

Mark 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Analysis

Mark quotes Isaiah 40:3, applying this prophecy of Israel's return from Babylonian exile to John's ministry. The 'voice crying in the wilderness' (φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ) identifies John as the prophetic herald Isaiah foretold. The wilderness (erēmos) recalls Israel's formative experience after Egyptian exodus—John's wilderness ministry symbolizes a new exodus and preparation for God's kingdom. 'Prepare the way of the Lord' (ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου) calls for spiritual preparation through repentance. 'Make his paths straight' uses road-building imagery for royal processions—spiritually, this means removing sin's obstacles. The title 'Lord' (Kyrios) translates Hebrew Yahweh—Mark identifies Jesus as Israel's covenant God, not merely a human prophet.

Historical Context

Isaiah 40:3 originally addressed Jewish exiles in Babylon (6th century BC), promising God would lead them home through wilderness. Jewish messianic expectation often employed exodus imagery. John's ministry in the Judean wilderness near the Jordan River (where Israel entered Canaan under Joshua) deliberately evoked these associations. His call to repentance prepared hearts to recognize Jesus as the Messiah bringing ultimate deliverance from sin and death.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the wilderness setting connect Jesus' work to the exodus narrative and Israel's formative history?
2. What 'paths' (obstacles, sins, idols, false expectations) need straightening in your heart to properly receive and follow Christ?

Interlinear Text

φωνή	βοῶντος	ἐν	τῇ	ἐρήμῳ·	Ἐτοιμάσατε	τὴν
The voice	of one crying	in	G3588	the wilderness	Prepare ye	G3588
G5456	G994	G1722		G2048	G2090	
ὁδὸν	κυρίου	εὐθείας	ποιεῖτε	τὰς	τρίβους	αὐτοῦ
the way	of the Lord	straight	make	G3588	paths	his
G3598	G2962	G2117	G4160		G5147	G846

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 3:3 (References Lord): For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.