

The Call to Follow Jesus

Studies in the Gospel of Mark

From the Series *Kingdom Living in a Twisted World*

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people or a church that helps people find relationship with Christ, thus filling the vacuum, rather than just religion?

10. Jerusalem is about twenty miles from the Jordan River and approximately four thousand feet above it. The people in Jesus' time walked a long way out and a long way up to get to Jesus. How far and how long are you willing to search to find deeper relationship with Him?

As you move through this study, watch for and record clues to developing a deeper walk with Jesus. Observe the slow but dogged progress of the disciples as they tried to follow Jesus who promised to make them "become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

Day 2

Baptism and Temptation (Mark 1:9-13)

I read recently about a traveler who was hunting in South America. While walking through the forest, he was drawn to the sound of agitated birds. He approached the sound and watched, fascinated, as a pair of birds were anxiously fluttering over a nest of eggs. The traveler then saw the problem: a highly poisonous snake was slithering up the tree toward the nest.

Suddenly, the male bird flew away and was observed flapping around a nearby bush as though anxiously looking for something. The man watched as the bird returned to the nest and laid a small, leafy twig over the nest. The two birds then flew to a higher branch to watch as the snake slithered inevitably forward. Just as the snake prepared to strike, it suddenly threw back its head, recoiled, and writhed away down the tree. The pair of birds burst into rapturous song.

The traveler, intrigued, climbed the tree and removed the twig. When he later asked the natives about it, he was told that it was from a bush that was deadly to the snake; the very sight and odor would cause any snake to flee. The helpless bird knew the bush and in an hour of danger used the bush to protect the nest.⁴ In today's lesson, Jesus models how He protects Himself from temptation of the enemy by knowing the Word of God and wrapping it around Himself.

⁴ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Awake, My Heart*. (London/Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, LTD., 1959), 36

The Greek word for *immediately* is *enthus*. It means, "Straightaway, without hesitation or lingering." Some scholars surmise that Mark's use of the word *immediately* is a way of communicating to believers the immediacy of God's power in response to the needs of humanity. It is mentioned forty-one times in the book of Mark.

Background Information

Part of Jesus' ministry was to break Satan's control over humanity. (Isa. 61:1-4)
His call to be baptized signified a beginning, an awakening of Messiah to His role and His ministry of reconciliation. (1 Cor. 12:13)

The gospel of John excludes information about Jesus' baptism and temptation probably because John's gospel portrays Jesus as God. Likewise, Mark gives only a few verses on Jesus' temptation while other gospels give the topic much more attention.

After being baptized, Jesus was immediately driven by the Spirit into the desert. There He was tempted by Satan. It was in the midst of these trials that Jesus had to make choices between God's best and the world's best. Everything He went through was an example to help us live out our own struggles as people of His kingdom.

Disciples' Perspective

It was not until after Jesus' baptism and testing in the desert that He called His first disciples. It is safe to assume that some of those who would be future disciples might have been present at Jesus' baptism. It was not until after Jesus' baptism and testing in the desert that He called His first disciples. Scripture records that many followers of John left him to follow Jesus and in the next section we will learn that some of Jesus' future disciples were already acquainted with Him when they received the call.

Historical Quote

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea,
Yet I know how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.
I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven,
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

-Emily Dickinson

Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Today's Reading Mark 1:9-13

Parallel Passages: Matt. 3:13-17, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34; Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13

1. **Review Mark 1 and underline the following words (and their derivatives or words having the same meaning):**

- (a) Amazing
- (b) Authority
- (c) Immediately
- (d) Wilderness

2. What do each of these words tell you about: (a) Jesus' ministry? (b) The act of becoming a disciple?
3. Read Mark 1:9-11. Why do you think the author only gives three verses to this important moment in Jesus' public ministry? (Hint: Think about what you have learned in this study so far.)
4. Read the parallel passages (Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13). What details can you add to Mark's narrative from reading the above passages?
5. The entire Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are involved in Jesus' mission to save the lost. How do you see the Godhead at work in Mark 1:9-11? Describe anything you see from the passage about their individual roles in Jesus' earthly mission.
6. List all who were present at Jesus' baptism.
7. Why do you think Jesus was baptized?

The wilderness is thought by some scholars to stretch between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea and was commonly known as "the devastation" or "the rolling bad lands." Measuring 35 by 15 miles, the place was made of limestone and large jagged rocks. It was a barren, chalky soil covered with tiny pebbles. Under the Middle Eastern sun it was like a furnace.

Perhaps because of the persecution Roman Christians were experiencing during the time Mark was writing, he mentions wilderness or wild beasts more than once in Mark 1:1-13. This is one theme of Mark. Many citizens were forced to flee their homes either out of the city altogether or into the catacombs. Mark pictures Jesus' temptation in the desert as overcoming the wilderness.

8. Read Mark 1:12-13. Think about your own life today. What is your wilderness like? What temptations are you and/or your family facing? How does knowing that Jesus overcame the loneliness, horror and danger of the wilderness help you today?

9. Scripture reveals that Jesus was tempted ‘in all ways as we are’ (Heb. 4:15). From your review of the parallel passages to Jesus’ temptation, how was He tempted in the following areas?
- (a) The Flesh
 - (b) Pride
 - (c) Power
 - (d) Greed
10. In Mark 1:12 Jesus was impelled by the Spirit into the wilderness immediately after His baptism. Notice the contrast between where His temptation took place (the desert) and where Adam’s temptation took place (the garden). Do you think this is significant? Why or why not? Write your observations.
11. List one or two temptations you are currently facing. How have your prior trials prepared you for this season of life? Being able to identify these areas is a key to a growing faith.
12. Review Isa. 61:1-4 and the parallel passage of Luke 4:14-21. If part of Jesus’ ministry was to break Satan’s control over humanity, how does Jesus’ temptation in the desert begin to do this? Go through each verse in Isa. 61:1-4 and write down everything Jesus came to do.⁵

You have probably heard it said “You may be the only Bible someone may ever read.” Jesus certainly portrayed this in His own life on earth. To me it is a frightening statement. But in a sense, maybe it is true. Each of us who carry the risen Christ in our hearts is living the gospel out through our choices, actions and words. It is seen in our attitudes, values, actions and relationships. The people around us are reading our gospel every day.

What happened to Jesus in this short treatise is what happens to us – and because it happened to Him we can take great comfort in knowing we are not alone in our temptations. He is always with us. As we grow, He will continually teach us how to protect the nest!

⁵ We will be referring to the Isaiah 61:1-4 passage many times throughout this study. I think it is a key passage to the whole of our journey as disciples.