

Mark 1:2-8

1. Something Old

Opening Example: Favorite book/movie franchises?

Question: What do we do with the Old Testament? Particularly the God of the OT? (Note: "Hebrew/Jewish Scriptures," "First Testament," "Old Testament" all refer to Genesis—Malachi)

Marcion tried to answer this question by saying that the God of the OT was a *different god* than the God revealed in Christ. Therefore Christians should reject OT.

Smacks of anti-semitism. Marcion wanted a Christinity, "Untrammelled and undefiled by association with Judaism."

But then we meet the opening of the book of Mark. "The beginning of the Gospel" begins with — the Old Testament.

"Isaiah" quote is actually 3 Old Testament quotes. First Malachi 3:1,

"Look, I am sending my messenger who will clear/prepare the path before me; Then suddenly the Lord (Yahweh) whom you are seeking will come to his temple." (God is going to come on the scene; but first a messenger).

Which itself is a quote from Exodus 23 at Mt. Sinai, "I'm about to send a messenger/angel in front of you to guard you on your way and bring you to a place I've made ready."

And a quote from Isaiah 40, "A voice one calling, 'In the wilderness prepare the way for Yahweh; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, all all people will see it together."
(Which just a few verses later is the passage we talked about last week..."Tell the good news...here is your God!")

Application: Jesus and NT is unintelligible without the OT.

2. Something New

Just because there's continuity with what came before doesn't mean something new isn't happening.

In the stories of the first horseless carriages, the investors and inventors were ridiculed because what they were doing was "just a fad" or just a novelty. Cars were just doing the same thing horses had done for centuries. And horses were a lot easier to care for.

John (and, we'll see, Jesus) had continuity with the past; but something brand new was happening as well.

- Wilderness. All the best stories happen in the wilderness. Wilderness was the place where God did new things. Red Sea, Sinai. Expectation was high that the messiah would show up in the wilderness to start the revolution.
- Baptism. This is what happened to Gentile converts to Judaism. John is doing it to Jews.
- Elijah. Same description as 2 Kings 1:8. And the expectation that Elijah would come back. "Look, I am sending Elijah the prophet to you, before the great and terrifyin day of the Lord arrives."

Application: Reducing Jesus down to a "nice moral teacher" is an insult to what John proclaimed and the first Christians believed.

3. Requires a Change of Direction

John's message was to change direction.

- We think of repentance as negative. But it simply means to change direction.
- Repent is bit preachy. Christianeze. But, you know, we like it when people repent. Repentance can save lives. When people change their minds. (Gay marriage moved from being allowed in one state to all 50 from 2004-2015. One study showed that "Repentance" from banning gay marriage meant 134,000 fewer teens attempted suicide each year).
- Which, we also think of repentance and forgiveness of sins as an individual thing. And it can be. But it's also a community thing; a as-a-people thing. So, as we get closer to the death of Jesus, and we talk about "forgiveness of sins," remember that we're talking about a "nation-being-brought-of-an-exile" thing; not a "go-to-heaven-when-you-die, now-god-can-stand-to-be-around-you-thing."

But here's the thing about repentance and forgiveness: **Grace has little effect on those who feel they have no need of it.**