

The Gospel of Mark

Divine Providence 340

There are two things that are the essentials and at the same time the universals of religion, namely, the acknowledgement of God and repentance.

The beginning of the evangel of Jesus Christ, Son of God,
² according as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, (Lo! I am dispatching My messenger before Thy face, who shall be constructing Thy road in front of Thee.):

³ "The voice of one imploring: 'In the wilderness make ready the road of the Lord! Straight...be making the highways'" of Him!

True Christian Religion 766

The Lord is present with every person, urging and pressing them to receive Him. And when a person receives Him, which happens when they acknowledge Him as his God, the Creator, Redeemer and Saviour, this is His first coming, and is called twilight. From this time the person begins to have his understanding enlightened as regards spiritual matters, and to advance to more and more inward wisdom. As they receive this wisdom from the Lord, so they advance through morning into day; and they continue in this daylight up to old age and until they die. After death they come into heaven to the Lord Himself, and there, despite the fact that they died in old age, they are brought back to the morning of their life, and continue for ever to develop the wisdom which was implanted in them in the natural world.

SERIES OBJECTIVES

- Identify genuine truths in the literal sense of the Word (Mks gospel)
- To get more familiar with the content of the gospels
- Equip church members to be able to share key New Church teachings with others using the gospel as their chief reference
- To get back to basics focusing on those things that introduce a person into the church

SERMON 1: WHO IS JESUS CHRIST? MK 1:1-3

Readings *Is 9:2-8 & AC 2005*

Genuine Truth = Jesus Christ is Jehovah Himself in His Divine Human

See also Jn 13:13; Jn 14:6,8-11

Key Ideas

V1. Jesus Christ being the Son of God establishes Him as Jehovah (see also Jn 5:18), there was no confusion in the Jewish mind in regard to the meaning of this statement.

V2,3. The OT scriptures from which these quotes are taken use the name Jehovah and here are clearly associated with Jesus Christ.

AC 14 & 15 states that in the Heavenly Doctrines the name "THE LORD is used exclusively to mean the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, and He is called the Lord without the addition of the rest of His names."

This acknowledgement, Jesus Christ is God is the *beginning of the gospel* in a person's life.

If Jesus Christ is God then all that He said and did was a perfect correspondence of the Divine Love and Wisdom in action. So it is that the Lord through His life in the world created correspondences on the material plane of existence that are vessels able to receive His love and enlighten a person to the realities of spiritual life. These correspondences are now found in the gospels which are the record of the Lord's life on earth—they therefore serve as the ideal means by which a person can be introduced into the church. It is the means by which He can be made known (see **TCR 766**).

SERMON 2: FIRST CALL TO REPENTANCE MK 1:4-8

Readings *Ps 18:1-6 AC 1692*

Genuine Truth = If a person is to be saved they must engage in the spiritual discipline of repentance.

Key Ideas

The Greek word *metanoia* has very little in common with its English translation repentance.

Repentance is from the Latin *poenitare* meaning to feel sorry, pain, sorrow, regret or remorse. It describes a feeling.

Metanoia is made up of two parts—the particle *meta* meaning *above, after* or *transform* and the Greek word *nous* meaning mind—it literally means *transformation of mind*.

Apocalypse Revealed 531

Actual repentance is to examine oneself, to recognise and acknowledge one's own sins, to take the responsibility, to confess them before the Lord, to beg for help and power to resist them, and in this way to give them up and lead a new life, and to do all these things as from yourselves...

NJHD 164

164. A person who examines himself in order to repent must examine his thoughts and the intentions of his will. In this he must examine what he would do if he could, if, that is, he was not afraid of the law and the loss of reputation, honours and gains. All of a person's evils are to be found there, and all the evil actions he actually does come from that source. Those who fail to examine the evils of their thought and will cannot repent, for they think and will to act afterwards as they did before. Yet willing evils is the same as doing them. This is the meaning of self-examination.

⁴ John the baptist came to be in the wilderness and is heralding a baptism of repentance for the pardon of sins.

⁵ And out to him went the entire province of Judea, and all the Jerusalemites, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins.

⁶ And John was dressed in camel's hair, and had a leather girdle about his loins, and was eating locusts and wild honey.

⁷ And he heralds, saying, "Coming, after me, is One stronger than I, the thong of Whose sandals I am not competent to stoop and loose.

⁸ I, indeed, baptize you in water, yet He shall be baptizing you in holy spirit."

Arcana Cealestia 8387.

Those who wish to be saved must confess their sins and repent.

Metanoia refers to a new mind, an entirely new way of thinking, new ideas, new knowledge with the overarching idea being one of a considered evaluation of things leading to a decision to pursue a particular course of action. It strongly carries the idea of engaging ones will in accordance with ones understanding—ie to do what the Word teaches.

The Heavenly Doctrines talk of repentance as self examination and also speak of engaging the will to do what the Word teaches—desist from evil and learning to do good (see the work **Apocalypse Revealed 531** and **The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine (NJHD) 164.**)

John the Baptist represents the literal sense of the word—we are able to gain an appreciation of the nature of the literal sense through the description given of him and his message.

V4,5. John baptized in the Jordan. This river formed a boundary of Canaan. Water corresponds to truth—the Jordan therefore corresponds to truths that introduce a person into the church if they will be baptized in them. That is if they will enter into them and seek to obey them leaving behind old ways of thinking and feeling, self reliance and pride, stepping out of the familiar territory and plunge into the Jordan (people coming out of Jerusalem and Judea)

V6-8. John is dressed in course garments and is unsophisticated. This is the Word in its literal sense—yet its style is the divine style which has the appearance of being simple and even harsh in places. We see that the literal sense calls people to self examination and points people to “one greater” than it. It also promises a baptism of a very different quality. It leads a genuine seeker to things more internal.

Summary from Heavenly Doctrines regarding John and repentance

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That repentance is the first thing of the church, is very evident from the Word. John the Baptist, who was sent beforehand to prepare men for the church which the Lord was about to establish, when he baptized preached at the same time repentance; and therefore his baptism was called the baptism of repentance, for the reason that baptism signified spiritual washing, which is a cleansing from sin. This John did in Jordan, because Jordan signified introduction into the church, for it was the first boundary of the land of Canaan where the church was. The Lord Himself also preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins, teaching thereby that repentance is the first thing of the church, and that so far as man repents his sins are put away, and so far as they are put away, they are forgiven. And still further, the Lord commanded His twelve apostles, and also the seventy whom He sent forth, to preach repentance. From all this it is clear that the first thing of the church is repentance

⁹ And it occurred in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and is baptized in the Jordan by John.

¹⁰ And straightway, stepping up out of the water, He perceived the heavens rent, and the spirit, as a dove, descending and remaining on Him.

¹¹ And a voice came out of the heavens, "Thou art My Son, the Beloved; in Thee I delight."

¹² And straightway the spirit is ejecting Him into the wilderness.

¹³ And He was in the wilderness forty days, undergoing trial by Satan, and was with the wild beasts. And messengers waited on Him.

Arcana Cealestia 1692

Hardly anybody can find out what temptations or the struggles of temptation accomplish. They are the means of loosening and shaking off bad inclinations and false ideas and of developing a dread of them. They both provide a conscience and strengthen it. So they are the means by which people are regenerated. This is the reason why people who are being regenerated are sent into combat and undergo temptations. Those who don't go through it in bodily life do it in the next life, if by their make up they are able to be regenerated. For this reason the church is called "militant."

The Lord by His own strength and power, bore up alone under the most merciless struggles of temptation, for He was surrounded by all the hells and He consistently defeated them.

For people who are in the struggles of temptation, the fight is the Lord's, and it is He who conquers.

SERMON 3: TEMPTATION MK 1:9-13

Readings Ps 18:1-6 AC 1692

Genuine Truth = Reformation and regeneration cannot occur without temptations

Key Ideas

Johns baptism or being in the introductory things of the church is to be in a natural understanding of spiritual things. The application of the Word at the level of external behaviour. Cleaning up ones external life.

Commandments eg Thou shalt not steal levels of application

1. You do not take something that belongs to another—objects, employers time
2. Withholding useful information from a person
3. Not sharing your understanding of spiritual principles with someone
4. Not acknowledging the all good and truth is from the Lord
5. As a church not reaching out with the message of the gospel to others

Natural temptation vs spiritual temptation— Nat. external behaviour and conduct
Spiritual temptation—shift in internal state guilt that arises due to not fulfilling false obligations associated with old religious understanding.

V9. Attending to our exterior life and behavior and seeking to do what is right because the Lord commands it in His Word is the beginning of the spiritual life and opens the way for a deeper understanding of the Word.

V10. This is illustrated in Jesus rising up out of the water = the separation of what is higher and spiritual from that which is lower and natural in regard to our understanding of the Word. (see also Gen 1:6, separation of the waters). This is a profound change. Bringing on spiritual temptation—heavens are said to be "rent" Greek = *schizo*—violent rending of the understanding as it moves from a literal understanding to a spiritual understanding.

Spirit/dove = new ideas regarding how to love our neighbour— all those ideas born of the Lord's own love for the salvation of the human race. Jesus in the wilderness—new understanding in the church concerning its vision, mission and purpose requires adjustment and struggle - letting go that which hinders.

Temptation—two sides to its meaning. 1. to be attracted to some evil. 2. to test or attempt. Greek word is *peirazo* meaning *to try, to attempt, to prove*. Second meaning is our focus where temptation is about testing the strength or quality of something—testing the quality of the church's love. Example of someone starting a new job and coming to terms with its requirements, struggle, doubts about ability.

Tempt (Indo-European root = temp) meaning stretch, extend. **TEMPle** stretch of land set aside to **conTEMPlate** the heavens. Temple = side of the head over which skin is stretched tightest, part of a loom for keeping the warp taut.

Temptation comes when attempting something new—trying to find new ways to reach out; this is the tension of having lower and higher ideas separated of having our own needs met (lower) and meeting the needs of others (higher).

Mark 1v1-15 CLNT

¹⁴ Now, after the giving up of John, Jesus came into Galilee, heralding the evangel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ saying that "Fulfilled is the era, and near is the kingdom of God! Repent, and believe in the evangel!"

True Christian Religion 571.

After Repentance comes Reformation and Regeneration. Repentance comes first and is the means by which Reformation and Regeneration can advance step by step. When people go from being natural to becoming spiritual they move through two general states. The first state is called Reformation, and the second Regeneration. In the first state a person views spiritual things from a natural perspective and longs to be in a spiritual state; in the second state they view the things of the natural from what is spiritual in them. The first state is formed by means of truths, which must be truths of faith, and through these people look to charity; the second state is formed by means of the goods of charity, and by these people enter into the truths of faith. It can also be viewed in this way, the first is a state of thought from the understanding, and the second a state of love from the will. When this latter state begins and is progressing, a change takes place in the mind; the mind undergoes a reversal, the love of the will then flowing into the understanding, acting upon it and leading it to think in accord and agreement with its love; and in consequence so far as the good of love comes to act the first part and the truths of faith the second, people are spiritual and are new creatures; they then act from charity and speak from faith; they feel the good of charity and perceive the truth of faith; and they are then in the Lord, and in peace, and thus regenerate.

Key points summary

Process is a progression—each step dependant on the previous.

People enter spiritual life at 1. This is where our efforts should be in reaching out to others. Not at 4 or 5.

New Church has been guilty of overcomplicating things trying to present the Lord in His second coming before people have received Him as to His first coming.

Only through understanding this process will be able to really assist people to come into a fuller appreciation of the things of the church.

SERMON 4: SECOND CALL TO REPENTANCE MK 1:14-15

Readings Is 49:8-13 TCR 571

Key Ideas

The Word in its external and internal meanings calls every person to repentance. External repentance precedes internal repentance and both are necessary if a person is to be saved. John (rep. literal sense) calls people to clean up their exterior lives. Jesus (rep. spiritual sense) also calls people to clean up the world of their thoughts and affections.

Journey = spiritual progressions—The Lord coming from Galilee to John (v9) shows us that when external repentance is done the Lord or a new understanding of the Word begins to come to a person. Nazareth (a branch) of Galilee (desire to live a good life) rep. the state from which a more spiritual understanding of the Word can come from. External repentance introduces a person to the church. Class of people receptive to the gospel that the church should target.

Two words in Greek for time.

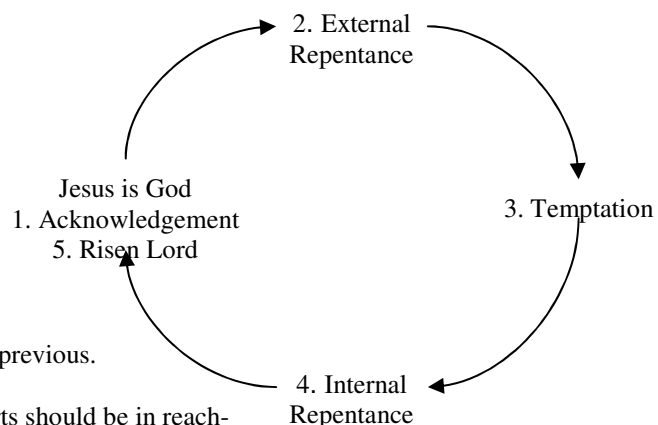
Significant time = "time is fulfilled..." *Kairos*

Ordinary time = *Kronos*

Jesus' return to Galilee to preach is the process of the Church being introduced into a person. This occurs after John (literal understanding of the Word) is imprisoned. Second repentance or transformation of mind. Issues when literal understanding imprisons the mind due to difficulty in reconciling view of God with literal sense: eg = God is love—yet in the literal sense of the old testament seems He is angry and vengeful. Church needs to be able to nurture and support people through this crisis. New Church well placed to do this.

Higher spiritual understanding arises "The kingdom of God is at hand" -

SUMMARY



Only through understanding this process will be able to really assist people to come into a fuller appreciation of the things of the church.