

## Mark Week 2

# Heaven Has Irrupted

March 1, 2026



Whatever you're doing as a Christian, you need to be doing more. The world's not going to just continue to get rosier and rosier. We can't tiptoe through the tulips anymore as Christians. We need to be for real. Amen, Chip, if nobody else will say, "Amen."

All right, let's get to work here.

Most of you all probably have had a picture that's come across your social media feed, or somebody's shown you a picture that's sort of like an optical illusion or something that you have to look at for a minute to figure out what's going on. You ever seen those things where you look for a minute and all of a sudden you can see numbers? It's sort of crazy, but it takes you a minute. You've got to spend a little bit of time to see this.

I saw a cute picture just a few weeks ago. I guess a guy was taking a picture of his family, and when he took a picture of his family, he didn't realize that there was a mirror in the picture. So when he took a picture of his family, he was in his underwear, and the mirror was reflecting him. You wouldn't have noticed it if you'd just been looking, but if you paid attention, you could see it.

And we've all had those pictures that we have to take a moment and go, "What is going on here?"

Well, here's a picture that went viral over the last year. People had no idea what to do with it. It's like, whoa, what is going on in this picture? And here is the picture. Look at it for a minute. You're probably going, okay, is there a Bigfoot in here? No, no, no. Just look at the picture.

You're probably going, "Okay, is that a—?" When I first saw this picture, I thought, is this like four different pictures spliced together? What is going on?

Here's what's crazy. That is a picture taken by someone's iPhone. There's nothing wrong with the picture. It hasn't been altered or anything. In fact, here are all the pictures that were taken with the iPhone. Of course, the one here in the center is the one we just saw. And you can see how the person took all these pictures with their iPhone.

It's crazy. It's a crazy thing to look at that picture and you know something's wrong. Something's off. But there isn't anything off. You're just maybe so used to seeing things a certain way, but you see that and you go, "Wow, that's pretty cool." Because that's what everybody thought. Something's wrong with this picture—until

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they learned that there wasn't something wrong with this picture.

Why do I say that? Great question.

The reason I say that is because oftentimes when we go to Scripture and we read about Jesus and we read what Jesus does, sometimes He does things in ways that we would go, that just seems like not the way I would have done it. It just seems maybe a little off. Like why did You do it that way? Why did You pray for them? Why did You do it that way?

And when we read Scripture, this is what we deal with. We deal with a Jesus that's constantly taking the way we do the world and sort of flipping it on its head. It's the upside-down kingdom, we call it in theology, that Jesus doesn't do it the way that we do it. He's constantly destabilizing the expectations and He's giving us new ways to see life.

And we should know that that's true. Solomon says in the book of Proverbs that there's a way that seems right to you and me, but it doesn't end in anything but death. There are things that seem right that aren't right.

And so this picture that we looked at that maybe seemed a little off but wasn't off—a lot of times when we go to Scripture and we read about Jesus, it seems like He's a little off. His family thought He was off. The disciples thought He was off. The crowds thought He was off. Like something's wrong. But when we really understand who Jesus is, we realize that His ways are the best ways. And even though He may destabilize us in some ways, He's actually really stabilizing you and me when we follow who He is.

And so this weekend, as we continue in the Gospel of Mark, I told you last weekend that there are going to be a lot of expectations that have to be reworked as we work through this passage together.

There are three specific things that we're going to see this weekend. Of course, we'll see it even more as we continue through the gospel. But the passage that we're going to look at—which is not that many verses—it destabilizes expectations. It's sort of a little alarming.

The first one we're going to see is that strength manifests in humility. That's a backward way for us. Most of us, if we were to be asked, you've got to have strength and you've got to have power in this world—that's true in this world. But that's not the way God's kingdom works. God's kingdom works through humility.

Remember, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Just a question. When's the last time you prayed, "God, humble me. Make me more humble"? Probably not.

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But this is where reading about Jesus and reading Scripture changes the way that we think because you really look at it and go, that can't be right. If I'm humble, people are going to take advantage of me. Things are going to go wrong. Yeah, because humility doesn't work in this world if what you're trying to gain is this world.

But let me remind you, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? We're not playing for this world. We're playing for another world.

We're going to see that sonship leads to suffering. The American church does not like the word suffering. We just don't like it because we've experienced a lot of affluence. I don't know how we would fare if we were placed in the situations that other brothers and sisters in the world face every day.

American Christianity is so circumstantial. As long as everything's going great, as long as all is good, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Job's good. Life's good. Things are going well. You pull in the parking lot. Praise God. It took me 30 minutes to park. I don't care. Life is good. I couldn't get my seat, but life is good. They ran out of coffee. Praise God. The message was terrible, but God, praise You.

But when things are going bad, it's this place stinks. You can't get in. The seats are not plentiful. The pastor's terrible. It's just the way we are. We're so circumstantial.

Can we go through difficulty?

I know for me as your pastor, one of the things I pray regularly is, "Lord, let me teach Your people how to have deep roots so if the world falls apart, we can say, 'Whatever my lot, it is well with my soul.'"

And we'll also see that divine affirmation precedes wilderness isolation. That's hard for us to wrap our heads around.

But again, this is destabilizing things. It's not destabilizing things just to destabilize things. It's teaching us something. It's teaching us the ways of the kingdom.

That's why I said last week, I think we need to be reacquainted with who Jesus is because the Jesus of Scripture is markedly different in many ways than the Jesus that is marketed in American culture.

And we need to be honest with Scripture—not what somebody says, not an agenda, not an opinion.

Who is Jesus?

So, let's get to work here.

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Last week, we talked about John the Baptist. He's baptizing in the Jordan. We talked about his baptism of repentance. And now we're going to pick up. We're only going to go through a few verses. We're not going to run through anything here. We're going to really take time and value Scripture. And I'm hoping that you learn how to read Scripture a little bit better. But I'm also hoping that you are inspired by what we're doing here as we read Scripture together.

I don't think there's anything better I can do as your pastor, no matter how bad the world may be falling apart, other than get into the Word of God and read it and let it speak to us. So let's do that here.

It says, "Now John was clothed..."

You probably stop and think, why in the world would I care what John the Baptist was wearing? This isn't *People* magazine. But when you see a word like clothed, you ought to ask, why would Mark want me to know what John the Baptist is wearing? Why is that important? It's obviously important, or it wouldn't be there.

Well, it says he was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist. That's not the normal getup that we're used to seeing. I don't know how well that would go over at Cheesecake Factory at UTC Mall. Might not get in.

And he ate locusts and wild honey. Locusts were the one insect you could eat in the law. Wild honey—you'd find it in the crevices of the rock. He's not on some bougie diet here. This is a man in the wilderness who is suffering and going through difficulty.

But he's got camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. Why does Mark want us to know what he was clothed with?

Well, it's important because you go back to the Old Testament: he wore a garment of hair with a belt of leather about his waist. They said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Mark wants you and me to know that John is dressed similar to Elijah. Why is that important? Because the Jewish people believed that before the Lord came, Elijah must come first. He's the messenger who needs to come first.

We're going to see later on in the chapters as we go forward, Jesus will talk about John the Baptist. And He will say, "If you have ears to hear, if you can understand, John was Elijah who must come first." He's the messenger.

That's why Mark wants us to see the clothing he's wearing. He's the Elijah who would come—not Elijah literally, but the

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messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord. Not throwaway words. Not just a verse that doesn't matter. It matters.

And we're told, "And he preached..." This is not everything John the Baptist preached. This is part of what he preached. But Mark has chosen to tell you and me what he preached. He could have chosen other things, but he chose this.

What do we learn about John the Baptist—the one, by the way, that Jesus said was the greatest that had ever been born among women? No one born was greater than John the Baptist up to that point.

Let's hear what he has to preach.

He says, "After me..." He's not drawing attention to himself. "After me comes he who is mightier than I." After me—not me. Don't look up here. There's somebody coming that I'm pointing you to.

If you ever feel called to ministry or you ever get an opportunity to preach, please remember: it is not your role to call attention to yourself. It's your role to preach and point people to the One who is mightier than you, to point people to Jesus. That's the job of the preacher.

I've heard over the years, "I wish you'd tell us more stories about your family." It's not about me. I'm not up here talking about me. I'm up here telling you about Jesus. I'm just the mailman delivering the mail of the kingdom to everybody that's here.

I wear my pants the same way you do. I don't walk on water. My kids pick their nose. Nothing special up here at all. They probably wipe it on each other too. But my point is, there's nothing special here. I'm here to do one thing: tell you about the One who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the way, the truth, and the life, that no one can come to the Father except through Him. His name is Jesus.

John understood that task.

"After me comes one who is mightier than I." And then listen to what he says: "The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."

Wow.

Mark Strauss, a New Testament scholar who has written on Mark, says this about that statement. Removing a person's sandals was a lowly task appropriate only for a slave. The Talmud says that the disciple of a rabbi must do for him everything that a slave

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would do except removing his shoes. John places himself below the level of the Messiah's slave.

John understands something. He understands humility before the Lord. He understands who Jesus is and he understands who he is.

Do we think maybe we're a little better than we are? "Well, I'm not as bad as my brother-in-law. He's scum. Not as bad as my neighbor. I don't know what they do at night. Pagans."

But what if we were people who walked in real humility? We would treat people differently.

John says, "I'm not even worthy to remove his shoes." What a slave would do.

The greatest man born up to that time was a man filled with humility—a man of strength, a man of power, a man full of the Spirit in his mother's womb—was humble.

Maybe we need to engage Scripture and drink it in.

And we're told that John said, "I have baptized you with water." We talked about that last weekend. "But he who is coming is mightier than I... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

We don't even know what to do in the American church half the time with the Holy Spirit because we go to extremes. We've got wild, frenzied, out-of-control over here. Or we run over here and say, we're not doing that—we'll be Father and Son, and the Holy Spirit we'll just put in the closet and shut the door because we don't know what to do with that.

Neither one of those are appropriate.

Biblically, we're supposed to be people filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, spiritual people doing spiritual things, allowing God to use us in ways that blow us away.

John says, "I baptized you with water, but the One who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." I think the church needs more Holy Spirit in us. I think we need to get wrecked a little bit. Shaken up a little bit.

You hear about getting filled with the Spirit. Reminds me of the story of the young boy up front saying, "Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit." An older lady in the back says, "Lord, don't. He leaks."

We don't want to be leaking Christians. We want to be people genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit.

And we'll see how much the Spirit is involved here. The Holy Spirit is all over this thing.

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It says, “In those days...” That gives us context. Jesus came from Nazareth. That locates who He is. People said nothing good comes from Nazareth. And He was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Lean in here, because the text is incredible.

When He came up out of the water, immediately—there's that word you hear a lot in the Gospel of Mark—Jesus saw the heavens being torn open.

Torn open. Ripped open. It's a violent term. What's going on here?

Mark is telling you that all those things God said in the Old Testament about how He was going to break into the world—how people would be given a new spirit, their heart of stone would become a heart of flesh, that God was going to forgive sins—right in this moment, God is ripping open the heavens and invading the world in the person of Jesus.

He's inaugurating the steps toward bringing the world back to right.

Right there, as Jesus comes up out of the water, the heavens are torn open. There's an inbreaking of heaven into this world, which is what it was always supposed to be.

Go to the first book of the Bible, Genesis: heaven and earth are created together. Go to the last book of the Bible, Revelation: people aren't flying away to heaven—heaven and earth are coming together. What happens in between? Heaven and earth are separated because of sin.

That's why we pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We're praying for heaven to come to earth.

We are citizens of heaven. We live as citizens of heaven. We don't look like citizens of this world because we're not representing this world. We're representing the One who is coming. We represent the kingdom that is coming—the city whose builder and maker is God.

We are constantly saying, “God, bring heaven to earth through me.”

God is breaking into the world here. He's tearing open the heavens, and the Spirit is descending on Him like a dove. This is hearkening back to the flood, where creation is resettled and redone. This is also reminiscent of a dove that is used as a sacrifice in the temple. There's a new creation. There's a sacrifice. All of it is going on in the water as God is tearing open the heavens.

You see here: Jesus is in the water. The Spirit is descending upon Him. And then there's a voice that comes from heaven. This is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit right here in that moment.

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That's why we're Trinitarian believers as Christians. We don't make these things up. They're right there in front of us.

In the book of Genesis, at the very beginning, you have God the Father creating. He's speaking the world into existence. You have the Spirit hovering over the waters. And then you have the Word that is spoken: **"Let there be light."**

Our whole world—everything you experience—height, length, depth, space, matter, time, gas, solid, liquid—all trinities. God's thumbprint is in everything. **The heavens declare the glory of the Lord.** Everything we experience is through a trinity because here's God the Father speaking, the Son, the Spirit—and the voice comes from heaven and says, **"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."**

This is a word spoken over Jesus. Now, Jesus is God. He's human. But as a human, God is speaking over Him an identity that nothing—misunderstanding, problems, difficulties—nothing can take away from what God has spoken over Him.

**"You are my Son... with you I am well pleased."**

This is important because nobody else hears this—but you do, because you're a reader and Mark's telling you, "Hey, are you going to recognize who this guy is? Are you going to miss Him?" Just about everybody else in the book does. He's telling you things. He wants us to see these things.

And the Spirit—again, immediately—drives Him out into the wilderness.

What? The Spirit leads Him into the wilderness?

Yeah. That's the place of testing. That's the place where you're forged.

What's interesting here is this word "drove out" is *ekballō* in Greek. *Ballō* is to throw. *Ek* is out. It's to throw out. It's the same word used of Jesus when He casts out demons. The Spirit has thrust Jesus into the wilderness.

He's God's Son. He has an identity. But if you're going to follow God, if you're going to be a follower of God, there's going to be testing. There's going to be forging. There's going to be character.

God didn't call you and me to comfort. He called us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

So He goes into the wilderness. What's out there?

He was there for 40 days. It calls back all those forties in the Old Testament—but primarily the 40 years of Israel where they didn't

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do what God wanted them to do. And Jesus is going to fulfill that.

And He's tempted by Satan.

Guess who shows up in the middle of the testing? Guess who shows up in the middle of the forging of character? Guess who shows up in the place where God is doing His work?

The enemy.

He always shows up when you're doing God's work. Always.

People come to church and they start to get their life right—or think about getting their life right—and then everything falls apart. Why do you think that's going on? Because the enemy doesn't want you to serve Jesus.

I had a person after the last service say to me, "You won't believe this. I didn't know God at all. I accepted Christ, and the very next day everything in my life fell apart. I'm talking about I lost everything. Over the next several months, I lost everything. But I'm going to tell you something—the greatest thing that ever happened to me. Because I've grown in the Lord, and I've seen His provision, and I've seen what He can do."

See, the enemy wants to take everything. He wants you totally discombobulated. He doesn't want you to serve God. He doesn't want you to press in. He doesn't want you to be what God wants you to be in any way, shape, or form.

The last thing he wants is for you to stand up and be the person that God has called you to be—to walk into the fullness of the authority of the Holy Spirit in your life and be the light to the world that God has uniquely called you to be. He doesn't want you to do that.

And then Mark throws in: he was with the wild animals.

Why mention that?

Because Mark is writing to Christians who are being thrown to wild animals by Nero. And he's saying, "Hey, Jesus was God's Son. And the Spirit led Him right into the place of forging character. The devil was there to tempt Him. He was out there with the wild beasts. But just know this—while He was out there in all of that, the angels were ministering to Him."

Mark is letting them know that no matter where they go, no matter what happens in their life, God is there. He's present. He's not absent.

This is an encouragement to Christians who are going through difficulty: Jesus has been there before you.

He's showing you the way.

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What can we learn from this?

The first point—heaven is irrupting. Not erupting with an “E.” Volcanoes erupt with an “E.” Irrupting is going into—like if you kicked in the doors and they irrupted into the sanctuary. Heaven is irrupting in this passage into the world. The long-awaited promises are being fulfilled amid spiritual opposition. And opposition is going to continue to happen in this book. The disciples will be opposition. Family will be opposition. Demons will be opposition. Everything is going to oppose what Jesus is doing. But heaven is irrupting into the world. And where irruption happens, there’s always opposition. And we’re seeing that here.

We see that the heavens were torn open, the Spirit came down as a dove, and then there was temptation by Satan. See, the reality is there’s an inbreaking in this passage. There’s a tearing out of the old order, and then there is a new creation that is happening.

It’s exactly what God wants to do with all of our lives. He wants to inbreak into your life in such a way that He completely gets control. He wants to tear out all those old things that don’t look like Him. And He wants to make you a new creation so that you and I can be the lights He’s called us to be, so men can see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

See, God is acting in Jesus to bring the world back to right. That’s what’s going on.

Now check this out. This is an inclusio. In biblical studies, we look at the beginning of books and the end of books. A lot of times there are similarities. At the beginning of Luke, they’re praying in the temple. At the end of Luke, they’re praying in the temple. At the beginning of Romans, Paul says he wants to bring about the obedience of faith to the nations. Chapter 1, chapter 16—he wants to bring about the obedience of faith to the nations. These are inclusios.

The word torn is used twice in the Gospel of Mark. Only twice. It’s used at the beginning when the heavens are torn and rent open—shredded. And then it’s used at the very end of Mark where the temple veil—the separation between man and God, between us and the Holy of Holies—gets ripped too.

What is God saying?

He’s saying, “I’m breaking into the world, and I’m tearing apart everything that would keep you from having a relationship with Me. You don’t have to go to a priest. You don’t have to go to a temple. You can come directly to Me because I am breaking into the world and I want you to have access to Me.”



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Can you imagine what that's like? That we can go before the One who created the world and spend time with Him? He says, "Come." It's powerful. It's not throwaway stuff. The Bible's awesome.

Second thing: our being precedes doing.

This is hard for us to understand. Biblically speaking, being precedes doing. In our world, it doesn't work that way. You have to do to be. You go to school to become something. You work hard to become something. You do to be. Do-be. Do-be-do.

It doesn't work that way in the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God, your being precedes your doing because your identity influences destiny.

See, Jesus has a word spoken over Him—God's Word: "**You are my beloved Son.**"

Why is that important? Because the Christians going through difficulty need to know they are His sons and daughters. They need to know that identity is settled.

We learn who Jesus is from the very beginning. We're told He's the Son of God. And nothing changes that at all because the story unfolds amidst misunderstanding, false accusation, criticism, suffering—all kinds of things—but it never takes away from His identity. He's always the Son of God.

And we sometimes hear the Word of God—what God has spoken to us—but circumstances mess us up. Mark is telling us, "No, no, no. If God says it, it's true." And he's written it in such a way that His identity guarantees the ending.

Just like when Paul says to you in **Philippians 1:6**, "**He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.**" He'll do it. He spoke a word. He says you're My children.

Now this is how powerful Mark is. In 1:11 at the baptism, we hear that He is My beloved Son. At the very center of the book of Mark is the Transfiguration where God says, "**This is my Son.**" No matter what's gone on between here and there has changed anything.

But where it gets powerful is when Jesus' identity looks like it's falling apart—He's suffering, He's dying. "Where's God?" No, no, no. God said, "This is My Son."

At the crucifixion, the Roman centurion who crucified Jesus comes to realize, "Surely this is the Son of God." The power of that is incredible. Rome is persecuting Christians. Centurions are nailing them to crosses. But God has spoken over His Son that He is His Son. Even the Roman centurion bows to the fact of what God has said

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because if God says it, He means it—and it happens. He guarantees the ending every time in every way.

And just a cool note—the exact amount of words from here to here are the exact amount of words from here to here. It's perfect. Which means if you want to know, did we get errors in copying or translation? Not at all. It's perfect. God knows exactly what He's doing. His Word is incredible. Look at that picture long enough to see what's going on.

Not only that, but we see that identity precedes action, performance, vocation, and ministry.

Why is it so important to see in this passage that what God has said over Jesus gets done? Because it matters to you and me.

We live in a world right now that doesn't even know how to answer this question: Who am I? People are confused. They don't know.

Listen to your pastor and lean in. If you don't hear anything else I say, hear this: our identity is shaped by God and who He says we are. It is not shaped by our feelings, our struggles, our sexuality, our goals, or our dreams. Those do not identify who we are. Who identifies who we are is God and what He speaks over you and me.

Our struggles in this life may shape our story, but they do not write our name.

Not only that, but God's declaration is more decisive than our confusion.

If identity is self-generated, then it is endlessly fragile. But if it is divinely given, it is secure. It's secure.

The last thing in this passage is realizing the importance of being Spirit-led in our lives. Spirit, lead me. Guide me.

You see it all through this passage. The Spirit descends like a dove. The Spirit drives Him into the wilderness. The Spirit is doing all these things. The Spirit is ripping open the heavens and ripping open direct access to God.

All of this is going on.

We're called to be something more. We're not called to just come to church and listen to a message. We're called to be the people God has called us to be.

We suit up every day with the armor of God. We go out into a world that is passing away. People are looking for everything—the next job, the next car, the next thing. What they don't know is that

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they're actually looking for the One we know. They're actually looking for Jesus.

But they need to see people living this out—people who look different than the world. We don't do it the way the world does it. We don't act the way the world does it. We wash feet. We go the extra mile. We live in humility. We pray for and love our enemies. We're different.

The Spirit will lead us to be a witness for the Lord because the Spirit is mission-oriented, not comfort-oriented. We're not called to comfort as Christians. We're called to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

We're living in a time and age where whatever's gone on before isn't going to cut it. We need to be seriously pressing in. We need to be serious about our Christianity. This is not tiptoeing through the tulips. This is for real. The world is going to continue to fall apart. What we need is to press into God—be people of prayer, people of devotion, people that love other people, people that serve, people that give to make a difference.

I've been saying this for 16 years, and I'm not going to stop. I'm going to continue to get up here and preach my heart out because I want to make it as difficult as possible to go to hell in Lakewood Ranch.

That's why we do all the things that we do. That's why we serve the way that we serve. That's why we get involved the way that we get involved. Because what really matters more than anything else is to make sure that people who are lost find Jesus.

Lord, we're going to sing a final song here. I pray humbly that You would speak to Your people here—those in the room, online, Lighthouse, lobby. Grow anchors in us. Put roots in us that are deep. Call us to another level of our Christianity. Call us to take steps closer to You. Move us to be more like our Savior.

Speak to us out of Your Word and inspire us to become the people You've called us to be. As we sing this song, I pray that Your Spirit would hover over this place, doing only what You can do.

We love You, Lord. We thank You for everything. In Jesus' name.

And everybody said, "Amen." Would you stand with us and let's sing.