

Introducing the person and work of the Holy Spirit Mark 1:1 – 13

As a pastor and Bible teacher I've noticed that, in the past, when I've informed our church that we're commencing a series in one of the Gospels, people have generally responded, *'It will be good to be reminded of the foundations of our faith'*. However, when I recently announced that we were about to embark on a series on the Holy Spirit a number of people from our church responded with statements such as, *'Hmmm. That should stir up a bit of controversy'*. Why do Christians seem to understand that studying the person and work of Jesus is fundamental to our faith and yet think that studying the person and work of the Holy Spirit will necessarily take us into the realm of the strange and unknown?

Mark 1:9 – 13 informs us that at Jesus' baptism, when he was coming up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove while a voice from heaven proclaimed, *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* This is one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of the relationship between the three persons of the Godhead (or Trinity): Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After Jesus' baptism the gospels make it clear that it was the Holy Spirit who sent him into the wilderness to be tested. After those forty days were completed, Jesus returned to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit (see Luke 4:1 – 21). Therefore, as we commence this series on the Holy Spirit let's keep in mind that the works of Jesus Christ are also the works of God the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Far from being the wild child of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven by the Father to empower Christ's mission on earth (see Luke 4:18). Then following Jesus' ascension into heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to empower the earthly mission of his disciples¹. So the work of the Holy Spirit is the work of Christ, and the work of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:12 – 15).

1. Read Mark's opening statement about Jesus (1:1). Why is the title, 'Son of God' so significant?
2. Read Mark 1:2 – 8. What is the key difference between the water baptism of John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
3. Read Mark 1:9 – 13. What does this account tell us about the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
4. Our church's three Biblical purposes are:
 - To reach people;
 - To make disciples;
 - And to transform communities.

Read the following three passages that directly follow Christ's baptism and temptation. Reflect on and discuss how our Biblical purposes relate to the three sections of Mark 1.

- Jesus began to preach the good news to the people. (Mark 1:14 – 15)
- Jesus began to call his disciples (Mark 1:16 – 20)
- Jesus began his powerful transforming (healing) work (Mark 1:21 – 34).

5. How and to what extent should we expect God's Spirit to help us do these things today?

¹ It's interesting that part of the nature of a dove (Mk 1:10) is that it flies back and forth from 'heaven to earth'.