

“What Sort of Man is This?” Part 2: His incomparable Life

Mark 1:9 ESV In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13** And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

- I. I want to begin today with a question: “What did Christ come to earth to do?”
 - A. There are many answers that have been offered to this question over the years.
 1. Some would say that Jesus came to earth to teach us higher ideals; to show us how to live in peace with our fellow man and how to “turn the other cheek”. It’s the approach to Jesus that says he was primarily a “good teacher”. But does this version of Jesus tell us the whole story?
 2. Others might say that Christ came to earth to die for our sins. This is absolutely true. But while it is true, we must ask ourselves, “Is it complete?”
 - a) Often when we think about Jesus, our tendency is to rush straight to Mount Calvary to see his bloody crucifixion, completely missing what happened at places like Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem, etc., etc., etc.
 - b) It is important to pause at these places along the way and ponder what happened there with as much interest as we give to Calvary.
 - (1) Consider this: Jesus lived 30 years on earth before beginning his ministry. His ministry lasted 3 years and was very full and active.
 - (2) **John 21:25 ESV** Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
 - B. When we go straight to his death instead of first considering **his life**, I think we miss a message that his life tells us, one that is just as important as the one told by his death. And if that’s so, shouldn’t we discover what that message is?
 - C. Today we are going to look at three events in Jesus’ life: his baptism, his temptation in the wilderness by the devil, and the inauguration of his ministry. We will try to uncover what importance these events might hold for us.
- II. **Mark 1:4 ESV** John (the Baptist) appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6** Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. **7** And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. **8** I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

- A. John the Baptist was Jesus' slightly older cousin, though they lived in different regions of 1st century Israel. Both of them had been miraculously conceived. John, to parents who were past child-bearing years; and Jesus, of course, to an unmarried virgin.
1. From the text we just read, we see that John the Baptist knew and accepted the temporary nature of his assignment as the one who would announce the coming of Jesus to be Israel's Messiah (This was prophesied about him by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi).
 2. He also clearly understood that the ministry of Christ would be superior, overshadowing his ministry in every way. So it should be no surprise that when Jesus came to him to be baptized, we read in Matthew...
 - a) **Matthew 3:14 ESV** John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" **15** But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.
 - b) When Jesus said, "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness", he was pointing to his role as the **Son of Man** rather than that of the **Son of God**. He was saying that what he was doing, he was doing as the representative of all humanity.
- B. So the bible tells us that Christ entered the water with John and three things happened.
1. First, He was baptized, even though he had no sin of which to be cleansed.
 - a) The **already** sinless one came out of the water and stood before God, as well as John and the watching world, **symbolically** clean and pure. By submitting to baptism, Christ was identifying with us - the world of sinners of which he was now a part.
 - b) Though John had already identified him as the spotless "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)", he stood in humanity's place, as the perfect man, demonstrating the beauty of a human man standing pure before God and man.
 2. Next, the heavens were torn open, and they collided with earth, as the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.
 - a) Standing there in perfect purity, the Spirit of God came to rest upon "the man, Jesus Christ", to dwell with him and in him, in order to live a new kind of human life in the power of God, and in absolute dependence, never stressing or striving. Rather, he was led by him moment by moment.
 - b) When Peter preached the first gospel message to the Gentiles, he tells them of **Acts 10:38 ESV** how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.
 3. Lastly, He heard the voice of the Father, approving him. "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
 - a) There was no question of his status before God! Many men might tremble in insecurity wondering what God wants, or thinks, but not so with Christ, because the Father made it clear that he delighted in him!

- b) Without the blemish of sin, God declared of his son what no one since Adam and Eve before their fall in the Garden had known: the complete and perfect approval of the Father.
 - C. Though he was in the world and surrounded by sin, for Christ, it was like a return to Eden. He was perfectly clean, walking with the Holy Spirit, and fully approved by the Father!
- III. **Mark 1:12a ESV** The Spirit immediately **drove him** out into the wilderness. **13** And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan...
 - A. Mark doesn't give us as many details of the this event as Matthew and Luke do, but he adds one important fact for us to consider.
 - 1. Jesus didn't merely stumble into the wilderness to face off against the devil by happenstance; rather, it was the intention and design of God himself. Jesus was **driven** into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit...
 - 2. The Greek word for "drove" here is **Ekballo**. It means to "lead one forth or away somewhere with a force which he cannot resist". Interestingly, it is the same Greek word that is used when Christ would drive an unclean Spirit out of a man. Because the Spirit was now in control, Christ was compelled so strongly by God, that he couldn't refuse his leading even if he had wanted to. Why?
 - B. Because there was business for Jesus to do. If he had returned to Eden, Jesus must face the same challenge posed to Adam and Eve: overcoming the tempter!
 - 1. Would he succeed where Adam and Eve and all of Israel failed?
 - 2. As Israel was in the desert 40 years, facing and being defeated by every kind of temptation, Christ would be in the desert for 40 days, facing the same temptations.
 - C. **1 John 2:15 ESV** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.
 - 1. John says that there are 3 impulses that make up the fallen world system:
 - a) First, "the desires (or lusts) of the flesh"; things we crave, thinking they will satisfy us: sex, food, drugs and alcohol, etc. These are usually rooted in a good appetite like the need for affection, nourishment, or happiness.
 - (1) But when we look to these things rather than God to bring us satisfaction, a problem results. **Psalm 16:5 ESV** The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
 - (2) God had provided a garden full of trees to satisfy every hunger she could ever experience, yet Eve looked at the fruit that was forbidden to her by God and saw that was "good for food (Genesis 3:6)". Therefore she took it, surrendering to the lust of the flesh.
 - (3) The children of Israel complained that there was nothing to eat or drink in the wilderness over and over. God had provided manna from heaven for them to eat, and water to flow from a rock to quench their thirst, but the Bible says they desired the food of Egypt instead.
 - (4) We all know what it's like to think that what we crave will satisfy us, only to be left feeling empty and unfulfilled, don't we?

- b) So the enemy comes and tries this strategy on Jesus! “Poor, poor Jesus!”, he might have said, pretending compassion. “You haven’t eaten for 40 days! You must be starving! No one would fault you for having a little snack! Say, I’ve got an idea! If you’re really the Son of God, why don’t you command these stones to become bread! Surely you can do that!”
- (1) But Jesus, in an act of self-control and submission to the Father he quotes Deuteronomy to the devil.
 - (2) “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God!”
- c) Second, John lists “the desires (or lusts) of the eyes”. These are the things we see that we think we can add to our life to make us happy. Greed, lust and covetousness fall into this category.
- (1) Paul warns us about these things in Colossians 3:5, saying that they are essentially idolatry.
 - (2) Notice again in Genesis, that Eve notices that the forbidden fruit was “a delight to the eyes”.
 - (3) When Moses was slow in coming down from Mount Sinai, Israel demanded that Aaron make them a shiny, golden god. When he did, he said that **the calf** was the god that brought them out of Egypt!
 - (4) Haven’t you made or pursued some beautiful “golden calves” in your life that you were sure would make you happy or that you believed could deliver you? I know I have.
- d) The devil returns to Jesus, and in an instant of time shows him every kingdom of the world along with all of their wealth. Once again, with a pleasant tone he says, “Will you just take a look at all that! That’s what you came here for right? To be a king? But why this ‘suffering servant’ routine? I’ll tell you what. If you’ll just bow down and worship me, I’ll give it all to you right now and you can skip the cross! You can’t beat that deal!”
- (1) But Jesus pulls out his pocket Old Testament again, turns to Deuteronomy again, and says, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve!”
 - (2) Jesus must have thought, “Nice try. But I didn’t come to conspire with you, I came to dethrone you.”
- e) Third, John mentions the “pride of life”. The Greek word for pride here means: an insolent and empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources, and shamefully despises and violates divine laws and human rights. It manifests in our universal impulse to boast; in our shameful bragging of who we are, what we have, and what we do.
- (1) “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest.” -C.S. Lewis

- (2) In Eden, Eve saw “that the tree was desired to make one wise”, it could produce something of which she could boast.
- (3) In the wilderness, Moses’ own brother and sister rebelled against him in their pride, jealous that God had chosen him to be his mouthpiece.
- (4) Who are you comparing yourself to today? Are you proud of how much better you are than them? Jealous of something in them that you lack?
- f) The devil takes Jesus to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem (the equivalent of 45 stories) and says to him, “Jesus! I’ve got a great PR idea for you! If you’re the Son of God, jump off the temple so everyone can see it! Doesn’t the Bible say that God’s angels won’t even let your foot get scraped on a stone? And just think of what the people will be saying about you! Why, you’ll impress everybody!”
 - (1) Jesus seeing right through his deception reminds him (again from Deuteronomy) “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test!”
 - (2) Though the Spirit had driven Christ to return to Eden, the failures of Eden were not repeated! The victory of the last Adam far overshadowed the failure of the first!

IV. **Mark 1:14 ESV** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

- A. So after Jesus comes out of his Baptism, he stands as a man who is clean, who is filled to capacity with the Holy Spirit, and one who is perfectly approved by the Father! He emerges from the wilderness having won back the championship belt for the human race that had been lost to the tempter because of sin so long ago!
- B. And what does he do next? He goes home and begins to proclaim the “gospel of God”! The good news!
 - 1. Remember seeing the Publisher’s Clearing House Sweepstakes “Prize Patrol” commercials? When they would show up at the winners door with a big check, balloons, marching bands, lights and cameras?
 - 2. Jesus came back carrying the giant check and knocking on doors! The good news he was bringing wasn’t the stuff of fortune cookies; it was going to change lives! And what was that “good news”? What made it so good?
- C. Jesus said “The time is fulfilled”! It had been millennia since God had first promised, right after the fall, that the seed of the woman (Jesus) would crush the head of the serpent. But now the day was here! All that the patriarchs and prophets had predicted concerning the consolation of Israel and the salvation of the Gentiles was about to take place. The waiting was over!
- D. Next he told them, “the kingdom of God is at hand”. This is good news because the gospel was not about a temporary fix.
 - 1. The nation of Israel knew temporary fixes. For example, in the time of the judges, Israel would sin and get in a big hole. Then they would cry out to God and he would raise up a hero to come to their rescue. The problem was that this cycle would be repeated over and over again!
 - 2. But Jesus was saying the cycle had ended! The coming of God’s kingdom didn’t just mean that another rescuer had come, but that **the** rescuer had come! Once and for all! More than that, the rescuer was bringing **the**

- kingdom!** This meant God's order, his way of doing things would be restored so that we could rediscover what it means to really be human!
3. In this "kingdom on earth", the poor would hear the good news, the sick, the blind, the deaf and the lame would be healed, demons would be evicted, religious bullies would be thwarted and the kingdoms of this world would topple. There was a new sheriff in town and nothing would ever be the same!
- E. Last, he said, "repent and believe in the gospel". This in itself was good news! He didn't come to subdue us or conquer us, but to invite us and welcome us! There would be a two-step process to come under the authority of this kingdom:
1. Repent. This means to begin to do things differently; to turn away from every method you have employed to navigate life, whether that method is religion or rebellion. And as you turn **away** from those things, you turn **to** Jesus.
 2. Believe. And what is it that we are to believe?
 - a) We are to believe that since we could never stand clean and pure before the Father, we needed someone to be clean for us. That is what Christ did for us.
 - b) We are to believe that since we were impure and corrupt, we could never be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, but because of what Christ has done in granting us his purity and holiness, now we can be the very temple of the Holy Spirit, and can be empowered to live as Jesus did!
 - c) We are to believe that though there is much in us that would cause us to expect wrath and judgement and to look for God's disapproving gaze, in Christ, because of what he has accomplished, we must open our ears to hear the Father say **to us**, "**This** is my beloved son, my daughter! **In you** I am well pleased!"
 - d) Lastly, we believe that though we have been in the wilderness many times failing test after test, because of Jesus' victory, we no longer fear the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; because we know that they were defeated for us by our hero!
 3. We don't merely repent to Christ (in the sense of saying, "I'm sorry!") and we don't merely believe in Christ (in the sense of acknowledging his existence or work), but we repent of relying on ourselves, and acknowledge that we don't simply believe in some facts about him, we believe we are now **in Christ**.
 - a) This means when he comes up clean, we come up clean. As he was filled with the Spirit, so we are filled with the Spirit. As he was approved by the Father, so we are approved by the Father. As he defeated sin, so sin is defeated for us.
 - b) Here are 14 scriptures that speak of the benefits of being in Christ:
 - (1) **Romans 6:11 ESV** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God **in Christ Jesus**.
 - (2) **Romans 8:1 ESV** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus**.
 - (3) **1 Corinthians 1:30 ESV** And because of him you are **in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption...

- (4) **1 Corinthians 15:22 ESV** For as in Adam all die, so also *in Christ* shall all be made alive.
 - (5) **2 Corinthians 2:14 ESV** But thanks be to God, who *in Christ* always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.
 - (6) **2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV** Therefore, if anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
 - (7) **Galatians 3:26 ESV** for *in Christ Jesus* you are all sons of God, through faith.
 - (8) **Ephesians 1:3 ESV** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...
 - (9) **Ephesians 2:10 ESV** For we are his workmanship, created *in Christ Jesus* for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
 - (10) **Ephesians 2:13 ESV** But now *in Christ Jesus* you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
 - (11) **Ephesians 4:32 ESV** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God *in Christ* forgave you.
 - (12) **Philippians 4:7 ESV** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds *in Christ Jesus*.
 - (13) **Philippians 4:19 ESV** And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory *in Christ Jesus*.
 - (14) **1 Peter 5:10 ESV** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory *in Christ*, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
- c) Does this motivate you to repent of every other thing you've tried? Do you believe in his name? Are you ready to be found in Christ?
4. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."