



Dear test person:

To be more like Jesus in DC requires effort. In some circles across our nation, believers tend to think that if one simply studies the Bible that that study and discipline will guarantee spiritual growth. As I said last week in my prologue, growth into Christ likeness requires more than just an intellectual uptake of Scripture. For one to be increasingly godly, it requires transformation of not only the head, but the heart and the hands (as one of my close friends likes to alliterate). In other words, we need regular Bible study, but we also need to give attention to our affections and our actions. Are we developing our passion for Christ and are we spending our time in obedience to His desires? I am here in the capitol hoping to help you in all three areas: head, heart and hands. May God richly bless you this week.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we learned that the gospel of Mark is a presentation of Jesus Christ to Gentile unbelievers. Accordingly what Mark includes herein relates to developing a persuasive case for the authenticity of the second member of the Trinity.[i][1] With that in mind, as the gospel unfolds, we will see these evidences. For example, one would think that if Jesus is God incarnate, the Son of God, that certain things would characterize Him. For instance He would be endorsed by God's prophets in the Old Testament, that he would be appropriately inaugurated into His ministry (John the Baptist), that God the Father would endorse Him, that He would teach with authority, that He would claim He could forgive sin, that He would be able to heal people, that He would be able to rule over Satan, that He would be able to walk on water, turn water into wine, that His words would be characterized by great wisdom and profundity, that others would follow Him and that He could defy death by rising again! These and many other evidences of Christ's deity are portrayed by Mark in this 16 chapter book! Mark is going to build an irrefutable case so that you'll believe in Jesus, that He can save you. I think that it is a very compelling case that he builds.

A PARALLEL ANALOGY FOR THIS WEEK

Legislators pay special attention to endorsements and introductions; they are the building blocks of your credibility.[ii][2] Here in chapter one, mark is doing the same kind of thing: Advancing a credible basis for an onlooker to consider Jesus.

THE PASSAGE

Mark 1:1 the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way; 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.'" 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." 9 And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."

I. THE PROPER FACILITATOR: ISAIAH, VERSES 1-3

It goes without saying that it is very helpful to have someone of high importance endorse your candidacy. It provides distinguishing ethos in the eyes of skeptical onlookers. It is not different here (save temporal vs. eternal objectives) in regards to the coming Messiah. In the Old Testament (OT) the prophet Isaiah states, "make ready the way of the LORD" (Isa. 40:3); and Mark quotes him in this week's passage (v. 3). This sets the stage, and ties who is to come with someone known from the past. Comporting with that, interestingly and of fascination "Isaiah" in Hebrew means "The Lord is salvation." [iii][3]

Isaiah is someone every politician needs to get to know. He ministered under four Judean Kings. From a higher socio-economic background, he had ready access to the kings (7:3) and served as a political/religious counselor for Israel's Southern Kingdom: Judah. Rich also in his vocabulary and communication skills, chapter 6:8-13 nonetheless indicates that he realized his ministry would bear little fruit due to the hardness of the people's hearts toward God. [iv][4] And, rather than go out "on top" his life on earth would end when King Manasseh (ca. 695-642 B.C.) had him sliced in two with a wooden saw ☹. Sobering for this reason: One's faithfulness to God's calling does not necessarily equate with triumphant success in a career path.

Query: What can be learned from Isaiah's career?

- Are you guaranteed "success" in your political career if you remain faithful to God's principles?

- What compels you, if anything, to persevere when there is little fruit from your efforts? What compelled Isaiah?
- The for-sure rewards of the believer are mentioned in 1 Thes. 2:19. What is the *crown of life* therein mentioned? How should this insight affect your head, heart and hands?

Concluding this point. Isaiah, in chapter 53 of the OT book bearing his name, elaborates extensively about Jesus being the coming Messiah; he does so with detailed prophetic language. One would think then, that if Mark were building a case for Jesus' credibility that he would include this historical connection. He does.

II. THE PROPER FORWARD: JOHN THE BAPTIST, VERSES 4-10

It goes without saying that it is very helpful to have the right person introduce you on the podium. It provides distinguishing ethos in the eyes of skeptical onlookers. It is not different here (save temporal vs. eternal objectives) in regards to the coming Messiah. John the Baptist was a rugged individualist whom God used for His purposes. He was the last of the OT prophets calling Israel to repentance. Clothed in "prophet garb" of camel hair and leather belt, he preached with enormous authority. "Make ready the way of the LORD" he piped. The Baptist's dress, demeanor and delivery authenticated his ministry and message. Upon that strong note of introduction, Jesus' public ministry was launched.

An insight regarding John's baptism: His water baptism was intended as an outward act following inward repentance. In other words baptism back then was like rings in a modern marriage ceremony today: rings don't consummate a marriage, rather they symbolize it. So it is with John's baptism: it was reflective, not causal (cf. Jn. 3:5).

III. THE PROPER FINALE: GOD THE FATHER, VERSE 11

Verses 10 and 11, theologically speaking, combine to build a brick house: God the Father sends God the Holy Spirit into God the Son, followed by the Father proclaiming "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." The doctrine of the Trinity is unmistakable here. Again, Mark is laying out his case that God has incarnated Himself in our material world—the one who can take away your sin and mine has come and dwelt among us! (Cf. John 1:28). If Jesus were whom He claimed to be it follows that the Father would affirm the Son. He does and Mark records it in building his case for Christ.

It is any wonder that Mark would provide us with these three authenticating distinctions? Isaiah, John the Baptist and God the Father: the Facilitator, the Forward and the Finale respectively. All attest to and proclaim the authenticity and validity of Jesus.

APPLICATIONS

Herein are three authenticating proofs of Jesus' credibility...they all point to His power to save us from our sin. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Throughout this gospel and our study, week in and week out, Mark will build his validating case for the Savior, attempting to persuade you to trust Him with your

life, both now and for eternity. Will you do that today based upon what Isaiah, John the Baptist and God the Father have testified? What credible witnesses they are!

- Who are the well-known people of character to endorse your credibility and vouch for your political candidacy?
- Who are your best missional spokespeople?
- Are you rejecting the testimony of Isaiah, John the Baptist and God the father if you reject Jesus,?
- What additional testimony would be required for you to deem Jesus as authentic?



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[i][1] The connotation of Mark 1:1 “Son of God” is intended to communicate that meaning, i.e. the deity of Jesus.
[ii][2] In a parallel sense, I have wonderful law-abiding men of integrity who sit on the board of directors of our non-profit organization, Capitol Ministries.
[iii][3] Further in parallel, in Malachi 3:1 the LORD Himself states that He will send a messenger announcing His second coming/advent. This messenger, prior to His second coming will “clear the way before Me.”
[iv][4] Isaiah faithfully prophesied Judah’s upcoming captivity (39:6, 7), an unpopular message which God had charged him to deliver. Nonetheless he was obedient to the task.