

# ON THE MOVE WITH JESUS

## IN MARK

### (DAY 2)

*A unique, verse-by-verse,  
life-application commentary  
by Terran Williams*

#### DAY 2 – THE BAPTISM AND TESTING OF JESUS (1:9-14)

#### COLOUR-CODE SUMMARY (THE FOUR MAIN WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE GOSPELS):

- **Blue** - something about Jesus' uniqueness and Lordship that shows he is worthy of our devotion, trust and surrender
- **Green** - something about Jesus' character or ministry that we can imitate
- **Red** - something Jesus taught that we can understand or apply to our lives
- **Orange** - insights we can apply based on the way various people responded to him

#### The baptism and testing of Jesus

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

#### Jesus' water baptism carries at least three meanings for your life

- Why did Jesus submit to John's baptism "of repentance for the forgiveness of sin" (see verse 4)? He didn't need to repent of any sin. There are three main reasons he did this. First, he was setting an example for us to follow. Jesus and his disciples would baptize many people during his life. He would then instruct that all his followers throughout the centuries get baptized in his name (Matthew 28:19) as a form of initiation into the community of his disciples, and into the adventure of following him. Second, he was endorsing John's ministry. It was his way of saying, "Yes, this man who baptizes me really is the front-runner of the Messiah (see 1:2)". Third, he was identifying with the very human people he intended to save. Jesus wasn't aloof when he came to this planet; he was fully human, one of us. Although he didn't sin like us, he deeply empathized with our weaknesses and temptations.

- We can learn three things for ourselves from Jesus' baptism: First, and most importantly, we need to get baptized in water as a form of obedience to him. Second, we need to submit ourselves to God-given leaders before we can expect a ministry of our own (in which case we would still be wise to submit ourselves to God-given leaders). Third, we need to identify with the people we serve. We don't serve them from afar, but we 'get in there' and experience life alongside them.

10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

### You desperately need to be filled with the Spirit.

- When the Bible speaks of heaven it doesn't speak of a far-off realm. It speaks of God being right here, right now. It speaks of God's spiritual reality hidden behind the curtain of physical reality. Heaven therefore speaks of the spiritual realm that immediately surrounds us. As Jesus came out of the water, the curtain between physical and spiritual reality was torn, and God made himself tangibly present to Jesus.
- The Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove. Luke says that the Spirit literally took on the form of a dove (Luke 3:22). Doves speak of purity, innocence, peacefulness and gentleness. The Spirit is pure, innocent, peaceful and gentle.
- In verse 8, we read that Jesus would one day "baptize people with the Holy Spirit". The word "baptism" can be translated "engulf, saturate, plunge and dunk". It speaks of an experience. Interestingly, two verses later, Jesus himself has a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit. It's not hard to see that the experience of the Spirit that Jesus would one day lead people into was connected to his own experience of the Spirit.
- Why do we need to be filled with the Spirit? First, it's the Spirit's infilling *that allows us to experience the Father's undeserved love and affirmation*. Ephesians 1:5 tells us that when we put our trust in Christ we are adopted as his children. And John 17:26 tells us that the same love the Father gave to Jesus his son, he also gives to us as his adopted children. Think about that – it is as though the words, "This is my son / daughter whom I love" are spoken over us at the moment of our salvation. But it is not enough for us to just know this in our heads. God wants us to experience it in our hearts too. That's why Paul, in Galatians 4:6, connects Jesus' *experience* of the Father's love and affirmation with our *experience* of the Father's love and affirmation: "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'." Jesus in this sense is setting an example for us of enjoying the Father's love and affirmation. If he needed this then how much more do we need it? Second, it's the Spirit's infilling *that empowers us for ministry*. Jesus was being empowered for his ministry. Only once he was filled with the Spirit's power, did he dare launch into public ministry. If he, the all-powerful Son of God, needed the Spirit's power in ministry, how much more do we need the Spirit's power?

- Luke captures a little detail about Jesus' baptism that the other Gospels don't: it says "and as he was praying ... the Spirit descended." In other words, Jesus seemed to specifically *asking* for the Spirit's power. If he asked, how much more should we ask God?

### At his baptism, God anointed and announced Jesus to be the promised Messiah-king.

- Although there are similarities between Jesus' experience of the Spirit and ours, we must remember that his is unique in that his baptism was God's announcing him and anointing him as the earth's true king.
- To understand this, we need to go back to king David. God did something interesting with him: he anointed (with oil, which also represented the Spirit's empowering) and announced him king in front of a few witnesses (who didn't understand fully what was happening), long before he actually ruled over the nation (see 1 Samuel 16:1,13). God had decided that he was Israel's true king and let him know. It took years before David eventually ruled the whole of Israel. In the same way, God was announcing Jesus as heaven and earth's true king, in front of a few witnesses (who didn't understand what was happening) and anointing him with the Spirit's power, before he would actually start ruling.
- The main reason we know that this was Jesus' anointing as king is because of the words that came from heaven (or from "the spiritual realm"): "You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased." Why did God speak these words over Jesus? The most likely reason is that, other than describing the eternal love between the Father and the Son, it was a moment of kingly inauguration. Jesus was being made king. We can be sure of this, because the words strongly echo two well-known, ancient prophecies about the coming Messiah-king:
  - Psalm 2:6-8: "I have installed my King on Zion ... You are my Son, today I have become your Father. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance ... You will rule them."
  - Isaiah 42:1: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations."
- The main ministry of Jesus was to launch his kingdom (as we will see in verse 14 and 15), but it all started at this moment when God announced him as king.
- Interestingly, eventually the disciples would understand that he really was the Christ (which is Greek for the "anointed Messiah-king") and their message to the world would be: "Jesus is Christ and Lord", which really is a way of saying, "Jesus is heaven and earth's true king. Bow down to him. Entrust your life to him. Give him your total allegiance."

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted [or tested] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

## God allows you to go through difficult and tempting times as a way of preparing you for ministry.

- The Spirit of God would soon lead Jesus into public ministry (see Luke 4:14) but before he was ready, he needed to go through some testing, so the Spirit first led him into the desert where he would experience the difficult circumstances of hunger, loneliness and danger (being surrounded by wild animals (v13)). In this vulnerable state he would also experience Satan tempting and taunting him.
- Notice that it was not God tempting Jesus. James 1:13 makes it clear that God does not tempt us. However, God does *allow* us to be tempted. For example, God allows Job to be tested by the devil (see Job 2:1-6) and Jesus allows Peter to be tested by the devil (see Luke 22:31), but always for a greater purpose.
- But why did God want Jesus to experience this difficulty and testing? There are two reasons: First, it was because he was showing us, the followers of Jesus, a very important insight: *secret victory over temptations precedes God releasing us into public ministry*. If we cannot be trusted in secret to do the will of God, then we cannot be trusted in public to do the will of God. Second, it was because he was showing us that *to the degree we are dependent on him to that degree we are also usable by him*. In the desert Jesus was hungry, endangered and tempted yet God gave him everything he needed to survive: God provided the Scriptures he needed to overcome the lies (as the Gospels of Matthew and Luke show), God provided the angels to protect him from the wild animals (much like he provided angels to protect Daniel in the lion's den). Probably more than anything else, it was his Father's words of love and promise (in verse 11) that carried him through this difficult time.