

Introduction

1. In this passage, we will examine two critical events at the outset of Jesus' public ministry—his baptism and his temptation.
2. Jesus' baptism is recorded in all four Gospels (cf., Mk 1:9-11; Mt 3:13-1; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:28-34).
3. Jesus' temptation is found only in the synoptic Gospels (cf., Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13).
4. Let's ask and attempt to answer two good questions: Why was Jesus baptized? Why was Jesus tempted?

A. Why Was Jesus Baptized? (9-11)

1. **Identification** – Jesus' baptism was an event through which he was identified as the Son of God (i.e., fully divine) and also identified with us (i.e., fully human).
 - a. In our last study of Mk 1:1-8, we considered three key witnesses that Mark called upon to support his statement that Jesus is “. . . the Messiah, the Son of God” (Mk 1:1 NIV – The NIV will be used for all subsequent citations unless otherwise noted.)
 - 1) Mark pointed first to the prophets as he cited from Isaiah, Malachi, and others in Mk 1:2-3.
 - 2) Mark then brought to bear the testimony of the forerunner of Jesus—John the Baptist in Mk 1:7-8.
 - 3) In this study we consider the direct witness of God, both Father and Spirit, to the identity of Jesus.
 - b. The identification of Jesus as the “son of God” is a central theme presented at nine critical points in Mark's gospel (cf., Mk 1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:1-11; 13:32; 14:61-62; 15:39).
 - c. In Mk 1:10-11 all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are present and confirm the identity of Jesus as the son of God.
 - 1) The word/phrase “At that time” “immediately” (NASB, KJV) (Gk., *euthus*) is an important word that Mark uses throughout his gospel to signal important transitional events.
 - a) This word expresses both immediacy and urgency and appears at the beginning of v. 10.
 - b) Mark writes much of his gospel in the present tense as if one is watching the events unfold.
 - 1) “And immediately coming up from the water . . .” (v 10).
 - 2) “And immediately the Spirit drives him into the wilderness” (v. 12).
 - 2) The Holy Spirit gave testimony by descending on Jesus, the Son, “like a dove” (v. 10).
 - a) The symbol of the dove as a representation of the Holy Spirit is clear to us as NT believers, but it must be understood in the framework of the OT.
 - 1) The dove was a veiled reference to the Spirit “moving” (KJV) or “hovering” (NASB, NIV) over the waters of creation in Ge 1:2.
 - 2) Remember Mark had proclaimed a new “beginning” (Gk., *arche*) in “the good news about Jesus” (Mk 1:1). God is about the business of recreating humanity through Jesus.
 - 3) Jews in the OT typically saw a dove (Hb., *jonah*) as representing the community of Israel.
 - 4) Jesus is the unique representative of the new Israel that came about through his work.
 - b) The Spirit descends not literally in the form of a dove but “like” (Gk., *os*) a dove.
 - c) In Ac 2:3 the Spirit descended on believers, the new Israel. Then the Spirit descended as “tongues like as of fire,” which may be seen as a fulfillment of John the Baptist's words that Jesus “. . . will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Mt 3:11, cf. Mk 3:8).
 - 3) The Father gave testimony by speaking as “a voice from heaven” (v. 11).
 - a) The Father spoke to initiate re-creation by sending forth his Word, Jesus the Son, into the world like the Spirit who hovers over the baptismal waters in the midst of God's re-creative action.
 - b) The Father spoke these words again at Transfiguration (cf., Mk 9:7) as Jesus prepared to make the final journey to Jerusalem and to fulfill his God-given mission on the cross.
 - c) As the Father spoke from heaven, he combined Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1.
 - i. Psalm 2 is not only an enthronement psalm for kings of Israel but also for the Messiah.
 - God through the psalmist declared, “. . . He said to me, “You are my son; . . .” (Ps 2:7)
 - Only Israel (cf., Ex 4:22-23; Jer 2:2; Ho 11:1-3) and the king as Israel's representative (cf., Ps 2:7) are called God's son in the OT.
 - Jesus is the Son of God, the firstborn of the new Israel, and the only perfect King in David's line whose reign has no end.

- ii. Isa 42:1 is the first of the four Servant Psalms of Isaiah. These psalms speak of a servant, a nation or individual, who will come to suffer for the salvation of all people.
 - Isaiah wrote, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1).
 - The last of the four Servant Psalms is found in Isa 52:13-53:12. It recounts the suffering of the Servant for the sins of the people.
 - Isaiah declared, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are headed” (Isa 53:5).
 - God for the first time in scripture brought together Messiah and Suffering Servant in one person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - d) The voice of God gives witness to the truth of who Jesus is and what he has come to do.
 - e) Jesus has come to be the Messiah and Suffering Servant of God who saves his people from sin.
- d. Jesus’ baptism was part of his identification with us as human beings.
- 1) God’s Son identified himself with humanity as the representative of a new people of God at the inauguration of the public ministry for which he came and through which he would fulfill his purpose, the salvation of humanity.
 - a) The Apostle John wrote, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).
 - b) His baptism marks Jesus’ willing identification in flesh with sinful humanity.
 - c) Note the parallel between Mk 1:5 and 1:9.
 - i. “The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him (i.e., John the Baptist). Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River” (Mk 1:5, insertion mine)
 - ii. “Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan” (Mk 1:9). In the eyes of the Jews, Jesus was a nobody from nowhere (from Nazareth-Ugh!).
 - iii. The Jews, even those from the holy city, came out and were baptized by John.
 - iv. Jesus came from an unexpected place, Gentile Galilee, and stood as the representative of all the Jews. He was the promised one who came to redeem his people and establish a new covenant people for the Israel of God, the NT church.
 - 2) After His resurrection Jesus would command, “. . . Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .” (Mt 28:19). This is a further identification with us, since a good leader never asks his/her followers to do anything that he/she is unwilling to do.
2. **Transition** – Jesus’ baptism was an important transition point as he moved into his public ministry.
- a. John the Baptist came “preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4).
 - 1) For Jews, baptism was nothing new. It had long been associated with a ritual process symbolizing the transition from an old identity to a new identity (e.g., converts to Judaism; brides; those entering the Temple sanctuary; those who copied the scriptures (e.g., *mikveh* of Qumran)).
 - 2) When Jesus came “to baptized by John” was he repenting and needing forgiveness for sins? **NO!**
 - a) Jesus never repents or confesses any sin because he had no sin.
 - b) Paul declared, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21).
 - c) The writer of Hebrews affirmed, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hb 4:15).
 - b. Rabbi Maurice Lamm reveals the meaning of baptism. “The person at this moment of transition . . . marks a move to an altered status or to a life transition” (Rabbi Maurice Lamm, *Becoming a Jew*, Jonathan David Publishers, 1991).
 - 1) For sinners, John’s baptism was a sign of repentance and movement to a new life in the coming kingdom of God, which will be a major topic of next week’s study.

2) For Jesus, baptism marked his transition from private life to public ministry as he moved to fulfill his God-given purpose.

3. **Purpose** – Jesus’ baptism identified his purpose in life and his commitment to fulfill it.

a. Jesus’ baptism was a public acknowledgement of who he was and his purpose in coming.

b. Mark used the verb “torn open” (Gk., *schizo* – “torn, split, opened”) only twice in his gospel.

1) Tearing signals two important moments in history and in the life of Jesus as he took up his mission and as he fulfilled it.

2) Here, in Mk 1:10, heaven was “torn open” as God the Father and Spirit testified to the identity of Jesus as the Son of God as he formally took up his redemptive ministry.

3) Mk 15:38 records that “The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” This was considered to be an act of God which marked the completion of Jesus’ redemptive ministry as the heretofore limited access to God was opened for all who would come through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross.

4) The Father intervened at the beginning of Jesus’ mission and at its culmination on the cross to identify him as Son.

c. Immediately, Jesus set out after his baptism to fulfill his God-given purpose as Servant/Messiah.

d. Immediately, Satan began to test Jesus and to tempt him to abort his mission and abandon his God-given purpose.

B. Why Was Jesus Tempted? (14-15)

1. Times of temptation often follow our acceptance of the call of God in living our lives to his glory and in serving him by finding and fulfilling our God-given purposes.

a. Mark provided only a succinct statement that Jesus “came . . . and was baptized by John in the Jordan” (Mk 1:9).

b. Matthew provided more detail as he stated, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness’” (Mt 3:14-15).

c. So how does Jesus’ baptism and subsequent testing “fulfill all righteousness”?

1) His baptism fulfilled righteousness through his identification as both holy Son of God and human being who will be the Suffering Servant redeemer of all humanity.

2) His testing by Satan proved that he was the true Servant of God who was the pure and perfect sacrifice for human sin.

2. Note how powerfully and vividly Mark records that “Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness” (Mk 1:12 NKJV).

a. It was an important and immediate (Gk., *euthus*) event following the baptism.

b. The Spirit drove (Gk., *exballei*) him. Mark used this word eleven other times to describe the casting out of demons. This was a harsh and intense experience but one which Jesus was willing to undergo in fulfillment of his God-given purpose.

c. The place of temptation was the “wilderness” and the time spent there was “forty days” (vv.12-13).

1) Remember our discussion of the significance of John coming “in the wilderness” (Mk 1:4)

2) As God prepared to call Israel as his people (Ex 19:5-6), he led them through the waters of the Reed Sea, a symbolic baptism, and into the wilderness where he would give them his law, feed them, lead them by a pillar of cloud/fire, test them, and forge them into his people ready to enter the Promised Land, again as they passed through the waters, this time of the Jordan River.

3) So, God brought Jesus, the first representative of the new Israel, into the wilderness for a time of testing and proving before entering upon his ultimate mission.

3. For forty days in the wilderness Jesus was tempted.

a. Forty is a symbolic number and represents a complete period of time.

b. Moses lived 40 years in Egypt, 40 years in Midian, and led Israel for 40 years.

c. Moses was on Mt Sinai with God for 40 days as Elijah would be later.

d. The 40 days of Jesus’ temptation communicates that the temptation was completely thorough.

4. Jesus was tempted in every way like the first Adam but his temptation was also different.
 - a. He was not tempted in a garden but in the wilderness.
 - b. He does not have a “helper” but faces temptation alone except for the presence of “wild animals” and “Satan” which are both threats to his physical and spiritual safety.
 - c. Mark’s Roman audience would have related to the presence of wild animals. During Nero’s persecution (AD 64-68), “[Christians] were covered with the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs” (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15:44).
 - d. Jesus, the Son of God, went into Satan’s homefield, a wilderness filled with dangers and terrors, and won the victory.
5. Mark did not give us the details of Jesus’ temptation. We must turn to Matthew and Luke for those details which we do not have time to explore in detail in this study.
 - a. Jesus was tempted in every way like us (cf., Hb 4:15).
 - b. According to 1 Jn. 2:16, the sources of human temptation come in three major areas: flesh, selfishness, and pride.
 - c. Mark’s main point is that Jesus faced these temptations and came through with flying colors.
 - d. However, this was not the end of Jesus’ temptation. Unlike the people of Israel who failed their tests in the wilderness and beyond, Jesus passed the test again-and-again.
 - e. In Gethsemane Satan brought to Jesus a last, great temptation to avoid the spiritual and physical pain of the cross as he bore the burden of human sin. But once again, Jesus passed the test and fulfilled his mission.

Conclusion – Let’s consider two questions for reflection.

1. Why were or should you be baptized?
 - a. Hopefully you were not baptized because you thought you had to be or just because everyone else was doing it.
 - b. Hopefully, you were baptized because you wanted to give an outward, visible indicator of the inward change Jesus brought in you after you repented of your sins and believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
 - c. Baptism is something you do because of the love you have for Jesus, your Redeemer, the one you know personally and commit to follow obediently and lovingly forever.
 - d. Your baptism, like that of Jesus, should be about identification, transition, and purpose.
 - 1) **Identification** – You identify your life with Jesus as he identified himself with you.
 - 2) **Transition** – You acknowledge a fundamental transition as you take up a new life in Christ Jesus.
 - a) Your baptism, unlike that of Jesus, is a baptism of repentance of sin as you ask Jesus to forgive you of past failures and to help you walk daily in the path that he shows you.
 - b) Baptist formula: “We are buried with Christ and raised to walk in new life.”
 - c) Our walk with Christ in new life is not about rules but about relationship.
 - 3) **Purpose** – You are a new creation in Christ Jesus and have a new purpose to live in and for him.
2. Are you ever tempted?
 - a. Satan tempted Jesus to abort his mission and abandon his God-given purpose. Why do you think you would face anything less?
 - b. You have faced and will continue to face testing as you live for Christ.
 - 1) Your testing is not to prove your perfection. So, don’t revert to trying to live up to a list of rules.
 - 2) Your testing is often the world’s attempt to move you off of your chosen path of being a new creation in Christ.
 - 3) So, when tempted, call on the one person, Jesus, who has passed the test and knows the way through temptation.
 - c. You have a ministry in God’s kingdom which you must seek out and begin doing with the help of Jesus to God’s glory each day.