wear sandals, that is to live as a poor lowly man; if He was willing to set aside all His glory and power to serve you and to give His life to save you, shouldn't we be all the more willing to humble ourselves before God? The prophet Micah tells us that God wants us "to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8

Our greatest problem is our pride. It shows itself in so many ways. Really one could argue that all of our sins stem from pride and selfishness, and selfishness is really also a manifestation of pride, putting yourself above others. Man wants to be the judge over God's word, deciding for himself what is right and true. Is there any greater arrogance than that? God wants us to walk humbly and simply submit to His word and accept it as true and apply it to our lives.

Human pride always wants to justify ourselves. We like to point out the good we do, and slow to see or admit where we have failed and sinned. We tend to get upset with others for things they say and do, but we don't see how we have hurt them. God wants us to walk humbly and confess our sins to God rather than making excuses for ourselves or priding ourselves in how good we are. God wants us to humbly apologize to others we have wronged. Even if we don't think we have done any wrong, if you see that they are hurt or offended by what you have done our said, go to them in all humbleness and sincerity and tell them you are sorry.

Human pride also leads us to think that we are above certain tasks, someone else of lower state can do that. God wants us to walk humbly and be willing to serve others in the most menial tasks. Jesus taught that lesson with His own example when He stooped down to wash His disciples dirty feet. Then He said to them and to us, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." John 13:14-15

When your pride rises up again and you realize that you have not shown genuine humility either to God or to your fellow men, then look to your Saviour once again. Look to the one who left His throne in heaven and wore sandals here on earth to serve you. Look to Him who stooped to wash His disciples feet. Look to Him who humbled Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross, in order to save you from all your pride and selfishness. He alone can cleans your feet and hands and also your heart. He not only shows you what true humility looks like, but can create that God pleasing humbleness in your heart. All this happened when the **Creator Wore Sandals**. Praise Him forevermore with your lips and with a humble heart.

Amen.