



Sunday School Lesson for June 5, 2005

"Preparing for Leadership"

Printed Text Lesson: **Mark 1:4-13.**

Background Scripture: **Mark 1:4-13.**

Devotional Reading: **Matthew 12:15-21.**

Time: A.D. 26

Places: wilderness of Judea; Jordan River

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Retell Mark's account of Jesus' baptism and temptations.
2. Explain what Jesus' baptism and temptations tell us about His identity and authority.
3. Name one reason why he or she is willing to follow the leadership of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

What makes a great leader? What credentials do we look for? Is it dynamism, like that of Alexander the Great? Is it political skill, like that of Abraham Lincoln? Is it integrity, like that of Mohandas Gandhi? Is it determination, like that of General George Patton? Is it a combination?

Christians want to be effective leaders in carrying out their God-given mission. But Christians are concerned with more than the world's standards of leadership. Christians have to ask, "What does God seek in a leader?" Mark's Gospel can help us understand the answer to that question. In certain ways, both Jesus and John the Baptist are models of leadership for us.

The Preparer - Mark 1:4-8

1. What was John's primary ministry, and what main activity accompanied that ministry (v. 4-5)?

The three Synoptic Gospel authors (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all introduced John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Jesus Christ before describing the beginning of Jesus' ministry. John's main purpose was to announce the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thus, John served as a herald. Important Roman officials were always preceded by heralds. When the people saw the herald, they knew that someone important was coming to town.

John's ministry centered around baptism. Hence, all three Synoptic Gospel writers called him John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1; Mark 6:14; Luke 7:28).

As Christians, we should be leading lost souls to Jesus Christ. It is important to remember that when we lead people to Christ, we should not be the center of attention. Just as John was the herald to Jesus while He walked on this earth, we are to be heralds to Jesus before he comes back again in his second coming.

2. What were the people indicating when they were baptized by John?

One of the functions of water is to cleanse us when we get dirty. In the Old Testament, the Mosaic Law commanded ceremonial washings in certain situations (Ex. 19:10, 30:18-21; Lev. 14:8,9). In those circumstances, a person washed oneself. John's ceremonial washing involved plunging the person underwater. In John's baptism, a person recognized that he or she is a sinner, and God is the only one who can cleanse the person from sin.

3. What is repentance, and what results when a person repents?

Many people believe that repentance is simply being sorry for one's sin and confessing it before the Lord. Although that is a part of repentance, the heart of it involves a change in a person's mindset. It requires Christians to think differently about sin. As a result of this change of mind, Christians must act differently when it comes to sin. We should not be willing to walk in sin any longer. We may still fall in sin from time to time, but we should not sin on purpose. As a result of repentance, we are forgiven of our sins.

4. Compare and contrast John's baptism with today's baptism.

John's baptism required a person to admit that he or she was a sinner, and that only God can cleanse the sinner from unrighteousness. The person also had to repent from their sinful lifestyle. People were baptized in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

Today's baptism focuses on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which all happened in the past. This baptism involves identifying with our Lord and Savior. In this instance, the water represents a watery tomb. As with those who were baptized by John, people receiving Christ as their Lord and Savior must admit that they are sinners, and God is the only one who can cleanse them from unrighteousness. Those new Christians must believe that God cleanses us through the blood of Jesus. Thus, the water also represents Jesus' blood.

5. Why is the comparison of John with Elijah important?

Luke's gospel records a statement from Gabriel the angel that described John's ministry. One of the things he said was that John would minister in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet (Luke 1:17).

John's lifestyle and attire reminded the people of the prophet Elijah. Elijah was hairy, and he wore leather clothing (2 Kings 1:8). John's clothing was very similar. This clothing identified him as a prophet of God. Also, since John was ministering in the wilderness, he had to depend on God for his food, just as Israel depended on God for manna (Exodus 6) and Elijah for the ravens to provide food (1 Kings 17:6).

Christian leaders must depend on God for the resources needed to fulfill their God called ministry. God will always provide his children the things that they need. Sometimes, we may have to live on very little, which is not comfortable, but we must always fulfill our ministry.

6. How did John attract so many people to hear and receive his message?

It is important to realize that John was different from everyone else. He did not live like others lived. His dress was that of a prophet. The people recognized him as a prophet from God.

As Christians, we must let our light shine. Something about us needs to show the world that we are different from them. No one should be able to question whether one of us is a Christian. The world should be able to see that by our lifestyles. We cannot lead anyone to Christ if we are living as the world lives.

7. What significant difference from John's ministry was going to be evident in the Messiah's ministry (v. 8)?

John's ministry focused on getting people ready for the Messiah. John's baptism served that purpose, and it was a physical representation of repentance from sin. Jesus' ministry focused on getting people in right standing with God the Father. Jesus will baptize with the Holy Ghost, who will truly give the children of God the power to repent from sin. Jesus' ministry is spiritual and His baptism cleanses us from the inside.

8. Why was Jesus' baptism different from all other baptisms?

As stated earlier in the lesson, John's baptism involved the sinner repenting from sin. So why would Jesus want to be baptized in the first place? After all, Jesus never sinned. Jesus tells John that He was to be baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (v. 15).

Jesus' baptism was different since He never sinned on this earth. There are three possible reasons why Jesus allowed Himself to be baptized of John. (1) It was an act of obedience showing that Jesus was in full agreement with God's overall plan and the role of John's baptism in itself (cf. Matt. 3:15). (2) Jesus wanted to identify with the nation of Israel whose heritage and sinful predicament He shared (cf. Isa. 53:12). (3) It was an act of self-dedication to His messianic mission, signifying His official acceptance and entrance to it.

9. What does the term "straightway" indicate in the Gospel of Mark (v. 10)? What occurred that confirmed that He was pleasing to God (v. 11)?

The word "straightway" is found in Mark's gospel forty-two times. In this context, the word can be translated as "immediately." Jesus was very eager to obey the will of His Father. God immediately demonstrated that He was pleased with Jesus as He was coming out of the water. This verse paints a picture of the Holy Spirit (like a dove) coming down on Jesus and anointing Him. A voice from Heaven says, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (v. 11). Isaiah 42:1-4 describes the relationship that the Father and Son share, that Scripture is fulfilled at Jesus' baptism.

10. Why is it important to note that Jesus was led, or driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (v. 12)?

Jesus was "driven" to the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. The word "driveth" indicates a strong and constraining impulse to do something. This is much more forceful than what Matthew and Luke describes, when they state that Jesus was "led" by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1). It is significant to note that it was **not** Satan who drove Jesus to the wilderness but the Holy Spirit of God. This shows that Jesus was on offense when he battled temptation and evil.

God wanted to put His Son to the test to demonstrate that He was free from sin, thus making him qualified to fulfill his Messianic role. Satan gave it his best when he tried to entice Jesus away from His God given role. The fate of mankind's salvation rested on Jesus. If Satan won, then the plan of redemption would have been ruined.

11. Why should we care about Jesus' temptation results?

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days. He was in the worse possible situation. We can assume that Jesus endured more than the three recorded temptations in the Gospels. It was in the wilderness that Jesus was tempted at every point. Jesus went through a spiritual battle so fierce that we cannot even imagine it. We cannot fathom going through every single human temptation that Satan can throw at us, especially within a forty day period.

We should be eternally grateful to God that Jesus understands everything that we go through in this life. Not only does he understand what we're going through, but he can help us through our temptations as well (Heb. 2:18). Everyone can expect to go through trials from time to time. Those trials will help Christians prepare for their leadership roles with God.

Conclusion

We have seen two great leaders in this week's text, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Our lesson has shown that God has unique ways of preparing His servants for leadership. God has a meticulous plan for all His children. Let us be sensitive to God's plan for our lives.

Before Jesus went to Heaven after His resurrection, He gave the world "the Great Commission" (Matt. 28:19). Our job is to lead others to Jesus Christ. In that sense we are all leaders, and we can benefit from this lesson.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we seek Your approval this day on our thoughts and actions as we look in humble gratitude back to the approval You pronounced on Your Son. May we live our lives in rejection of the evil that Jesus came to defeat. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thought to Remember

You don't have to be a great leader to lead someone to Christ.

Anticipating the Next Lesson

In our lesson next week we will explore the concept of true healing. We will explore whether it is physical or spiritual.

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