

# Mark 1:8

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[ 0 : 00 ] Mark identifies the heart of John the Baptist's message in verse 8 of the first chapter of that gospel. And within that message of John the Baptist, we have these words, I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The task, the mission of Jesus is clearly central. This task is clearly central to John the Baptist's conception of Jesus' mission and indeed to Mark, who grants it this place of prominence at the very start of His gospel.

This is the one element of Jesus' mission explicitly highlighted in His message, in John the Baptist's message. And given that's so, it would be reasonable for us as we go through the gospel, as we could do so even if we were to read it from start to finish, it would be reasonable for us to look with anticipation to Jesus doing what John the Baptist says He will do. If it's the case, as it seems to be, that this is central to the mission of Jesus, to baptize with the Holy Spirit, then surely as we go through the gospel that relates to us, the life and ministry of Jesus, then we will find Him doing that which is presented as central to the mission. But of course, if we were to go through the gospel with that expectation, we would be disappointed because we would find no account of Jesus doing what Mark begins his gospel as identifying as central to His mission. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. So it would seem to be a bit of a mystery. If this is so important, if this is so central, then where is it? Well, this evening we want to try and solve that mystery. And we can solve the mystery, or try to at any rate, by tracing the trail of the promise of the Spirit. And that will involve us beginning in the Old Testament, making our way through this verse in Mark, but then continuing through to the book of Acts through to the book of Acts in particular. So let's begin chronologically, as it were, by identifying this starting point of the trail concerning the promise of the Spirit.

And the start of the trail is indeed that God has promised that He will pour out His Spirit. Through the prophets in the Old Testament, we find this promise of God. We're going to limit ourselves to one occasion when we find this promise in the prophet Joel that we read a few moments ago. We limit ourselves to Joel partly because this is the prophecy that Peter makes explicit reference to on the day of Pentecost. We didn't read that part of the account, but for that reason it's particularly helpful. Let's just remind ourselves of what it says there in verses 28 and 29 of Joel chapter 2. And afterwards, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions, even on My servants, both men and women.

[ 3 : 53 ] I will pour out My Spirit in those days. So in the Old Testament, God promised that a day was coming when He would pour out His Spirit on His people in a special way. Now, as I say, we're going to limit ourselves to this passage in Joel for the reason that this is the passage quoted by Peter. But what can we say about this promise? One thing that we do need to clarify or make very clear is that this promise is not implying that the Spirit was absent or inactive prior to this day that God is announcing.

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the third person of the Trinity. He is eternal. He has ever been ceaselessly active in the creation and preservation of the universe in providence and revelation, in the regeneration of believers throughout the ages, in the equipping of special people for special tasks throughout the Old Testament. The Spirit was active. So it's not that He was inactive and He will only at some later date become active. The new element anticipated in Joel is that the Spirit would be poured out on all of God's people. In the Old Testament, we find the Spirit's work in relation to God's people, particularly as He would come upon those specially called and appointed for a given task, kings and prophets and priests, and even then for a period. And Joel anticipates a new situation when the Spirit would be poured out on all of God's people. And though Joel doesn't make the point, at least not explicitly, it becomes clear not only for a season but permanently. The other aspect to note in reference to the promise of God concerning His pouring out His Spirit is that

this outpouring of the Spirit is clearly identified as accompanying and confirming the inauguration of the anticipated messianic age.

This is central to this messianic hope that when this age begins, it will be accompanied by, indeed it will be confirmed by this reality that God will at that time pour out His Spirit on His people.

So that's where the trail begins, in the promise of God concerning this reality. But then we move to the verse that we noted this morning in Mark's Gospel and we revisit this evening.

We notice that this promise was also anticipated by John the Baptist. There in verse 8 of chapter 1, I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

[ 6 : 58 ] The very announcement that this is what Jesus will do, even in the absence of Jesus actually doing it, served to confirm the coming of Jesus as the prophesied and long-awaited day that had been anticipated and anticipated and prophesied by God through the prophets in the Old Testament.

Now what John adds, what John the Baptist adds to the passages in the Old Testament, we've only looked at one of them in Joel, but he adds to the others also, is that he identifies through whom God would fulfill the promise to pour out His Spirit.

And he will do so, John is clear, through Jesus. Now as we saw this morning, this fact alone involves attributing to Jesus a divine prerogative, for God alone can pour out His Spirit.

And he would do so. He would fulfill the promise through Jesus. And John the Baptist recognizes this and announces this in his message.

I baptize you with water, but He, the One Coming, Jesus, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. So the trail begins with the promise of God that this day will come.

[ 8 : 21 ] This promise is now picked up on and anticipated by John the Baptist, the final really of the Old Testament prophets. But then we notice as we continue following the trail, is that this promise is confirmed by Jesus.

And we turn to Acts, the book of Acts, and chapter 1, to notice on what occasion and in what circumstances this promise, we can trace to the Old Testament, anticipated by John the Baptist, is now confirmed by Jesus.

And we find that in Acts chapter 1 and in verse 5. Now the context of it is Jesus is about to ascend to heaven. The disciples are despondent at His imminent departure, and He has final words to direct to them.

And among what He says, or part of what He says, is what we read in verse 5. And the words we read are almost an echo of what John the Baptist had said, recorded there in Mark's gospel.

We read there in verse 5 of Acts chapter 1, For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. You can see the parallels with the verse in Mark.

[ 9 : 39 ] They're very clear. Jesus almost seems to be picking up on what John had said some few years previously. So Jesus is confirming the promise.

This promise remains. We've had to skip right through the Gospels. Nothing in the Gospels concerning the fulfillment.

Certainly not the fulfillment through the Gospels. But rather we need to turn here to Jesus speaking to His disciples just before He is to ascend to heaven.

It's interesting to notice how Jesus omits to mention that this event that will occur in a few days, as He says, will involve Him. It's clear that it will involve Him.

John the Baptist makes that clear. But when Jesus picks up on the very language of John the Baptist, He makes no mention of His involvement. He simply says this is going to happen. In a few days this will happen.

[ 10 : 43 ] You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Now what Jesus does do in His words, as He confirms this promise, is He highlights how this baptism and subsequent companionship of the Holy Spirit is indispensable for discipleship and mission.

Jesus makes clear that the disciples can do nothing in the absence of this promised baptism. They are to wait until the day when it happens.

They are not to even try and do ministry and witness or do mission. They can't do that in the absence of this baptism, in the absence of receiving this gift that is going to be given to them, Jesus says, in a few days.

The disciples are going to be given a companion. Now that was particularly good news. I don't know to what extent they received it as good news.

I suppose in the measure that they understood it. But it was particularly good news given that they were so downcast downcast at the prospect of Jesus leaving them. And now there is this promise of one who will come and will act as their companion.

[12:06] And with their companion will come power. You will receive power when this happens. Without the Holy Spirit, they can do nothing.

With the Holy Spirit, they can do everything. And nothing has changed in that regard. That was true for the disciples here on this occasion when Jesus confirms the promise given by God in the Old Testament, anticipated by John the Baptist, and now confirmed by Jesus.

So I think that the mystery, if indeed it was a mystery, but if we can call it a mystery, the mystery is beginning to unravel, unravel in a good sense. It's becoming clear what is going on.

In a few days, the promise will be fulfilled. Well, that takes us on to the next aspect of the trail, or the next stop on the way of this trail.

And that is the disciples experiencing the promise, the promise being fulfilled and so experienced by the disciples. And there we remain in the book of Acts, and we simply turn to this following chapter, chapter 2, and verses 1 to 4.

[13:20] Now, we've read that passage already, but I think there will be some merit in just reading it again to remind ourselves just what happened on this occasion.

And we read there in chapter 2, when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place, the disciples, those who had been told to wait for a few days. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now, there can be no doubt that Pentecost, what is described here in chapter 2 of the book of Acts, is the day of fulfillment of the promise that we discover in the Old Testament, this day when God would pour out His Spirit on His people.

Here we find it being fulfilled. And of course, Peter, in the sermon that follows, makes it very clear that that is so. Indeed, he makes specific reference to the passage in Joel, there from verse 17 and following in chapter 2.

[14:46] So, as promised by God, as anticipated by John the Baptist, as confirmed by Jesus, the Spirit is now poured out on all believers.

We'll come back in a moment just to notice some of the aspects of that. But we'll leave that for the moment to move on to the next step on the trail and what I'm calling explained by Peter.

Experienced by the disciples in the events of Pentecost, but then explained by Peter and particularly in verse 33 of chapter 2. Because there we find him picking up on some of the threads that we've already identified as we've been following this trail.

I suppose before looking at what Peter says there in verse 33, we could ask the question, where is Jesus in all of this on the day of Pentecost? John made it clear that it was Jesus who would baptize with the Spirit.

Well, where is Jesus? If this is his job, if this is part of his mission, where is he on the day of Pentecost? And Peter helpfully explains.

[15:56] He explains everything in his sermon. It's always good to get a good sermon to explain those things that we don't understand. We don't always get one, but it's good to get one when we can.

And certainly Peter's sermon explains the matter very clearly. And we want to just focus on one verse of the sermon, one part of the sermon that we find in verse 33 of chapter 2.

There we read as follows. Peter is speaking about Jesus, his life and death and resurrection, and then we pick up on what he's saying when he speaks of Jesus being exalted.

And we read, exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out, that is Jesus, has poured out what you now see and hear.

all those who are witnessing what is going on. Peter says, what you've seen, what you've heard, this is what it is. Jesus has been exalted to heaven.

[17:01] He's at the right hand of God. He's received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and now he has poured out the Spirit on his people. Striking to witness in what John says, rather than

what Peter says, how the Trinity, the three persons of the Trinity are united and yet distinct in the activity that is going on.

The Father grants the Spirit to the Son, the Son pours out the Spirit, and the Spirit is gladly poured out to indwell and enable.

And so Peter ties up in a way the loose ends in terms of what is going on. And we see how it all fits. What God had promised in the Old Testament, what John had anticipated, John the Baptist had anticipated that would be central to Jesus' mission.

But then we go through the whole gospel and it doesn't happen. But then Jesus says, no, it will happen, but just not yet. Wait a few days. And then it does happen. We say, well, where's Jesus? And Peter explains, well, Jesus is the one who's done this.

He's in heaven. He's been exalted to the right hand of God and now he has received from the Father and he is the one who has poured out the Spirit, just as John the Baptist had identified it would be as a central plank of his mission on behalf of his people.

[18:33] So, we could say, well, that's good, but is that it? Are we, as we examine these things, as we follow this trail, are we just distant observers of an unrepeatable redemptive act that occurred on the day of Pentecost when the promise of God was fulfilled and the Spirit was poured out?

And we ought to be assured that Pentecost is indeed an unrepeatable redemptive occasion. It is as unrepeatable as the incarnation, as the crucifixion, and the resurrection.

You don't have Pentecost repeated any more than you could have any of these other redemptive acts repeated. Pentecost is unrepeatable. The initial outpouring of the Spirit at the beginning of the Gospel age is unrepeatable.

But Jesus continues to baptize with the Holy Spirit. This is how this becomes very practical and personal for us. This is a ministry of Jesus that continues to this day.

He continues to baptize with the Holy Spirit. What I want to do now is to in a sense confirm that or to ground that statement.

[19:56] I want to just turn quickly to John's Gospel and chapter 1 and verses 32 and 33. So John's Gospel chapter 1 and verses 32 and 33.

And we're going back to John the Baptist and what John the Baptist has to say about this matter but what is recorded by John in his Gospel.

So let's just read what it says there in these two verses of John chapter 1. Then John gave this testimony. I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

That is remain on Jesus. I would not have known him except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me. And then what follows. The man on whom you see the Spirit come down that is Jesus and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Well the language very similar to what we have in Mark simply the context in which it says is somewhat different and some elements that we don't have in Mark's Gospel. The interesting and the significant and it's really a grammatical detail is that John the Baptist as recorded here in John's Gospel in describing Jesus as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit uses what in grammar is called a present participle.

[21:26] The verb there translated baptize in verse 33. Now why is that important? What does that mean? Well it means that this activity of Jesus is not exhausted in a single event at Pentecost but is the timeless and distinctive ministry of Jesus.

Jesus is the baptizer. It's not simply one who on a given occasion baptized at Pentecost. He did. He ascended to heaven.

He was exalted to the right hand of the Father. He received the Spirit and He poured out the Spirit on that occasion, on that historical occasion. He did that. But He continues to baptize with the Spirit because that is what He does.

He is the baptizer. He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit today. In the absence of Jesus baptizing with the Spirit none of us would be here today gathered around God's Word.

We would have no interest in doing so. It's not possible to come to faith in the absence of this work of Jesus. So it's not to be restricted to a single moment in history but nor is it to be limited to a single event in our own personal spiritual history.

[22:45] We've noticed how the baptism of the Spirit is described on the day of Pentecost as being filled with the Spirit. I don't know if we noticed it but that's the language that's used in the book of Acts in chapter 2.

So the event that Jesus says is going to happen in a few days and that Jesus speaks of as being baptized with the Spirit when it's actually recorded for us in Acts chapter 2 another word is used. It's the same thing but another word and the word used is filled with the Spirit. Now that's interesting because this is the verb that Paul uses when he writes to the believers in Ephesus in chapter 5 of his letter to the Ephesians and in verse 18 and he calls on believers the believers in Ephesus and by extension on us he calls on believers to be continually filled with the Spirit.

Be filled with the Spirit or his exact words. And what that makes clear is that this is our permanent need to be filled with the Spirit.

We need to be filled because as we read in Acts chapter 2 the Spirit fills or indwells us in order to enable us. As we draw things to a close in terms of our own circumstances and our own need let's just focus focus on this verb that we find in Acts chapter 2 and verse 4.

[ 24 : 15 ] All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. We're not going to focus too much on what it is they did on this occasion at Pentecost.

Important though that is. But simply to focus on what is said about the Spirit that as he filled the believers he enabled them. He enabled them. What about us?

In what way does the Spirit enable us? In what way is it necessary for us to be enabled by the Spirit because in the absence of that enabling we will not be able to do what we need to do?

I think there are two areas of our lives we could maybe identify more but two core areas of our lives as Christians where we stand in the permanent need of the Spirit's enabling.

First of all he enables us to live in purity. The language of Pentecost the description that is given of tongues like flames of fire is language that is very appropriate to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

[ 25 : 16 ] He is the Holy Spirit and he is the one who enables God's people who enables us to live in purity to become ever more like Jesus to resist temptation to flee from sin to become holy.

All of this is something that the Holy Spirit enables us to do. Without him we cannot do it. He enables us to live in purity.

Do you need his help in this matter? In your life as you examine your life as you examine your struggles with sin and temptation do you recognize your great need to be enabled by the Spirit to live in purity?

but then secondly he enables us to witness with power. That is maybe what's particularly striking and apparent on the day of Pentecost.

These group of disciples dejected and downcast at the departure of Jesus and then they're transformed as the Spirit comes down upon them and they're enabled to witness with power to the gathered and multitudes.

[ 26 : 29 ] Well we don't live on the day of Pentecost but we do have this privilege and duty of witnessing to others about Jesus.

Do you need the Spirit's help in this responsibility that you have? Just imagine the week that has begun and you're going to work tomorrow. Those of you who are going to work, just picture where you sit and work at your desk or wherever it is and the colleagues you can see.

I don't know if it's open plan or you can just imagine who's in the next office. The people you work with, the people you rub shoulders with day by day at work. How easy is it for you to witness to them, to speak to them about Jesus, to maybe think about inviting one of them to come and participate in Christianity Explored.

When you think about that do you think well that's not going to happen? I'm not going to be able to do that. It's just not going to happen. Well you need the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

With the enabling of the Holy Spirit then it can happen. Without His enabling you're right it won't happen. You need His enabling. Or maybe if you're a student and tomorrow you've got a lecture and you can look around the lecture hall and maybe you can just visualize your fellow students or maybe your fellow students in halls or whoever it is can you imagine speaking to them and telling them about Jesus sharing with them the good news of the gospel or you say well no I can't do that.

[ 28 : 02 ] That's just so difficult. I just can't do that. You need the enabling of the Holy Spirit to witness with power.

I hope as we've traced the trail of this promise of God as we find it in the Old Testament a promise that is picked up on its fulfillment anticipated by John the Baptist in and through the person of Jesus Jesus Himself picks up on it and reminds His disciples or tells His disciples that this is going to

happen and it does happen.

the Spirit is poured out at Pentecost. Peter is able to explain what it was that's going on but Jesus and the ministry of Jesus continues to be a ministry of baptizing with the Holy Spirit and we stand in permanent and urgent need of this work of Jesus in our lives.

It's good to be able to trace a trail and to conclude that we maybe better understand what's going on in what we read in the Bible but even more importantly than solving a mystery even more importantly we need to be persuaded of our permanent and urgent need of the enabling that only the Spirit of God poured out by Jesus can provide us as we seek to live in purity and witness with power let's pray heavenly father we do thank you for your word and we thank you for your spirit we thank you for the one poured out so powerfully so dramatically on the day of Pentecost but we thank you that in our savior Jesus we have one who continues to baptize with the Holy Spirit and we come before you and we acknowledge our great need of the Spirit's work and enabling in our lives we pray that we would know what it is to be continually filled with the Spirit of God and that the evidence that that is so would be seen in lives that are ever more marked by purity and by a witness for you that is ever more marked by power and we pray these things in Jesus name  
Amen