

## VOC – August 2015: In the gospel according to Mark we address a number of questions:

### 1. Who is Jesus Christ?

*Dear Listeners,*

Do *you* know Jesus Christ? Do you know *how* He works? Do you *understand* Him and *believe* in Him? Are *you* living for Jesus? These are some of the questions I would like to address today and in the coming weeks here on the “Voice of the Church!” In order to answer these questions I want to use the gospel account of *Mark*. As you know, the Bible contains the accounts of Matthew, Luke, and John as well, yet the gospel according to *Mark* was written especially for *people like you*, people who were *not* familiar with the Word of God in the Old Testament, people who had *not* been exposed to the life and work of Jesus Christ very much. Yes, it’s the account of a man who himself was intimately involved with the disciples, especially with *Peter*, and who wrote this account in order to share the good news with those who didn’t know Jesus as well!

When Mark writes his account, he begins with a reference to the *OT*: “It is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way’ – ‘a voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” When you would look back to this prophecy of *Isaiah* in chapter 40, you would hear in these words the great announcement of God’s coming! That was Isaiah’s message. In it Isaiah tells God’s people, the people of Israel, who He is that’s coming: the *God* of heaven and earth, who cannot be compared to anyone. Then Mark also refers to Malachi’s prophecy, “I will send my messenger ahead of you!” God let’s His people know that He was coming to them and *how* His coming would be *announced*! Then in his account Mark adds: “And so John came...”

So Mark starts out his gospel account with the fact that *John the Baptist* was the messenger whom *God* sent ahead of His *own* appearance on the scene. With *John* that great and glorious message of Isaiah came to its *fulfilment*. The people at that time realized as well how special and how different *John the Baptist* was, a prophet like the *OT* prophets. They came out in great numbers to hear him preach and call them to repentance, and to see him baptize those who heeded his message! Then John told them, “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” That was the work of a *slave* and John sees himself as even less than a slave compared to the greatness of Him whose coming he had come to announce! Who that was? Well, *God Himself*, as Isaiah had prophesied and Malachi had foretold!

What a wonderful way of *opening* his account Mark here shares with us: with his references the whole *OT* is coming along in its fulfilment at this momentous occasion! It’s very clear that Mark wants us to know that *someone of the greatness and stature of God Himself* was coming. Then in verse 9 Mark *zooms in* on one of the people among the crowd: “At that time *Jesus* came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” That’s when

*Jesus* appeared on the scene, and at the moment of His baptism something *exceptional* happened: “As *Jesus* was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’”

What special moment this was! The voice of *God*, the *Spirit* of God and the *Son* of God coming together here, directing all the attention on that one person in the water: *Jesus of Nazareth!* God Himself points Him out as His beloved Son; God’s Spirit who descends upon *Jesus* and who sends Him out! It’s a special moment at which the *Triune God* manifests Himself to show that *Jesus* is the one in whom God would come to this world! For what? Well, Mark shows *that* right away too: “At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.” Mark doesn’t give us any details here (the way Luke does for instance in his account of the gospel), but Mark does tell us: before you read on in my account, you should know that *Jesus* did not just come to interact with people, but *behind* his coming into this world is a much greater, much deeper matter, namely His battle with *Satan!* He had to be *God* for it to take this on!

Dear listeners, do you see already and realize why it is so very important to *know Jesus*, this *Jesus* who was baptized by John and by the Holy Spirit? He is *Jesus* the *Anointed One*, *Jesus* the *Christ* that is, who is God in the flesh, who came to show Himself as God in the battle against *Satan!* So, in *Jesus* you are meeting with God, with Him you end up with God in your life! And is that not one of the most desired realities people cherish when it comes to their religious hopes?! The world over there are many religions, and these religions give rise to many, many questions (especially about the truth of them!). Well, there is no religion but the *Christian religion* that shows and teaches and reveals that God Himself came to this world to save this world, deliver it from sin and misery, from sin and Satan, from sin and death!

That’s ultimately what *Mark* shows in his account, dear listeners: God came on earth to save you from death; *Jesus* rose from the grave! That’s an important message for you, so that *you* may know *Jesus Christ*; in Him *God* came to you, so that you will have *life*, so that you will live for *God* again! Now that’s what Mark wants to show you in his account: the restoration of that real and full life that’s lived for God again! Are *you* coming along with me this month as we further explore this wonderful booklet of Mark?

Thank you for listening!