

The Baptism and Temptation of the Servant-King

Mark 1:9-13

Introduction: 1) Those of us who have walked with the Lord for any extended period of time would agree with the prophet Isaiah that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways. His ways are higher. His thoughts are higher (Is. 55:8-9).

2) His ways surprise us. His plans often are mysterious. Sometimes they seem down right strange. He does not do things the way we would.

3) The beginning of Jesus' public ministry is a perfect example.

- It starts not in a thriving metropolis but in the rugged wasteland of the Judean wilderness near a Dead Sea.
- It starts not with a press conference but a baptism.
- It starts not with a parade but with 40 days of solitude and fasting even further in the wild and dangerous wilderness to be tempted by the archenemy of God, a demon leader named Satan.

4) An unexpected beginning to be sure, for the coming of the Lord (v. 3), for one mightier than anyone who has or ever will come again (v.7), for one who will baptize His followers with the Holy Spirit (v.8), for the one who is the Christ, the Son of God. (v.1).

Transition: Indeed God's ways are not our ways, but his ways are, as Rom 12:2 affirms, always good, acceptable and perfect. What then do we learn from these two critical events in the life of Jesus?

I. The baptism of Jesus was a declaration of Sonship.

1:9-11

- 1) Jesus comes to John, probably in the middle or latter days of John's ministry though we cannot be certain.

- 2) He comes to be baptized, an event that is also recorded in each of the other gospels (Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:28-34).
- 3) The word baptism occurs for the 6th time in vs. 4-9.
- 4) This is one of the most surprising aspects of Jesus' life. Why was He baptized? Matt 3:14 says John the Baptist was against it and he had a pretty good argument (cf Mark 1:7).
- 5) Jesus, however, says it must take place "for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15).

There is your answer but then, what does that mean? I believe we can tease out the answer as we look at 7 things His baptism teaches us. These will revolve around the idea that the baptism was the beginning of His humiliation as He faithfully submits to the Father's will and willingly identifies Himself with sinful humanity. Mark Dever is right; it is no more odd for Jesus to be baptized in the Jordan River than for Him to hang on the cross at Calvary as the sinless and spotless Son of God.

- 1) It inaugurated His public ministry. 1:9
 - He came from Nazareth (the sole mention of His hometown in Mark), a small backwater town from nowhere. Galilee was despised because of its distance from the holy city of Jerusalem and the infestation of Gentiles. Nazareth was even worse, unknown and unmentioned. A nobody from nowhere!
 - But He comes to John and His public ministry begins. He was probably in His early 30's. His public ministry would last only 3 to 3 ½ years. The time has come for the Servant-King to ascend to the public stage.
 - Why the wilderness? This is where God has often met with His people. It is something He promised to do again in Hosea 2:14-15 where He says, "Therefore,

behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

2) It identified Him with sinful humanity. 1:9

- Jesus comes and joins those who seek a baptism of repentance and who are confessing their sins.
- Jesus neither repents of sin nor confesses His sin because He had no sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).
- He aligns Himself with those He came to save. Like Moses in the 1st Exodus (32:23), He does not set Himself apart from their sins (Lane, 55). It also is an evidence of His humanity and full identification with sinful humanity.

3) It associated Him with John’s ministry. 1:9

- Jesus does not hesitate to connect Himself to John the Baptist as to
 - The fulfillment of prophecy
 - John’s message of repentance (cf 1:15!)
 - John’s ministry
- No one had higher praise for John than Jesus. He said he was the greatest man who ever lived.
- The time is now for the Christ, the Servant-King to make His public appearance. As He does, He validates and endorses the ministry of His cousin John (Luke 1:36).

4) It demonstrated His approval by His Father. 1:10

- Immediately – an important word in Mark occurring 42 times but only 12 times in the rest of the New Testament. He comes up and something, better, Someone (Holy Spirit), comes down.
- Saw the heavens parting (lit. “rent”, “torn open”, “ripped apart”). The word occurs only one other time in Mark in 15:38 when God the Father took the temple curtain and “tore it in two from top to bottom!” Thus at His baptism and at His crucifixion the Father intervenes supernaturally, eschatologically, declaring that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Isaiah 64:1 had predicted this, “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! “That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence.” God in cataclysmic power would come and come down in the person of His Son Jesus. The tearing apart of the heavens signals a significant moment in history and the life of the Servant-King. The Father gives His approval first in action. He will follow it up with a startling announcement that will catch many by surprise.
- Note *Testament of Levi* 18:6-8 on this! (Edwards, 35).

5) It revealed the Triune God. 1:9-11

Adrian Rogers said, “The doctrine of the Trinity is not beyond logic and reason – just above it!”

- The Son is baptized/ (v. 9)
- The Father speaks. (v.11) There is a real sense in which the baptism is not so much about what Jesus does as what the Father does to Him.
- The Spirit descends into (*eis*) Him! (v.10).

- Like the ending of Matt (28:19-20), the beginning of Mark gives us a brief glimpse into the nature of our God, the great 3 in 1.
- The appearance of the Father and the Holy Spirit revealed the Trinity and served as a confirming witness concerning the identity of Jesus.

6) It showed His total dependence on the Holy Spirit. 1:10

- The presence of the Spirit on the Messiah was promised in Is 42:1, “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, my Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.” It is elaborated in Is. 11:1-2 “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”
- Mark says the Spirit descended like a dove (it was not literally a dove). In gentleness and purity and meekness, the Spirit came into (*Eis*) Him. He is filled and equipped for His ministry.
- There is no “adoptionistic Christology here!” He did not become the Son of God at the moment of His baptism. No, He was declared to be and empowered as the Son of God for the suffering servant ministry that lay before Him.
- John Piper says it like this, “When Jesus was baptized along with all the repenting people who wanted to be on God’s side, it was as though the commander-in-chief had come to the front lines, fastened his bayonet, strapped on his helmet, and jumped into the trench along with the rest of us. And when he did that, his Father

in heaven, who had sent him for this very combat, signified with the appearance of a dove that the Holy Spirit would be with him in the battles to come. (3-18-84)

7) It declared the type of Messiah He would be. 1:11

- One of the most important verses in the Bible! It is echoed again at the Transfiguration in Mark 9:7.
- It is a combination of 3 Old Testament texts, each with massive significance. The verse literally reads, “You are the Son of me, the beloved, in You I am well pleased.”
 - “You are my Son” → Ps 2:7 → You are the Messiah-King, the Greater son of David who will rule the nations.
 - “The beloved, the one I love” → an allusion to Gen 22:2 → the way Abraham saw Isaac, the son he was called to sacrifice. It bears the weight of “one and only.”
 - “In you I am well pleased” → Isa 42:1 → the first of the Suffering Servant songs which climax in the great Isa 53 text where the Servant is crushed by God as He bears the sins of the world!
- This declaration by the Father of His love for His Son cannot be overstated and must not be overlooked. No prophet ever heard words like these!
 - Abraham was a friend of God (Is. 41:8)
 - Moses was a servant of God (Deut 34:5)
 - Aaron was a chosen one of God (Psalm 105:26)
 - David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:4)

But only Israel (Ex 4:23) and the King of Israel as their leader and representative (Ps 2:7) were called God's Son. Now both the nation and the King are united in One in the person of the Servant-King Jesus!

- That we must not doubt that Son of God is a declaration of deity is easily demonstrated by the actions of the Son that we shall see in Mark.
 - He forgives sins (2:5)
 - Heals the sick (1:40)
 - Cast out demons (1:24; 5:1-20)
 - Is Lord of the Sabbath (2:28)
 - Raises the dead (6:35-43)
 - Rises from the dead (16:1-8)
- So, You are the promised Messiah-King who is uniquely my Son and the delight of my life. But, You will realize your kingdom by being a faithful Servant to your Father even to the point of a crushing and painful and humiliating death. Now the question: would Jesus accept such an assignment?

II. The temptation of Jesus was a declaration of war.

1:12-13

- The commissioning by God is often followed by a time of testing. This is true for all of us and it was true for Jesus, the Servant-King.
- Will Jesus continue to "trust and obey" the will of the Father now that the course of His life is made clear?
- James Edwards says here we see Jesus is Israel reduced to one." (p. 37) As the Messiah and Son of God, Jesus is both a 2nd Adam and a new Israel who will succeed where they failed!

–The temptation is described in detail in Matt 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. Mark, gives us a brief, but important summation of the “war in the wilderness.”

–The battle begins and it will rage all the way to a Roman cross and an empty tomb.

–Here is Christ in mortal/eternal combat for the souls of men. If He loses, we are lost!

1) Jesus was submissive to the Spirit. 1:12

Immediately – Again 42 times in Mark and only 12 times in the rest of the New Testament.

Drove – (*exballo*) – “impelled, cast out.” Mark will use the same word 11 times to describe Jesus casting out demons! This was no accidental encounter, no chance meeting. It was a divine appointment scheduled by the Father and implemented by the Spirit. It is not what we expected to happen after the baptism and the voice from heaven. There is no reception or celebration, but a descent further into the wilderness. The Spirit that descended is the same Spirit that drives Him into the wilderness.

- The Servant King has a job to do and the Spirit immediately compels Him to engage the assignment. Our King, our Commander-in-Chief goes out to fight in the dirty, filthy trenches just like us, turns back the enemy, and provides hope and a pattern for us to do the same.

2) Jesus was engaged by Satan. 1:13

– 40 days in the wilderness was 40 days in the deep wilderness.

– 40 days in the wilderness recall Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness and Moses 40 days on Mt. Sinai (Ex 34:28) and Elijah’s 40 days at Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:8).

– A new Adam and 2nd Israel, He is also a better Moses and a superior Joshua!

- Jesus said in John 8:44, “[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” A murderer and a liar by nature, Satan (36 times in New Testament, meaning “adversary”), the devil (34 times in New Testament, meaning “the accuser”) meets our King in of all places, the desert. Note:
 - the wilderness not a garden
 - the wilderness for 40 days of fasting (Matt 4:2)
 - the wilderness alone with no companion
 - The wilderness with wild animals. The wild beasts are only mentioned in Mark and immediately follow the mention of Satan. It suggests they are in partnership and alliance with Satan. They heighten the horror, the danger of our Lord’s 40 days in the desolate and untamed Judean wilderness. He does battle with Satan on His home field. It is a divine invasion of enemy territory.
 - Further, remember Mark’s Roman audience especially during the Neronian persecution (A.D. 64-68). The Roman historian Tacitus wrote in his *Annals*, “They [Christians] were covered with the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs” (*Annals* 15:44).
 - Christ knows what you are going through. His angels came to His aid. They will come and sustain you too!
 - 1 John 3:8 reminds us, “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

- What was Satan’s goal? Defeat the Son! How? Prevent Him from receiving His glorious kingdom? After all if God’s will is for our health, wealth and happiness who would He determine would get it more than Jesus?! NO, His goal was to get Jesus to not suffer! Satan was at the baptism I am sure! He saw and he heard, and heard it all! The suffering and death of Jesus meant Satan’s doom and destruction and salvation for you and me. This is what was at stake in the war in the wilderness!
- Mark does not record our Lord’s victory as does Matthew and Luke. He does tell us that the angels came and ministered to Him. The reason he does this: to affirm that this is just round one of a 15 round bout that will continue for some time. The Servant-King won this round. However, there are many more to come. The war in the wilderness was not the end. It was just the beginning, or better, it was the resumption, of a war begun long ago in Genesis 3:15.

Conclusion:

God’s ways are not our ways are they? His ways are often full of unexpected twist and turns that we do not see coming and that catch us totally and completely by surprise. No, God’s ways are not our ways. But aren’t you glad, they are good. They are acceptable. And, they are perfect. If you doubt this, just look at the baptism and the temptation of the Servant-King! God’s will is not always safe. But, God’s will is always best!