

Our Need To Be Changed

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Date: 20 October 2019

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[0 : 00] Let us now turn back to the chapter that we read in the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Mark and reading at verse 9 of that chapter.

Mark chapter 1 verse 9. In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan and when he came up out of the water immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descended on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven, you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased.

And in looking at these verses we shall first look at the fulfilment of God's word and then a need for change and finally Jesus is the way, Jesus is the way and firstly coming to a fulfilment of God's word.

And we notice at the beginning of the chapter that Mark uses a quotation from prophecy. He starts with a quotation from the prophecy in the Old Testament.

Behold I send my message to you before your face will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

[1 : 38] And in this quotation, Mark is revealing to us through this quotation of prophecy that all the events that follow this quotation has the invisible hand of God behind them.

And the quotation from prophecy is a mixture of two prophecies.

It begins the first part of the quotation is taken from Malachi chapter 3 and verse 1. Behold I send my message to you before your face will prepare your way.

And the second part of the quotation is taken from Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 3, the voice of one crying in the wilderness and so on. And what that is revealing to us is, what it reveals to us is God's continuous activity in relation to his saving purposes.

God led Malachi through the Holy Spirit and Isaiah through the Holy Spirit to prophesy about this event that is now actually happening in the New Testament age.

[3 : 12] And it also reveals to us the link between the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church. The New Testament Church grows out of the Old Testament Church.

John is the fulfilment. It reveals to us that John the Baptist is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. He is the forerunner of Christ, the forerunner of Jesus Christ sent to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the one who is my dear than him.

John's message, as we know, was centered solely on the coming promised one whose sandals he was unworthy to untie.

Now the untying of anybody's sandals or of a teacher's sandals was not something yet disciplined, it was something asserted.

John was not worthy to even, he looked upon himself as being unworthy to do even this servant, this task that was set aside for the servants to do it for this one who was coming after him.

[4 : 39] And of course John was baptizing people, as we read, John was baptizing people in the Jordan, in advance of the coming of the one who was my dear than himself.

And as we read here in this chapter, many were coming to John to be baptized. Many were moved to be baptized by John.

All the country of Judea and all of Jerusalem were coming to John to be baptized. It seems as if there was an awakening in things of spiritual interest at the time of Christ and John the Baptist.

There was, we find many following Christ, many coming to John to be baptized. And of course Mark here mentions for us that John was clothed, his clothing was camel's hair and he had a leather belt round his waist.

And if we go back to 2 Kings chapter 1, we find King Ahaziah, there he fell through the lattice in his own house, the lattice in the upper room.

[5 : 59] He fell and he was seriously injured. And so he sends his messenger to the God of Ekron to find out if these injuries weren't to death or if he was going to survive it.

And God spoke to Elijah and he said to Elijah, go and meet the messengers and ask them why are they going to consult the God of Ekron? Is there not a God in Israel that you can consult?

King Ahaziah was the king over Samaria, the northern tribes who had separated themselves from Judah and he was king over these times.

Is there not a king in Israel you can consult? And he told Elijah to send the messengers back and tell the king that he was not going to rise from the bed he was lying on again.

And when the messengers came back, King Ahaziah was surprised that they came back so soon, so he asked them what happened. And they told him that they had met with this man and he had given them this message, that he was not going to rise from that bed again.

[7 : 15] And he asked them to describe the person that they had met with. And the way they described him was his garments were hairy and he had a belt round his waist.

And that is why a lot of people were coming out to be baptised by John. They recognized through his clothing that he was Elijah in Bath, Gignon, his second career.

Of course John wasn't Elijah but they were familiar with Scripture. Everybody in Israel was familiar with Scripture and John was clothed very like Elijah.

And of course we know that John was through what Jesus himself said to his disciples that John was the fulfillment of the promise that Elijah would come before the day of the Lord and here he is. And this is why, this is probably why many were coming to be going out to be baptised by John. In the midst of this multitude we find this person Jesus of Nazareth. And Nazareth as we know is a town in Galilee.

[8 : 27] We do not know if Jesus was the only Galilean who was ever baptised by John because as we mentioned what the Scripture reveals to us here that they were coming from all the country of Judea and all of Jerusalem were coming out to John to be baptised.

We do not know if Jesus was the only Galilean that was ever baptised by John but we find this person Jesus in the midst of the multitude coming to be baptised by John.

Now Mark doesn't beat about the bush. He doesn't waste time on disputing John's disputation with Jesus. He should I not be baptised by you and instead of you being baptised by me, doesn't waste time it comes straight to what is taking place during the baptism.

And we find this person Jesus of Nazareth rises out of the water. The heavens are opened.

Now the word that Matthew uses here in the Greek is schizo which means the heavens were torn.

[9 : 43] The heavens were torn. And we know that when something is opened it can be easily closed again.

When something is ripped apart it is very difficult to put it back the way it was. You look at any piece of clothing that you or I rip apart it is very difficult to put it back again the way it was.

Now the thing that we should take note of here is that Joshua, Elijah and Delicia all parted the waters of the Jordan.

All parted the waters of the Jordan River as a symbol of the power that was placed at their disposal in being servants of God.

But as Jesus rises out of the water something greater occurs. The heavens themselves are parted.

[10 : 57] Not the river Jordan but the heavens themselves are parted. Some people are of the opinion that this signifies our access to God.

But that is wrong. It is not old access to God but it is God's access to us.

God's access to us. The barriers are removed. The heavens are ranked and God has condoned into old midst in the possession of his son.

And the reason why Matt uses the word skid so the heavens are torn or rent apart is that that access is still open to the world.

It has not been closed and you might argue well Jesus has left. He has gone to the right hand of the Father. But this access is still open to us through the Holy Spirit.

[12 : 25] He left us his spirit. God is still in old midst and this access is still open to me and to you.

And really what we find here is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prayer. If you go back to Isaiah chapter 64 and verse 1 you remember Isaiah's great words.

The heavens have been ranked, the heavens and come down. Let the mountains tremble before you and this is the fulfilment. This is the answer to Isaiah's Old Testament prayer.

The heavens have been ranked. God has come down in the possession of his son. The heavens are also open. We find the heavens been opened at the time of Ezekiel's call to the prophecy in exile. Ezekiel chapter 1 and verse 1.

The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. And what the opening, the rending of the heavens mean is that God is either going to speak or act.

[13:47] The next thing we find taking place at Jesus baptism is the descent of the Spirit. The descent of the Spirit. The Spirit descends upon Jesus like a dove. Not as a dove but like a dove. It is a dove like descent. Not a dove like Spirit.

And the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ inaugurates the Kingdom of God.

It establishes the Kingdom of God within the world. And this descent of the Spirit does not resemble a bird of prey like the eagle or the vulture.

But it resembles the gentleness of a dove. You remember Jesus' words in the Gospel of John chapter 3.

I have not come to condemn the world but to save the world from sin. Yes, there was judgment concerned with this coming. But his priority was to save and to bring sinners, to reconcile sinners to God.

[15:16] I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world from sin. The descent of the Spirit resembles the gentleness of a dove.

And this is the very same Spirit that hovered over the formless void at the beginning of creation as we read in Genesis. The same Spirit that we find hovering over the formless void at the beginning of creation.

This is the same Spirit that descends upon Jesus in the baptism which brings us to the second thing that we have, our need for change. Now as the Spirit brought order into that formless chaos at the beginning of creation, so the descent of the Spirit at this particular time upon Jesus means what? It means the liberation from the hold that the cares brought in by sin had upon humanity.

And when we talk about the cares brought in by sin, all we have to look at is our own DNA. If you look at the Brexit, dilemma that our nation has seen, you look at other nations around the world, you find cares everywhere.

[16:48] The world has not changed. It has always been like this. Cares brought in by what? By the sin of the human heart.

There is no order to anything. And yet the descent of the Spirit here is revealing that as he brought order into the formless chaos at the beginning, so the signifies liberation from the hold that the cares brought in by sin has upon humanity.

And the Spirit descending like a dove upon Jesus was the sign that the new creation had begun.

This was the beginning of the new creation. Remember what God promised in Isaiah, I think chapter 43. I think it is, I will do a new thing in your midst. I will do something new in your midst that will astonish you and astound you.

And this is it. This is it. The descent of the Spirit on Jesus is the beginning of the new creation. And here of course we find the Spirit descending upon a human being.

[18:08] Yes, he is the Son of God, but he is the Son of God in our age. The Spirit is descending upon a human being. He is not hovering over a formless void as he was doing at the beginning of the old creation.

He is descending on a new human being, revealing what? That God was going to transform humanity. God was going to bring a transformation into the lives of human beings, into the lives of human beings.

And the next thing we find is a voice coming from the right heavens. You are my beloved Son with you. I am well pleased.

And this was a voice of Kush that had been silent for centuries. From the time Malachi wrote his prophecy which closed the canon of the Old Testament.

From that time onwards, for over 400 years, this voice had been silent in relation to Israel.

[19:31] This declaration that comes from the rent heavens leads us back to Psalm 2, the Psalm that we have already sung. And that Psalm is an enthronement Psalm. It celebrates the King that will rule over the people of God.

That will rule over God's people. My Son is a title that was given to the Davidic Kings of Israel, the matters revealed to us in 2 Samuel 7 and verses 12 to 16.

God is announcing a Jesus baptism that this is whose chosen King set apart to do God's will. And the Jews along with the Gentiles, what do they do? They try, they beat him, they mock him and they finally crucify him.

And all of that was simply a fulfilment of Psalm 2 as Peter points out in a sermon on the day of Pentecost.

[21 : 01] Now when you and I look at this passage, we read this chapter or the portion of it that we read and we try and figure out what does this mean to us?

What does it mean to me and to you? Some of us might come to the conclusion, well this chapter is all about this portion that we read is all about baptism.

And especially baptism with fully mission. That's what has been pointed out to us here. Others might conclude, no, it's about the baptism of the Holy Spirit which we all need, which we all stand in need of.

But what it truly reveals to each and every one of us is that we all without exception must be changed.

We all without exception need to be changed. We need the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened.

[22 : 12] We need to be given ears to hear the joyous sound of the Gospel. Is the Gospel simply a sound to you? And to you it's like every other sound.

But it's just words that are meaningless to you. We all need our understanding to be opened.

And we all need to be given ears to hear the joyous sound of the Gospel. This great good news and this is what John is getting at the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Something new is happening here and that new thing is challenging me and you. We need to be changed. Our lives need to be altered. Our lives need to be altered.

You see the children of Israel, children of Israel fully believed that baptism was only for gentle proselytes and for those amongst their own people who were defiled to come into contact with dead bodies and so on.

[23 : 40] Baptism was only for such. But John the Baptist knew full well that the whole of Israel needed far more than the muddy waters of Jordan.

If a new heart was to be created within them and a right spirit was to be given to them, they needed much more than the muddy waters of the Jordan.

Water baptism was only preparatory. It was only a preparatory thing. But the one coming after John who was mightier than himself would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit.

And it's this baptism with the Holy Spirit that would bring about the necessary transformation within the lives of men and women and boys and girls.

The rending of the heavens, which means that God has come down into a midst in the passion of his Son, means that things are never going to remain the same.

[25 : 05] Things will never be the same again. And John was sent to prepare the way for Jesus and Jesus was sent to prepare the way for his people.

What does that mean to me and to you? It means that we have a decision to make. And that is what the Gospel, that is the challenge that the Gospel brings to us.

We either continue walking in the ways of the world or we commit at all to Jesus Christ, which brings us finally to Jesus as the way.

Well, the thing about that decision is I cannot make it for you. Neither can you make it for yourself. Only the enablement that comes with a baptism of the Holy Spirit will give you the desire to follow Christ.

[26 : 21] It will give you the desire to follow Jesus. It will make you willy to follow Jesus. So we all need this baptism of the Holy Spirit with which Jesus baptizes his people.

Listen to the words we have in Romans 5 and verse 5, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

And without this baptism, you and I cannot love God, but we will remain as the enemy of God.

Only this baptism through the Holy Spirit can bring the necessary change into my life and your life. Now we can interpret what Marcus get in this way.

I, God, have sent my messenger John before you, Jesus, who will prepare your way, who will prepare the way for you.

[27 : 45] And what is different here to the quotation in the way it's put in Malachi, what is different here is that this messenger is not any longer preparing the way for God himself, but he is preparing the way for another powerful one.

Mainly Jesus Christ, God's Son, who is now to be acknowledged as O Lord and as O King. This means that God's coming in salvation and judgment which is promised in Scripture takes place through his Son, Jesus Christ.

And with Jesus having now come, we can interpret it in another way. We can interpret it in another way. We have another interpretation.

I, God, will send my Son, Jesus, before you, his followers, who will prepare your way, or before you as disciples, who will prepare your way.

[29 : 06] So we read on in this Gospel. We find Jesus leading his disciples to Jerusalem and to the cross and to death.

And when he rises again, he goes before them into Galilee as we have it in chapter 16 and verse 7 in this Gospel itself.

You see, Jesus has come to prepare the way for his people to follow him.

John's baptism was simply a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins. Israel was called to acknowledge God's judgment upon the nation.

However, confessing their sins and passing through the waters of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a new and forgiven Israel emerges.

[30 : 20] And who is this new forgiven Israel? It is the New Testament judge made up of Jews and Gentiles.

If we go to the letter to the Hebrews, we find there the writer telling us that the blood of bulls and goats could never cleanse the conscience from guilt.

But things have now been changed. The Old Testament dispensation was a dispensation of sacrifice that was pointed forward to the one great sacrifice that God had in you.

And now God's Son has come. He's been crucified. His blood has been shed. And only his blood is able to cleanse my conscience and your conscience from sin.

Only the death of Jesus. And that is what Mark is getting at here. The door for God to forgive me and you, our sins, has been opened in the death of Jesus.

[31 : 46] And this is why this new Israel, as it comes, confessing its sins, passing through the waters of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, can emerge on the other side as a new forgiven Israel, as the New Testament judge.

And you see Jesus is very, when he will look at Jesus, he is very like Moses, isn't he? Moses give up his royal privileges in order that he would identify with his own people to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt.

And this is exactly what Jesus is doing in being baptized by John in consenting to John's baptism.

He's giving up his royal privileges. He had these privileges before he took our nature to himself.

He's given them up. He's taking our nature to himself. He's consenting to John's baptism, identifying himself with sinners, standing beside them, taking a stand with them.

In other words, as he said to himself, he must be numbered with a third scratch. And as he entush into the water of John and rises out of it again, that is exactly what he is doing, numbering himself amongst the transgressors, giving up his royal privileges, humbling himself in order that he will identify himself with sinners and take a stand with them. Eventually he will be put to death as a rejected and despised king.

[33 : 49] And the other question is that finally, did the baptism of the Holy Spirit lead to Jesus experiencing peace and inner tranquility?

Well, the answer to that is no. We find Jesus in the desert engaged in a fish confrontation with the Archdemon Satan.

And the desert or wilderness and her world, her world is permeated with such places.

Deserts and wildernesses, what does it mean? It means it takes us back to the time that God cused the ground because of humanity's fall into sin.

The desert means barrenness. It's a place that means barrenness. It's a place that means isolation. It's the uncultivated place of the cuse. Nothing grows. The uncultivated place of the cuse.

[35 : 06] It is the realm of the poise of darkness. This is where Jesus finds himself. The realm of the poise of darkness, a place populated by wild beasts, the allies of evil. The allies of evil.

The day in which Jesus Christ leads his people. It is not an un-trupled path, not at all, but can be arduous, strength sapping, strength sapping and difficult.

It is not an un-trupled path. Remember what he said himself in this world, you will have tribulations. He doesn't promise us an easy passage at all because we are still in this wilderness called the word, the place of sin.

But I tell you this, Jesus's way is the only way that leads to life eternal.

[36 : 39] And as you and I walk it, we do so with a peace of God that passes all understanding, ruling within our hearts.

Repentance, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Repentance means negatively it means turning away from sin, turning away from our disobedience to God's word.

Positively it means turning to God. And it is only as you and I see Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, dying for my sins and your sins.

It is only then that we are willing or made willing to turn our back upon sin and to turn our face towards God.

Has that happened to you yet or are you still in this unforgiven state where there is no communion passing between yourself and God, no fellowship with God?

[38 : 15] Well the access unto God is still open. It has not been closed. The rent has still open. Seek him where he may be felt, call upon him, where he is near.

Let us pray. Oh gracious and ever blessed Lord, that we would be thankful to you that you are still available to us and that you have not yet shut your door.

You are not yet shut the door on Sinush. And Lord help us to make use of our days granted to us here by your hand, by your providence to seek to be reconciled to you and to know the joy of God's salvation.

Bowling within our hearts. Bless this congregation and community forgivers, for our many sins and all that we ask that we would do so in Christ's name and for the sake of amen.