

*Have you been baptized? If so, share a little about the experience.*

The Old Testament prophets foretold of a time when God's Spirit would be poured out on all people. This was Mark's invitation to his readers, prepare yourselves to receive the promise of God's Spirit when you encounter the Messiah, Jesus.

*8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ - Philippians 3:8 NIV*

*Each of us has a unique story about our first encounter with Jesus. What were the circumstances of your journey to faith? What have you exchanged to receive the greatest gift of salvation that Jesus offered?*

## **WRAP-UP**

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, fulfilling the prophecies from Isaiah, Malachi, and Exodus, to prepare the way for Jesus. He preached a message of repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins, calling the people of Judea and Jerusalem to turn away from sin and be baptized in the Jordan River. John emphasizes that someone far greater than him is coming — Jesus, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Through his appearance and message, John connects the past prophecies with the arrival of the Messiah, urging Israel to prepare spiritually for God's redemptive work. Mark reminds us of the importance of repentance, humility, and baptism as preparation for encountering the true Jesus, the Messiah who brings transformation and the Spirit.

## **MEMORY VERSE**

*7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."  
- Mark 1:7-8 NIV*

## **Challenge-**

*Next week we will hold a baptism during our services. Prepare your heart for Jesus to renew and refresh your spirit as you celebrate this very special occasion. If you haven't been baptized, consider making this your time.*

## **Prepare for Something Greater** **The Gospel of Mark - Week 2**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this week's passage Mark introduces John the Baptist. John played a pivotal role in revealing Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy of a promised Messiah. In fact, John himself was the fulfillment of prophecy. His message was a call to action and many people responded to that call. If John was indeed their prophesied messenger, then the Messiah was coming to deliver them. But before He arrived, the people needed to prepare the way for Him. And that began in the river Jordan with John.

### **Ice Breaker**

If you are hosting a Thanksgiving gathering, are you already preparing your home? If not, what preparations do you make when you know an important guest is coming?

### **Key Passage**

**4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.  
- Mark 1:4 NIV**

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Echoes of the Old Testament**

The appearance and message of John the Baptist resonated with the people of Israel. It was their story being retold in a new way. The story of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt was the story of God's enduring love of His people as He called them back to Himself. It was retold every year at Passover. It defined their identity as God's chosen people.

*Is there a part of your family's story that gets retold when you gather? Maybe stories of how your family immigrated from another country or survived a great disaster. Is there just one place you all called home or many? What are the stories that define you?*

When the Israelites struck out from Egypt (Exodus 23:20), God sent someone ahead of them as they made their way through the wilderness to the place God had prepared for them. Most translations call that someone an angel, but the Hebrew word used there is mal'āk and can mean a representative or messenger. The same word was used in Malachi 3:1.

*1 "I will send my messenger [mal'āk], who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. - Malachi 3:1-3 NIV*

*In what way was Malachi's prophesy of the Messiah's appearance also a warning? Do you know how Jesus fulfilled this prophesy? What is the answer to the questions in verse 2?*

Because God loves His people, He promised a messenger to help get them ready. When John arrived on the scene, he told the people the time had come to prepare the way of the Lord.

*1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. - Isaiah 40:1-3 NIV*

Mark uses Isaiah 40:3 to set the stage for John's appearance. In this chapter Isaiah shifts from a message of warnings to comfort. Isaiah had previously warned the people to turn from their rebellion and idolatry and return to the Lord. Now he assures the people that there is good news in Zion, their God is here, and He is a good shepherd who cares for His flock. (Isa 40:11).

*The people were told to prepare the way and make straight the path for the Lord. What are some ways we can clear out the things that hinder Jesus's from making His way into our lives? After we clear our own path, are there things we can do to help make a clear path for those around us to encounter Jesus? What do you think would happen if we don't clear our own path before trying to make a pathway for others?*

## 2. John the Baptist and Elijah

*17 And he [John] will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." - Luke 1:17 NIV*

*5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. - Mark 1:5-6 NIV*

*6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on. - 2 Kings 2:6 NIV*

*8 They replied, "He had a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist." The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite." - 2 Kings 1:8 NIV*

There were many ways the people would recognize John as the messenger prophesied as the one who would precede the Lord.

*Where, in the above passages, do we find the connection between John and the Old Testament prophesies of the Lord's messenger?*

## 3. Repent and Be Baptized

The practice of baptism existed prior to Christianity, but with some significant differences. Baptism was a part of ritual practice of cleansing and was used when Gentiles converted to the Jewish faith. As John encouraged repentance, he was calling all people to turn from their rebellion and idolatry and be reconciled to God. Their response demonstrated a heart that was ready to receive the Messiah when He arrived. But as John pointed out, Jesus would bring about something greater than had ever been experienced.

*4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ... 7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." - Mark 1:4, 7-8 NIV*