

- ⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee
and was baptized by John in the Jordan.
¹⁰ 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.
¹¹ And a voice came from heaven,
"You are my beloved Son;
with you I am well pleased."
¹² The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness.
¹³ 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.

The Spirit descending on Him – The ESV translates this “on Him”, but literally in Greek it reads “into Him.” Both Matthew and Luke read “on Him,” so it’s a bit of a clash that Mark says it differently. What might that difference mean? That the Holy Spirit descends into Jesus would seem to place emphasis on the fact that Jesus was literally possessed by the Spirit (not demon-possession, but Holy Spirit possession (cf. Mark 3:22!). This possession is what immediately drives Jesus into the wilderness in the next scene. More broadly, for Jesus to dispense the Holy Spirit requires Him to possess the Holy Spirit.

Isa. 42:1-4 ESV 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.² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

In the Old Testament, one of the great signs of the Day of the LORD was to be the pouring out of the Spirit on the people of God. Here then is the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise, with Jesus standing in for the people of God. Later on Jesus will then send the same Spirit on His people.

Joel 2:28 ESV "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

Acts 2:15-17 ESV For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:¹⁷ "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ...

As a dove – It's not completely clear what is being modified here. Is the descent of the Spirit compared to the *descent* of a dove (emphasizing flight?) or does the Holy Spirit take the shape/form of a dove (emphasizing a discernable appearance). Also, it's possible that both meanings are intended, thus the ambiguity. Being a Spirit, the Holy Spirit would be invisible, so it's possible that the point here is that the Holy Spirit took on a physical form so that Jesus could see Him (compare Luke 3:22). In Rabbinic literature, the dove was used as a symbol of Israel, but that doesn't seem to apply here (Hos. 7:11).

Gen. 8:8-12 ESV Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.⁹ But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.¹¹ And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.¹² Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

Gen. 1:2 ESV The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And a voice... – By the content of the message, the voice is revealed clearly to be God the Father, noting that Jesus is God the Son. The only other times a voice from heaven speaks in the Gospels is at Jesus' Transfiguration and in response to Jesus' prayer in the Gospel of John.

Jn. 12:27-29 ESV "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour."²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

This passage is extremely important in our confession of faith in God as Trinity: One God in Three Persons, united yet distinct. Together with Jesus' words in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), this is easily the clearest passage to show both the unity and distinctive Persons of the Godhead.

You are My Beloved Son... - This phrase certainly seems to be an allusion to two OT passages, Psalm 2:7 and Gen. 22:2. Both passages bring out important distinctions in Jesus' identity.

Jesus as God's Son, the King...

Ps. 2:7 ESV I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. [read the whole Psalm]

Acts 13:33 ESV this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'

2 Sam. 7:14 ESV I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,

Isa. 42:1 ESV 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.

Jesus as the Father's beloved Son, a greater fulfillment of Abraham's story

Gen. 22:2 ESV He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." [on the future of Mount Moriah see 2 Chronicles 3:1]

Mk. 12:6 ESV He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' [review the parable]

2 Chr. 3:1 ESV Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Jn. 3:16 ESV "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Rom. 8:32 ESV He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Rom. 8:15 ESV For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Gal. 4:4-7 ESV But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Jn. 3:5 ESV Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus as Son, the recipient of His Father's possessions

Gal. 3:26-29 ESV for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Jn. 8:34-36 ESV Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Matt. 21:38 ESV But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.'

Well pleased – This phrase again draws upon Isa 42:1 in order to affirm Jesus as the fulfiller of that passage, the Servant of Yahweh. It also perhaps is meant to recall the story of Creation in Genesis. As God created, He looked upon His creation and repeatedly affirmed His pleasure in it, declaring it good (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31. Jesus is bringing about the new creation beginning at His Baptism as He has received the Holy Spirit

Col. 1:19 ESV For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

2 Pet. 1:17 ESV For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"

Mk. 9:7 ESV And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."

Matt. 17:5 ESV He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

1 Cor. 1:21 ESV For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Matt. 11:25-26 ESV At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

Eph. 1:5 ESV he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Lk. 2:14 ESV "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

The Spirit immediately drove Him out – Each word here is important. The primary driver is the Spirit. Jesus' temptation is not self-sought, but it is still part of the mission on which God sent Him. Immediately very tightly connects Jesus' temptation and baptism. The close participation of Jesus with the sins of the world is being emphasized. Is Jesus' identification with sinners going to mean that He also sins? The verb "drove...out" is not an altogether gentle depiction of the transition from baptism to temptation. It sometimes connotes violence, but at the very least implies resistance. It is commonly associated with exorcism, driving out demons. Here though, Jesus, the one possessed by the Holy Spirit is the one being driven out to encounter Satan. In the prophets, the Spirit of God is described as a mighty force (Micah 3:8) and to resist Him is futile (Psa. 32:3-4)

Forty days – The Old Testament prophecies that precede John's ministry prepared us for the idea that Jesus is not only going to be God (the Son of God) coming to His people, but He is also going to be embodiment of the people of Israel themselves (Son of Man). The dual idea of Jesus; identity is further emphasized by Jesus' Baptism (as Son of Man He stands with all Israel in being baptized, as Son of God the voice of the Father declares Jesus to be His only Son). In Jesus' temptation, we are not surprised that the connections continue. Jesus is led by the Spirit to be confronted by Satan. This is the epic battle that has been promised from the opening pages of the Bible, where the Seed of the woman was promised to crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). But here we also have a strong connection to Jesus being the embodiment of all Israel. Jesus' time in the wilderness is strongly connected to the 40 years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Whereas their wandering was predicated and defined by their lack of faith (Exo 32 for instance), Jesus' time in the wilderness begins because He is led by the Spirit to fulfill God's purposes.

Exod. 15:24 ESV And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

Exod. 16:2 ESV And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness,

Exod. 17:2 ESV Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"

Deut. 2:7 ESV For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing." (See also Deut 8:4; 29:5)

Deut. 8:2 ESV 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.

If you look specifically to other time periods in the Old Testament that are specifically forty days, you will find the Flood (Gen 7:4ff. and 8:6), the time which Moses remained on Mt. Sinai to receive God's Covenant with the Israelites (Exo 24:18 and 34:28), the amount of time Goliath mocked the Israelites before David came out to defeat him (1 Sam. 17:16), the time of God sustaining Elijah after he fled to Horeb (Sinai) after defeating the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:8), the amount of time after which God would destroy Nineveh (Jonah 3:4), and the amount of time Jesus was with the disciples after His resurrection (Acts 1:3)

Being tempted by Satan – Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark gives no details about the content of Satan's temptations of Jesus, merely that it happened. One need not think that Satan's 3 temptations in those Gospels are the only 3 things that Satan asked of Jesus either, but they give us more of an idea of the attacks Jesus endured.

Heb. 2:18 ESV For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Heb. 4:15 ESV 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.

Although this is not specifically emphasized here, Jesus is likened to Job who is tested by God with great suffering, and yet remained faithful. He is also likened to Adam and Eve, who in the Garden of Eden, failed to remain obedient to God, but fell to the temptations of the serpent (i.e. Satan). Here, the difference is Jesus' temptation begins well outside the Garden, but His faithfulness leads us back to Paradise. Jesus' temptation is not primarily an example for us to follow, but the salvific victory against Satan that we as sinful humans could never accomplish. In Jesus' Baptism, Jesus becomes like us, as He associates His own identity with sinners, but here He shows Himself to be completely unlike us. And all of this was done through the leading of the Holy Spirit as Jesus works according to the plan and purpose of His Father. Satan's temptation of Jesus is all part of God's plan.

Satan – the word Satan is not an actual name, but a title. Satan derives from Hebrew and it means "the adversary."

1 Chr. 21:1 ESV ¶ Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

Job 1:6 ESV ¶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

Zech. 3:1-2 ESV ¶ Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

In the other Gospels, Satan is also referred to as the Devil (from Greek, meaning “the slanderer”), but Mark does not use this term at all. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) used the word Devil to translate Satan. In addition Satan is also called Beelzebul (the exact meaning of which is debated, but perhaps is in reference to ba'al, a Canaanite fertility god) (Mark 3:22).

Into the wilderness - The wilderness once again is a key part of the temptation. While Mark tells us nothing about the temptation itself, he makes a point to say that the temptation took place in the wilderness. In the wilderness, there is no other defense or aid for Jesus against Satan.

With the wild animals – There are two ways to understand this particular part of Jesus' wilderness experience and it all gauges on whether one thinks Jesus' time with animals was a positive one (linking with the angels ministering to Him) or a negative one (linking the animals more with the hostility of Satan). I tend to lean more toward the positive view. If this is right, the idea is that Jesus is bringing about the Day of the LORD (a “new” thing), the time when the enmity of all creation is put aside and peace reigns forevermore. If the idea is on the hostility, then there is still hope that Jesus will one day bring about this peace, but the message is that it has not happened yet and we are still waiting.

Isa. 43:19-20 ESV Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.²⁰ The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,

Isa. 42:9 ESV Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Isa. 48:6 ESV "You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known.

Ezek. 34:25 ESV "I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Ezek. 34:28 ESV They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid.

Ps. 91:11-16 ESV For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.¹² On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a

stone.¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.¹⁴ "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." [Jesus Himself quotes Psalm 91 in His battle against Satan in Matt. 4:6 and Luke 4:10-11, so even Jesus has this Psalm in mind during the experience.]