



2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 1

The Beginning of the Gospel

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

Introduction

The introduction starts with describing how in Mark the demon possessed people recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Most High God, and how Jesus commanded them to keep silent. Then the lesson says the following in the second paragraph:

- But Jesus rather consistently commands that they keep this information quiet. Why this command for secrecy? Bible students for centuries have mulled over this question. It even has a name in scholarship—the Messianic Secret. Why would a Gospel want us to keep quiet about who Jesus is? (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 2).

Did you notice what the lesson did—innocently to be sure, but did it nonetheless? The lesson introduced an interpretation, most likely accepted from Christian tradition, that Jesus commands secrecy. Is this true or false? Did Jesus command secrecy or did He command that the demons be silent?

Are those ideas, Jesus commanding demons to be silent and Jesus commanding secrecy the same?

Is God the one who operates in secrecy or is the devil the one who operates in secrecy? Does God want things to remain hidden or bring things out in the open? Is God the source of darkness or light that exposes the darkness?

Who is the source of all truth and who has no truth on his side? Who then requires secrecy and who wants the full light of truth to shine forth?

Is commanding the demon-possessed in His day to keep quiet the same as commanding you and I in our day to keep quiet? Or, in fact, are we commanded to share the gospel with the world?

Read the third paragraph:

- What will become clear in this journey through the Gospel of Mark is that not only is there secrecy in this book—there also is amazing revelation. It can rightly be called the revelation/secrecy motif, and it runs through the Gospel of Mark. Although, at the end of the book, all the secrecy is surprisingly replaced with a powerful revelation of Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 2).

So glad the lesson here acknowledges Jesus is revealing truth—yet continues to suggest this idea that secrecy may be coming from Jesus, the idea that there a motif being used of mixing secrecy with revelation.

Who is the one who wants to mix the true and the false?

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the **light** of men. **The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.** (John 1:1-5 NIV84, emphasis mine)
- This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5 NIV84).

In reality, there is the battle between good and evil, light and darkness, truth and lies, reality and fantasy, life and death. There is revelation and there is obstructing of revelation, there is secrecy.

The question is do we find such mixture of these elements in God's character, God's kingdom, God's methods, and God's law? Or do we find this mixture today because this world is the battleground between good and evil, between light and dark, between truth and lies?

So, is Jesus commanding secrecy? No, He is commanding that the enemies be silent so that people will not look to them for light and truth. He is here from heaven as the light; He is here to dispel the darkness; He is here as a revealer of the secrets; to expose the liar and He does this by His methods which are evidence revealed in action and deeds achieved, by teaching and instruction through the lessons of life, how reality works. The demons work through claims, proclamations, through authority of position, through intimidation, through suspending thinking.

Jesus tells them to keep silent not because He wants secrecy, but because He wants the truth to be seen unmixed with error, without confusion, without the testimony of His enemies. He doesn't want their endorsement because their spoken truth on who He is will lead some to listen to what else the demons have to say and thus the demons introduce falsehood—a mix of revelation and secrecy, light and darkness—the domain of demons, which sadly seems to be being applied to Jesus by the lesson, which is not unexpected whenever people have rejected God's design law and operate upon imposed law. The Jews in Christ day, with correct doctrines, the correct Bible, the correct rituals, the correct Sabbath, did this all the time. They mixed the true doctrines with the wrong law and the wrong character and methods of God which mislead.

And is this question leading us to truth or does the question mislead?

- “Why would a Gospel want us to keep quiet about who Jesus is?”

Doesn't this imply the Gospel wants *us* to keep quiet about Jesus?

Does Jesus want us to keep quiet about Him or does Jesus want us to tell everyone the truth about Him?

I don't think the lesson authors are intentionally trying to mislead, not at all. I think they intend, with the purest motives, to help us understand—but people cannot explain what they themselves do not know. So, even with good intentions if one only knows the false system of imposed rules then that is what one teaches.

We are in a war between the source of all truth and the father of lies, and the father of lies constantly tries to imbed falsehood in with the truth—this is his most destructive form of deception. Lies mixed with truth do much more harm than complete falsehoods alone, for the truth becomes the element that allows people to accept the lie and the lie corrupts the heart and mind undermining trust in God and inciting more fear while people believe they are advancing the truth. And the central issues are the beliefs we hold about God—2 Cor 10:3-5.

Read the sixth paragraph:

- The second half of Mark, from Mark 8:31 to the end of the book, answers the question, Where is Jesus going? The answer is shocking. He is going to the cross, the most ignominious and shameful manner of death in the Roman world. And it is such an unexpected destination for the Messiah, who **His followers think will defeat Rome and establish Israel as a powerful nation.** (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 3, emphasis mine).

Why did His followers think this?

- What about Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman will be bruised?
- What were all the lesson taught by the sacrifices and sanctuary?
- What about Isaac being saved by a substitutionary sacrifice?
- What about Isaiah 53 which describes our suffering and dying Savior?

Didn't the Bible teach them that the Savior was coming to suffer, be rejected, and die as a means of dealing with the sin problem?

Why didn't they understand this? Why did they think He was coming to defeat Rome and establish an earthly kingdom?

Because they read the Bible through the imposed law lens. They thought legally. They thought justice is achieved by law and law enforcement, and they were looking for a Messiah to come and enforce his way through might and power, to punish and destroy their enemies.

What about the Christian world today? What is almost the entire Christian world teaching about the kingdom that Jesus is coming to set up? Isn't it that He is coming with might and power to inflict just punishment upon His enemies and establish a kingdom that He rules with a rod of iron?

And this is why so many Christians will accept Satan's impersonation of Christ, because they believe the methods and principles of Satan are God's.

SABBATH

Interesting title—**The Beginning of the Gospel**—I think the title means the book of Mark which is one of the four books we call the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And thus the title means, we are going to explore the beginning of the book of Mark, not the origins of the good news.

But the title lends itself to ask that other question—when did *the* gospel begin—the gospel that Jesus said we are to take to the world—the eternal gospel? Does that gospel have a beginning?

How would you define that gospel—what is it?

Revelation says it is an eternal gospel—good news that is eternal good news, good news in eternity past as well as throughout all eternity future.

What is that good news? The truth about God, that God is not the kind of being that Satan has alleged, and God's character, laws, methods are not those of a creature, but of the Creator God of love—truth, love, liberty.

Does this good news about God have a beginning? No—because God doesn't have a beginning—that is why the good news is eternal because God is eternal and the good news is the good news about God which destroys the lies and wins us to trust and in trust we die to fear, sin, selfishness and are reborn with a new heart and mind, we receive the life of Jesus and become new beings united with God in love and trust.

Read the memory verse:

- Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15 NKJV).

What does this mean? The kingdom of God is at hand, what kingdom?

Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world—was He correct, or did He make an error in that statement, an oversight?

Wasn't Israel still on the Earth, even though under Roman occupation, didn't they still have a king, and wasn't the Sanhedrin still functioning? Didn't they have a temple, and weren't they still following the blueprint given to Moses?

Yet, Jesus said His kingdom is NOT of this world. He didn't say, "My kingdom is not of this world, except for Israel, that is my kingdom."

The nation state of Israel was never His kingdom—they were His chosen people to fulfill a mission (which they barely did, but they did)—but their national sovereignty, imposed laws, judicial system despite being set up by the directions given by God through Moses does not represent the kingdom of God—Jesus rejected that system as His kingdom.

In fact, all the kingdoms of this world are Satan's, and he offered them to Jesus.

Why was Israel not God's kingdom of earth?

Because it operated upon imposed laws with imposed punishments and not upon design law. It used the power over others method of coercion, it did not rule in the hearts of people, but over their behaviors. Then why did God Israel the various laws if His kingdom doesn't function in this way?

The answer is simple and straightforward: The rules given to Israel were for the setting up of a civil government in a sinful world to bring order and stability to a rebellious, unrighteous, self-centered, and sinful people who did not have hearts reborn to love God and others, people who had not experienced the new covenant of having design law written upon their hearts, a people who functioned upon the same me-first, fear-based, survival-of-the-fittest principles as the godless world around them, people who were just freed from being slaves of pagans.

This was to allow for the gospel, the good news about God to be carried forward so His true kingdom of love, the new covenant where He writes His law on our hearts and minds, could be established.

The imposed rules were not intended to represent how God's government works; rather, they were intended to establish societal order among this sinful people to protect them from decaying into infighting, political intrigue, and tribal wars, which was already starting to occur with Korah and his rebellion, so that they could accomplish the mission for which they were called—to be the human avenue through whom the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15 would come and to preserve the inspired writings.

In Romans 13 the apostle Paul describes how God uses human imposed law via civil governments to provide order in a sinful world but contrasts it with the law of love—God's design to love our neighbors which must be written upon the heart. And to help people realize the need to have the law of love written upon their hearts God added laws, both ceremonial and the Ten Commandments (Galatians 3).

Jesus said

- And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14 NIV84).

The Jews were looking for a kingdom of this world. Jesus said when the good news of His kingdom of truth, love, and liberty goes to the world then the end will come. But sadly Christianity accepted Rome's idea of law and have taken another gospel to the world, the gospel of a kingdom of law, of rule, of imperialism, of external judgment and inflicted punishment—a false gospel and God is waiting for people to return to worship Him as Creator and take the good news of His kingdom of love to the world, which requires we reject imposed law and return to understanding all of God's laws are design laws.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the author of the book of Mark, who was John Mark. The SDA Bible Commentary has the following:

- The unanimous and consistent testimony of Christian tradition points to John Mark as the author of the Gospel that bears his name. The name Mark is from the Latin Marcus, and is the surname of the writer (Acts 12:12, 25). His first name was John (see ch. 13:5, 13). His mother's name was Mary (ch. 12:12). He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), who at one time had been a resident of the island of Cyprus (Acts 4:36). Mark's home in Jerusalem seems to have been the house in which was the "upper room" (see on Matt. 26:18), where, for a time at least, some of the apostles lived after the resurrection and the ascension (John 20:19; Acts 1:13), and where members of the early church in Jerusalem assembled (Acts 12:12). It was John Mark who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their first missionary journey (ch. 13:5, 13). On a later journey, Mark accompanied Barnabas to the island of Cyprus (ch. 15:36–39). Later he seems to have worked under the direction of Peter and Paul (1 Peter 5:13; Col. 4:10 2 Tim. 4:11). The fact that the Gospel carries the name of so inconspicuous a man as Mark is indirect evidence of its genuineness and of his authorship. Had the book been a forgery, the name of a more well-known person who had been associated personally with Jesus, such as the apostle Peter, would no doubt have been attached to it. There is no valid reason to doubt either the authenticity of the book or that Mark was its author. Papias, bishop of the city of Hierapolis, about 10 mi. (16 km.) from Collossae and Laodicea in Asia Minor, is the first known writer who speaks of Mark as the author of this Gospel. (Nichol, F. D., ed. (1980). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Vol. 5, pp. 561–563). Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

The lesson focuses on the struggles of John Mark, how he started out on a missionary journey with Paul, but then quit and went back to Jerusalem, and later wanted to rejoin Paul, but Paul wouldn't have him back on his team, so Barnabas took him, and then later he went with Peter.

The lesson quotes EGW, and we will read a little farther than their quoted portion from the commentary *Acts of the Apostles*:

- Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts of the Apostles 169.3)

This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after years his solicitude in Mark's behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the blessing of God, and the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker. (Acts of the Apostles 170.1)

Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark and received him as a fellow laborer. He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker “unto the kingdom of God,” and “a comfort unto me.” Colossians 4:11. Again, not long before his own death, he spoke of Mark as “profitable” to him “for the ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:11. (Acts of the Apostles 170.2)

I believe this is a reasonable and accurate historical account of the events recorded in Scripture. And these events in Scripture are recorded for our benefit. What are the lessons we can derive from the account of Mark becoming discouraged, leaving his initial commitments, Paul losing confidence in him and refusing to work with him, Mark being mentored by Barnabas and Peter and recovering himself and Paul regaining confidence in him?

What was revealed by Mark's initial withdrawal from service? What was the likely cause? Was it evil in Mark—was it that he wanted to pursue a worldly course with his life? Had he rejected Jesus? Did he choose a new god? Or did he get overwhelmed with various feelings and was unprepared for the investment of time and energy, didn't have the emotional mental stamina, and wasn't prepared for the rigors of the struggle. This would be immaturity, or lack of preparation.

Did that mean he was now cast off by Jesus, that he had lost his salvation, that he had forever forfeited his usefulness for God and God's cause? Obviously not, but could the devil tempt a person in such a situation to think this? And if a person believes this lie then what happens? The problem is not the initial disengagement, but the lies that get in the head and prevent one from growing, maturing, and returning to Jesus.

And might the devil bring to mind a Bible text to discourage and undermine a person's faith?

- Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 NIV84).

Does this text mean that John Mark was unfit for Jesus' service because he started and then turned back? Again, obviously not as John Mark was very useful to God's cause, then what does this text mean?

Consider,

- "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV84).

Man looks at the behavior—someone started in service, but pulled back—then man judges that person to be unfit.

God looks at the heart—the motive, someone starts in service but is only unfit if their heart was not right. In other words, they started the service because they thought they could make a name for themselves and then turned back because they never really embraced the truth and principles of God, they didn't get the accolades they sought for themselves, they didn't get the position, recognition, or validation they wanted, so they left the cause. This is different than the person whose heart does love God and seeks to honor Him, but who hasn't yet developed the experience, stamina, energy, or perspective, and it is in this very hardship of the experience of giving up a particular mission that they learn about themselves, go to Jesus to overcome what they had not previously seen in themselves that interfered with their initial attempt, and they go out again better equipped having struggled through their first failed attempt.

The one Jesus spoke about is one who leaves Jesus completely and is no longer interested in kingdom of God or the true gospel. Mark represents those whose hearts never left Jesus, but they may have left a particular endeavor but still want to work for Jesus in another endeavor.

So, I rendered it in the Remedy this way:

- Jesus said, "No one who puts their hand to sowing seeds of truth — yet has their heart longing for the world — is capable of sharing the Remedy from the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 REM).

So, back to John Mark, what other lessons do we learn from his life experiences?

What was likely a key factor in enabling Mark to overcome his immaturity? The events that followed his leaving Paul. His conscience convicted him; Paul lost confidence in him, which would have likely been upsetting to him; Barnabas and Peter almost certainly counseled him. He was sure to have spent

time in prayer and reflection on what transpired, and as evidenced by his later actions, he experienced a maturing of character and became reliable and trustworthy.

Can you think of other Bible examples of this process?

- All of the disciples except Judas—look at their journey with Jesus, how at the beginning they were vying for who would be first, and at the end, right before the crucifixion, they were still vying for who would be first and were unprepared for the crucifixion. Were discouraged, Thomas about to give up his faith. The disciples on the road to Emmaus, doubting and about to give in. Yet, they were all searching, looking, and willing to reexamine themselves and the evidences and they grew and matured.
- Peter of course, his denial of Jesus, and that experience did not put the pathology of fear and selfishness into Peter's heart, it revealed it, exposed it to Peter and all of us in such a way that Peter really couldn't deny to himself any longer that despite three years with Jesus he had not yet been fully converted. This is why Jesus said to him, prior to those events, when you are converted feed my sheep. And that event, caused Peter to go out, weep bitterly, wrestle with himself in union with God, and the working of the Holy Spirit to overcome the fear and selfishness and experience a new heart. And after that, Peter was a changed man—did that mean Peter was mistake free, error free? No, his heart was right, but his understanding and judgments were not flawless and thus he made a mistake with the Judaizers requiring Paul to correct him publicly—but that was not done out of fear and selfishness, it was done out of a desire to reach the Jews and not offend, yet it was an error and introduced wrong concepts that would have been destructive. And because his heart was renewed, rather than pridefully objecting and claiming his Apostleship as his authority to advance his own judgments, he accepted the correction.
- David after the Bathsheba/Uriah incident—did that incident place the infection of fear and selfishness in David's heart, or was that incident the graphic and undeniable exposure of the fear and selfishness still operating in David's heart? And what happened to David afterward? He wrote Psalm 51, experienced full and complete repentance, rebirth, recreation of a new heart and right spirit and then became a man after God's own heart.
- Moses after he murdered the overseer.

The evidence of Scripture is clear—we are all born infected with sin, fear and selfishness, and God is working through Christ to heal us, to give us a new heart and right spirit of love and trust. As we are won to trust in Jesus we enter into a conflict with our old motives, methods, beliefs, attitudes and while we may have the good intention to honor God, we still may be immature, still have old biases, prejudices, beliefs, attitudes, or simply not developed the maturity to handle certain responsibilities and we try before we are ready and fall short. It is then the devil will step in and try and discourage us and it is then we must remember these stories, the evidences God has given us, the reality of what is transpiring, the truth of who God is and go to Jesus, fall down before Him, wrestle against the lies, fear, selfishness and old habits in union with Jesus and this is how we advance, how we overcome, how we mature.

Was Paul wrong for refusing to work with John Mark again? No, he judged that John Mark wasn't ready at that time for the rigors of what Paul was going to face. And that feedback to Mark required him to do some introspection and evaluate if there was some truth to Paul's concern.

Does that mean John Mark should be rejected by the church and not allowed to serve in any capacity? No, and we are all blessed because of the fact Paul didn't take him again but others did.

What does this mean for us in our personal discourses and relationships within the church? Not every person who is a true follower of Jesus is well suited to fill every position in which they might volunteer or be drafted, and once in that position, they might become overwhelmed, discouraged, and give up that mission—but that doesn't mean they are a backslider, or a rejector of Jesus—it might only mean they were not well suited for that role.

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Mark 1:1-8, let's read it from the Remedy:

- The Remedy originated with Jesus Christ, God's Son. God's spokesman Isaiah wrote: "I will send my herald before you, who will prepare the people for your arrival. A voice calling in a dark and desolate land: 'Prepare your minds, untwist your hearts, and make ready for the Lord to come with his healing Remedy.'"

And so John arrived, immersing people in a desolate region, and preaching, "Immerse your minds into truth and love and turn away from lies and selfishness so that your sinful hearts can be healed. "From all over Judea and Jerusalem huge crowds of people flocked to John, and confessing their sinfulness, they were immersed by him in water in the Jordan River. John was dressed in a camel hair cloak, tied with a leather belt and he ate locust and honey found in the wild. He proclaimed, "The One coming after me is so awesome, I am not even worthy to tie his shoes. I only immerse you in water, but he will immerse your minds and characters with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:1-8 REM).

Do you like this version, or do you prefer other more traditional versions that say things like, "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" Mark 1:4 NIV84)?

What would you say was the purpose of John's preaching? What was it to achieve? Was John preaching about legal adjustments or what John preaching about actual changing of hearts and minds?

And while John was a real historical person, who really preached a message for the people of that day as recorded in Scripture—he also is the fulfillment of a prophecy, someone that prophecy predicted would return—who?

- "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes." (Malachi 4:5 NIV84).

- As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

“ ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 11:7-15 NIV84).

Who is the prophet Elijah returned? Jesus says it wasn’t the individual person who went to heaven in a fiery chariot, but the one who came with the message of Elijah, the message that called people back from Baal worship, the legalistic worship of a legalistic punishing god, to the worship of Yahweh the Creator. And John is the one who fulfilled this role 2000 years ago. But this is another example of a dual fulfillment prophecy—with a lesser regional fulfillment and a greater global fulfillment.

John was the lesser regional fulfillment—what is the greater global? It is when the people of God give the end time message of Elijah to the world, preparing the world for the second coming of Christ, as John called people to prepare to meet Jesus at His first coming.

And Jesus quoted an Old Testament verse:

- ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’

I had always linked this in my mind with the verse John quotes from Isaiah about make the paths straight and thought this was from Isaiah, but it is not, do you know what verse Jesus links with the Elijah message? Malachi 3:1:

- “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness (Malachi 3:1-3 NIV84).

This is the message the Elijah people will give at the end of time, it is the message of Jesus coming to His Temple for the purpose of cleansing the Levites, the priesthood of believers, to prepare them, to

purify them, to unify them into eternal at-one-ment with Him so the people will be ready to meet Jesus when He comes. We describe this cleansing of the sanctuary message, this cleansing of the bride of Christ in our recent talk [Light from the Sanctuary](#)

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness. The word “drove” is from the Greek word *ekballō*, the common word used in the Gospel of Mark for driving out demons. The Spirit’s presence here illustrates the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ life. The Lord is already starting the journey of His ministry, and He immediately confronts Satan. The sense of the struggle in the scene is displayed by the reference to 40 days of temptation, the presence of wild animals, and the angels ministering to Jesus. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 10).

Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness? Didn’t the Holy Spirit know Jesus would be tempted? Aren’t we supposed to pray for God to lead us not into temptation—but it appears here that Jesus was led into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted—why?

Because that was exactly part of why Jesus came—He came as our substitutionary Savior—the second Adam, to take up humanity damaged by Adam and to overcome where Adam failed, to be tempted in all points like we are but to instead of sinning, to overcome sin, fear, selfishness, and ultimately death itself—which He did. Thus the only way to achieve the victory is to face the pathology and destroy the lies with truth, confront the fear and overcome with love, to be tempted with selfishness and choose selflessness. And in Jesus God lived fully overcoming by exercising only human abilities and powers as Jesus’ trusting His Father to succeed and did not rely on His own divine abilities.

Read last two paragraphs,

- An unusual characteristic of the opening scene of the Gospel of Mark is that Jesus is presented as a character with both divinity and humanity. On the side of divinity: He is the Christ, the Messiah (Mark 1:1), the Lord announced by a messenger (Mark 1:2, 3), mightier than John (Mark 1:7), the beloved Son on whom the Spirit descends (Mark 1:10, 11). But on the side of humanity, we see the following: He is baptized by John (not the other way around, Mark 1:9), He is driven by the Spirit (Mark 1:12), tempted by Satan (Mark 1:13), with wild animals (Mark 1:13), and ministered to by angels (Mark 1:13).

Why these contrasts? This points to the amazing reality of Christ, our Lord and Savior, our God, and yet also a human being, our brother and our example. **How do we fully wrap our minds around this idea? We can’t. But we accept it on faith and marvel at what this truth reveals to us about God’s love for humanity.** (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 10, emphasis mine).

Thoughts? What do you hear is the message? Is it, “While God is infinite and we can never fully comprehend God, yet we are to think, reason, and understand to the fullest extent possible and our understanding and appreciation will grow through all eternity?” Or did you hear, “God’s ways are beyond our ability to comprehend so we don’t think about them—we just accept them on faith without seeking to understand?”

I really dislike the merger of a truth with an action that is against God’s desire for us. The truth is that we cannot FULLY wrap our minds around this—we cannot FULLY comprehend God—that is true. But that does not mean we cannot comprehend and understand many things of God, His character, methods, nature, motives, design laws, aspects of His sacrifice, and grow in our understanding through time.

In fact, Jesus said He wants us to understand, that He wants us to be His friends who do understand and not be unthinking servants who simply obey because the master said so (John 15:15).

This type of logic really bothers me because it presents itself as virtuous, as righteous, as a good thing, as pious, holy, saintly, meek and humble—but it is actually none of those things. It is a deception to keep people from knowing the truth for themselves; it prevents people from understanding and being set free by the truth. Satan has no truth on his side so he must get people to accept and believe things based on faith without understanding, without comprehension, to believe things that are not supported by evidence, things that are irrational and unreasonable—that is why they cannot be thought about—because if one thought one would see the lie. So, people are taught, don’t question, don’t think, that would be a lack of faith, just believe.

But while we cannot FULLY comprehend the things of God, we can understand a lot about why this contrast is there and the reason Jesus had to become human. This contrast is there, inspired by God and written by Mark, because our salvation requires both to be true. Our salvation requires that Jesus had to be fully human in order to save the species God created in Eden. But He also had to be fully God in order to address the lies Satan told about God that started the war in heaven deceived angels, and then deceived Adam and Eve. Both must be fully true in order to both save humanity and also bring an end to the cosmic war over God’s trustworthiness.

So it is quite understandable as to why both are presented and necessary. Jesus is God who became fully human. He was the merger of two lives, or life-forces, or spirits—the breath of life, or spirit, breathed into Adam which Adam corrupted with sin, and the Holy Spirit, who was the Father of Jesus’ humanity. In Jesus the spirit of fear inherited from Adam was opposed, overcome, eradicated, and replaced with the spirit of love, truth, and holiness and became the new life source for humanity—connecting humanity back to God the source of all life. And when we are converted, won to trust, we surrender our old life, our old spirit of fear and selfishness, and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit who imparts a new spirit of love and trust that comes from Jesus. We are reborn with new motives and desires and become part of the family of heaven.

THURSDAY

Read Mark 1:14-15:

- After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:14-15 NIV84).

What is the time referred to by Jesus? The fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 9, 70 weeks set aside for the Jews to fulfill their mission to be the avenue through whom the Messiah would come.

And Jesus did come and reported that the kingdom of God is near—what kingdom? How would you describe it? What is the basis of His kingdom?

What did Jesus mean when He said,

- “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21 NIV84).

What does this mean? Is it related to 1 Samuel we quoted earlier, man looks on the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart?

What kind of kingdom functions inside of person?

What is the basis of any kingdom? Its law—what kind of law functions inside a person?

What is the new covenant—God writing His laws upon our hearts and minds—how does this happen? Is it a list of rules?

Can God get His law upon our hearts and minds by might, power, enforcement of any kind? How does He win?

Truth, love, and freedom is the only means to be used.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Light from the Sanctuary Presentation: Several weeks ago I presented our understanding of the Sanctuary message from the design law reality, God's plan to heal and cleanse us so we are ready to meet Him when He comes. We have this video along with the power point slides available online and have sent out an email this week with the promotion and link. We are asking you to forward it with your recommendation or encouragement to all of your Adventist family and friends. Ask them to view it and see if this isn't the first presentation that actually makes sense on this subject.

<https://comeandreason.com/light-from-the-sanctuary/>

A NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE: Biblical Concepts Made Easy, by Stephanie Land. It is a fun book with puzzles that teaches children the truth about God, His design laws, and answers difficult questions regarding moral decision making and why suffering happens. These are available for you and your family and to share. We will ship them at no cost to any US Postal address. They will also be for sale on Amazon as an individual book and we will have them for sale at bulk discount pricing on our website for schools and church groups to purchase and give to their youth. Please get a copy and share with your youth pastor or leader and give them the contact information where they can order on our website.