

**"THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL"**  
**The Introductory Statement of Mark's Gospel**  
**(1:1-3)**

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**Introduction**

The way in which a book begins is usually indicative of the overall message and purpose of the book. In the introduction, one prepares the reader with the expectations that will govern how he will read what follows. Thus Matthew prepares his readers with the genealogy and infancy narrative of Jesus so as to present the theme of fulfillment of Old Testament promises. The readers of Matthew will then read the Gospel with the notion that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament expectation concerning the Messiah who will come to establish the Kingdom.

Likewise, Luke introduces his Gospel with a clear statement of purpose that the reader is being given an orderly account of the historical events of the life of Jesus Christ on earth which forms the foundation for one's faith.

In the Gospel of Mark, however, the author launches into his narrative with a very brief introduction. It begins so abruptly that a lot of questions remain as to the function and significance of the section. In this paper, we will attempt to investigate the various problems related to the introductory statement of the Gospel of Mark in order to evaluate its significance for the whole book.

In the first section, we will examine the lexical and syntactical problems of Mark 1:1-3. The main problem is the relationship between 1:1 and 1:2-3.

In the second section, we will analyze the form of the Old Testament quotation in 1:2-3. Besides viewing Mark's quotation in relation to versions of the Old Testament text, we will also compare it with those in Matthew and Luke.

After this, we will seek to explain the literary relationship between this opening statement and the immediate context and try to determine the theological themes in this section and its message.

Finally, we will relate the opening section to the whole book to see how this introduction contributes to the overall message and theology.

### **Exegetical Considerations on Mark 1:1-3**

Mark associates the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the proclamation in the Old Testament.

#### *Text and Translation*

<sup>1</sup> Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]. <sup>2</sup> Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ, Ἴδου ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὅς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου· <sup>3</sup> φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ, (Mark 1:1-3; NA<sup>26</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God, <sup>2</sup> as has been written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will establish your way, <sup>3</sup> a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Mark 1:1-3; own translation)

### *Textual Comments*

There is no major textual problem in this section. However, some minor problems should be investigated.

#### **The son of God (1:1)**

"Son of God" (υἱοῦ θεοῦ) is missing in  $\aleph^*$ ,  $\Theta$ , 28, some Sahidic manuscripts, and Origen. Although the testimony for its omission is weak, the deciding factor for its inclusion comes from a weighing of the internal evidence. This term, and its variations, occurs six or seven times in the Gospel of Mark. We always find it in places important to the Gospel as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Among these, the two declarations by the Father from heaven (1:11; 9:7) and the confession of the centurion seem to form the framework for the message of the Gospel of Mark. In view of the importance of this term in the Gospel as a whole, it is very probable that it should form part of the opening sentence. The importance of this term will be more fully brought out when we consider the role of this introduction in the whole Gospel.

#### **Isaiah the prophet (1:2)**

The Byzantine manuscripts have "the prophets" (τοῖς προφήταις)<sup>2</sup> instead of "Isaiah the prophet." Although it may be argued that the earliest manuscripts contain the more specific designation of the source of this quotation, the external evidence appear to be equally divided and inconclusive. However, the Byzantine reading appears to be an attempt to smooth out the difficulty in the composite quotation which is derived not only from Isaiah but also Malachi and Exodus. Therefore, the more difficult reading is accepted. The significance of this designation for the quotation will be discussed later under the topic "the Form of the Old Testament Quotation."

### *Exegetical Comments*

In this section we will survey some of the major exegetical problems associated with Mark 1:1-3. The discussion will focus on 1:1 and its relationship with 1:2-3.

<sup>1</sup> cf. 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61; 15:39.

<sup>2</sup> A, W, f<sup>13</sup>, Byz, sy<sup>h</sup>,

## The "beginning"

The word "beginning" (Ἐπιχῆ) can have many possible meanings. Here it may refer to the "temporal starting point of the evangelical preaching of Jesus."<sup>3</sup> This meaning would tend to highlight the historical, temporal aspect of the Gospel. It starts with a point in time and looks towards the end. Both the beginning and the end would then define the present.<sup>4</sup> The term may also refer to the "elementary principles" or "rudimentary elements."<sup>5</sup> Since the Gospel of Mark places much of its focus on the historical events of the life and passion of Jesus, one can argue that the term here refers to the temporal starting point of this Gospel.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation would take the first verse as the overall title for the whole work, that the life and work of Christ forms the beginning of the Gospel message. On the other hand, if we see the introductory statement as being tightly tied with the Old Testament quotation, then it may be a statement concerning the essential foundation for the Gospel message, its "elementary principles" being found in the Old Testament proclamation of salvation in Isaiah.

The use of the word without the article at the beginning of the sentence is reminiscent of similar usages in Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. This has led some to suggest that its meaning here would draw on the theological background of these other uses. However, the context of Mark 1:1 clearly shows that it is not interested in the time before creation, but the time when the promise and/or fulfillment of the Gospel begins.

Syntactically, the anarthrous noun with a series of five genitives is highly unusual. Since there is no verb, we can treat the phrase as a pendent acting as a title. Whether this is the title to the opening section or to the book as a whole will be discussed later.

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<sup>3</sup> G. Delling, "Ἐπιχῆ," *TDNT* 1 (1964) 482.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel*, tran. James Boyce (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 41.

<sup>5</sup> *BAGD*, s.v. "Ἐπιχῆ," see also the discussion of A. Wikgren, "APXH TOY EYANGELIOY," *JBL* 61 (1942): 11-20.

<sup>6</sup> The meaning of the term depends on the meaning of the phrase "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" as a whole and its relation to what follows in 1:2-15. We will argue later that the Gospel is the proclamation of the fulfillment of the kingdom promise through the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, as the Messiah; and that this beginning is introduced in 1:1-15.

## The "Gospel" of Jesus Christ

The word "Gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον) has the clear meaning of "good news." However, there is considerable debate concerning the origin or background of the term.

In the Greek Old Testament, the word is used to translate the word group with the root בשר. Although the noun was only used in a non-theological sense, the verbal forms, including the participial form, carry both the secular and religious meanings. The secular sense usually refers to the announcement of good news, especially concerning military victory.<sup>7</sup> However, when we consider the belief that all victory or deliverance comes about because of the sovereign work of YHWH on behalf of His people, it is easy to see its connection with the theological usage which announces the good news of the reign of God or His deliverance.<sup>8</sup>

In the Greek world, the word was used in a wide variety of different settings. These include military victory, birth, and royal ascension.<sup>9</sup> The Priene inscription from 9 B.C. recording the birth and ascension of Augustus has been frequently quoted as forming the background to Mark's use here.<sup>10</sup> Although the inscription offers a lot of parallels with the Gospel, especially with its focus on the theme of the coming of the kingdom of God, the date of the inscription and the lack of other parallels raised many unanswered questions.

Since the noun form is only used non-theologically in the Greek Old Testament, and the background in the Greek world does not offer satisfactory explanation for the use of the term in Mark, some have resorted to the preaching of Paul as the background to its usage here.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Paul used the term nearly sixty times in his epistles referring to the message of salvation brought about by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> However, this does not explain the origin of

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 1:42; 1 Samuel 4:17; 2 Samuel 18:26.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 61:1; Psalm 96:2-10.

<sup>9</sup> G. Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζειν", *TDNT* II (1964) 710-27.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζειν", *TDNT* II (1964) 710-27.

<sup>11</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, (Dallas: Word Book, Publishers, 1989), 14. This suggestion is boosted by the strong tie between Mark and Paul in early traditions.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Romans 1:2-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; etc.

the use of the term by Paul. If we accept that this usage originated with Paul, then we would have great difficulty explaining Jesus' own use of the term, and this forces the question whether Jesus Himself proclaimed the "Gospel of the kingdom of God."<sup>13</sup>

We propose, therefore, that the solution to the question of the background of the term "Gospel" should be sought in the Old Testament itself. Although the noun form was not used theologically as in the New Testament, the theme of the announcement of the reign of God is dominant in the other usages. In view of the quotation from Isaiah 40 which follows in Mark 1:2-3, we can argue that Mark has the prophecy of Isaiah in mind when he used the term as the title to his work.

### "Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

This is a clear declaration of the identity of Jesus as the Divine Messiah. Although there are many critical theories concerning the theological significance of this title for Jesus,<sup>14</sup> we will not attempt to address it in this paper. The determination of its meaning for Mark should be sought in his overall usage of the term throughout the Gospel story. We will provisionally take the sense of the title as referring to a Divine royal Messiah which the Old Testament prophets had proclaimed.

One of the major difficulties of the phrase lies in the sense of the series of genitives in relation to the term "Gospel." Some see this as an objective genitive and interpret this as "the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> Others see this as a subjective genitive, rendering it as "the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus Christ."<sup>16</sup> Some have taken the phrase to denote both subjective and objective senses.<sup>17</sup> However, its use in the Gospel of Mark seems to go beyond these three possibilities. Since the person and work of Jesus form the content of this Gospel, it is not merely a message concerning Jesus Christ but Jesus Christ Himself as the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J.D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 1-45.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, W.L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 44-45; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 6.

<sup>16</sup> See C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 35-36.

<sup>17</sup> Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζεω" in TDNT II, 718.

fulfillment of the hope for the kingdom of God. Accordingly, the scope of this title covers the whole career of Jesus. Therefore, this introductory statement declares the temporal beginning or theological foundation for the whole of the Gospel message of Mark.

### "As it is written"

Some commentators link this phrase with the appearance of John in verse 4, translating it as "just as it is written..., John came..."<sup>18</sup> However, the use of this conjunction in Mark refers only to what precedes it. Hugh Anderson writes,<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly the presumption is, and it is supported by the fact that this formula always introduces a scriptural confirmation of a preceding statement, that Mark intends to apply the scripture(s) he quotes to his opening words in 1:1, and thus to demonstrate that the Gospel's 'beginning' (i.e. the whole story of Jesus) is in conformity with the will of God expressed in the OT.

### *Conclusion*

We have seen that the first verse acts as a title for the whole book. It declares that the Gospel consists of the person of Jesus, the divine royal Messiah, Son of God. However, this introductory statement does not end with the first verse, but is closely tied to the prophecies written in the Old Testament.

### **The Form of the Old Testament Quotation**

This is the only "Markan" quotation from the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> Although there are other citations in the Gospel, all of them are recorded as the words of Jesus or some other characters. The only other supposedly Markan quotation is judged by most to be spurious.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Mark begins his Gospel with the only Old Testament quotation should signal that this is a programmatic announcement for the message of the whole book.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, S. Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1,14-3,6): A Redaction Critical Study* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1990), 9.

<sup>19</sup> H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 68.

<sup>20</sup> This is the only quotation employed by the Gospel writer himself. All other Old Testament passages used in the book were employed by various characters in the story.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 15:28; the verse is omitted in  $\aleph$ , A, B, C, D,  $\psi$ , etc.

It appears that this quotation is taken from three sources in the Old Testament: Exodus 23:20 in Mark 1:2b, Malachi 3:1 in Mark 1:2c, and Isaiah 40:3 in Mark 1:3.

### *The Quotation Formula*

The difficulty of attributing the composite quotation to Isaiah has been variously explained. Some explain the material from Exodus and Malachi as a later gloss.<sup>22</sup> This position is untenable because of the lack of textual evidence.

Others see this as a common way of thematically quoting from a selection of Old Testament texts.<sup>23</sup> However, since there are other ways of introducing composite quotations from the Old Testament, we need to explain why Mark chose this particular formula.

Still others see Isaiah as having a leading role as a prophet so that he would be mentioned in a composite citation. It seems best to see Mark putting his emphasis on the citation from Isaiah as the focus of his introduction. He is in this respect following the tradition of introducing the ministry of John the Baptist with the prophecy of Isaiah 40.

However, we should not see this quotation as merely the introduction to John's ministry. Since the quotation is syntactically more closely connected to 1:1 than what follows, Mark's focus is on the beginning of the Gospel which began in the word of Isaiah 40.

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 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. A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.' ... You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God!'"<sup>24</sup>

In other words, Mark used his special quotation formula to alert the reader that his focus lies in the introduction of the subject of the Good

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 153.

<sup>23</sup> J. Grassmick, "Mark" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary (NT)* ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (SP Publications, Inc., 1983), 103.

<sup>24</sup> Isaiah 40:1-9 (NIV).



news, who will be preceded by a forerunner. But he looks past the forerunner to the one who will truly fulfill the promise of the Gospel in Isaiah.

### *Tradition of the Quotation*

From a comparison of the wording in the texts, it appears that the first quotation is following the LXX of Exodus 23:20, the second follows the Masoretic Text of Malachi 3:1, and the final quotes from the LXX of Isaiah 40:3. The following is the listing of the various texts for the purpose of comparison:

Mark		Ἴδου ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου· <sup>3</sup> φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ,
Exodus	MT	הַנְּנִי שְׁלֵחַ מַלְאָכִי לְפָנַי
23:20	LXX	Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου,
Malachi	MT	הַנְּנִי שְׁלֵחַ מַלְאָכִי וְפָנֶי דְרַךְ דְּלִפְנֵי
3:1	LXX	Ἴδου ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου,
Isaiah	MT	קִוֶּה לְקוֹל יְהוָה בְּעֶבְרַת הַדֶּשֶׁר לְפָנֵי הַקְּהִלָּה
40:3	Targum <sup>25</sup>	A voice of one who cries: "In the wilderness clear the way before <i>the people</i> of the LORD, level in the desert highways before <i>the congregation</i> of our God.
	LXX	Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

A comparison of the wordings of Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1 in both textual traditions shows that there is conflation of these two texts in the LXX. There is evidence that these two texts had been linked together

<sup>25</sup> Translation taken from Bruce D. Chilton, "The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes," *The Aramaic Bible*, ed. Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987).

in the tradition.<sup>26</sup> Therefore we believe that Mark's quotation is not his own redaction but that he used traditional material for his quotation. His contribution is the special introductory formula which he used to alert the reader that the focus is indeed on the Isaianic prophecy.

### *Synoptic Parallels*

Matthew used the quotation from Isaiah 40:3 as one of his formula quotations in Matthew 3:1-3. As with his other formula quotations, Matthew first reports the event and then cites Scripture to show that the event is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The reversal in Mark shows a difference in emphasis. While Matthew focuses on the event as fulfillment, Mark looks to the prophecy as the beginning and direction for the present event.

Those who argue that the quotation in Mark 1:2 is spurious would cite Matthew's quotation here that only the Isaianic quotation is original.<sup>27</sup> They argue that if Mark 1:2b, c was original, it is inconceivable that Matthew would leave that out. However, since the question of synoptic relationship is not in any sense a settled issue, it is dangerous to base any conclusion to a supposed dependent theory.<sup>28</sup> Matthew did, on another occasion, use the material from Exodus 23 and Malachi 3.<sup>29</sup>

Luke's quotation from Isaiah 40 is much longer. In Luke 3:4-6, Luke quotes from Isaiah 40:3-5. The most significant point in Luke's quotation seems to be his adoption of the LXX rendering "all mankind will see God's salvation."<sup>30</sup> This appears to be an interpretive expansion of the Masoretic Text's כָּבוֹד.<sup>31</sup> This expansion is consistent with Luke's emphasis on the universal availability of salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Luke would also focus not only on the events but also

<sup>26</sup> See K.R. Snodgrass, "Streams of Tradition Emerging from Isaiah 40:1-5 and Their Adaptation in the New Testament," *JSNT* 8 (1980): 24-45.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 153.

<sup>28</sup> See the discussion in "Synoptic Relationships and the Supposed Priority of Mark," in C. S. Mann, *Mark, The Anchor Bible*, vol: 27 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986), 47-71.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 11:10.

<sup>30</sup> καὶ ὄψεται πάντα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. (Luke 3:6; Isaiah 40:5, LXX).

<sup>31</sup> D.L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 97.

the results of the events. Therefore we can understand why he included the longer citation from Isaiah which describes the effect which the voice from the wilderness brings.

### **The Function of Mark 1:1-3 in the Immediate Context**

Although Mark 1:1-3 is not syntactically related to 1:4ff, there is a close tie in the common theme of the appearance of the messenger in the wilderness. Furthermore, a close analysis of the structure of Mark 1:1-15 would show that it is a closely knit unit with 1:1-3 acting as the starting point which finds its imminent fulfillment in 1:14-15.

### *Structural Analysis of Mark 1:1-15*

#### **The Limits of the Section**

The boundary of this opening division has been placed at 1:8, 1:13, or 1:15. The separation between 1:8 and 1:9, created by the spacing of the text prepared by Westcott and Hort, finds few followers today. It is unlikely that Mark intended by his "beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" to refer only to the appearance of John the Baptist in the wilderness.

The reason for setting the demarcation at 1:13 is usually not clearly stated.<sup>32</sup> Scaria Kuthirakkattel made an excellent defense for setting the limit of the section to 1:13 instead of 1:15.<sup>33</sup> However, the reasons that he used to argue for this delimitation are open to considerable debate. First, he argued that the definite article should be read in 1:4 according to  $\aleph$  and B, making βαπτίζων a title for John instead of an activity which he undertook. Then he sees John the Baptist coming to preach as supplying the main verb which is missing from Mark 1:1-3. Thus he argued that the "beginning" of 1:1 refers to the preaching ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea. The main problem with this argument is that he forces "correct syntax" down on Mark, requiring him to have a main verb for his sentence. We should instead grant that

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, H. Anderson, "The Old Testament in Mark's Gospel", in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays*, ed. Etird, James M. (Purham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972), 283.

<sup>33</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1,14-3,6)*, 3-22.

Mark has complete freedom to make 1:1-3 a complex, but improper sentence as an introduction of the opening section.

The main part of Kuthirakkattel's argument is the literary coherence of Mark 1:1-13, which forms a concentric structure as follows:

A (1:1-4)  
                   B (1:5-6)  
                           C (1:7-8)  
                   B' (1:9-11)  
 A' (1:12-13)

The parallel between A and A' is acceptable, for both scenes are staged in the wilderness. But one may argue that the actual ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness (1:4-8) can also form a parallel to the struggle between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness (1:12-13). The main weakness of this structure comes in the parallel between B and B'. Although Kuthirakkattel demonstrated that there are some verbal similarities between the two passages,<sup>34</sup> the theme of the two can hardly be parallel.

Therefore, we find no sufficient reason to limit Mark's opening section to 1:1-13. We will include 1:14-15 in the structural analysis and attempt to demonstrate that the whole of Mark 1:1-15 forms a coherent unit and acts as a prologue to the Gospel of Mark.

### **The Literary Coherence of Mark 1:1-15**

Most recent scholars see Mark 1:1-15 as an integral unit.<sup>35</sup> There are many factors that tie the unit together. We will discuss some of them and show that they make the passage into a unified whole.

The word "Gospel," which occupies a prominent position in the opening verse, is repeated in 1:15 when Jesus begins His preaching ministry. The word is used eight times in the book. However, all three occurrences in the first half of the book are found in 1:1 and 1:14,15.<sup>36</sup> This suggests these occurrences form an *inclusio* for the section.

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<sup>34</sup> S. Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel* (1,14-3,6), 17.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, L.E. Keck, "The Introduction to Mark's Gospel," *NTS* 12 (1965-66) 352-70; see also Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 14; Mann, *Mark*, 179; Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 62-63.

<sup>36</sup> The other occurrences are found in 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; and 16:15.

Not only is the section tied together by the inclusio formed by the word "Gospel," the theme of preaching also links the section together. The term κηρύσσω is used in 1:4,7 for John's ministry and in 1:14 for Jesus' ministry. The good news is to be proclaimed, and we find in this section the beginning of this proclamation by the forerunner and the Messiah Himself.

Besides the use of key words which link together the passage, we can also detect a parallel between the description of John the Baptist and Jesus. Laurence Brett proposed the following analysis of the structure of this section.<sup>37</sup>

Title—1:1-2, Introducing Prologue and Gospel

a	b	c
John 1:3-7	Jesus and John 1:8-10	Jesus 1:11-15
3- "a voice"	8- water, Spirit	11- "a voice"
4- Setting	9- Jesus, John	12- Setting
5- Results	10-water, Spirit	13- Results
6,7a- "proclaims"		14- "proclaims"
7b- Proclamation		15- Proclamation

The major problem with this analysis is in the middle section. It is obvious that the narrative shifts from John to Jesus at the beginning of 1:9. The separation of part of John's proclamation to join with the baptism account of Jesus is quite artificial and unconvincing. Moreover, it is unnatural to cut the quotation in 1:2-3 into parts. Although Mark quoted from different sources, he introduced it with the title to the second quote and thus united them together.

Others have basically analyzed this section according to the parallels 1:2-3//1:9-11; 1:4-6//1:12-13; and 1:7-8//1:14-15.<sup>38</sup> Although the parallel is not exact, there are enough similarities to see 1:2-8 as having a parallel relationship with 1:9-15. Both figures are introduced by a divine

<sup>37</sup> Laurence F.X. Brett, "Suggestions for an Analysis of Mark's Arrangement," in Mann, *Mark*, 179.

<sup>38</sup> There are slight variations in different analyses; cf. Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1,14-13,6)*, 15 and Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 4.

announcement, they are both prepared in the wilderness, and their respective proclamations show a definite sequence. However, as we have discussed above, 1:2-3 is closely linked with 1:1 so that 1:1-3 forms the introductory unit. This then makes the parallels unbalanced.

In narrative literature, we should not look for exact schematic parallels as we would normally do in hymnic or epistolary literatures. The narrative turns on plot and development of themes although parallelism sometimes play a role. Therefore, we would offer a modified analysis based on plot development, which also offered a thematic parallelism:

- A. Beginning of the Gospel in prophecy concerning the messenger (1:1-3)
  - B. John's person and work as fulfillment of the messenger prophecy (1:4-6)
    - 1. John's ministry (4)
    - 2. John's success (5)
    - 3. John's identity as prophet (6)
  - A'. Bringing near the Gospel in John's prophecy (1:7-8)
    - B'. Jesus' person and work as (initial) fulfillment of John's prophecy (1:9-13)
      - 1. Jesus' identity (9-10)
      - 2. Jesus' approval from the Father (11)
      - 3. Jesus' work (12-13)
  - A". Fulfillment of the Gospel as imminent in Jesus' preaching (14-15)

In this analysis, we have the development of the Gospel from its initial prediction in the Old Testament, to the nearness brought about by the successful ministry of John as that which was prophesied, to the arrival of Jesus the Son of God who declares that the time is fulfilled after His struggle with opposition.

### ***The Role of 1:1-3 in 1:1-15***

According to the above analysis, we see Mark 1:1-3 as the starting point from which a series of events occurred, moving towards the goal in which Jesus declared the imminence of the time of fulfillment. As the rest of the Gospel trace the development of this message in Jesus, Mark

1:1-3 can be seen as the beginning of the beginning. The Gospel found its beginning in the proclamation of the prophet Isaiah, who followed in a tradition of the Old Testament that God delivers His people through the wilderness. Likewise, John and Jesus came to proclaim the time of fulfillment in and through the wilderness and intended to lead the people of God through it.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

In this paper, we have studied the meaning and significance of the introduction to Mark's Gospel. We found that it set the stage for the development of the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message that found its beginning in the words of the Old Testament prophets. Therefore, although there is only one truly "Markan" quotation of the Old Testament, we can argue from the use here that Mark saw the Old Testament prophecies as fundamental to the Gospel. In light of this, we should see the indirect quotations of the Old Testament in Mark, that is, those that Mark quoted through the mouth of Jesus and other characters, as having significance in the understanding of Mark's theological outlook as well.

One of the possible implications of this observation requires further investigation. It concerns the audience and purpose of the Gospel of Mark. Mark has been viewed as written to the Christians in Rome to prepare them for persecution.<sup>39</sup> However, some would argue from the strong Old Testament flavor indicated by this introduction, together with the imagery utilized in the description of both John and Jesus, that we should seek a more Palestinian background for the work. This kind of argument assumes that the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition play no part in the formation and life of the Roman Church, which is quite untenable. The solution to this problem would have to come from a more thorough study of the Gospel as a whole to determine Mark's purpose and his theology.

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<sup>39</sup> For the various views of the audience and purpose of the gospel of Mark, see R.P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1972), 51-83.

## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to show that the initial quotation in Mark 1:2-3 functions as a bridge between the Old Testament tradition of God's deliverance of His people through the wilderness and that of its fulfillment in the Gospel story. As such it is not only the beginning of the prologue but also the beginning of the whole Gospel and provides the proper orientation for the interpretation of the Gospel of Mark.

## 撮 要

本文旨在指出馬可福音一章2至3節中的舊約引述是舊約傳統和它在新約時代的應驗之間的橋樑，其作用在於將舊約中上帝拯救祂的子民離開曠野，與記載在福音書中有關上述舊約應許的成就連接起來。這樣，這句舊約引述不但是馬可序言的開始，更是整個福音故事的開始，因而為馬可福音的解釋提供適當的方向。