

Mark 1:9–15 (NKJV) — 9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. **11** Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” **12** Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. **13** And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. **14** Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, **15** and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

JESUS QUALIFIES TO BE OUR SAVIOR

Before I decided to study to be a pastor, I was studying something called “Actuarial Science.” This is just a fancy word for the guys who price your life insurance policies. There is a lot of Math involved and a lot of tests. In fact you won’t even be eligible for an entry level position if you don’t pass the first three hour probability exam. I remember that day quite distinctly. Sweats, nerves, pessimism. Until I would pass that exam I basically didn’t qualify to be an Actuary. It wasn’t too long after that when I decided to become a pastor. Maybe you’ve had similar experiences. Maybe even mentioning ACT’s and SAT’s make you sweat. Maybe you’ve found out you don’t qualify for a particular job or school.

Let’s consider this on a heavenly level. What does it take? What qualifications need to be met before we can stand in the presence of God? What tasks and tests need to be overcome? Epiphany season and the Transfiguration revealed the glory and exultation of our Lord. Now as the Passion season is upon us, this fades into a hidden glory as we considered the humbled Servant, sent to be your Savior. We ask the Holy Spirit to be with us this morning as we consider how Jesus, in every way, qualifies to be our Savior.

1. # 1 : Is Chosen by God . . . ✓

#1 – You must be chosen by God. I guess this applies equally in any job market. You must be chosen. You can pass all the tests, pay all the money, and apply, but ultimately to be an employee, you must be accepted and chosen by the employer.

Jesus was chosen and accepted. We read **v.9–11**. This is God’s beloved Son, the only begotten Son of God. In fact, this was a qualification that was met long before His baptism. All the way back to His birth, Jesus was referred to as the Christ, the Son of God. That name “Christ” is actually more of a title, an office. It means “Anointed” or “Chosen” One. It describes Jesus as the One who qualifies according to all the prophecies of the Old Testament. As it is written in Psalm 2 – 7 **“I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.**

Jesus must qualify for this work of salvation. Our lives depend on it. Since our conception, we were disqualified. Ps. 51 describes us as brought forth in iniquity. No amount of studying, dedication, or self determination could change this. By nature we are sinful and unclean. God responded to this dilemma by finding us someone qualified to take our place.

Even before the birth of Jesus, God had determined the qualifications and chosen this candidate for the work of salvation. As God has said, **18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1).**

Jesus' baptism then is the public confirmation both for John and Jesus' disciples that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, really is the Anointed One, the Christ: both the Son of Man and the Son of God. Here we find a worthy candidate for the job, to take our place, to be our Savior. Hence the Father says, "in Him I am delighted." Qualification #1, check.

2. # 2 : Overcomes the Temptations of Satan . . . ✓

Of the four Gospels, Mark is distinct in his action packed presentation. We aren't even 13 verses into this book and we find Jesus baptized, beginning His public ministry, and facing Satan head on. We read, (**v.12**). How excited are you ever to leap into a difficult exam? Yet our Savior wastes no time in meeting qualification #2. Where we have failed to refuse and resist Satan's lures, our Savior must overcome.

The Temptations we face are REAL. The Tests we face are REAL. Actually the Greek word whether translated temptation or test is the same. Temptations is how we describe what Satan throws at us, Tests are how we describe what God allows to happen to us. The problem is, without a Savior, we have failed on both accounts. Our flesh leads us toward Satan. Our flesh leads us to despise God's tests. When tests of our faith arise our flesh thinks, why me? When temptations to our faith arise, our flesh thinks why not me? We need a qualified Savior to rescue us, to overcome Satan.

Jesus faced REAL temptations too. His 40 days were not just a challenge for the Son of God to go without food and avoid getting eaten by a lion or bear. In the book of Hebrews the Holy Spirit reveals that . . . **in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2). . . 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4)**

Jesus was both tempted and tested in the exact same way you are tempted and tested right now. "In all things He had to be made like His brethren" Hebrews says. He did not face Satan as the Almighty Son of God, He faced him as the Son of Man. He gave up His almighty power and humbled Himself to face temptation as a man, though without sin. Where you have fallen, He did not. Where you are facing a great test to your faith through difficulties that seem too much to bear, Jesus stood right there facing that same test.

To this He was called. He was literally, "driven out" into the wilderness. This was something the Spirit compelled Him to face. Yet it was also something in which the Spirit was with Him. Enter now your personal scenario. Enter now a consideration of what tests and temptations you are facing. Do you feel "driven out" into the wilderness to face Satan's worst? Do you feel alone? The word "Lent" means "forty." It reminds us of the forty days that our Savior was tempted. Perhaps you are being led through "forty days in the wilderness" this Lenten season.

For these Actuarial exams that I needed to take when I was studying in that field, it was estimated that a student should commit himself to 100 hours of study time for every hour of exam time. This meant for the first exam which takes about 3 hours, a student should prepare for some 300 hours before hand.

When it comes to our spiritual exams, we need much more than 300 hours preparation. In fact it really is not an amount of self dedication that can equip you to pass these exams. Only Savior-preparation can equip you. You need Jesus at your side as you sit down and face the questions you don't know the answer to. You need Jesus as you stand in the wilderness facing Satan's lures. Indeed, you are not alone like Jesus was. And as the angels came and ministered to Jesus' needs, so also may God send His messengers come and minister to your needs. Let us all be angels to one another in times of distress. And we pray in the 6th and 7th petition, Lead us not into tests and temptations, but deliver us from evil. The Spirit drove Jesus into temptation so that you can be led out. Qualification #2, check.

3. # 3 : Brings the Good News . . . ✓

Boy, I sure remember the feeling I had the day I received the results of that three hour exam I had taken. In fact, I think I already knew the news before I had even sat down to take the test. Here in God's kingdom, the results are in. And our Savior brings nothing but good news. (14).

This qualification was laid out in Isaiah 61 – 1 **"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,**

Qualification #3 is that in order to be your Savior, Jesus must bring you good news. (v. 15) If He had nothing good to say, what kind of Savior would He be? What kind of

repentance there be if there were no good news to turn to? It would lead you to utter despair and eternal depression. How humans can face the temptations, guilt, trials, and general curse of this world without this Savior is something I can't comprehend. What do they turn to? There is nothing to turn to except one's self. And that is not an encouraging thought.

But here is an encouraging thought . . . "Believe in the gospel." Believe in the good news that Jesus has passed every exam and the results are 100% perfect. Believe that He is with you through every test and temptation. As we will sing in our next hymn – "He's by our side upon the plain with His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, Goods fame, child, and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth." Yes the kingdom yours remaineth. That is, God is ruling in Your heart. His word is with you. He visits you again and again with the good news that Your sins are forgiven and your home in heaven is secure. He is by your side, having faced every trouble and temptation for you already and overcome – your refuge, your strength. Believe the good news.

Qualification #3 check.

The sweats, nerves, doubts and apprehension can fade away. For it is not on our shoulders to pass these exams that God lays before us. It was on Jesus' shoulders and He has overcome every one for you. Through His sweat, His labor, His cross He is fully qualified. He has been chosen. He has overcome. He brings good news. He is indeed your Savior. Amen.