

**WHEN GOD BROKE HIS SILENCE**

Mark 1:4-13

**Intro:** Bible teachers often refer to the period from the end of the OT to the beginning of the NT, as “the four hundred silent years.” In that expression “silent” means *God’s silence*. And “God’s silence” means a period of time when there was no direct revelation from God.

The whole OT anticipated the coming of a Redeemer. From Abraham on He was known as the seed of Abraham, and eventually as the Anointed One, the Messiah, the One we now know is our Lord Jesus Christ. And the coming of the Messiah was declared by John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, whom we now know as John the Baptist. The four Gospels all speak of John the Baptist. And, as we learn from the first three verses of Mark’s Gospel, his coming was predicted by Isaiah and Malachi, although Mark mentioned the quotation from Malachi first, and then the quotation from Isaiah.

Matthew gets to John the Baptist in chapter 3, and he introduced his account of his ministry with the same quotation from Isaiah’s prophecy which Mark used. Matthew 3 is devoted entirely to the ministry of John the Baptist, ending with the baptism of our Lord.

Luke begins his Gospel, after a brief introduction, telling us about the birth of John the Baptist. In chapter 3 of Luke we get to the ministry of John the Baptist, and there Luke also quoted from Isaiah 40:3, along with verses 4 and 5.

The Apostle John began his Gospel in a way that was completely different from the other three Gospel writers, but it just takes five verses in chapter 1 for the Apostle John to get to the ministry of John the Baptist. John 1:6 gives us these words: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” As we realize as we continue reading that the Apostle John was not talking about himself, but about John the Baptist.

Going on down in John, chapter 1, to verse 19 we see that a delegation of “priests and Levites” had been sent by the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees, to Jerusalem to find out just who this man was who was attracting such attention from the Jewish people. They wanted to know if he claimed to be the Messiah. He told them that he was not. Then they asked him if he was Elijah. He denied that. Then they wanted to know if he was the

prophet that should come. And again he said, “No.” Then they said, “Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?” (John 1:22). John the Baptist’s answer was Isaiah 40:3. And the Apostle John obviously must have believed John the Baptist’s answer.

All four of the Gospel writers also record the baptism of our Lord by John the Baptist, but I will say more about that in just a moment.

We know from the Gospel of Luke that John the Baptist was just six months older than the Lord Jesus. In Luke 1:36 of the KJV Elisabeth is called Mary’s cousin, but a better translation would be *relative* as the word is translated in the NASB, the ESV, and the NIV.

Just how much attention was being paid to the prophecies of the OT when John the Baptist and our Lord were born, we do not know. But we know that there were those who were expecting the Messiah. However, most of them seemed to believe He was coming as their King to deliver them from Roman oppression. But what we need to realize as we pick up any of the Gospel records to read, that the period of God’s silence had come to an end. Multitudes of the Jewish people may have forgotten the promises of God, but God had not forgotten them, and He had people even in those days who were looking for their Messiah-Redeemer.

As we begin to read Mark’s Gospel, and come to the mention of the Gospel, and then the quotations from Malachi and Isaiah, I think that we are to understand that John the Baptist knew that this was his mission. It is clear from Luke 1 that Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, understood what his son’s mission would be. And somehow, as John the Baptist grew up, he knew, too, what his mission was in the world.

The first point that John Mark made in writing about John the Baptist had to do with:

### **I. JOHN THE BAPTIST’S MISSION (Mark 1:4-6).**

He came to baptize, not in Jerusalem, but “in the wilderness.” A mighty work was done right from the beginning. He did not go to the people, but the people came from Jerusalem and all over Judea (in which Jerusalem was located). And Matthew added that they came “from all the region round about Jordan” (Matt. 3:5). There was no advance team that went

ahead to announce his ministry. No outstanding, well known, celebrity accompanied him. He just began to preach, and the people came. And what is even more astounding when you compare it with modern evangelism, John the Baptist preached about sin, and how sin can be forgiven. That is what “remission” is. He came telling the people how their sins could be pardoned, how they could be set free from divine judgment as well as from the bondage of sin.

He came to call the nation Israel to repentance. And the way they expressed their repentance was by being baptized. And John the Baptist was an immersionist. Notice that John Mark said in verse 10 that following His baptism, our Lord came “up out of the water.” Later when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, we are told that “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip ... and he [the eunuch] went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38b-39a).

Now John the Baptist did not preach salvation by water, nor by works. He preached that Jesus was “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” But people were baptized, confessing their sins, giving evidence of their repentance, and expressing their intention to live a life that was pleasing to God. There was no entertainment, just the simple preaching of the Word of God. You know, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Water baptism is actually a humbling experience. I had that impressed upon me early in my ministry when I was the Pastor of the West Memorial Baptist Church in Vancouver, B.C. **Illus:** the lady who wanted to wear a bathing cap at the baptismal service.

It must have been an amazing experience to hear John the Baptist preach, and then to see the people responding with tears, confessing their sins, and seeking the release from the burden of sin which can only come when God forgives. When God is really working, as He was through the ministry of John the Baptist, you don't need a lot of publicity, or a lot of promotional work. But the preaching of the Word by a godly man like John the Baptist was, is all that it takes to see a mighty work of God. We don't work up revivals; they are brought down from God.

And there wasn't anything particularly attractive about the preacher. No

indication is given that he was a charismatic person. His dress could not have been more simple. I might have had dinner with him, but only for half of the menu.

We need to notice these things when we read our Bibles. We are inclined to think in terms of what will draw a crowd. John the Baptist was more concerned about what would draw the blessing of the Lord.

Notice that there is no indication that he was seeking to reach just a particular group of people. When John saw Pharisees and Sadducees in the crowd, he didn't see any evidence of repentance on their part. So he warned them that God was a God of judgment as well as forgiveness, and that if their repentance was not true repentance, they needed to know that "unquenchable fire" awaited them. John the Baptist preached to all men, but he was partial to none. God was doing a mighty work in many hearts, but there are always those who do what everybody else is doing just because it looks like everyone else is doing it. Not even our Lord Jesus Christ got the response from the people that John the Baptist got.

It is hard to distinguish in a faithful man between his mission and his message. They really go together. A faithful man is going to have the true Gospel. But beginning with verse 7 and going through verse 8 we have:

## **II. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE (Mark 1:7-8).**

(Read verses 7 and 8.)

John the Baptist was true to the Biblical prediction of his ministry. John never did give his business card to the priests and Levites who came to find out who he was. He told them that he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." And he was using Scripture when he said that. He was not trying to hide who he was, but neither was he interested in letting them know who he was; he only wanted them to know who the Lord was, and how to get right with Him.

What did John Mark say about John the Baptist's message?

In so many words John the Baptist said, "It was not who I am, but who He is. It was not what I can do for you, but what He can do for you." John added that the Lord was so great that he was not worthy to be the lowliest

of His servants, the one who would loosen the sandals on His feet. Regardless of what may have been the human relationship between John and Jesus (because if their mothers were related, that made them relatives too), John saw his own insignificance in the light of the greater glory of the Lord Jesus.

John's words in verse 8 do not minimize the importance of baptism, but they exalt the ministry of the Lord. It is possible for us as servants of the Lord to baptize with water, but none of us is able to baptize with the Spirit.

**Illus:** I had a Greek teacher who told our class that the Greek βαπτίζω does not mean *to dip*, but to put in and to leave. But it does have both meanings in Scripture. It pictures our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, but it also pictures our death to the old life, and resurrection to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

But now we come to our third point in these verses:

### **III. THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD JESUS (Mark 1:9-11).**

(Read Mark 1:9-11.)

In connection with the baptism of our Lord, let me take you for a few minutes to Matthew's account of the baptism of our Lord. It is found in Matthew 3:13-15:

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

What did the Lord mean by these words? Did He mean that salvation is by baptism? No, He was agreeing with John that He needed to be baptized by the Lord, but that it was necessary for Him to take John's place in order that John might have His place, a place of full acceptance with the Father, which is what salvation is.

And this was the very moment, as Jesus was baptized, that the Apostle

John tells us that John the Baptist “saw, and bare record that this was the Son of God” (John 1:34).

Then it was that a very wonderful thing happened. Matthew mentioned this. And so did Luke, and so did John. But see it here in our text in Mark 1:10-11. It was a moment when the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord, anointing Him for His earthly ministry, and the Father spoke from heaven indicating that our Lord was fully qualified on earth to do the work that the Father had sent Him to do, sent Him to become a Man and to die for men because no other human being could qualify for such a task.

One point remains:

#### **IV. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS (Mark 1:12-13).**

The word “spirit” in verse 12 should be capitalized because it refers to the Holy Spirit.

The study of the temptation of our Lord is a subject by itself. It is given more in detail by both Matthew and Luke. But here it is just mentioned by Mark.

It was brought about by the Holy Spirit. The scene was the wilderness. The Lord was tempted personally by Satan. He was with wild beasts who normally could have attacked Him. Angels ministered to Him. Matthew says that this was after the temptation was over.

But the question has to be raised: Why would Satan, our Lord’s chief adversary, want to tempt the Lord? He surely would have known that the Son of God could not sin any more than the Father could sin, or the Holy Spirit could sin? And why was the Spirit evidently so concerned that the Lord be subjected to temptation?

We are told in the book of Hebrews that our Lord was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). So one reason surely was that our Lord might be a merciful and faithful high priest for us.

But I think that there must have been another reason, and this is only my suggestion. Satan knew that the Son of God could not sin, but what he didn’t know was what effect His birth as a Man could have affected His

Deity. And so the Holy Spirit was determined to show at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, not only that He would not sin, but that He could not sin! Satan left our Lord, perhaps not fully convinced, and planning to get at Him at some other time. Only the other times were events when the Devil, as he often does with us, used people, or trying circumstances, to get us to sin against the Lord.

**Concl:** And so we have the beginning of Mark's Gospel, brief, but complete, and to the point. John the Baptist is given as a confirmation of the basic promise of the OT, and thus confirming the reliability of the Word. He also is our example of what our attitude toward the Lord should be. And we have both the Spirit and the Father's confirmation of our Lord's perfect qualification to be our Savior. Tested personally by the Devil himself, the Lord demonstrated that as a Man He truly remained in the fullest sense, the Son of God.

If we know the Lord, we ought to turn from these verses thanking God that we do. If we do not know the Lord, then we ought to give the most serious consideration to these words, asking God to help us to understand these words in order that we, too, might know the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior, as our Savior from sin and the judgment of God. We need to know about the Lord, but then we need to know Him by putting our faith in Him as our Savior.