

Mark 1:9-15

- 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.
- 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.
- 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."
- 12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.
- 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.
- 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,
- 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

9 *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*

- The Cambridge Commentary notes, "*In those days, i. e. towards the close of the year...a.d. 28, when our Lord was thirty years of age (Luke 3:23), the time appointed for the Levite's entrance on 'the service of the ministry.'*" (*Num. 4:3*)
- Presumably, Jesus had been living with his parents a quiet life in a quiet town which is unnamed in the Old Testament, but, although Nazareth itself was not notable, its proximity to centers of learning, and both Roman and Jewish elites made it a perfect place for Jesus to "increase in wisdom and stature."
- Matthew Henry dreams, "*How much hidden worth is there!*"

- The site was probably near Jericho, where multitudes from Jerusalem could easily gather.
- We are tempted to jump quickly to the other gospel descriptions of the baptism because Mark's narrative is sparse and matter-of-fact. Try to receive this account, however, as a first century reader might, because Mark's gospel was the only written gospel for at least a decade.

10 *And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.*

- Yes, you guessed it! "Just as he was coming up..." is, actually, "immediately!"
- Wow! The heavens were "torn apart!" or, literally, "rent." Mark is not only immediate, he is vivid!
- What a beautiful symbol for the great gospel truth that it is Jesus who opened up the heavens that all might find salvation by faith and grace.
- Some have insisted over the years that Jesus somehow became the Christ at this moment as the spirit came upon him.
- The Pulpit Commentary writes, "*The earliest heretics took advantage of this statement to represent this event as the descent of the eternal Christ upon the man Jesus for personal indwelling.*"
- Many have superimposed upon this passage an emphasis on immersion, which only became popular beginning in the 1800s; and even though it cannot be either proven or disproven, the evidence of similar practices of that day and the pattern of the early Christian church suggests otherwise.
- In Mark, the Spirit *descends* as a dove, not necessarily in the form of a dove.
- A dove is a wonderful representation of the Spirit: humble, meek, gentle, mournful, peaceful, pure, and ever-present.

11 *And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

- The Cambridge Commentary writes, *"The first of the three heavenly Voices to be heard during our Lord's Ministry, viz., at (i) His Baptism; (ii) His Transfiguration (Mark 9:7); (iii) in the courts of the Temple during Holy Week (John 12:28.)"*
- All three synoptic gospels agree here, which speaks to this being well witnessed and attested.
- Charles F. Best wrote, *"Most of all, the baptism of Jesus reminds us that to identify with God and God's mission is a threefold experience. It is a baptism of water for repentance, forgiveness and identification with Jesus Christ. It is the gift of the Spirit, the gracious presence of God which brings us fulfillment and assurance. And it is also a naming: we are adopted as sons and daughters of the creative and redeeming Lord. We are chosen for service and blessed with God's favor, as those called "children of God."*

12 *And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.*

- The verb in Greek is so strong as to suggest that the Spirit "kicked him out" into the wilderness! Mark definitely wants to convey force and urgency!
- Temptation always follows triumph!
- Once consecrated, it is the call of every believer to turn away in obedience to God from darkness, deception, and death.
- Vincent states, *"The place is unknown. Tradition fixes it near Jericho, in the neighborhood of the Quarantania, the precipitous face of which is pierced with ancient cells and chapels, and a ruined church is on its topmost peak."*

13 *He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*

- Ellicott explains, *"In our Lord's time these might include the panther, the bear, the wolf, the hyena, possibly the lion."*
- Jesus is unharmed by the wilderness beasts, reminding us of Adam in the Garden.
- The Greek Expositor writes, *"These few touches of Mark suggest a vivid picture of a spiritual crisis: intense preoccupation, instinctive retreat into congenial grim solitudes, temptation, struggle, fierce and protracted, issuing in weakness, calling for preternatural aid."*
- Mark doesn't use the term "devil," but, rather, Satan, the adversary of both man and God.
- We are led to infer that the three temptations mentioned in Matthew may have been the strongest or most important, but that temptations were constant for the forty days.

14 *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,*

15 *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

- Mark agrees with Matthew in beginning the gospel ministry after the temptations.
- Mark relates the arrest of John as though any reader or hearer would (immediately!) know the details.
- If John were six months older than Jesus, and if he, too, waited until the priestly age of 30, his ministry would have been brief.
- The time is fulfilled! The fullness of time!