

Prepared for Ministry

Mark 1:9-15 (11/02/14)

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"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee...." (Mark 1:9)

The time has come. This Middle Eastern Jewish carpenter from Nazareth closes his shop door for the last time. He is heading out to meet John the Baptist down at the south end of the Jordan, about a 100-mile trip. But who is this carpenter making this journey? Don't be too quick to think you understand Him.

Here He Comes – Who is He? It took the early church over 400 years to figure out who He is and there were many wrong and heretical views. The early Gnostics got it all confused since they believed matter was evil and spirit good. So either Jesus just seemed to be there but was really a phantom, or when He was baptized the Christ Spirit came upon Him and left before His crucifixion. In the early 300s a man named Arius painted Jesus as a great Hero, God-like, but not fully God. His view became very popular. But a bit later Apollinarius rose up and said, "No, no, no. He had a human body but his mind was pure God." "No," said Nestorius in the 400s, "He was two persons, a human person and a divine person." Then Eutyches said He had one nature, a human and a divine nature all scrambled together to make a third nature, so He was neither truly God nor truly man. Finally in AD 451 church leaders got together at Chalcedon in Asia Minor and wrote up a creed known as the Chalcedonian Creed to settle this issue once and for all. This creed stated that Jesus is One Person with two natures that are "inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably".... "Each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son...." That statement has stood the test of time for explaining who this Person is.

Let me give you a phrase to impress your friends and confound your enemies. This Man is the one and only Theanthropic Person in Hypostatic Union. He's the God-Man with two natures united so that He's still One Person, but has two natures. Wow! You thought the Trinity with One God existing in Three Persons was tough to get your head around. I think this is just as much a mystery. You'll never logically figure it out. Just rejoice in this amazing Person! Christ is worthy of our praise and worship and adoration forever and ever!

Here He Comes – to launch His public ministry - v. 9

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

Now, Jesus has been living in Nazareth for the last 30 years according to Luke 3, after being born to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. He's been working as a carpenter, a "techne." This Greek word is the source of our words technical, tech school, and techie. It has the idea of designing and building stuff. But now, Jesus leaves Nazareth and everything is about to change. His time has come. He closes the shop door and heads out to meet John the Baptist, right on schedule. He is about to go public.

He comes out of total obscurity; no one besides Mary and probably Joseph really knew who He was. And even they pondered Him in their hearts, especially Mary. As a son He always obeyed, never talked back, always did what He was asked. His goodness probably really got on his brothers' nerves, "They never spank Jesus. We get all the spankings." Even when he went public and did miracles, his brothers didn't believe in him.

So there was nothing about Jesus' first 30 years that was striking or set him apart as different from other young men except he never sinned. I'm sure if you wanted a well-built plough or yoke or table, He could do it.

All those silly stories about Jesus wowing his buddies by turning little clay balls into sparrows or striking down bad guys or one time when a friend fell from a balcony and died and his parents charged Jesus with

pushing him over so Jesus raised him from the dead and asked, "Did I push you over?" "No!" These and other stories are from false writings from the first couple centuries after Christ.

Here He Is – to be baptized and anointed for His public ministry – v. 9-11

Jesus...was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

Matthew tells us Jesus submitted to John's baptism "to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15) True, John preached a baptism of repentance for sinners, but John was also the great Preparer in the wilderness for the coming Messiah! Jesus submitted to baptism because God wanted Him to, and in this way He authenticated finally and for sure John's ministry. John was preaching the kingdom of God, and here's the King! He was publicly identifying with John and with all those Jews who were baptized to prepare for their Messiah. Luke 7:30 says the Pharisees and lawyers rejected God's purpose for them, refusing to submit to John's baptism, but not Jesus!

Baptism is important today. We aren't baptized for the same reason Jesus was, but when you submit to baptism you are publicly identifying with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and with God's people. You are also showing your union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. If you haven't been baptized, the only question is, why not? If you are a believer, join the next group. Those Sunday morning baptisms are a highlight of our church!

Two things happened when John baptized Jesus. When Christ comes up from his baptism, which was almost certainly immersion since He "came up out of the water," the sky splits open, the Spirit comes down, and God the Father speaks to His Son. Mark uses a strong word for "opening," like ripped or split (skidzo - schism). The heavens were ripped open! Calvin says John could see beyond the planets and stars. What's happening here is monumental. This is the inauguration of Jesus Christ into His Messianic ministry heading right up to the cross, burial, resurrection, and ascension. According to John 1:33-34, John saw the Spirit coming down and probably heard the voice.

The Spirit came upon Him without measure, in other words, in fullness. He had the Spirit as a child, like John the Baptist, but this is a special, one of a kind, full-blown anointing prophesied in Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners." The Spirit came "as a dove." This is probably speaking of the character of the Spirit not coming in violence and vengeance, but in gentleness and approachableness. He will come to rule with a rod of iron at His second coming, but not now!

The Spirit did not come upon His divine nature, but His human nature. Everything Christ did in His public ministry He did in the power of the Spirit as a Man. He is fully prepared and equipped right here for all he will be doing. Peter clarifies this for us in Acts 10:37-38

*You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the **Holy Spirit** and with **power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

The second thing that happened is this voice right from heaven. I just love this. Every son wants to hear their father's approval. And Jesus, in His humanity, drinks up these inspiring, invigorating words from His heavenly Father. "I love you and totally approve of you. I am well-pleased with you!" What is God saying to us right here? 1) God is really there – He's talking, there are sound waves, ear drums vibrating, hearing the very voice of God! God isn't just a theory or concept or philosophy! 2) God has a unique relationship with His Son – My beloved Son! There is love and enjoyment and delight within the trinity. 3) The Father finds His greatest delight in His Son!

Remember, this is why Jesus came – to bring us into a relationship with God! If you are a believer in Christ, a genuine Christian, then God the Father says the same thing to you! If God loves and is pleased with Jesus, He loves and is pleased with you because you are in Christ. That's why He came! You are in Christ and being there, God couldn't love you more than He loves Christ! Listen to Ephesians 1:4-6

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

So now Jesus is fully prepared for His public ministry, with the Spirit and the assurance of the Father's love and delight! But before He goes out to preach and heal, He has a test to endure for our sake.

There He Goes – to do battle with the devil – vv. 12-13

Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

First, the Spirit impels or drives Jesus out, emphasizing that Jesus and we are in a spiritual battle, a spiritual war, and there is a huge enemy of everything God is doing for humanity right now. Jesus has to face this foe. The devil slithered into the garden of Eden and succeeded in seducing our first parents into disobeying God and giving him their worship. Here we are in a wilderness, in isolation from all human comfort, and God arranges for this duel, this trial, between His Son and His enemy. If Satan can get Christ to sin just one time, God's whole redemptive plan goes up in smoke!

You'll have to read Matthew and Luke for the full play-by-play of what's happening here. Mark indicates Satan was tempting Jesus for the entire 40 days. Probably those three major temptations were like Satan's strongest blows! You're hungry, so turn stones to bread. No one knows you; jump down from this high pinnacle. You need a kingdom; take possession of all the kingdoms of this world with one little caveat – just bow down to me and worship me. Were these temptations real? Absolutely! Jesus was weary, hungry, and alone, and Satan came at just the right time. This wasn't a cake walk for Jesus. He experienced genuine temptations so He could become our faithful and sympathetic high priest. He knows your trials and gives you mercy and grace to help in just the nick of time.

How did Christ win? The same way you and I win. God doesn't put us in temptations so we will cave, fail, mess up. He wants to show Himself strong on our behalf through the Spirit and the Word! 1 John 2:14 says, "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and YOU HAVE OVERCOME THE EVIL ONE." We had a pastor in Warsaw who loved teaching on the life of Christ. I can still remember his assuring us that any Christian equipped with the Word of God and the Spirit of God are more than a match for Satan! Luther confidently wrote in *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*: "One little word shall fell him."

So by the Spirit and the Word and prayer, you are more than a match for the devil. He is not in lock down right now. He's walking around like a roaring, hungry lion, looking for tasty Christian strips who have walked away from God and His Word and aren't fighting the fight like our Lord did! God says, "Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might! Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day!"

What about the beasts and the angels? My opinion is, Jesus had a foretaste of the millennial blessings of the entire earth regenerated, which will include the wild and dangerous animals domesticated and lying down with the lambs and sheep and cobras. And Hebrews 1:14 says angels are sent out to render service to the heirs of salvation. Angels function on our behalf. Maybe it was the angels that kept me from pulling out in front of that semi that I almost didn't see many years ago! Or allowed only the deer guts to fly through my windshield and land in my lap rather than the bones which could have impaled my heart! Or kept our vehicle from turning over when I ran off the Pennyrile into the median strip and helped me to slowly steered it back up to the road. However they work in our lives, we know they comforted Christ!

Now between verses 13 and 14 a lot of time passes that Mark, Matthew, and Luke don't mark. You have all of John 2 through 4 taking place, possibly 8 to 12 months. You have the wedding in Cana, cleansing the temple, Nicodemus, the woman at the well. John has been taken into custody for rebuking Herod for marrying his brother's wife! We'll see John the Baptist again in chapter six. It's a rather grisly story.

There He Goes – preaching the gospel! vv. 14-15

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

This begins what's called the greater Galilean ministry, a period of a year and a half when Jesus preaches and does all kinds of miracles. B. B. Warfield commented that few people were probably sick in this area in view of all the healings Jesus did. We don't have nearly all Jesus' miracles recorded.

Now, the **time has been fulfilled**, or filled full. What does He mean? Here's the reason there was such a strong Messianic expectation among the Jews. God had revealed to Daniel that 483 years after a decree to rebuild the Jewish temple, which most Bible students believe was issued in 444 BC, the Messiah would come. The time is fulfilled. God never misses His appointments. Messiah is here and He is preaching God's good news. Of course, Daniel 9 says Messiah will be cut off, too. Many people believe the actual fulfillment was on the day Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey and all the people were singing His praises!

Notice, **Jesus is preaching good news**. God is now speaking to you through His Son and it's good news. He is reconciling sinners to Himself. It's all good news: forgiveness, redemption, salvation from the curse of sin. This Gospel tells us there's a loving personal God in heaven moving and working in and through His Son here on earth for us! What if there wasn't this gospel for this world? What if there was only Islam with its Sharia law? Look at Hinduism. Look at Shintoism, 80% of Japan. Look at communism. Look at atheism and secularism. Then look at Christianity, at this good news Jesus is teaching! Look at true Christians, who find hope in the face of death, power to conquer every kind of addiction, assurance of forgiveness and acceptance with God. Joy in the midst of severe suffering!

Do you really want a world without the gospel of Christ? How dreadful. Jesus begins preaching and declares that God's wonderful kingdom is near, but people have to **repent and believe**, the two conditions every human being must obey to enter into the kingdom of God. Thank God for the good news that He is bringing salvation in His Son, and thank God He delights in Jesus, because then He also delights in you and me if you have turned to God and embraced Jesus as your Lord and Savior!