

## IN THE WILDERNESS (Mk. 1:12,13)

The Gospel of Mark is a great account of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. As we have said before though, it does not consist of all the information Matthew and Mark includes. For example, in Matthew the account of the temptations (4:1-11) takes in Satan tempting Jesus to turn the stones into bread (v.3,4), tempting Jesus to jump off the highest pinnacle in the temple (v.5-7), and lastly, the devil took Jesus up to a high mountain and offered the Creator the kingdoms of the world and their glory (v.8-10). When the devil left Him, Matthew records how the angels ministered unto Him (v.11). ... Luke records something similar (4:1-13). In keeping with Matthew's account, he also begins with Jesus being hungry (v.2, cf. Mt. 4:2), with the devil tempting Jesus to turn the stones into bread (v.3,4) ... but the second temptation Luke records is when the devil takes Him up to the high mountain (v.5-8) ... and then on to the pinnacle of the temple (v.9-12), before the devil leaves Him *for a season* (v.13).

So Mark didn't include the detail of the temptations in his Gospel ... merely a fleeting statement, *1:12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.*

Neither did he mention the wedding at Cana (Jn. 2), nor the occasion when Jesus confronted the money-changers in the temple, nor the meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar (Jn. 4). ... Probably the reason Mark condenses certain information is to 'draw in' his largely Gentile readership by emphasising, *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1)*. Then we are down by the River Jordan (v.2-11), and then we are given a very brief summary of the temptations in the wilderness (v.12,13). ... That's what lies behind the very commencement of Mark's account, - Christ's coronation at His baptism, and His pre-eminence over Satan in the temptations.

Indeed, the 'speed' behind Mark's narrative is also shown in how he used the word 'immediately' (εὐθύς) seventeen times throughout his Gospel (1:12,28,31,42; 2:8,12; 4:5,16,17,29; 5:2,30; 6:27,50; 10:52; 14:43). But what Mark is doing is firmly establishing the attributes of Christ's ministry so as to build a clear message that what he is testifying to is nothing less than *the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*.

Notice the number of times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in these verses in the opening chapter, v.8,10,12. Mark doesn't tell us why the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, but Matthew does, 4:1 *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.* Matthew tells us the Holy Spirit brought Jesus specifically into the wilderness with the sole purpose that the Son of God would be tested, tempted and tried.

However, Mark shows us how the Holy Spirit *took* Jesus into the wilderness. He used a very strong word, ἐκβάλλω, which means literally to throw out, - it is the same word that is used to describe how Jesus cast out the moneychangers from the temple (Mt. 21:12). It is also the same word used in the parable in Mt. 25:30 to describe how the unprofitable servant was *cast* into outer darkness, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. ... *This* is the word that describes how the Holy Spirit took Jesus and *compelled* Him to go out into the desert! It was the will of the Father, and the will of the Godhead drawn up 'in the counsel room of Heaven' that Jesus would face the devil in this wilderness following His baptism in the River Jordan ... Jesus did not wander into the wilderness, - as the children of Israel had done ... No, He entered the wilderness willingly under the direction of the Holy Spirit ... to confront and to be confronted by Satan. It was all under God's control and management!

Since Mark left out a few other instances in Jesus' life, why does he highlight that Jesus was taken into the wilderness? He highlights it because it shows how Jesus was taken away from everyone and everything. He has gone from the crowds gathered on the banks of the River Jordan into the absolute isolation of the desert. ... He had come from Nazareth in the hills of Galilee to be commended by the Father and empowered by the Spirit in His baptism. He is filled with all power, wisdom and truth, and at such a high pinnacle, the Holy Spirit literally 'casts' Him into conflict with Satan in the wilderness.

Yes, He is out there on His own with Satan. There is nobody around Him or with Him, and there is nobody to help Him through the temptations ... There was none to pray with Him, to comfort Him, or to encourage Him. Jesus Christ was alone with the devil in the wilderness in order to demonstrate His power over Satan! ... Jesus was there to face the enemy in pursuit of Gospel victory!

Such temptation! Adam was the first to be tempted in Scripture, but he was tempted in a paradise, ... nothing like the wilderness! Adam was tempted when he was in the company of Eve ... but Christ had neither company nor comfort. He was in the most isolated and barren of deserts. It was where there was no human habitation, - it was where only the wild beasts lived (Mk. 1:13). It was a place of the most horrendous danger and isolation. That is where Jesus was tempted!

Matthew and Luke tell us He was in this environment for forty days ... *forty days* without food (Mt. 4:2; Lk. 4:2)! What must that have been like! ... Moses also fasted for forty days (Ex. 34), as did Elijah (I Kings 19) ... That's almost six weeks of not eating anything! ... But this was more than simply being faced with starvation ... This was Jesus for almost six weeks having no other company but the company of the devil, - surely that is close to Hell in itself!! He had no comfort, no encouragement, no heartening conversation ... and He was in the hottest and driest of terrain, and in the worst and vilest of company! ... Surely He must have been at the lowest of the low! ... He must have been 'drained'! But since He is the King, He *had* to conquer the wiles and wickedness of the devil! Christ must reign, and He mustn't lose any of His power. He must stand up against and revile Satan! He has been tempted the whole time, during those forty days, but He has withstood the oppressor, - the evil adversary. Look at how the devil even tried to get Him to bow down and relinquish His sovereignty, Mt. 4:9 *All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

Actually, when you take great care to read what the devil said to Jesus, the devil was not attempting to get Jesus to relinquish His Kingship ... because the devil knew that was impossible for Jesus, - as God, - is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8) for He never changes (Mal. 3:6).

No, the devil was being more subtle than that. Instead, the devil was attempting to get Jesus to renounce *His humiliation*. Satan sought to seduce Jesus as he had previously and successfully managed to seduce Adam and Eve ... Satan said to Jesus, "You're hungry ... turn those stones into bread, and you can have a banquet out in the middle of the desert. ... You are the Son of God, the King. You are God, the Christ, the Messiah. You are privileged. You shouldn't have to be wandering around the desert *starving*! Come on, turn the stones into bread. *Do not accept this humiliation!*" ... That is actually where the devil was coming from! He wanted Christ to abandon His humiliation.

That's the same reason he took the Lord up to the high mountain and showed him the kingdoms, "I'll give You all this ... As King Jesus, You have a right to them ... You have a right to be the ruler. You can have them, and all You have to do is put Your two knees on the crowd and bend down before me! Simply abandon your humiliation, and You will be raised up once more."

It is the same objective the devil was trying to succeed in when he took Jesus to the top of the pinnacle, "Go on, Jesus, jump off ... and when the people see your miraculous landing You will make such an impression, they will all want to come and worship You! Abandon Your humiliation!"

How different the plans and the proposals of the devil were to the will of God, ... Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). Later in His ministry, Jesus called a little child over to Him and He told His disciples, Mt. 18:3 Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ... What a far cry from the aspirations of the devil to the eternal purposes of God, Is. 53:10 it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [*him*] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [*his*] seed, he shall prolong [*his*] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Yes, indeed, Satan appealed to our Saviour to take the authority, the dignity, and the exaltation of His earthly and Heavenly Kingship and to abandon His humiliation ... His humbleness. *That was the temptation!* This was the devil trying to take Jesus away from the purpose for which He had been sent into this world. Jesus had been tempted plenty of times before (in his thirty years), - temptation is something that shows itself every day of our lives, from birth until we die, - He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). ... And for forty days, - day after day, moment by moment, - Satan persisted in trying to get Him to abandon His humiliation... "Jesus, You don't have to do it" ... But yes, Jesus did for it was the will of His Father.

How did He come out of the temptation? Each time, He quoted Scripture. Yes, but here is how Mark explains how Jesus came out of the temptation, 1:13 and the angels ministered [διακονέω] unto him. ... In other words, after the forty days of fasting, the angels looked after, - served, - Jesus. Who sent the angels? ...

The *Father* sent them. Why? The Father sent the angels because He saw the faithfulness of His Son, and with the sending of the angels it was His way of saying, “I am still well pleased with You”. This was the Divine approval of the Father upon this work of Jesus in holding onto the humility the devil sought to deprive Him off.

God sent His Son into this world to achieve all of Heaven’s purposes, and Jesus succeeded in fulfilling every one of them, to His Father’s good pleasure and full approval. That is also the target for each of His children to aim for, - the good pleasure and full approval of our Heavenly Father. And when the world sees the change He has effectuated in His people, all the glory is His.

Jesus was baptised and tempted in the wilderness with the purpose he would come [preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God](#), - the Gospel of repentance that produces full salvation. That was the reason for which He came. He came in order for sinners to be saved! ... That is the only Gospel He preached, and it is the only we have the responsibility to proclaim ... The religious leaders from Jerusalem were against Him and His Gospel, and the devil was against Him but the Saviour did not stray from the path of obedience ... *There* is a lesson for us to take note of! No matter what else life sets before us to achieve, the greatest purpose for which we have been born into this world is “to glorify God and to enjoy Him [*for now*], and forever! ... That is also the greatest *calling* for Pathhead Baptist Church! He has established us for no other reason than to proclaim Christ in all His glory!

What is the Lord saying to us? He is saying to us ... Here is the example of how My Son served ... even when the greatest enemy of man and God withstood Him in the most hostile environment, *Jesus* remained faithful. ... *There* is our Example ... God says in His Word, I Cor. 10:13 [There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God \[\*is\*\] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear \[\*it\*\].](#) *That* great truth was supremely borne out in the life of Jesus to show us *how* to be faithful, Gal. 5:1 [Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.](#)

Just a couple of verses later in the first chapter of Mark, Jesus said to a group of ordinary men, v.17 [Come ye after me](#) ... May God encourage His people to travel towards Heaven and towards Glory, in obedience and humility ... in the footsteps of our Saviour and our Lord! Amen.