Jesus Tested

Mark 1:9-13

Introduction

Colin Smith: 'Early in the twentieth century, a pastor in London by the name of J. Stuart Holden purchased two tickets for the maiden voyage of a new ship that many people were talking about at the time. Shortly before the ship was due to sail, Holden's wife took ill, and to their great disappointment, the couple had to cancel their trip.'

When Holden recognized they had been mercifully saved by the providence of God – which prevented their sailing on the Titanic – he decided to frame the two tickets and underneath wrote – 'a testimony to the love of God.'

When visitors came to his home – he would explain – how they had purchased two tickets but were unable to travel due to his wife's illness

However – on one occasion – a guest told him he had the wrong inscription

How so – asked Holden

"Well - I have a friend who did sail on the Titanic," his guest replied. He was an evangelist from Glasgow called Harper. He was on his way to preach the gospel in America, but he died in the water.

"Now, tell me Mr. Holden – when you say 'a testimony to the love of God' are you telling me that God loved you more that He loved Mr. Harper?

Holden had no answer – except to ask: 'What should I have written?'

'You should have written a testimony to the sovereignty of God' – God called Harper home and God called you to remain here. Why it was that way round and not the other, you will never be able to explain.

Colin Smith: 'In the mystery of God's sovereign will, one was called up quickly to heaven, and the other was left to serve longer on earth. When you think about a loved one who has been called home, you may wonder: Why was he or she called home? And why am I left here? Only God knows. But here is what you must hold onto: God wants you here to serve and honor Him with the days He has given unto you.'

We began Mark's gospel with the arrival of John the Baptist

He began doing the work of a forerunner before Jesus

'Get ready' – 'Jesus is coming'

And people were to become ready by receiving a baptism of repentance

This was the hour of John's service to the Lord

John will be gone within a couple years – slain by the executioner's sword

First - Imprisoned by Herod - - - and when the daughter of Herodias did a dance before Herod and his guests that pleased them - - - Herod told her to ask for whatever she wished – up to the half of his kingdom

She came back and asked for the head of John the Baptist – and Herod not wanting to disappoint his dinner guests sent the executioner who came back with John's head and gave it to the girl who gave it to her mother

Did God not love John?
Where was John's reward for his service for the Messiah?

The answer is, 'The Father loved him – his time for ministry had come to an end – and the Father called him home - - and his reward was in heaven.'

Thomas Boston: 'Surely you will live as long as you have work cut out for you by the great Master, to be done for Him in this world: and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.'

Now- we see – even at this early stage – how the Baptism of John will begin to be overshadowed by the coming of Christ

Mark moves now to the very beginning stages of the ministry of Jesus in Judea and Galilee

As the ministry of Jesus is opened up for us - - - Mark shows us right from the start - - - this is the One we need as our Savior – and who came for that very purpose

I. The Baptism – vv. 9-11

While John is out baptizing people in the Jordan River - - - Jesus shows up – and wants to be baptized!

We might say: 'Wait a minute – this was a baptism of repentance! Jesus doesn't have anything to repent of. Why should He be baptized?'

What is Jesus doing in that water?

He is identifying with His people

John protests the idea of baptizing Jesus

Matthew 3:14-15 – 'But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.'

Jesus overruled John's reluctance to baptize Him

R.C. Sproul: 'It was as though he was saying to John: "Let it Be. I do not have time for a theological lecture right now. Trust me on this. It must be done to fulfill all righteousness.'

One key characteristic of the messiah was that He would be identified with sinners – while He Himself was not a sinner

Isaiah 53:12 – '. . . He was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.' [kjv]

He fulfilled this on the cross – dying between two criminals – dying a sinner's death

Here – He is taking the sinner's baptism

Baptism in the church is now our way of publicly identifying with Christ / the Christian faith

If someone says: 'Why should I get baptized?'

If there was anyone who could've skipped baptism – it was Jesus - -- but He chose it to be identified with sinners

Charles Spurgeon once responded to the question of baptism

Spurgeon: 'If my master told me to pick up six stones and lay them in a row I would do it without demanding of Him, 'what good would it do?' . . . the very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the believer say, 'Therefore I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my obedience to my master.'

Spurgeon: 'When you tell your servant to do something and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns around and says, 'please sir – what for?' You are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and

servant. So, when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, 'What for?' I cannot have taken the place which faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple obedience to what the Lord hath said. Baptism is commanded and faith obeys because it is commanded.' [MTP 10, p. 327]

We note the presence of the Trinity here: Father, Son, Holy Spirit

R.C. Sproul: 'The baptism of Jesus was a trinitarian event.'

Our church doctrinal statement gives a concise summary of the Nicene Creed

Sully Community Church Doctrinal Statement: 'I believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'

Jesus would call the disciples to make our baptism a trinitarian event

Matthew 28:19-20 - 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'

A loud voice came out of the heavens – the voice of the Father

God the Father affirmed Jesus as the Son of God

He did not become the Son of God at this moment – but was acknowledged as such
His sonship was from eternity past [John 17:5 – 'Father . . .]

The Spirit fell upon Him – anointing Him for His public ministry

The Messiah was to be One who was characterized by the Spirit

Peter made use of this fact in His teaching to the Gentiles

Acts 10:38 – 'You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.'

Immediately following Jesus' baptism – He is led out into the wilderness for a spiritual conflict with Satan

II. The Testing – vv. 12-13

James Edwards: 'There is no time to linger in the glory of baptism. Without a moment to catch His breath, as it were, Jesus is thrust into the fray to pursue the ministry to which He is ordained, and to which He is endowed.'

The first thing the Spirit leads Him to is a time of trial and testing

When the Navy Seals bring in a class of new recruits – they are all smiles / filled with grand visions of being one of the Seals -- - - but then they are put thru a time of severe trial and testing - - - pushed beyond limits

Admiral McRaven's class began with 150 men entering the Seal program and finished with 42 men

The training includes 'Hell Week' - - - which involves 6 days of sleep deprivation – facing the elements / loud speakers / verbal and physical abuse / swimming with the sharks / all kinds of tests of their physical endurance

If someone insists that they have what it takes to become a Seal - - - their superior officer has one reply:

That response: 'Prove me wrong'

We should view the testing of Jesus to be something of this nature
40 days without food

His physical body is in a weakened condition

Satan comes to tempt Him – 'If you are the Son of God . . .'

C.S. Lewis: 'A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down.

Lewis: 'A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in . . . Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means – the only complete realist.'

The testing of Jesus had a similar purpose of the Seal training – displaying His fitness to be our Savior

Jesus came into the world – to conquer evil / to crush Satan under our feet / to destroy the work of the devil - - - to accomplish that – He must be sinless / able to withstand Satan's assaults

Matthew 4:1 – 'Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.'

This was Satan hitting Jesus with his best shot – trying to take Him out of the running / to disqualify him from being our Savior

*** If Jesus sinned – the whole plan of salvation collapses

If Jesus fell into sin – the entire NT would consist of the words – 'Sorry – I tried'

You and I would still be in our sins

Somebody once said: 'What doesn't kill you makes you stronger'

The point: – testing and trials can often be the crucible out of which emerges something positive - - - strength of character / wisdom [endurance] / a greater sympathy with others who go thru the same

Look at what the Scriptures say about this event and Jesus:

Hebrews 4:15, 16 – 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are – yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.'

In Jesus – do we have a sympathetic High Priest? / Do we have a champion fighter who knows what it takes to defeat evil?

Yes! We do

*** Every follower of Jesus is going to face temptations and trials as well

Corrie Ten Boom once tested as a young girl – she was around 8 or 9 years of age – and an older boy – Richard asked her to go for a walk thru the dunes

Corrie: 'However – I was not prepared for an act of boyish curiosity which surprised and shamed me at the same time. We had reached a valley where we could not be seen, and suddenly he pulled me close to him and started to do very strange things. Even without previous warnings from protective parents – I knew this was wrong.

Corrie: 'I pulled away from him, flushing with childish indignation, and stamped my foot, 'Richard – you stop that. Mama would think it's dirty!'

Richard looked frightened but defiant, 'She isn't here . . . and you mustn't tell.'

Corrie: 'Mama isn't here, but Jesus is and I'm sure He doesn't think it's right.' Richard was defeated and gave up his efforts

We might think of Joseph with Potiphar's wife – she is trying to get him to commit adultery – and he is refusing

Genesis 39:9 - 'How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?'

When you choose to identify with Jesus and start following Him - - - you're marked – you're a foe – and you will be tested – expect it – it's the nature of this world

I Corinthians 10:13 – 'No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.'

The wilderness – represented a God-forsaken place
Jesus being surrounded by the wild animals

There is a tv show – called 'Alone' - that would have 10 [survival experts] dropped off in a remote / harsh wilderness area – such as Alaska – to see how long they could survive with no human contact

They ate the fish they caught / etc. / built a shelter / fire / etc.

Scare away bears / various predators

The winner took home a prize of either $500,000 or $1M

In the wilderness – there is danger

One of the temptations was for Jesus to turn stones into bread – in the wilderness

Matthew 4:2-3 – 'And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

Satan: 'If you are the Son of God – you shouldn't be out here starving in the wilderness – you should be in a palace with lush foods – turn these stones into bread – you have the power – if you are the Son of God!

Satan knows full well who Jesus is

Satan – in his temptation seeks to turn Jesus away from obedience to the will of God

Alfred Plummer: 'Here Satan attempts to vanquish the mission just as He is about to begin.'

Satan hurls three temptations at Jesus – and Jesus deflects each one with the Word of God

Matthew 4:4 – 'But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

The Word of God is our sword in spiritual conflict – a key in victory

John Piper: 'I have never met a mature, strong, spiritually discerning Christian who is not full of Scripture, devoted to regular meditation on Scripture, and given to storing it in the heart through Bible memorization – and that's not a coincidence.'

A Spirit-filled Christian is a Bible filled Christian

Matthew 4:5-7 – 'Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning you; and 'on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Matthew 4:8-11 – 'Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if you fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold angels came and began to minister to Him.'

Satan threw everything he had at Jesus – trying to derail Him

If Jesus came into the world to defeat the devil and to save sinners - - - He would have to prove His fitness for the task – this was part of that proving

Admiral McRaven – had a storied career in the Navy after his training with the Navy Seals

His biggest accomplishment was being put in charge of a joint special ops mission – called 'Operation Neptune Spear' - - - or the mission to get Bin Laden – in 2011

McRaven was handpicked by Leon Panetta – to plan / organize / and train the men who would storm the compound in Pakistan - - - take out Bin Laden

Seal team Six – along with some Night stalkers – carried out the raid

The success of the mission led to McRaven being named, runner up for Time Magazine's person of the year – 2011

Jesus will later take His ultimate mission to take out Satan – by going to the cross of Calvary – laying down His life for sinners

God the Father highly exalted Him for His work

Philippians 2:9-11 – 'Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Jesus proved Himself up to the task of saving sinners

In His victory over temptation – He becomes one who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses - - - and to be a sympathetic High Priest

Conclusion

Mary Cushman – was in despair

It was the Great Depression of the 1930s - and her family had been hit with hard times financially. Her husband's paycheck shrank to eighteen dollars a week. Since he was given to illness – many weeks he didn't even earn that much.

Mary began to take in laundry and ironing on the side. She dressed her five kids in salvation army clothes. At one point – the local grocer, to whom they owed fifty dollars – accused her 11 year old son of stealing. That was all she could take.

She said:
'I couldn't see any hope - - - I shut off my washing machine, took my little five year old daughter into the bedroom, and plugged up the windows and cracks with paper and rags . . . I turned on the gas heater we had in the bedroom – and didn't light it. As I lay down on the bed with my daughter beside me, she said: 'Mommy – this is funny – we just got up a little while ago.' But I said: 'never mind – we'll take a little nap.' Then I closed my eyes listening to the gas escape from the heater. I shall never forget the smell of that gas . . .

Suddenly I thought I heard music. I listened. I had forgotten to turn the radio off in the kitchen. It didn't matter now. But the music kept on, and presently I heard someone singing an old hymn

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer

Oh what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

As I listened to that hymn – I realized that I had made a tragic mistake. I had tried to fight all my terrible battles alone . . . I jumped up – turned off the gas, opened the door and raised the windows.

She then spent the rest of the day praising God – and finding renewed hope for the journey

We have a sympathetic High Priest – cast your burden / lay your sins down / find your strength in Him