

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Water from Rock, March 7, 2017, Tim Smith

“Live by the Spirit.”
Galatians 5:16a

MARK 1:9-13

*9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’
¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*

The evidence is that Mark wrote his Gospel in Italy, in the A. D. 60’s, after Peter’s execution in Rome when Nero was persecuting Christians.

“he saw the heavens torn apart”

- “If we go back to the biblical roots we will realize what ‘seeing heavens opened’ means. It doesn’t mean that Jesus saw a little door a jar miles up in the sky. **‘Heaven’** in the Bible often means God’s dimension behind ordinary reality. It’s more as though an invisible curtain, right in front of us, was suddenly pulled back, so that instead of trees and flowers and buildings, or in Jesus’ case the river, the sandy desert and the crowds, we see that we are standing in the presence of an altogether different reality altogether.” (N. T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*)
- Mark uses this verb “*torn apart*” (*schizomenous*) to describe the curtain of the temple “*torn in two, from top to bottom*” (Mark 15:38).

“the Spirit descending like a dove on him”

- The dove was a symbol of gentleness (Matthew 10:16) and sacrifice (Leviticus 14:30; Luke 2:24).
- The spirit descended, literally, “*into (eis) him*”.

‘You are my Son, the Beloved’

- This alludes to the Messianic Psalm 2, verse 7, and the enthronement of the Lord’s Messiah.

“with you I am well pleased”

- This alludes to Isaiah 42:1, where Yahweh speaks of His Suffering Servant who will bring justice to the world: *“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him.”*
- In Jesus’ baptism God reveals His true identity as the Lord’s anointed Messiah and Suffering Servant upon whom God puts His Spirit.

“And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness”

- The same Holy Spirit who came into Jesus at His baptism “drove” him into the wilderness to face trial and temptation. Note the use of the verb “drove out” (ekballo) by Mark:
 - *“cast out (ekballo) many demons”* 1:34, 39
 - *“he put (ekballo) them all outside”* 5:40
 - *“And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out”* (ekballo) 9:47
 - *“began to drive out (ekballo) those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple”* (11:15)
- This is the first action of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ adult life, driving Him out onto the battlefield of evil.
- The Spirit acted *“immediately”*; God the Father sent the Son into the world to defeat evil and death, and it is time to get on with His mission. After only thirteen verses in this Gospel we see Jesus confronting evil. Jesus’ first public ministry in Mark is casting out an unclean spirit (1:21-28).
- Mark presents the wilderness temptation to provide pictures of what God will accomplish through His Spirit-endowed Messiah Jesus.

“he was with the wild beasts”

- That Jesus “*was with*” wild beasts indicates peaceful existence with wild animals in the wilderness where He confronts Satan. This is a fulfillment of God’s peaceable kingdom foretold by the prophets (Isaiah 11:6-9, 65:17-25; Hosea 2:18). The wild beasts will live in harmony with one another and with humanity just as when Adam cared for the creation.
- This signals the beginning of a restored Eden, a new creation coming into being.

MARK 13:9-13

9 ‘As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹ When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ¹³ and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

- Mark uses the word “*hand you over*” (paradidomai) to speak of the betrayal of Jesus (3:19; 9:31; 14:21, 41), and His being handed over to the Gentiles (10:33). This will happen to Jesus’ followers.
- This passage is noteworthy as giving the only promise regarding the Holy Spirit in Mark’s Gospel. Christ’s faithful followers are not promised escape from suffering and martyrdom, but are promised the Spirit’s empowered testimony (martyrion).
- “We don’t require angelic care when there are no threats. To discover more of God’s care, to feel God’s providence in our guts, we need to face our enemies and confront hostilities square on – so the Holy Spirit drives us out into the wilderness, hurls us into the realm of Satan, abandons us, or so it seems, among the hostile animals. The Holy Spirit sends us to places and people we would never otherwise choose to go because only there, where our very existences is at risk, can we understand on the deepest human level that we too are God’s beloved, a source of God’s pleasure.” (Jack Levinson: *Fresh Air: The Holy Spirit for an Inspired Life*)