

# The Spirit and the Kingdom

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Date: 27 July 2014

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, people have turned to Mark's Gospel because it's said to be simple and it moves with pace and it shows us Jesus.

And all those things are relatively true, although I have to say things that look simple aren't always as simple as they look when you delve into them. There's perhaps more there than meets the eye. But let's look at, particularly looking at verses 9 to 20. Mark has told us that this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

That's what it is. That's what this document is. It's the good news. The whole thing is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And if you were here last time, you will know that for the first eight verses, we don't actually see Jesus at all.

We don't see him being born. We don't see anything of his childhood. But we get a scene set in terms of, I think we could say, an agenda and in terms of expectations.

[ 1 : 11 ] So he's going to tell us about somebody, you know, like the Sunday school teacher asks a question and the answer is Jesus.

Well, the answer is going to be Jesus. But what was the question? And in the beginning bit, he's really drawing out in quite a strong way. These are the things that Jesus is the answer to.

This is what he came to do. This is why he came. This is the story that he is the fulfillment of. And without trying to go through the whole thing again, we found that there was a preparation and then someone following.

So he quotes. He tells us he's quoting from Isaiah in verse 2. But as we saw, he's actually including some other quotes in there as well. So you get, as it were, a messenger followed.

So number one, a messenger followed number two by somebody else. So the first quote says, I send my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way.

[ 2 : 21 ] The voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him. So taking that at its face value, the messenger goes first and the Lord, the God of Israel, is coming second.

And we look back in the quotation and the source of it seems to be in the whole idea of rescuing God's people from the right pickle that they got into.

Their sin had caused them to be expelled from God's presence. They'd gone into exile and God was saying, well, I'm going to get them and I'm going to bring them back again.

And that's what the prophecy was about. So here's part of the agenda to bring home exiles from judgment. Bring home the people who are distant. There's also a second quote hidden in there from the Malachi.

And that quote seems to be saying, the Lord is coming and he's going to scrub up his people with a really rough scrubbing brush and really powerful soap.

[ 3 : 35 ] But somehow or other, he's going to apply this and his people are going to be sparkling clean at the end of it, which they've never been before. So I don't know whether that's an attractive proposition.

I don't think I've ever been scrubbed with a really hard scrubbing brush. I think if my mum had tried that, I probably would have cried. But that's what's sort of on the agenda from Malachi, a really rough, tough cleansing of God's people.

It's not quite explained how that will work, but that's what the agenda is. And then Mark says, and John came, so presumably in fulfillment of this, John the Baptist.

He himself was a very effective and influential leader. And it says lots and lots of people went to see him and to receive baptism from him.

And he was saying to the people, you know jolly well you're not right with God. You know jolly well that God has promised great things. You're not ready. You're not on the ball for this.

[ 4 : 44 ] You're not where you're supposed to be. So get ready. Sort yourselves out. Say to God, I need to be clean. I need to be washed. I need to be turning. And be baptized in token of that.

So it's quite a, it's a new thing. It's not, it's not without parallel in the Old Testament. But it's a definite new, you know, it's gone up a gear.

At least that. And John in his Old Testament way, because he wears Old Testament clothes, leather belt, eating locusts and wild honey. So lots of complex carbohydrates.

And this was, this was his message. So he says, I am number one. There is number two who's going to be following me. And after me will come one more powerful than I.

The thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize with water. That's what I've been doing. I've been baptizing you with water. But the one who's coming will make you, make you immersed in and drenched by the Holy Spirit.

[ 5 : 52 ] And that in itself is an Old Testament prophecy. So we have the picture of John the Baptist being number one. Followed by somebody. So I've just left a question mark because he doesn't, he just says someone is coming.

And John brings water baptism. As a turning thing. As a repentance thing. As a seeking forgiveness thing.

And this one who's coming, who's going to be greater, is the one who will pour out the Holy Spirit. As prophesied in the ancient prophecies.

And we're still left with the question, well who is this going to be? Who could possibly fill the bill? Who could possibly meet the criteria?

Who could possibly make this all happen? Given the agenda he's been set. You know, to basically fulfill the Old Testament.

[ 6 : 56 ] He's been given this agenda and Mark is setting up these expectations. So who's it going to be? What's it going to look like? How on earth is he going to do these things?

So that's the question that is leading us up to verse 9. And there's the wonderful thing that verse 9 just goes straight on in and says, you know, you're thinking who's it going to be?

What's he going to do? At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. So that's the answer to your question. Of course the gospel doesn't end there because it's going to take quite a long time to say exactly how Jesus fulfills this.

In some cases he won't look as though he's doing it at all. In other places you'll see him doing it but it wasn't quite the way you expected it. But nevertheless, at that time, along comes Jesus.

And what I'd like to do, and if I could do this really concisely, you would be really happy I think, wouldn't you? Rather than dragging it out till about quarter past nine. But what I've got to do is there's three scenes here.

[ 8 : 04 ] There's the scene at the Jordan, verse 9. There's a scene at the Jordan. And then there's a scene in the desert from verse 12. And then there's a scene beside the Sea of Galilee in verse 16.

So I'd like to do those three scenes. And Mark does seem to give us sort of snapshots. You know, click. There's that, that, that, that and that. And you know, and you could tag people in it.

And just take a look at that picture. So let's take a look at this first scene. At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee. And was baptized by John in the Jordan.

As Jesus was coming out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open. And the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven. You are my son whom I love. With you I am well pleased. So we've got verse 9, 10, and 11.

[ 9 : 08 ] And he just puts them one by one and says a huge amount, doesn't he? Think of what's in that picture. So I've tried to draw it. I didn't quite give myself enough room, in fact.

There's the picture. So what we've got on the side of the riverbank is all the other people who are being baptized. And we've got the river.

We've got John in the river doing the baptizing. We've got Jesus who's being baptized. We have heaven being torn open, a dove descending, and a voice from heaven.

So let's go through those a bit at a time. There's the sinners. Of course, those are the people who are being baptized, aren't they? They're people who are saying, we're dirty. We're not right for God.

Baptize us please, John. There's John the Baptist doing it. There's Jesus of all people in the water. There's the voice of the Father from heaven.

[10:08] And there's the Spirit descending like a dove. And above it we have heaven torn open.

That's quite a picture, isn't it? That's quite a picture. So let's look at some of the components of it. So may I first of all comment on the word immediately? Mark, particularly in this bit, is often saying immediately.

The translation doesn't always translate it that way. But verse 10 says, as Jesus was coming up out of the water. Well, immediately as Jesus came up out of the water.

And verse 12, immediately the Spirit sent him out into the desert. And in verse 18, Jesus calls them. And immediately they leave their nets.

And in verse 20, the other guys, immediately he called them. They left their Father. And verse 21, I think I'm correct in saying it. They went into Capernaum.

[11:13] And immediately on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue. And in verse 23, and immediately a man was in the synagogue. And verse 29, immediately they left the synagogue.

And I think it's in verse 30. She was in bed with a fever. And immediately they told Jesus about her. And immediately the fever left her.

Well, that's enough. There's lots of them. So he's really pushing the pace on. This happened. That happened. This happened. Immediately that happened.

And it's just cracking on like that. So what's happening? Well, we have the baptism of Jesus. So that's worth...

That's a conundrum in itself. So why should Jesus line himself up with all these other people? All the other people are saying, we're sinners.

[12:13] We're not right with God. We need to be put right with God. And we're going to take any measure that's before us. John, you're telling us to be baptized.

And we're going to be baptized. And there's Jesus in the line. That's pretty remarkable, isn't it? Now, I would like to suggest that that line, the queue that he's in, stretches all the way to the cross.

Because what Jesus is doing here is saying, I'm not a sinner. And I don't need to be baptized.

But I am prepared to queue up with you guys who are. I'm prepared to be counted as if I was a sinner. I'm prepared to be treated as if I was a sinner. And whatever road that leads to, I'm prepared to take not only the first step, but all the steps along that road.

And that road led to the cross, didn't it? That road led to the cross because on the cross, Jesus, although he was not a sinner, was treated as a sinner, was numbered as a sinner, was reckoned as a sinner, and played the ultimate price that sinners ought to pay.

[13:30] So I would like to suggest that this baptism is a very, very significant first step. And it tells us something about the character of Jesus, doesn't it?

That he's prepared to queue up in the same queue that we're in. There's a story of a doctor that went to, I don't know, let's say for the sake of argument, it was South Africa.

And he'd gone to serve in a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases. And it was his first day. And he went down to the clinic and asked, where is the clinic?

And they said, it's down there. Turn the corner. Turn right. It's the first door. So he went there and he found there was a queue of people. And he stood in the queue to go where he'd been told to go. And then, of course, it dawned on him that he, as the doctor, was queuing up with the line of patients. Which was a rather humbling thing to do.

[14:34] And Jesus is prepared to queue up with us as sinners and say, yeah, I'll stand with you.

I'll identify with you. I won't go in the sort of consultant's entrance, if you see what I mean. So I think it says something about Jesus.

So there's the baptism. And as Jesus is coming up out of the water, he sees heaven torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove.

Well, this is a wonderful picture that we have here.

Let me put some other ingredients before we put it all together. The spirit descends and a voice comes from heaven. You are my son whom I love.

[15:34] With you I am well pleased. Who is Jesus? That was what we were asking. Who's going to come? Who's going to fulfill this agenda?

Well, God says at the outset, this is my son. That's who he is. He is the son of God.

So we have that assurance. And the addition to it, I love him. I value him.

I remember when Anthony Smith, who worked here for a number of years and worshipped with us, got his PhD. Do I remember it? I think I remember it.

And he went to his graduation. And of course, when he did your graduation, you have your gown and your whatever it is, hood and everything like that. And of course, mum and dad come and sit in the audience.

[16:32] And when they see, that's my son going up there. My son, the PhD. It's perfectly right and natural, isn't it?

This is my son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased. And that's exactly what God says about Jesus. Look at him.

Look at him. He's brilliant. Look at what he's doing now. He's being baptised. He's saying, I'm going to identify myself with sinners. Can you find anybody in the whole universe who'd do something like that as well as my son?

This is my son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased. It's quite a spectacular moment, isn't it? And notice the words that he says.

Now again, we could, I'm sort of thinking we won't, but we could pull several threads here. Because it's another of those things where the wording is not random.

[17:35] The wording has been picked from existing wording in the Old Testament. And there are three places in particular.

Psalm 2. Where the Messiah in Psalm 2 tells what the Lord said to him.

You are my son and today I have become your father. So it picks up on Psalm 2. And Psalm 2 is the great manifesto of the Messiah.

So what is the Messiah supposed to do? Answer, he's supposed to do what Psalm 2 says he's supposed to do. Which is solve all the problems of the nations and the turmoil of the nations.

To bring them all into line and to reign over them. And that's what Messiah is meant to do. And during the process of it, if you, as a member of the nations, realise you're on the wrong side of him, it's your job to go as quickly to him as possible and to make friends with him, to kiss the son lest he be angry and take refuge in him because blessed are all who take refuge in him.

[18:59] That's Psalm 2. It's the Psalm of the conquering Messiah. And this is what, this is one of the things that the voice from heaven alludes to.

This is my son. I'm talking Psalm 2. And it also picks up on Isaiah 42. Which is another huge raft of Old Testament thinking.

And the person in Psalm 42 is, no, Isaiah 42 is the servant. The servant of the Lord who is going to put right all the things that Israel got wrong.

She was supposed to be the servant of the Lord, but she's made a complete hash of it. And this servant comes to do what the other servant didn't manage to do.

And what a job the servant has. He does it by suffering. Isaiah 42, verse 1. Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.

[20:08] I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. And there's a quote of that. So Jesus is not only the great king who comes in victory, but he's also the servant.

And that's the servant, incidentally, who achieves his achievement by suffering, isn't it? Who is the one who we thought was smitten by God and afflicted.

My servant will act wisely. He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.

Yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him.

And by his wounds we are healed. That's the servant. And he's alluded to in the quotation from heaven. And it's also a strong similarity to the wording in Genesis 22, 2.

[21:22] Let's make sure I've got the quote right. This is Abraham and his son. The son whom he loves.

And this is the time when God sort of said, I'm going to solve the problem of sin here in Genesis. I'm going to make a human being a sin offering.

And the one that's going to do this is Isaac. And he says to Abraham, Take your son, your son Isaac, whom you love.

You see the wording of it. And offer him as a burnt offering. And you remember that that all proceeds. And we're very nearly there.

And he's all tied up. And he's ready to be sacrificed. And we think, gosh, really? Wow. This is the salvation of the world here, is it?

[ 22 : 22 ] And Abraham's already with the knife. And you know how the narrative slows up. He sort of raises the knife. And then suddenly there's a voice from heaven. Stop! No, this isn't it.

This isn't it, actually. This isn't the salvation of the world. This isn't the sacrifice that will solve it all. Stop. No, we'll just have to make do with a ram for the moment.

So, a human sacrifice of Isaac is off the agenda. We'll have to keep on having lambs and bulls and rams and things like that, which actually can never take away sins.

We'll have to keep on doing that until another day. And that another day is many, many days later. But we have here a hint, don't we?

Who is the son who is loved, who actually is a burnt offering? And where, as the knife, as it were, is raised to store to him, there's no voice going to come and say, stop.

[ 23 : 21 ] All a big mistake. He actually will die for sin. The son who is not spared. So, that's the scene at the Jordan River.

And I didn't come back to the matter of the Spirit, because you could say the question here is, what's going on?

And the answer is, the Trinity. Because what you see here is the Trinity sort of exploded into action, isn't it? You have the Son who is being baptised.

You have the Spirit descending on him. You have the Father approving the whole thing from heaven. And you see something like the Trinity getting into gear and getting into action.

And, of course, what that will lead to is yet to be seen. But it's a pretty striking snapshot, isn't it? So, that's scene number one at the Jordan River.

[ 24 : 27 ] Let's do scene number two. So, this is verse 12. So, immediately.

So, let's not hang around. Immediately. The one who we have been told about, this son, is sent into the desert.

The word is to chuck out. So, he's almost booted into the desert. The Spirit sort of boots Jesus into the desert.

And he's in the desert for 40 days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels attended him.

So, let's look at this scene for a bit. And I say that it's a scene of hidden conflict. So, there was the river. Now, he's not at the river. He's driven into the desert.

[ 25 : 23 ] And he's there for 40 days. We're not told about the food arrangements, which the other Gospels say. It's just said that he's in the desert for 40 days.

But we are told that he's tempted by Satan, that there are wild beasts there, and angels attend him. And I think that's quite a scene, if you think about it. He just paints it in a few brush strokes, but it's quite a scene.

Let's make some comments about this. Number one, the man who we're told gives the Spirit, because that's what we've been told at the end of verse 8, must first be disciplined by the Spirit.

That's a fascinating thought, isn't it? This man, Jesus, of whom we are beginning to think so much, in order to achieve that, must first humble himself to be put under orders.

[ 26 : 30 ] And if the Spirit says, off you go, he doesn't say, well, I'm the second person of the Trinity. I'll make up my own mind. He goes. It's interesting, isn't it? The Spirit immediately sent him out, and off he goes.

He must first learn obedience and humility. And then let's look at the place that he's at. Now, one of the commentaries says, Mark, this is his suggestion, and I think it's got something to it.

You know, in John's Gospel, there's a prologue. And the prologue is quite different to the rest of it. The prologue sets out a lot of ideas, and then it goes and explores them afterwards.

And he says, well, maybe Mark has a prologue, because he uses some thoughts and ideas which he hardly ever uses ever again in his Gospel, and one of them is desert.

Several times, he says, we're thinking desert here. The Spirit sent him into the desert. He was in the desert. And what sort of place is the desert?

[ 27 : 41 ] Well, the desert is a significant place in the Bible, isn't it? And I would like to sort of shortcut it and say, in the Bible, the desert can very well be the place of getting sorted out with God.

Because Israel was in the desert, wasn't she? She left Egypt, and she was wandering in the desert, trying to get things sorted out with God.

She got things wrong, but she had to get them sorted out. How many years was she in the desert for? Forty years. And how many days was Jesus in the desert for? I wonder if there's a, I wonder if that's more than coincidence.

The desert was the place where God says, I will bring you into the desert and speak tenderly to you and allure you, he says, in one place.

And Jesus is in this very special place. Jesus doesn't go back to the desert. This is part of the, the sort of initializing process.

[ 28 : 51 ] And in the other Gospels, it's a place of testing. You know, what sort of son is he going to be? Is he going to be a son who fails the way that Israel failed when she was tested in the desert?

Well, he doesn't. He comes through this. But Mark just tells us that he was there and that it was a place of huge spiritual conflict. He was there tested, tempted by Satan.

So Jesus goes into the desert and faces, so we presume, the rawest, strongest, most hard-hitting temptations head-on from the evil one.

Sometimes we think that we have a problem being tempted by the devil, which we do, but we are never, we never have to face any temptation as strong as Jesus faced. The simple reason being that we would give in far earlier.

But Jesus resists and resists and resists and the temptation is strengthened and strengthened and intensified and Jesus goes through the strongest and most intense temptation but never yields an inch.

[ 30 : 14 ] And there he is and there's the picture of angels angels and the devil and wild beasts and I've drawn it up there and I have to say that when I drew it, it reminded very much of the drawings I did for the book of Revelation.

I don't know whether you remember them or whether you've expunged them from your mind but in those drawings, in the book of Revelation where we were shown what it was behind the scenes.

It's an apocalypse, an unveiling. We had a conflict. We had beasts. There's different beasts in the book of Revelation. We have angels in the book of Revelation, don't we?

And we have the serpent, the ancient serpent in the book of Revelation. And maybe John, maybe Mark is just in a quick thing because he's got to get on.

He's saying this is what I would like you to have in mind as the prologue. This is the scene against which all the other action will take place.

[ 31 : 26 ] Or we might even say it unveils what's behind it all, what's behind the scene. Here we have not just wrestling with earthly powers.

This conflict is not with flesh and blood. It isn't a conflict of ethics and a conflict of Jewish traditions and a conflict of Roman justice procedures.

It's actually wrestling with Satan and his power and his kingdom. And although it won't look like that necessarily as we go on, that's really what the scene is. So there's my second snapshot of a hidden conflict.

It is hidden because nobody else sees it, do they? They would only know about it if Jesus had told people afterwards. And in a way the first bit was rather hidden because it doesn't say that everyone saw heaven being torn open, it says Jesus saw heaven being torn open.

So there's a sort of hiddenness about these first two pictures. So let's get on to the third picture.

And the third picture is at the lakeside and I realise when I look at the drawing I've left one thing out which maybe we can put in.

[ 32 : 45 ] And now I think we have moved. Well we certainly moved geographically. We're not at the Jordan, we're not at the baptism, we're not in the desert in this place of conflict, we're now beside the sea.

We're now in somebody's workplace because that's what the seaside is for fishermen. It's normal Monday to Friday except it wouldn't have been Monday, it would have been Sunday to Friday wouldn't it?

It's their normal daily life. And we've suddenly, if you could imagine it in sort of cinematography terms, you have all the CGI effects, you have all the multicolour in verses up to verse 12, and then we go into black and white for verse 14, sorry, up to verse 13, there's all computer graphic effects with Satan and angels and heaven opened and everything, and then we suddenly go to verse 14,

into black and white, no funny sound effects, no funny visual effects.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. The time has come, he said, the kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news.

As Jesus walked beside the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, but they were fishermen. Come follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men.

[ 34 : 22 ] Immediately they left their nets and followed him. After he had gone a little further, he saw James, son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat preparing their nets. Without delay, he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

So the bit that I didn't put down, and I'm not sure where I put my this agenda and you've told us the expectation what is going to look like in real life.

And I think that's even true for verse 15 which seems in a way to be a rock in the sky doesn't it doesn't seem to be connected with anything. The time has come the kingdom of God is near repent and believe the good news.

Okay well what does that look like? How are we supposed to do that? This is the point apparently the kingdom of God is near okay what's that going to look like? Are we going to have swords and trumpets what's it going to be?

And apparently the response is that we turn and believe. Right that's what we want to do so what does that look like? Give us an example of it and maybe that's why verse 15 which says repent and believe the good news is followed by verse 16 which says well I'll give you an example of it and here's part A of this scene there's Simon and his brother Andrew and I don't know whether they don't have a boat but they're throwing their net into the sea they're casting a net into the lake because they're fishermen that's what fishermen!

[ 36 : 11 ] do seeing them do that in Sri Lanka you can see the guys throwing the net into the sea and Jesus comes up to them so you've got all this in your head this is all these expectations kingdom repentance believe the good news here's a guy throwing a net into the sea because that's what he does he's a fisherman and Jesus says come and follow me and immediately he does it I think that's a significant act come and follow me says Jesus and I will make you become fishers of men and at once they left their nets and followed him and let me just tell you that this is the way Mark tells the story if you read the other gospels you'll find that there's more to it than that that Jesus had met these people before and had quite a few conversations but Mark says let's cut to the chase the important thing is this they're fishermen they're doing their daily work there comes a point when

Jesus says come and follow me and they do it and what did they leave please what does the text say that they leave yep verse 18 they left their nets and Jesus makes this remarkable promise if you come and follow me I'll make you something that you weren't already it's quite a promise isn't it I think that's a wonderful promise to people and he says come and follow me and I'll make you something that you weren't maybe you were lots of things but I have it in my power to make you something that you would not otherwise have been just left to yourself you would have gone that way and been that but if you follow me I'll make you become something quite different it's a wonderful promise isn't it and we'll see again what that looks like as things go on because it's not necessarily an easy process and then part

B is very similar when they had gone a little further he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat I think they're more wealthy because they've got a boat and they seem to have a family business there and they're not chucking their nets into the sea they're preparing their nets but again same thing immediately he calls them what do they leave correct they leave their father Zebedee so I put him there going we're just in the middle of preparing they're gone and the hired men which makes you think that there's some money involved in this as a business and Jesus says to these guys you follow me and they leave something different they leave their father and they leave the hired men but they follow

Jesus and I would like to suggest to us that this is the way the gospel works so we've got a huge multicolored multilayered brilliant picture of Jesus the great king the suffering servant the one prophesied the one who does what Abraham couldn't do with his son Isaac the one when he sets his foot forward on the path of sacrificial obedience heaven opens and the trinity sort of leaps up into action that's who Jesus is and he has a message of repenting and believing the good news and what does it look like well the answer is that it looks like ordinary people in their ordinary lives following

Jesus following Jesus which is remarkable isn't it what does it look like it looks like fishermen leaving their nets and going and following Jesus well there's kingdom stuff yeah apparently this conflict with Satan what does that look like it looks like some guys hearing the call of Jesus and just doing what he says and we know that discipleship doesn't actually mean that whatever profession you have you leave it necessarily and we know that it doesn't mean that whatever family you have if you're going to be a disciple you just ignore them we know it doesn't mean that but it does mean that all of those things are subjugated to Jesus coming first is that right he says all these legitimate things your business your daily activity your family it looks like me being put first on a day by day basis where the rubber hits the road not in the world of  
[ 42 : 02 ] CGI graphics and multicolour it looks just in the ordinary coloured world that you and I live in that is what it's all about