

THEN JESUS CAME

Mark 1:9-15

Introduction:

"In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee..." This morning we are going to be looking at the coming of Jesus to begin his ministry. As I mentioned last week, Mark tends to be very brief and concise in his recording of events. In the first 15 verses of his gospel he covers the prophecies regarding John, the ministry of John and his message of repentance and forgiveness, the appearance of Jesus, his baptism, his temptation in the wilderness and the introduction of his ministry and message.

Last week our focus was on the ministry of John the Baptist as he came to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ. John came in fulfilment of the OT prophecies particularly those of Isaiah. He was "...the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

His message was one that touched people at their point of need. It was a message of repentance and forgiveness. *Read v. 4* – people responded to that message. They came out in droves, seeking the forgiveness of their sins and being baptized in the river as a sign of their repentance.

But John's message went even further. He was clear that there was more. His message of repentance was only the beginning. He preached a message that called people to repentance and forgiveness, but he also said – *read vv. 7-8*.

You see, John was only the forerunner. He was the one sent in advance to prepare the way for the one they really needed to listen to. There was another coming—One who would turn their lives upside down; One who would change them and would change their lives in ways they could never imagine.

Isn't that what we all need? What we all want? To meet the one who can not only forgive our past but offer us a future?

Well, in our text this morning, twice we come across those two little words, "Jesus came..." Verse 9, he came from Nazareth in Galilee and there are two things that happened to him – he was baptized in the Jordan and he was tempted in the wilderness. These two things were necessary before he began his ministry.

Then in verse 14, he came into Galilee, returning from the wilderness. And he came preaching, proclaiming the gospel of God. That is what really defines his ministry for the next three years. He came preaching message that changed lives.

This morning I want to take a brief tour through this text, looking at Jesus baptism and temptation, as well as considering the message of Jesus that Mark identifies. Then we will try to draw some lessons from this as we think about what happens when Jesus comes in to a life.

The Baptism of Jesus

All four gospels record the baptism of Jesus – it is obviously important. Mark & Luke are brief and John only mentions it. But Matthew tells us that when Jesus came to be baptized, John protested – *expand*.

But Jesus insisted saying, *"Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* (Matt. 3:15) Without going into a lot of detail, it would seem that Jesus was indicating that, in order fulfil his ministry, which was to provide righteousness for us, through his perfect righteousness, it was important for his to identify with us in our need of cleansing by entering into the waters of baptism. So John consented and baptized the Lord Jesus. ***It was an act of identification.***

But all four gospels record a very significant event that occurred as Jesus came up out of the water. Immediately, as Jesus emerged from the water, the Holy Spirit descended on him, appearing in the form of a dove. At that moment, the Holy Spirit descended on him in power to empower him for ministry. Now, that is not to say that Jesus did not have the Holy Spirit prior to this. As the eternal Son of God he is and was one with the Father and the Spirit. But, as a man, having identified with us in our need, he was now empowered by the Spirit to carry out his ministry. ***It was a moment of empowerment.***

Then came the voice from heaven, the voice of assurance and affirmation. *Read v. 11.* Matthew records the voice as saying, "This is my beloved Son..." Mark and Luke both have the voice speaking to Jesus, saying, "You are my beloved Son..." Which one is correct? Ray Stedman makes an interesting case. He suggests that both are right.

Those who were standing around heard the voice saying, "This is my beloved Son," as the stamp of God's approval upon the thirty quiet years of Jesus' life about which Scripture is silent. People have wondered, "Perhaps he was just like everybody else; perhaps he sinned in the same way. Perhaps he was disobedient to his parents, or did even worse things -- we don't know." But God knew. God the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was a testimony to his purity.

But when Jesus heard it, it was, "You are my beloved Son," and was addressed to him directly as a ground of assurance and security for him. It was the assurance of his Heavenly Father that he was not alone in his mission here on earth. ***It was a sign of assurance and affirmation.***

In this we see an example that is to be followed as we approach baptism. For us, baptism is a sign of identification with Christ, a time of empowerment as we commit to walking with Christ and a sign of assurance as we place ourselves in the fellowship of God and other believers.

So, when Jesus came, he came with the approval, the blessing and the authority of his Heavenly Father.

The Temptation of Jesus

The other necessary part of Jesus' preparation for ministry was his temptation. Mark is very brief regarding this period in Jesus' life. Matthew and Luke give a lot more detail, outlining three specific temptations Satan brought before Jesus. John does not mention it at all. But Mark, in his brief description of this event, mentions some things that the other writers do not. I want to briefly discuss three things.

1. Immediately (that word shows up often in Mark) the Spirit "drove" him into the wilderness. Jesus was compelled to go out into the wilderness to face this time of testing and temptation.

He needed to do this for himself. It was the opportunity to face the opposition that would come his way during the coming months and years. Matthew and Luke both tell us of three specific temptations and they were all designed by Satan to distract Jesus from the purpose of his coming—to get him away from his mission. He had come to serve and ultimately to sacrifice himself before being exalted again by his heavenly Father. But Satan offered him ways to bypass the suffering to achieve the glory without the pain. But, through his victory there in the wilderness, he was strengthened for all that would come his way in the coming three years.

He also needed to face this temptation for us. We can face temptation knowing that our Saviour has been through it all and came out victorious.

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:14-16 ESV)

2. The second thing we notice from Mark's account is that the testing seems to be continuous, ongoing throughout the forty days he was there. The other writers imply that the devil came and presented him with three tests, and then it was over. Mark tells us that he was there for forty days, being tempted by Satan. Satan's persistence should not surprise us. He is determined to bring us down, and I am sure there were many other tests that Jesus faced besides the three that are described by Matthew and Luke.
3. The other thing that Mark makes clear is the fact that even though Jesus was by himself out there in the wilderness, without any human companionship, he was not alone. *"And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him."* (v. 13b) I'm not sure how the wild animals benefited him, I am sure that he was not frightened of them. Somehow they brought comfort and help to him. And then he also had bands of angels to minister to him. They were there to uplift him, to sustain him, to encourage him, to strengthen his spirit.
How often are we ministered to by angels and don't even know it?

When Jesus came, he came with the approval, the blessing and the authority of his Heavenly Father. He also came in victory, conquering the temptations of the enemy.

The ministry of Jesus

Now we come to the ministry of Jesus. Mark takes quite a jump here as he begins his account of Jesus ministry after the arrest and imprisonment of John the Baptist.

But at this point we again read, "*Jesus came...*" this time coming from Judea into the Galilee. This time he is coming with a message to begin his ministry there in the area around the Sea of Galilee. His message is – *read v. 15*. I'm not going to dwell on this verse too much this morning. There are just a couple of things I want to mention.

First, the primary ministry of Jesus was preaching. He came to proclaim a message – the message of the gospel. His message was one of repentance and forgiveness.

His message was also about the kingdom of God. What does he mean by that? He is talking about his own lordship. We live in a troubled world full of conflict and confusion. But, as we sang earlier, He is Lord. He is Lord over everything. He knew what he came to do and from the outset his message was that he came to make everything right again.

Conclusion

As we wrap this up, there is just one more thing I want to mention. And this is really an introduction to what is ahead. Jesus ministry of preaching—his message—was supported by a ministry of signs and miracles.

Everywhere Jesus went, he encountered people with problems – the lame, the blind, the deaf. But when Jesus came, everything changed. The lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw.

But more than that, when Jesus came, their lives were changed. Sins were forgiven, relationships were healed, people were given hope.

Jesus is still in the business of changing lives today. When you encounter Jesus, your life will never be the same.