

Final Preparations

Mark 1:9-13

Well, amidst the many things happening at our church, as you can tell from announcements in the bulletin and what was in there, one of the things that I get to enjoy being a part of is our soccer camp that we do every summer. And the soccer camp is something that's been going for a while now, over ten years, and so it's been a joy to be a part of that myself. We used to bus kids all the way out to the Lancaster Soccer Center and then bus them back. But now we can just have it right here at our own grass field which is a huge praise, and obviously, this is something that as a church we've made happen, so we're thankful for that. And so the soccer camp really is... it's a great ministry that we've been able to kind of connect ourselves to the community with a sport to families, to kids, and a lot of them will end up coming back for like a VBS or for AWANA or potentially even the church. So, I just... I love being a part of that, not just because I like soccer myself, but also the opportunity to introduce some of these kids for the first time to Jesus and who He is. This is one of the joys.

But one of the other elements of soccer camp is we actually have to teach them soccer. Right? You know, otherwise, we can't call it soccer camp anymore. So we do; we have to teach them soccer, and I enjoy that part too. It's a fun part to try and convey and help kids understand the game of soccer and how it all works. And one of the parts of soccer is that it's a team sport. So, you have multiple people on the field at once, and you have positions that need to be played. All right? There's different positions that, you know, kind of call for you to be in a certain area, and so, explaining that to kids for the first time, some of them, a lot of them, you know, doesn't always compute right away. All right? Some of them don't understand. You know, they think, okay, I'm playing defense. Got it! So, I'm going to go up and score as many goals as possible. Okay, not quite. Okay, let's try that again. All right? What does the goalie do? You know, the goalie isn't the one scoring the goals. The goalie blocks the goal. Oh, okay. So, explaining that to kids is fun.

And it's just funny because if kids have a favorite position that they like to play, they'll let you know. All right? They don't hesitate to go, oh yeah, I'm a forward. That's what I play. I score all the goals. That's me, and I don't play... I actually am unable to play any other position but forward. Right?

They'll make that very clear, and if you ever try them somewhere else and play them in defense, they'll say, oh, that was the worst thing ever! They'll moan, and they'll tell you all about how terrible it was, and they'll complain until they get their way. Right. And so, this is part of the challenge as a coach. You're trying to move kids around and give them the opportunity to learn that there's different positions that need to be played because this is how a team sport works. All right? And some kids love their position for different reasons. Some kids love to be the forward scoring all the goals because scoring goals is fun. Some kids love to be the defenders because they want to run into people and tackle them, and they like contact, and this is the closest thing since football camp's stopped, you know, here or something. Right? And then, some kids just want to use their hands for once, so they want to be goalies so they can use their hands and stop using their feet so much.

And so, it's just, you know, it's a funny kind of interaction, but it's a very simple concept that you try to convey to these kids that there's different positions, and sometimes you need to learn to play your position. Right? Sometimes you need to learn how to do that. And I think... I just laugh at them sometimes the way that they respond, and they say they can't do it, there's no way. And I just think, oh, that's so funny, and then I realize, you know, I was kind of like that, too, but not just when I was a kid, like into high school and into college - I did the same thing. I just... it's like, aw, seriously coach? Aw, man! You know, I'm eighteen-year-old. Like, come on, you know, quit moaning about it. This is a team sport. This is how it works. And I just continued to have that attitude, and there's just some times that came that I played different positions, and I didn't want to play them, and I had a bad attitude about it when I really needed to, for the sake of the team, embrace that role and actually take it on for the sake of what we're trying to do.

And so, really, today, we come to introducing Jesus for the first time here in Mark's gospel, and we see Him embracing the role that is set out for Him; and this is one of the major themes of Mark's gospel is that Jesus is highlighted as a servant. He's highlighted as a suffering servant, and we see just from the get go here as what we look at in verses 9-13 in Mark's gospel of chapter 1, Jesus embracing that role, being willing to play the position that, when you think about it, no one else wants to play. No one else wants to play this role, but Jesus willingly takes it on, and He sets Himself up on

this trajectory, on this path, to be the suffering servant. So, that's where we're going to get to.

Before we get into our verses, let me just remind us a little bit of where we're at. Mark's purpose in writing this whole gospel is, really, found in verse 1. If you look at verse 1, he says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The good news - Mark says I'm writing to give you the good news, the good news of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. And so, Mark gives you a historical kind of understanding and basis for who Jesus is and what He's done. And so, that's the whole point of this. We're going to work our way through and continue to see the good news about Jesus who is the Messiah, who is the Son of God; so that's the purpose.

And then, Mark showed us how this has been prophesied and not just Jesus, right? The Old Testament didn't just prophesy about Jesus. The Old Testament actually prophesied about people before Jesus, like John the Baptist, all right, like people that would come before and be a forerunner, someone to prepare the way, to pave the way for Jesus, for the Messiah, when He would come. And so, he introduced us to that, and we saw John the Baptist come on the scene in verse 4; and so, he came with a very simple message: repent. He came telling the people of Israel that they need to repent. They need to confess their sin and find forgiveness. They need to get their hearts right because the Messiah was coming, because someone mightier than John the Baptist was coming, and this was John the Baptist's message. He was proclaiming repentance, proclaiming and urging people to confess their sins and be baptized, all right, to turn and forsake their old ways and be right with God - pursue righteousness and justice.

We see in verse 6... remember John the Baptist was looking a little funky? If you remember, he was "...clothed with camels' hair and wore a leather belt around his waist..." and this wasn't just to be different. Right? This wasn't hipster jig John the Baptist. Right? This was legitimate. Right? He was doing this for a reason, and it was to model Elijah, the prophet Elijah from the Old Testament. This is how Elijah was recorded as kind of dressing and what he looked like, and the Old Testament prophesied that Elijah would come again, and he would pave the way and prepare the way for the Messiah. So, here's John the Baptist before he even speaks a word, just in the way that he presents himself, and the way that he looks, he's saying, I'm

Elijah, and I'm preparing the way for the Messiah. So, that's why John the Baptist is dressing this way and then giving all glory, giving all praise, not to himself and his own ministry that's booming and expanding, but to someone mightier than him. So, look at verses 7-8, just to get the flow into our verses. John the Baptist, "...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. I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' "

So, John the Baptist doing an excellent job of putting the attention where it needs to go, not on himself, not on what good stuff he's accomplishing, but on someone who's going to do something greater than he, someone who's going to baptize with the Holy Spirit, to give the Holy Spirit to God's people. So, this's where we left off, this expectation, this hope of a Messiah to come, to come on to the scene.

And today, we get introduced to that Messiah, Jesus. So, we will see two parts surface today. The first part is the baptism of Jesus, the baptism of Jesus that we find in verses 9-11. So, we will read those verses right now and break them down into three obvious sections. So, verse 9, as we continue on in Mark 1; "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and [He] was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.' "

...so, a pretty epic scene here in the baptism of Jesus.

So, the first part that we see in verse 9 is Jesus approaches. We find Jesus approaching John the Baptist. Jesus coming on to the scene. So, notice this; this is basically a summary statement because it's kind of like a big event just wrapped up in one verse. "In those days..." (the days of John the Baptist) "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Done. That's it. "Jesus came from Nazareth..." ...came down to John the Baptist, got baptized. You think, oh wow! Okay, that's kind of like a big summary statement just packed into verse 9, and really there's a lot into this. And we, really, kind of, have to see this and understand this. So, I'm going to take some time to help us understand, really, the importance of just this event in and of itself, not just because of where it appears, that it's the first thing Jesus does in the gospel of Mark, but really, of what the significance is behind it and what it brings.

So, notice first of all, where's Jesus coming from? He's coming from Nazareth of Galilee, and if you remember the nation of Israel, you have the southern section, the southern region of Israel being Judea, and that's where Jerusalem was and the temple. And then you moved up and the middle section was Samaria. And then when you got to the northern section of Israel, you had Galilee, right, the region of Galilee around the Sea of Galilee. And so, as we recall, it doesn't take us, you know, too long to look back at our verses in verse 5. John the Baptist had the ministry in Judea. In verse 5 it says, "...all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan..." So, John the Baptist had a really flourishing, a thriving ministry, but notice that it was specifically to the people in Judea, the people in the southern region. So you don't have people from Samaria coming. You don't have Samaritans coming. You don't even, really, have a reference here to Galileans, people from the north, coming. You just have the southern section of Israel being mentioned, people in Jerusalem, people in Judea.

And so now, when you get to verse 9 and we find that Jesus comes and shows up on the scene, it's significant because He's coming from the north. He's coming from Galilee. He's coming from all the way up in Galilee in the small town of Nazareth. So Jesus goes out of His way to come all the way down to, really, see what John the Baptist is doing and to take part in it. In this moment, Jesus is stepping onto the public scene. This is Jesus, up until this point, being isolated, living at home, maybe being a part of His father's business of some sort, but not actually engaging or doing His miracles or doing His teaching to the extent that He does until right now. Right now, He steps onto the scene, into the public square, and makes Himself known with this event. And, I mean, you can't help but, first of all, come to a contradiction when you realize He was baptized by John in the Jordan. And you start to remember, what was the baptism of John all about? It was about the confession of sins, wasn't it? It was about repentance. It was about turning from your sinful ways and coming to Yahweh, following God alone.

And so, we have this statement here that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan. And don't you kind of hit a wall and start to think is this a contradiction? Because everything I understand about Jesus is that we worship Him, and we call Him the sinless One, the One without any sin at all, and you'd be right because there's tons of Scripture to back that up. Right? You can look at 2 Corinthians 5:21 when Paul describes it in this

way, God "...made Him who knew no sin..." Jesus is the One "...who knew no sin..." There was no sin found in Him at all, not in His mouth, not in His thoughts, not in anything He did. He "...knew no sin..." So, this is accurate. This is what Scripture teaches. But then we come back to our text, and we realize Jesus is getting baptized by John, so how does this work? Why? Why is Jesus doing this? Well, we get a little help from other gospels at this point.

In the gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 31, we hear what John the Baptist says in John 1:31; "I myself did not know Him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel." ["...that He might be revealed to Israel."] So, in this ministry of John baptizing people that were confessing and repenting and turning from their ways, in the midst of that, he would then baptize Jesus, and the Messiah, the Chosen One, would be revealed to God's people, would be revealed to Israel. So, Jesus is being a part of this plan, and He's following in this vein of what God is doing so that God's people might recognize their Messiah, so that they might wake up and see this is Him. This is who John the Baptist was talking about, the mighty One that has come. This is who all the prophets were talking about, the Messiah, the King, the servant; and so, at a basic level, it's for the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah.

But there's more. In Matthew 3:15, we see Jesus in His interaction with John the Baptist when He gets baptized. He says let's do this. Let's proceed forward with this baptism "...to fulfill all righteousness." ["...to fulfill all righteousness."] Jesus states that this baptism is necessary in order to do what is right. This is what is right in God's eyes. This is what is necessary for Him to do. It's Jesus coming alongside the entire nation of Israel and identifying with them all. He's an Israelite just like them. He comes alongside them. He joins them. He's a representative of them. He identifies with them, so He comes alongside. So, He doesn't just show up to John's ministry and look around and take notes at everyone being baptized and see how big of a crowd there was there. He doesn't come to speculate and to observe and to tell people what they're doing wrong. He comes to identify and be one of them, to be a fellow Israelite. He's approving of the ministry that John is doing. He's approving of what God is doing in turning the tide of history through John the Baptist and his preaching and the introduction of Jesus the Messiah. He's verifying everything that John has done and everything that John has said. He comes on to the scene to identify with the nation of Israel.

And then, further and even beyond that, He is baptized for the sake of embracing His Messianic Mission. He's embracing the very task that's been set out before Him. Really, Jesus being baptized by John is Jesus embracing the position that He needs to play. He understands the role that God has set before Him. Jesus understands that He must be the suffering servant for the nation of Israel. Jesus understands that He must be the One to represent the people to God. Jesus understands He must be the One that will eventually go to the cross and take the sin of mankind upon His shoulders and bear that punishment. Jesus understands all of this. We are quick to claim that Jesus is not a dummy. Jesus knows. When He's twelve years old He's debating with people in the temple. So, at this point I think it's safe to say that He understands the Old Testament Scriptures well. He understands what was expected of the Messiah, that the Messiah was not just a figure that would come and be a king and reign in glamour and kind of rule the world, but the Messiah was also someone that had to suffer. The Messiah, in fact, was first supposed to suffer on behalf of the sins of the people.

So Jesus knows all of this, and with this knowledge, He now goes down... He leaves His town, quits His job, says goodbye to His family, and He comes down, all the way down to Judea, and He is baptized by another human being, a sinful person, John the Baptist. He submits all the way to that low of a level and is willing to obey to that extent. Jesus understands that with this He's starting the first domino that will tip and knock down the rest of the dominos in the following three years of His ministry. The following three years will be more teaching, will be more miracles upon miracles; and then this initial welcoming of the people will turn into animosity and antagonism, until they will turn on Him, and they will kill Him. Jesus knows this. Jesus is aware of this, and so Jesus in humility, in this one little tiny verse, in verse 9, He leaves Galilee, and He goes down and is baptized by John. He understands what He's getting Himself into. He's embracing the mission that's been set out before Him. God says this is the role You must play, and Jesus does not protest. He willingly assumes that role. It reminds me of how Paul, right, Paul's commentary on this, really, in Philippians 2. Paul states it this way in Philippians 2:5-8, some familiar verses; "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,

He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” When Jesus is baptized by John, He knows what’s to come. He knows His suffering is coming, and His death is necessary, and He humbles Himself. He’s obedient. He submits to God’s plan, and He plays the role. He plays a position that God would have Him.

So, let me ask you this question. If Jesus the God-man, the Messiah, humbly submitted to His role on Earth, how much more should we gladly submit to whatever role God has for us? It’s hard. I know you encounter difficulties. I know you might be in the thick of it right now. I know you’re fighting sin in this very moment. I know there’s troubles with your relationships and the family or at work, and it’s difficult. It’s not easy. And God has you in a certain position. He has you playing a certain role, and you might feel like you’re a little kid at soccer camp, going, God, I don’t want to play this position. I’m done. I want to be the forward that has the easy life and scores the goals. Get me out of this difficult situation. I don’t want to deal with my family anymore. I’m done. I don’t want to deal with this boss. I don’t want to deal with this coworker. I’m done. I’m not playing that role anymore. If Jesus submitted to this role of suffering to the point of death in His fleshly body, how much more so should we submit to wherever God has us and whatever role He wants us to play?

Could Jesus have given excuses? Could He have said, I’m not going to do this? I’m not going to do this because I’m God, and I shouldn’t have to do this. I shouldn’t have to take on flesh. I shouldn’t have to live with these people and deal with them in their slow minds and slow understanding. I shouldn’t have to deal with these people and their rebellion and the way that they’re going to kill... I shouldn’t have to go to death on a cross. I’m God. I shouldn’t have to go through that. Jesus could have given plenty of excuses. He could have given up at any moment, but here He is, in a simple verse, embracing what is to come, embracing the future plan and path of His ministry to be the Messiah that would suffer for His people. Jesus made no excuses, and He embraced this role. We too, must embrace whatever position God has us in and humbly submit to God in obedience. This is what Jesus is doing.

Notice that this quick little verse about His baptism is not all. There is more, and there is detail that’s given in the next two verses. And this is what we find first in verse 10, Jesus anointed - Jesus anointed. So, after this baptism,

after Jesus submits to this role and is willing to take on the position God has for Him, verse 10 states, “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.” So, first you note, very obviously, the heavens... the heavens are torn open - the heavens are torn open; this kind of cosmic display of glory. Right? And when you read about this in other parts of Scripture, it really is... it’s a supernatural moment. It’s something - God intervening for a reason, like in Revelation when He’s coming to this earth; when He’s actually pronouncing and bringing judgment upon it, and you see the sky is rolling back, getting split open. And in the same way, in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 64:1, this is what the people pleaded for when they were in captivity or when they wanted God to intervene. In Isaiah 64:1, he says, “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down...” ...pleading for God to split it open and just come down and take care of things, to solve the dilemma, to solve the situation, to bring deliverance and rescue.

And so, you have all these people getting baptized by John, and then all of sudden someone gets baptized and it causes the heavens to split open. Wow, that’s pretty amazing. Do you think that might get attention, that might kind of cause a scene a little bit? If it didn’t happen at your baptism, that’s okay, that’s fine; you’re not Jesus, right? So, this happens and this clearly gets people’s attention. And it doesn’t just stop there. It’s not just the clear indicating that God is coming down. By the way, side note - this word “torn open,” the only other time it’s used in the gospel of Mark is when the curtain in the temple is torn at the death of Christ; kind of this invasion of God to mankind, making Himself accessible. And so, here’s Jesus, His baptism causing the heavens to be torn open, and then “...the Spirit descending...” “...the [Holy] Spirit descending on Him like a dove.” There’s a lot of different views behind this; why the Holy Spirit’s linked to a dove. All right? Some people have different views behind it, and some people actually have that as part of their church logo sometimes, a dove of some sort, and that’s representing the Spirit. More than likely there’s lots of different views. I’m not going to give you all the other ones. I’ll just give you... what seems to be the probability is that a dove was a legitimate offering of a sacrifice. The people, the Jews, could bring a dove as a sacrifice to the temple if they were poor. And it’s also... has this kind of imagery of innocence in the way that... in lowliness in the way that the other rabbis of the time and Jewish people understood the dove. And so, the Holy Spirit coming almost like a

bird of sacrifice and resting upon Jesus for the fact that Jesus knew the ministry that was before Him.

It wasn't this amazing ministry of Jesus assuming the throne and overthrowing the Roman emperor. It was this ministry of sacrifice. It was a ministry of humility, obedience, right, Him going to the cross. And so, you have the Holy Spirit coming like a dove, a fitting bird that would actually kind of model, essentially, what Jesus's ministry would be in humility. And also, we see just the very fact that the Spirit is coming down and resting upon someone. It should get people's attention. If the heavens being torn open doesn't get your attention, the fact that the Holy Spirit comes on one person should get your attention. All right? The people should recognize - John the Baptist would recognize that God's presence, the Spirit, coming upon one man, that means something. And their knowledge of the Old Testament, over and over again, states that the Messiah would be a person who has the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would dwell upon the Messiah. The Messiah would do His ministry in the power and the ability of the Holy Spirit. So, the people observing this and examining should be making very obvious connections in their mind just because creation is turning upside down, and the Holy Spirit is coming upon Jesus. Interesting to note how John said in verse 8, "...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." And so, here's a man that comes and receives the Holy Spirit and after His life and ministry will then give the Holy Spirit to His church.

So, not only is Jesus anointed by the Spirit, but we see more. In verse 11, we see Jesus acknowledged - In verse 11, we see Jesus acknowledged. Our passage continues; "And a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." So, not just this visual display that would get people's attention, but now this audible rumbling, if you will, the voice of God. And you might think, you know, who specifically? Well, the voice is saying, "You are My beloved Son..." This is God the Father speaking. This is God the Father speaking from heaven in such a way that there is strength. There is kind of a shaking even, if you will. This only happens two other times in the life of Jesus. One is in the transfiguration when Jesus goes up on the mountain and reveals His glory to James, Peter, and John; that's only three people, and God speaks similarly there. And another time at Passion Week before He goes to the cross, God speaks again. This isn't a frequent occurrence by any means. This is something that would get people's attention.

And it's also important to note what the voice actually says because the voice could have said a lot of things, but to see, specifically, God the Father stating, "You are My beloved Son..." He's specifically addressing the One whom the Holy Spirit has come upon, Jesus; "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." Kind of has more Old Testament prophesy getting fulfilled here. And I'll just read to you Isaiah 42:1. This is an understanding of the Messiah as a servant. Isaiah 42:1 states, "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen, in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." This was their expectation. If they read, if they listened to the Old Testament when it was read in synagogues, they would understand that a servant would come who would have the Holy Spirit upon them, and God would delight in this servant. And what do we have this voice saying? "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." ...as the Holy Spirit comes down upon this man. So, needless to say, this got people's attention and probably helped them identify who this mighty One that John the Baptist was talking about. This was Him. This was Jesus, the mighty One, who would baptize us too, with the Holy Spirit.

And we get the extra privilege and blessing of seeing all three members of the trinity present. You have the audible voice of God the Father speaking. You have the descent of God the Spirit, upon Jesus, God the Son; all three members present, God the Father God, the Spirit, God the Son - one of many passages affirming and showing this understanding, this doctrine of the trinity, who God is, and His complexity, the three in one, Father, Son, and Spirit. So this baptism, no doubt, would've got people's attention, no doubt, would have clearly made the connection for John the Baptist and others that this is the One. And thus, Jesus has now set into effect His ministry. He is now set into motion the very purpose for which He's come. He is now submitted to God's plan. He's displayed Himself as obedient and willing to be identified as this Messiah who must suffer. And so, this is not just a theatrical display, but we see immediately something takes place after this to show that this is real.

And next, we see the temptation of Jesus. So next, we come to the temptation of Jesus in verses 12-13. Verse 12 states, "The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. 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.” So, once again, we see a few things in these two verses. First, we see Jesus led by the Spirit - Jesus led by the Spirit. This is Jesus engaging His role immediately. Right? This is not Jesus coming and enjoying the theatrical display, the glamor of everyone looking at Him and seeing how great He is and then leaving. Right? And this isn't Him aimlessly wandering, either. This isn't Him going back to Galilee to what's comfortable. And this isn't Jesus just kind of looking around thinking, you know, I haven't been to the desert in a while. Let Me go hang out in the desert. Let Me go hang out in the wilderness and see what's going on over there. This is purposeful. This is Jesus submitting to, immediately, the role that He has. As the beginning of the verse states, “The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness.” The Spirit led Him. It drove Him. The word here, “The Spirit immediately drove Him...” that's the same word of when Jesus later on will cast demons out of people. Jesus will drive demons out of people, and the same way, Jesus, in His humble submission to the Spirit, is driven into the wilderness. This isn't against His will. He's obviously submissive and obedient to God, and He's willing to take on whatever God puts in front of Him; but this is the Spirit leading Jesus specifically for a task into the wilderness.

And so, you think about this, and you think, yeah, the wilderness. Hmm, this seems like an interesting place. Is that a nice area? Is that... you know, what's exactly happening in the wilderness? It's a negative, negative, completely negative area. It's a... the stigma for the wilderness, is bad. It's always bad. The wilderness is where people were tempted, and they failed. The wilderness is where beasts dwelled. The wilderness is even a part of the demonic and spiritual realm as far as the Jews were concerned, and as far as they understood. In fact, this is why we find Jesus encountering Satan when He goes out into the wilderness. So as He submits in obedience to the Spirit and the Spirit's leading, He encounters Satan in the wilderness. So, He's tempted by Satan - tempted by Satan. Once again, Jesus obediently getting baptized, identified as the Messiah, and now willing to take on this temptation in the wilderness. So, the wilderness was understood as a negative place, and it really does fit with the understanding that the demonic realm, of the spiritual realm, the demonic... the demons and Satan and his kind of coworkers there dwelling in the wilderness. And this is what Jesus even says. In Matthew 12:43, He says, “When [an] unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest...” And so, this is what happened. This is how people understood the desert. The people

understood the wilderness as a place where demons would go after they did their work and they found someone to possess or a place to possess and they got cast out, they would go back into the wilderness. The wilderness was not a positive place. It was negative - had a terrible stigma to it.

And so, here's Satan, really, kind of in his home field advantage. He's in the wilderness. This is where he hangs out. He's the god of this age. He's blinding the minds and the eyes of unbelievers. He's having his way with what's taking place on the earth. This is Satan. And so, Jesus is driven by the Spirit to where Satan is in the wilderness on the earth having his way; and it's not just for a brief moment, a quick chat, a little showdown, it's for forty days. Right? When He notices, this is forty days. This is a significant time because we learn from the other gospels that Jesus also was not eating during this time. He was fasting. This is not an easy kind of camping trip of some sort, to go out there for forty days with all your meals planned. All right? This is Jesus going into the wilderness, not eating, feeling the weakness of a human body with no food, and what happens to the body when day after day there is no sustenance, and how weakness overcomes and even can affect the mind and the will and everything else that is made up of a human.

A lot of people speculate about what these forty days are referring to, or why it's forty days, because we see forty other places in Scripture. And so, are there valid connections there? And so, some people like to make the connection between the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for forty years. I think there seems to be a connection there because, in that time, God does describe their wandering in the wilderness as a time of temptation - that the Israelites were in the wilderness, and God was tempting them to see what was in their heart. He was testing to see what they would do, and they rebelled, and they rebelled, and they rebelled, and they kept rebelling against God. So God struck them down and raised up a new generation after forty years of wilderness wandering. And so, some people say there's this connection here. Here's Jesus, now functioning as the representative of Israel, and He, all by Himself, going out into the wilderness, enduring the same, if not worse, temptation and testing for forty days, making that a connection of some sort. Deuteronomy 8:2 makes the connection; "And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or

not.” And so, we know from the Old Testament, we know from Israel’s history, that there was failure. There was sin. They did not obey God’s command.

And so, now, we turn here to see, will there be the same failure? Will there be the same sin and rebellion, or will there be obedience? Will there be holiness? Right? Challenging - being able to stand the temptation. Notice also, it says, “...being tempted by Satan.” So, that means it’s more than just a one-time deal. In fact, if you read Matthew and Luke, it makes it seem like there’s three specific confrontations that happen, but since it’s forty days and Mark is just vague in using this word “...being tempted...” over that time, it could even be more than that. It could be way more than those three times we see in Matthew and Luke. There’s no end to how much this temptation was and how often it took place over these forty days from Satan.

And then notice this interesting phrase that comes up; “And He was with the wild animals...” [And He was with the wild animals...”] And you wonder why that detail? Because when you look in the other gospels, you don’t really find that detail. You don’t find that added fact that Jesus was out being tempted, and there were wild animals there, too. And so, some people try and run a certain direction with this, and they see this as a positive thing. They see that this added detail, for the fact of showing that Jesus was out there with the wild animals, and He was petting them and naming them and hanging out with them and rolling around; and it was a great time. Some people think that. And the reason why they think that is because Jesus, no doubt, is the Messiah, and there are prophecies that talk about when the Messiah comes, that there will be a renewal of creation. All right? Creation will be restored and renewed back to almost the Garden of Eden and how it was like when Adam and Eve were in the garden. So, some people view this as a positive thing. Mark in this instance is not using it positively. This is negative. This is a negative detail that Mark adds to the story. You don’t see Jesus out there with all of His brothers and sisters of Israel. You see Him out there with wild animals to keep Him company, all right, wild animals being a bad thing: boars, jackals, wolves, leopards, hyenas. All right? This is not a picture of paradise, at all. This is not a petting zoo. This is a difficult situation where Jesus is now surrounded by these terrifying elements all around Him, not just lack of food but also danger on all sides, even as David talked about when he was running from Saul in the wilderness - the danger that existed.

And interesting to note, too, how significant this temptation is when you compare it to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve, as we know, were in the Garden of Eden. They're in a wonderful situation where they had sustenance; they had food all around them. Right? They had this wonderful situation, not wild beasts, but beasts that they named, and that they were dwelling with. There was harmony. There was peace there. There was actual relationship with God. It was everything you could really want and ask for, and then the temptation came from Satan, and they took it. They failed. They sinned. As representatives of mankind, they plunged us and the entire world into sin and depravity. And now here's Jesus, as stated elsewhere by Paul, the new Adam. Jesus, the new Adam, going up against the same, if not very much worse, temptation. Jesus, not in the Garden of Eden, not with nice animals, but in the wilderness with wild beasts for forty days being specifically tempted by Satan over and over again. And how would Jesus fare? As the new Adam, would He fail or succeed? And as we know from all of the gospel accounts, really, we know that Jesus does succeed in this. He does not forfeit His ministry. He does not give up and say I was just baptized, and that was cool, but now, I'm done because this is too hard, and I want to eat. He stayed the course. He maintained what was in front of Him. So, Adam failed in Eden, but Jesus succeeds in the wilderness in His temptation.

And the last detail we find in our verse is that the angels were ministering to Him. He's served by angels - served by angels. So, we look at our text. Very simply after this display, we see "...the angels were ministering to Him." ["...the angels were ministering to Him."] And so, it's interesting to see here, really, what is two sides of the nature of Christ, two aspects of who He is. Because, when it comes to who Jesus is, and we look at what Scripture says about who Jesus is, we have to come away with two conclusions. He's a hundred percent God. That's one conclusion, and we have to uphold the other conclusion. He's a hundred percent man. He's both, and there's no way around it. And the simple two verses like this really shows us. He has to be a hundred percent God because He is perfectly led by the Spirit as verse 12 states, and these angels are ministering to Him. These angels are coming to Him and ministering to Him at the end of His temptation. This is God. All right? This has to be. This is divine, this being; but then, we see that there is legitimate weakness. He's in the wilderness for forty days, not eating, surrounded by danger of wild animals, and being tempted by Satan; such

that He can actually relate to you and I in our weakness, and He understands the temptations that we go through. So, He's both. He is a hundred percent God, but at the same time, He's also a hundred percent man; and you have to affirm that in this passage. This is what Scripture teaches over and over again. We'll see that this Jesus is the God-man. He is. He's a hundred percent God. He's a hundred percent man. He's not fifty-fifty. He's not seventy-thirty. He's both, completely, fully.

So, that's what we find – Jesus, in this text, willingly understanding, knowing what His path is, knowing the position He must play and embracing it, obeying, humbling Himself, submitting to God's plan, and being willing to put that to the test immediately. After this first domino falls, immediately after this baptism, He's willing to be driven out into the wilderness and tempted for this time to represent that He is the new Adam. He will restore all things, and He will not fail as Adam, our representative, did. So, how can we kind of take something from this? What are we going to learn from this? What? We're not Jesus. We're not perfect in every way. We don't have the Holy Spirit descending upon us at our baptism of some sort. The simple obedience and humility of Christ is enough for us to live this out and understand what it means to be Christ-like, to model Him in our lives.

As I've already said, I know that you're going through difficult times. I know that you're in situations you'd just rather not be in, and unfortunately, I know that the temptation for us is to respond incorrectly to those situations. The temptation is to say and make excuses like, aw, later. Later I'll get around to it when the time is right. Once I fix things and get things right over here in my home with my family, then I'll think about serving the Lord on this front. Once my position at my work changes, then I'll share the gospel. And that's our temptation. We like to make excuses and say that we have valid excuses for not submitting to the position that God has us in. I'd just plead with you, that is not what Jesus does. Jesus understands when John the Baptist comes on the scene; that's His cue. No Israelite would rise up and say, oh, pick me. I would love to go to the cross for my fellow man. But this is Jesus humbly accepting the position that He must play, embracing the role that God has set before Him and being obedient, no matter the cost, no matter the circumstances, no matter what lies before Him.