

First Sunday in Lent

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 22:1-18

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. 9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.” 15 And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

22:1-2 The text states that God “tested” (*nissah*) Abraham (v 1). It was a test of the highest order because it involved the sacrifice of the one whom God acknowledged to be “your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love” (v 2). The preacher will want to recount for his hearers the history behind the birth of Isaac and why God’s command would have been so painful for Abraham. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Luther echoes the distinction that James draws in the Epistle between tests provided by God and temptations to evil provided by Satan: “[God] does not test in order that we may fear and hate Him like a tyrant but to the end that He may exercise and stir up faith and love in us. Satan, however, tempts for evil, in order to draw you away from God and to make you distrust and blaspheme God” (AE 4:132). It is both the source and the intended result that distinguishes tests and temptations to evil. In the midst of either, God provides for his people (Ps 50:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Note the repetition of two critical elements in the account: “son,” *ben*, occurs ten times and “provide,” *yirə’eh*, occurs three times. The two are connected through the willingness of God to provide the sacrifice (lamb) so that Isaac, and by extension all people who would be blessed through the continuation of Abraham’s seed (offspring), could live. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

22:1 *after these things*. Isaac had grown into adolescence or young manhood, as implied also by 21:34 (“a long time”). (CSB)

(literally, “After these things”) may indicate a surprising turn of events. Abraham apparently had security with his promised heir, a political alliance, and a symbol of permanence, but now everything becomes uncertain. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

tested. † Not “tempted,” for God does not tempt (Jas 1:13). Satan tempts us (see 1Co 7:5) in order to make us fall; God tests us in order to strengthen our faith (Ex 20:20) or prove our commitment (Dt 8:2). (CSB)

Verb is translated “tempt” elsewhere, but that is not the sense here. One way that faith is strengthened is through trial and hardship. (TLSB)

To test someone’s quality through hardship. When it refers to testing by God, it concerns obedience (e.g., Ex 16:4; Deut 8:2; Jud 2:22; 2 Chron 32:31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

This was done for Abraham’s spiritual benefit. Abraham’s love for Isaac, right and good though it was, might in time have crowded out his love for God. (PBC)

Here I am. Abraham answered with the response of a servant, as did Moses and Samuel when God called them by name (see Ex 3:4; 1Sa 3:4, 6, 8).) (CSB)

The servant is willing to obey the command whose contents are yet unknown. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

22:2 *your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love*. In the Hebrew text “Isaac” follows the clause “whom you love,” in order to heighten the effect: “your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac.” Isaac was the “only son” of the promise (21:12). (CSB)

Abraham’s love for Isaac, right and good though it was, might in time have crowded out his love for God. Jesus once said: “Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). In God’s view, Abraham needed an opportunity consciously to put God first. With this test God brought Abraham’s training in faith to a climax. (PBC)

Of course Abraham had another son, Ishmael, but Isaac alone was the son who carried the covenant promise from Gen 12:1-3, reaffirmed in v 17 of our text. Note that the Greek equivalent monogenas “only begotten,” is used to refer to Isaac in Heb. 11:17, and is applied to Christ in Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

land of Moriah. The author of Chronicles identifies the area as the temple mount in Jerusalem (2Ch 3:1). Today “Mount Moriah” is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, an impressive Muslim mosque constructed in A.D. 691. A large outcropping of rock inside the building is still pointed to as the traditional site of the intended sacrifice of Isaac. (CSB)

Where Jerusalem and the temple would later be built. (TLSB)

Moriah would become the site of Solomon’s temple (2 Chr 3:1), and Golgotha where God’s Son was sacrificed, was to the west on the same hill. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham had committed himself by covenant to be obedient to the Lord and had consecrated his son Isaac to the Lord by circumcision. The Lord put his servant's faith and loyalty to the supreme test, thereby instructing Abraham, Isaac and their descendants as to the kind of total consecration the Lord's covenant requires. The test also foreshadowed the perfect consecration in sacrifice that another offspring of Abraham would undergo in order to wholly consecrate Abraham and his spiritual descendants to God and to fulfill the covenant promises. (CSB)

Human sacrifices were likely common among the Canaanites. God's command seemed to contradict His promises to give many descendants through Isaac. (TLSB)

"Sacrifice him" without indispensable "to me" perhaps implies that God did not intend to demand an actual human sacrifice. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

burnt offering - Whole burnt (no part of it was eaten by the worshipers; it was all God's) offering (literally holocaust), represented one's complete dedication to God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The particular sacrifice God asked Abraham to bring is called a "burnt offering," a blood sacrifice which in the OT symbolized a person's complete dedication to God. (PBC)

22:3 *Early in the morning.* Prompt obedience, even under such trying circumstances, characterized Abraham's response to God (CSB)

After what must have been a sleepless night Abraham got up early,, perhaps so he wouldn't have to discuss with Sarah the gruesome assignment ahead of him. (PBC)

God's will is not to be delayed, not questioned but executed. By rising early, Abraham indicated that he would not deny the Lord's authority but would obey him. It was an act of worship. Abraham must have believed that God would have a resolution to the difficulty. Faith is believing in God and acting on it. The outcome had been hidden so the test could be real and the obedience genuine. The test as a whole was a father's path of suffering; one can only suffer with Abraham in helpless silence. Obedient silence in his own case contrasts with his protracted intercession for Sodom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

saddled – The sense is not to prepare to ride, but to carry the large amount of wood needed for a holocaust. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

22:4 *third day.* Three days would be necessary for the journey from Beersheba (see v. 19) to Jerusalem. (CSB)

Abraham had a fifty mile trip ahead of him. God didn't want Abraham's obedience to flow from spur-of-the-moment enthusiasm. Three days of traveling gave Abraham plenty of time to think. And we can sure Satan supplied a dozen logical reasons why he should not take the life of his son. (PBC)

Considering time for preparations on the first day and ascending the mount on the third day, this was the expected time for a hike of about 50 miles. Christ's resurrection happened on the third day. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

22:5 *stay here* – In his personal test, Abraham must be alone, as would Moses on his mountain (Ex. 19:1-13) and Christ, in the desert, in Gethsemane and forsaken on the cross. NOTE: Abraham and Moses weren't truly alone because God was with them.

Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:19). (TLSB)

boy. See v. 12. The Hebrew for this word has a wide range of meaning, from an infant (see Ex 2:6) to a young man of military age (see 1Ch 12:28). (CSB)

Isaac must have been a strong teenager, perhaps 13 years old (cf. 17:25) to be able to carry a large load of wood uphill. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

come again to you. Abraham, the man of faith and “the father of all who believe” (Ro 4:11), “reasoned that God could raise the dead” (Heb 11:19) if that were necessary to fulfill his promise. (CSB)

The Hebrew word translated “we will come back” is an emphatic verb form expressing the speaker’s determination. It hints at the answer Abraham had reached to the awful question that was torturing him: “How can a merciful God cut off the Messianic line?” Abraham’s faith answered: “If God commands me to kill Isaac and I obey him, then God is simply going to have to bring Isaac’s ashes back to life, and the two of us are going to come back sown this mountain.” (PBC)

22:6 *on his son* – As Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice, so Christ carried his own wooden cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

the fire – This would be the equipment to produce fire, e.g., flint and tinder. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

they went both of them together – Concludes v. 6 and v 8, signifying the most poignant silence in all literature. Isaac was puzzled and Abraham troubled. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

22:7-8 This, the only recorded conversation between Abraham and Isaac, begins in the Hebrew with “my father” and ends with “my son.” This partnership of father and son as offering and victim prophesies that expressed in Is 53:7, 10, and reflects that of the divine Father and Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

22:8 *God himself provide for himself the lamb.* The immediate fulfillment of Abraham’s trusting response was the ram of v. 13, but its ultimate fulfillment is the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29, 36). (CSB)

V 8: In answer to Isaac’s question, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham replies, “God will provide (*yir’eh*) for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The question Isaac asks in verse seven must have cut Abraham life a knife. His answer was a combination of considerate love, which spared Isaac the brutal details, and of confident faith, which left the outcome to God. (PBC)

Literally, “God will see for himself.” The same Hebrew verb “to see” is used in the sense of God providing, as also in Gen 16:13-14. Abraham’s prophetic words point to God himself supplying the only true Lamb who could take away the world’s sin. No sacrifice supplied by us humans could accomplish that. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Abraham’s words were first fulfilled by the ram (v. 13). Their ultimate and true fulfillment was the Lamb. (TLSB)

22:9 *laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.* Isaac is here a type (prefiguration) of Christ. (CSB)

22:10 *slaughter* – Translates the usual Hebrew verb for “slaughter (in sacrifice).” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The climax of the sacrifice is described with abundant detail. To obey God’s command Abraham had to disregard everything his heart and his reason told him, and to concentrate totally on God’s promise: “My covenant I will establish with Isaac” (17:21). The epistle to the Hebrews helps us to understand Abraham’s attitude: (PBC)

¹⁷”By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ¹⁹Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.”

If there was a conflict between God’s command and his promise, resolving that conflict was God’s business. Abraham’s business was to put God first and he drew the knife. (PBC)

22:11 *angel of the LORD.* See note on 16:7. (CSB)

This messenger is the Son of God. (TLSB)

Was a pre-incarnate manifestation of God the Son. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 2)

God provides for Abraham in and through “the angel of the LORD,” understood to be the pre-incarnate lamb of God that would later be provided for all people (see *TLSB* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009], 48). Even more interesting is that this event takes place on Mount Moriah, where Jerusalem would later be built and where the Lamb of God would be provided and offered once and for all by God for the sins of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Abraham! Abraham! The repetition of the name indicates urgency (see 46:2; Ex 3:4; 1Sa 3:10; Ac 9:4). (CSB)

Here I am. The repetition of the name indicates urgency. (CSB)

22:12 *now I know* – Abraham completed the test. Hilary of Poitiers: “God certainly was not ignorant of the faith of Abraham, which He had already reckoned to him for righteousness” (NPNF2 9:242). Luther: “The statement refers not only to his faith but also his entire worship” (AE 4:134) (TLSB)

fear God. A conventional phrase equivalent to “true religion.” “Fear” in this phrase has the sense of reverential trust in God that includes commitment. (CSB)

It includes an absolute fear of doing anything that would displease Him, as well as childlike respect for Him. In the case if the unbeliever only the former is present. Abraham’s behavior at Moriah demonstrated that both were present in his heart. (PBC)

In the NT God-fearers are Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel without becoming full Jewish proselytes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

you have not withheld from me your son, your only son. See v. 16. Abraham's "faith was made complete by what he did" (Jas 2:21–22). (CSB)

Angel identifies Himself as God. (TLSB)

22:13 *ram caught in a thicket by his horns* – Ram became the sacrifice. Often seen as a foreshadowing of Christ with His crown of thorns. Tertullian: "Christ... in His times, carried His "wood" on His own shoulders, adhering to the horns of the cross, with a thorny crown encircling His head" (ANF3:171). (TLSB)

instead of. Substitutionary sacrifice of one life for another is here mentioned for the first time. As the ram died in Isaac's place, so also Jesus gave his life as a ransom "for" (lit. "instead of") many (Mk 10:45). (CSB)

This emphasizes the substitutionary nature of sacrifice and applies particularly to Christ's sacrifice in our stead ("life as a ransom for many" Mark 10:45) Every animal sacrifice was a substitute for a human. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

22:14 *will provide* – This was Abraham's expression of joy and praise. God sees His own in their anguish and provides for them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Abraham refers to the place where this event occurred as "The LORD will provide (*YHWH yirā'eh*)," and the text then states that to this day it is said, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided (*yera'eh*)." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

mount of the LORD. During the Israelite monarchy the phrase referred to the temple mount in Jerusalem (see Ps 24:3; Isa 2:3; 30:29; Zec 8:3). (CSB)

22:16 *I have sworn.* There is no greater name in which the Lord can take an oath (see Heb 6:13). (CSB)

As certainly as He is God, so certainly shall He fulfill His promise. (TLSB)

He swore by Himself, since there is no higher authority. (PBC)

you ... have not withheld your son, your only son. Abraham's devotion is paralleled by God's love to us in Christ as reflected in Jn 3:16 and Ro 8:32, which may allude to this verse. (CSB)

22:17 *I will surely blessed you* – Luther: "There is a twofold blessing; a blessing in words and a blessing in actuality. The blessing in words consists of praises and commendation... The blessing in actuality is truly divine, for when God blesses, the result is the thing itself or that which is said... He is One who blesses with effect and does all things through what He says" (AE 4:155). (TLSB)

He rewarded Abraham's faith by repeating and expanding the Messianic promise. (PBC)

offspring as the stars of heaven.

Abraham's descendants as numerous as sand on the seashore, would take possession of the cities of their enemies – a reference to the Israelite conquest of Canaan. (TLSB)

sand that is on the seashore. Fulfilled, at least in part, during Solomon’s reign (see 1Ki 4:20). (CSB)

possess the gate of his enemy. . Lit. “gates.” Taking possession of the gate of a city was tantamount to occupying the city itself (see 24:60). (CSB)

These were where the enemy controlled the whole conquered city. (TLSB)

22:18 *in your offspring* – Or, “in your seed,” i.e., in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). (TLSB)

all nations on earth will be blessed. Luther: “For the promise does not depend on my merits or works; it depends on the Seed of Abraham. By Him I am blessed when I apprehend Him in faith; and the blessing clings to me in turn and permeates my entire body and soul, so that even the body itself is made alive and saved through the same Seed” (AE 4:158). (TLSB)

because you have obeyed my voice. God blessed Abraham out of His free mercy through faith (15:6), not because Abraham merited the blessing by his works. Nevertheless, his obedience was an external sign of true faith, of which God approved. (TLSB)

When Abraham left Moriah his trust in God’s promise was deepened, and his love for his son was purified. (PBC)

EPISTLE – James 1:12-18

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1:12 Serves more appropriately as a conclusion to vv 2–12, not the start of a new paragraph. (TLSB)

Blessed. See Jer 17:7–8; Mt 5:3–12; see also notes on Ps 1:1; Mt 5:3; Rev 1:3. (CSB)

David P. Scaer (*James: The Apostle of Faith* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983], 52) sees “the man” as Christ, especially because the word for *man* is “male” (*anēr*) and not “person” (*anthrōpos*). Certainly Christ is the blessed man who best resisted temptation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

The rhythm of this verse reminds us of Psalm 1. To be blessed means that we are content, serene, and confident that He is still managing the world’s business, confident that He manages everything for our ultimate good and confident that our life’s story is guaranteed to have a happy ending. To be blessed means that we are aware that God intervenes in our lives to make good things happen for us. (PBC)

The Messiah was so closely connected with His people that the Jew believed he shared in all the benefits the Messiah earned. (Scaer)

remains steadfast – This is the same quality that Jesus praises and rewards in each of the seven letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. All believers need to grow in this kind of spiritual toughness, because we are under daily assault from Satan. (PBC)

trial - peirasmon, “trial.” This pericope from James contains six forms of this same root. This one is the sole noun; four are verbs and one is an adjective. It is the same verb used in the day’s Gospel to tell of Jesus’ temptation by Satan, the adversary. Believers are constantly under attack to turn from God. As becomes evident from vv 16–18, the greatest temptation is to be deceived about God and forget or reject the new birth he has given us through his Word of truth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

James does not identify the trials faced by these early Christians, but in this context, it seems that the lure of wealth was an issue (cf 4:13–5:6). (TLSB)

crown. The Greek for this word was the usual term for the wreath placed on the head of a victorious athlete or military leader. (CSB)

Symbol of eternal life with God. Parallels “perfect and complete” (v 4). (TLSB)

Scaer observes that this is the first use of this phrase in the Scriptures (Scaer, 53). It is echoed in Rev 2:10, where our Lord emphasizes faith in the face of temptation: “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” It is eternal life in God’s glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

This epistle was written shortly after the persecution which led to the death of Stephen and the exile of Peter from Jerusalem. The reference to the crown of life as a theological term applying to eternal life could have taken on special significance, since Stephen in Greek means crown. (Scaer)

life. Eternal life, as the future tense of the verb (“will receive”) indicates. (CSB)

1:13 *tempted*. In vv. 13–14 the verb refers to temptations that test one’s moral strength to resist sin (see note on Mt 4:1). (CSB)

The testings of vv 2–12 refer to external circumstances; the temptings of vv 13–15 refer to internal struggles against sin. (TLSB)

“Lead us not into temptation” does not mean that our Father might tempt us. It is a prayer that the Lord would successfully lead us through temptation, without being trapped. God’s testing (tempting) of Abraham must, of course, also be understood in this light. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Luther: “[God] does not test in order that we may fear and hate Him like a tyrant but to the end that He may exercise and stir up faith and love in us. Satan, however, tempts for evil, in order to draw you away from God and to make you distrust and blaspheme God” (AE 4:132). (TLSB)

God cannot be tempted. Because God in his very nature is holy, there is nothing in him for sin to appeal to. (CSB)

If Jesus were only true God, he could not be tempted. He was tempted because he is also true man. Heb 4:15, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in

every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

tempts no one. While God indeed allows, and sometimes even may send hardships upon His children, His purpose in that is always good: to test their faith as genuine and to draw them closer to Him, away from this sick and dying planet. God never, ever wants His children to choose evil. (PBC)

1:14 *by his own desire* – Our temptation problem is not from God but really comes from within: cooking away in each person’s heart is a sinful self that will never be converted. It restlessly seeks to dominate our thinking and values. (PBC)

Temptation into sin comes from us, from our own fallen nature. It does not come from the Lord as some rabbis taught (see Martin Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971, 1979], 252). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

1:15 The three stages—desire, sin, death—are seen in the temptations of Eve (Ge 3:6–22) and David (2Sa 11:2–17). (CSB)

fully grown. As a mature faith results in a crown of life (v 12), so the ultimate result of unforgiven sin is death. (TLSB)

death. Sin consumes and destroys. (TLSB)

“Brings forth death.” The verb here, *apokuei*, appears only twice in the New Testament. Both are in this pericope (again in v 18). Here, sin brings forth death. There, the Word of truth gives us birth into new life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

1:16 *Do not be deceived.* Deception comes from the world, which has rejected God. This is best understood as the conclusion of vv 13–15, not the beginning of a new paragraph. (TLSB)

planasthe, “deceived.” Another word for temptation in this text. One might count six different words that speak of temptation and its work in this section of James. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above.* God provides everything we need, including wisdom (v 5), exaltation (v 9), and new life (v 18). (TLSB)

Father of ... lights. God is the Creator of the heavenly bodies, which give light to the earth, but, unlike them, he does not change. (CSB)

Refers to God’s creative work (Gn 1:3–5, 14–19). (TLSB)

That is, all that is beneficial for us and our salvation and everything that is complete are “from the Father of lights,” who created the sun, moon, and stars. Those heavenly lights we consider certain and reliable, but the Father is even more certain and reliable. “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

The vocabulary of this section with its strong Christological terminology and salvific expressions indicates that James is speaking of God’s plan of salvation in an abbreviated way. It could be

paraphrased in this way: “The one perfect and good gift of salvation has already come down from heaven.” (Scaer)

Coming down is the theological term in the NT to describe the incarnation. (Scaer)

God steadfastness is like the stars. (Scaer)

variation or shadow - Trials and temptations test the believer’s faith. James encourages perseverance. Yet the very temptations themselves present the believer with a problem. Is God tempting me? As *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (4.408–11) points out, Jewish rabbis had long struggled with this problem. The answer is not “God is tempting me” (v 13). Rather, every good and perfect gift comes from him who provides light and enlightenment, physical and spiritual light. Do not charge him with the evil that comes from man’s disobedience. While the lights of the firmament created by him (Job 38:28) may vary and change, sometimes bringing light and sometimes causing shadows, the Father and Creator is not that way; he does not change. From him comes only that which is good and perfect. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Though the heavenly bodies change and move, God and His Word remain constant and sure. We can trust His promises. (TLSB)

1:18 *brought us forth*. Not a reference to creation but to regeneration (see Jn 3:3–8). (CSB)

Reference to new life in Christ through Baptism. Cassiodorus Senator (sixth century) notes: “By holy Baptism he declared us to be begotten, freely, not by meriting, so that by a new restoration we might be born into his family” (*Complexiones in epistulis Apostolorum* Jac 3, MPL 70, p 1377). (TLSB)

word of truth. The proclamation of the gospel (see 1Pe 1:23–25). (CSB)

“The Word of truth” seems to anticipate the fourth gospel, where Jesus is identified as “the Word” (1:1) and “the Truth” (14:6). It is not improbable that John in developing his unique understanding of Jesus as the incarnate Word and the Truth may have been influenced by James. The influence of James on the fourth gospel should not be discounted. (Scaer)

The Father’s unchangeable, good, and perfect will not only created us, but also caused us to be born from above by the Gospel, the Word of truth (see 2 Tim 2:15; Jn 1:13; 1 Pet 1:23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

firstfruits. See Lev 23:9–14. Just as the first sheaf of the harvest was an indication that the whole harvest would eventually follow, so the early Christians were an indication that a great number of people would eventually be born again. (CSB)

Best of the harvest, offered to God in sacrifice (Ex 22:29; 23:19). In the NT, Christians are the “harvest” of the preaching of the Gospel (TLSB).

This same Creator of lights has given us that which is good and perfect: new birth in Christ. In us he has begun his new creation through the Word of truth (1 Pet 1:23). This spiritual rebirth was clearly outlined by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). He chose to give us birth, in contrast to man’s evil choice which conceives and gives birth to sin, and full-grown sin gives birth to death (v 15). Such a newborn child of God does what is good and right, because God’s seed (*sperma*) remains in him (1 John 3:9). He has been chosen by Christ to bear fruit (John 15:16), to be a kind of first fruits, even as the Word

of truth (wisdom) is a kind of first fruit of God's creation (Prov 8:22, 35). Those who choose to do the will of God are evidence of the new creation of God. Paul uses the same image of the wave sheaf, the first fruits of the harvest (Deut 26:1–11), in 2 Thess 2:13. Elsewhere he applies it to Christ, "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). The first fruits are here; the complete harvest will surely come. Give thanks to the Father who is blessing us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

There is a debate between commentators as to whether the *eis to* phrase should be taken as purpose (God brought us forth that we should be) or result (God has brought us forth so that we are). The ESV has taken it as purpose. Lenski argues that it is a result (*The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966], 547–48). Lenski argues that once we've been brought forth by the Word of truth, we are already heirs, sons, and firstfruits. In his *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (LW 32:24), Martin Luther, however, takes it as purpose. He looks at it as a statement of what we will be eternally. "Firstfruits" refers to the first portion of the harvest dedicated to the Lord, which is a picture of Christ's people (see Lev 23:10; Rev 14:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

creatures. Or, "creation." All creation is restored in Christ, beginning with humanity (1Co 15:20–28). (TLSB)

1:1–18 James writes to struggling Christians who are facing many trials and temptations. Those who face such challenges may be tossed about (vv 5–8) and eventually destroyed by sin (v 15). Those who seek God's wisdom endure trials (vv 2–4) and become stronger. In Baptism, God gives His struggling children the crown of life not because of their strength but because of His grace. In that grace, we can follow Him and live confidently in this world of struggles and uncertainty. • O Lord, deliver me from my struggles, and grant me the gifts that come from You alone. Thank You for Your Son, Jesus, who has given me new life. Lead me in Your wisdom until I am raised to receive the crown of life. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 1:9-15

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." ¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

1:9-11 The Baptism of Jesus invites the question Why? The best answer comes in the voice of the Father from heaven, saying, "You are my Son, whom I love." This is an echo of Is 42:1, one of the "songs" of the (Suffering) Servant of the Lord. In his Baptism, Jesus further identifies our sinfulness as his own (cf. Isaiah 53). He voluntarily walks through the doorway marked "sinners." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

1:9 *At that time*. Jesus probably began his public ministry c. A.D. 27, when he was approximately 30 years old (Lk 3:23). As far as we know, he had spent most of his previous life in Nazareth. (CSB)

It is unclear how long John preached before Jesus came to him to be baptized, but it was long enough to have gathered some disciples (cf John 1:35). The focus now shifts from John's ministry to that of Jesus. (TLSB)

The verse begins with a Hebraism, frequent in LXX and Luke, which denotes something exceptional and noteworthy. Here it denotes a noteworthy occurrence during the Baptist's ministry. "At that time" means, at the very height of the Baptist's ministry. The Baptist was baptizing on the east bank of the Jordan not far from the Sea of Galilee. It wasn't far from Nazareth. It has been suggested (but can't be proved) that some of the natives of Nazareth had already gone to be baptized by the Baptist. That is an interesting thought. And it leads to an interesting question: "Had Jesus' mother already been baptized, assuming that Joseph was already dead?" We know not. The point we are making is that when one reads all four Gospel accounts one is left with the definite impression that Jesus came just as did all the rest, without fanfare. (Buls)

He came of His own volition and when His hour had come. His purpose in coming was to be baptized. By the way, compare the baptism of Jesus with that of the people in verses 4-5. Jesus did not need the preaching of repentance-baptism to have His sins forgiven. Jesus did not come confessing His sins. (Buls)

Nazareth – Nazaret . . . Jordanēn: “Nazareth . . . Jordan.” The God who created “place” acts and reveals himself according to place. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

baptized by John. For the significance of Jesus’ baptism. (CSB)

In submitting to John’s baptism Jesus acknowledges the judgment of God upon Israel. At the same time his baptism signifies that his mission will be to endure the judgment of God. In doing so he identified himself with a rebellious generation in need of redemption. Mark is concerned to indicate from the very beginning that Jesus is not an isolated individual who is responsible only for his own righteousness. From the point of introduction Jesus shares the heritage and predicament of the people like Moses in the first exodus (Ex 32:23), he does not set himself apart from their sins. (Lane)

1:10-11 *schizomenous*, “parting.” This middle present participle portrays the effect of Jesus’ Baptism upon the creation. The descent of the Spirit and the words of the Father are not normal or neutral events in the creation, but rather, the Creator tears the fabric, so to speak, of the creation in this most glorious revelation of God. *su ei ho Huios mou ho agapētos*, “You are my beloved Son” (ESV). The Father speaks this again of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mk 9:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

The visual descent of the Spirit and spoken words of the Father show the usual means by which divine revelation is given and received: human senses. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

1:10 *Jesus coming out of water* – Suggests that Jesus was either immersed or sprinkled while standing in the river. (TLSB)

ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος—This phrase confirms that Jesus was in the water of the Jordan. (CC)

immediately – Greek *euthus* occurs 41 times in Mark but only 10 additional times in the rest of the NT. It underlines both the urgency of Jesus’ ministry and His march toward the cross. (TLSB)

The Greek text begins with a word that means "immediately," that is, after His baptism. "As He was going up" denotes attendant circumstance. "Out" means "from." All ancient paintings of Jesus' baptism have Him standing in the water. "Up out of" by no means supports the idea of immersion. Furthermore, verse 10 tells us what happened "after" not "during" Jesus' baptism. (Buls)

heavens being torn open – Mark’s distinctive language echoes Is. 64:1, where the prophet prays, “Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence...” The pattern had been established already in the first exodus that God could not come down until the people had been consecrated (Ex 19:10 f.). For this reason Jesus expressed a vicarious confession of sin on behalf of the many. He walked into the waters of baptism in obedience to the Father’s will. He had consecrated himself in faith, even as every other man must do. But in this instance God came down, and there was striking attestation that sonship has been re-established through the one true Israelite whose repentance was perfect. (Lane)

“He saw” implicitly means “Jesus saw.” This clearly denotes Jesus’ humanity. From the account in John 1:29-34 we know that the Baptist also “saw.” (Buls)

“Torn open” is a predicate, passive participle. Matthew and Luke have forms “to open.” Mark says: “the heavens rent.” The comments on this word are interesting: (Buls)

Bengel: ‘Rent open’ is said of that which had not previously been open. Christ was the first who opened heaven. (Buls)

Luther: Heaven opens itself which hitherto was closed, and becomes now at Christ’s baptism a door and window, so that one can see into it; and henceforth there is no difference any more between Him and us; for God the Father himself is present and says: ‘This is my beloved Son’. (Buls)

Lenski: What happened was an act of God, that great act by which he inaugurated Jesus into his mighty office of Prophet, High Priest, and King. (Buls)

Ezekiel (1:1) saw the heavens opened; Stephen likewise (Acts 7:56); compare also Revelation 4:1; Isaiah 64:1. We are not told what became visible when the heavens were suddenly opened, as we are told in the case of Ezekiel and of Stephen. Out of the open heavens the Spirit came down upon Jesus. (Buls)

the Spirit descending on him. Jesus’ anointing for ministry—an anointing he claimed in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4:18). (CSB)

The Messiah would possess the Spirit of the Lord (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). The prophecies are fulfilled. “On Him” literally mean “into Him.” (TLSB)

Jesus saw two things happen: the heavens rent and the Holy Spirit coming down to Him as a dove. Why as a dove? Perhaps it is best not to seek symbolism in the word “dove.” There are so many ideas on this point. What is clear is that it was a clear and visible sign both for Jesus and the Baptist that the Holy Spirit was now descending on Jesus. Here He truly becomes the Messiah, the Anointed of God. Jesus, of course, had the Holy Spirit before. As true God He was One with the Father and the Spirit. He also had the Spirit according to His human nature but now He is anointed with the Spirit without measure. Read John 1:33-34. No human being ever received the Holy Spirit in the measure which Jesus did. (Buls)

Bengel: The Holy Spirit with which Jesus was about to baptize. (Buls)

Exactly. That is the whole point of John 1:32-34. There the Baptist says: “This (Jesus) is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” The Baptist clearly means that his own (John’s) baptism is effective because Jesus had been anointed with the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Triune God was effectively working in the baptism of the Baptist. (Buls)

Lenski: Some speak of the Spirit's descent upon Jesus as though this were a feature of his baptism, which it was not. The application of this to our baptism, namely that in the same way through our baptism and in it, the Spirit comes to us with His regenerating grace, is wrong. He, indeed, does come to us, but upon Jesus he came, not in and through the baptism but AFTER it. (Buls)

Titus 3:5 and John 3:5 tell us that we are regenerated, born again, of the Holy Spirit through baptism. Jesus did not need regeneration or rebirth. The Holy Spirit, in fullest measure, was bestowed on Him AFTER His baptism. (Buls)

Lenski: The Spirit was a permanent gift to Jesus. Like his conception 'of the Spirit' so was this coming of the Spirit as a gift; it pertained to the human nature of Jesus, it equipped and empowered that nature with all that it needed to carry out the work of redemption. In His deity the Son was of identical essence with both the Father and the Spirit, nor could the Spirit be given to him. But in his human nature, which he had assumed in order by it to work out our redemption, he could and did receive the Spirit. . . . The coming down of the Spirit upon Jesus is the anointing prophesied in Psalm 45:7; Isaiah 61:1. Cf. Acts 10:38. The prophets received some of the gifts of the Spirit; Jesus, lifted far above them for an infinitely greater task, received the Spirit as such. What power thus filled him we see when he is now led up into Galilee, to teach there in his wonderful way and to work miracles. (Buls)

Jesus did not begin teaching or performing miracles until this bestowal of the Spirit right after His baptism. (Buls)

like a dove. Symbolizing the gentleness, purity and guilelessness of the Holy Spirit (see Mt 10:16). (CSB)

1:11 An allusion to Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1. (CSB)

a voice. God sometimes spoke directly from heaven (see 9:7; Jn 12:28–29). (CSB)

You are my Son. In v. 1 Mark proclaims Jesus as the Son of God; here God the Father himself proclaims Jesus as his Son. (CSB)

Jesus had seen two things with His very own eyes. Now He hears something with His very own ears. Whose voice was this? It must have been that of the Father because the voice says: "You are My Son." Only the Father could say that. (Buls)

"My Son" clearly denotes Jesus' divinity. "Whom I love" clearly denotes this divine Son incarnate. "Whom I love" is not a synonym of "only begotten" found in the Gospel of John. "Only begotten" denotes Jesus' eternal generation from the Father. But here we have a passive verbal adjective with Father as agent which denotes the Father's total approval of the incarnate Christ. It would not be necessary for the Father to say that He loved the "divine" nature of Christ. (Buls)

Note the repetition of the article here to stress the importance and uniqueness of the love of the Father toward the incarnate Christ. The Father saw His Son through thick and thin, motivated by His love, here meaning the very highest type of love. (Buls)

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit equipped the Son to accomplish His work. All three Synoptics quote the words of the Father. Mark and Luke have identical wording. But Matthew has "This is" but otherwise has identical wording. The Father's voice said both: emphatic "My" for Jesus' sake, and emphatic "you are" for my sake. The Father assured His Son that He would see Him through. The Father assured me that

His Son would see me through. The Father assured me that His Son, the Messiah, would accomplish my salvation. For the same reasons Matthew reads "in whom" and Mark and Luke read "in you." (Buls)

God addresses Jesus as his unique Son, the object of his elective love. In this expression of unqualified divine approval there is recognition of Jesus' competence to fulfill the messianic task for which he has been set apart. (Lane)

I am well pleased – The grammars struggle to explain the tense usage of "well pleased" and the lexicons struggle to explain its meaning. These Notes consider the translation "I am well-pleased" correct. And its meaning lies right on the surface. The Father is fully pleased with what the Son is, says and does for all men. (Buls)

1:9–11 The Father declares Jesus is His Son as the Spirit descends on Jesus. Jesus' status as God's Son makes Him a target of Satan's assaults (1:12–13). This same dynamic continues in the lives of God's children today, as Satan does all that he can to tempt the baptized. Yet, our own Baptism joins us to Christ and clothes us with His righteousness. • Lord, You humbly stood in our stead when baptized by John and thereby gave us a share in Your life, death, and resurrection. Let us therefore celebrate our place in God's family, obeying the Father, dwelling richly in the Spirit, and ever following You. Amen. (TLSB)

The Temptation of Jesus

12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

1:12-15 The temptation of Christ follows immediately after the baptism of Christ. There he made Baptism his own that he might make us his own in Baptism. After Baptism, however, comes temptation, for it initiates us into a life of combat with Satan. The Father's words at Jesus' baptism, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11), are twisted by Satan as he endeavors to get Christ to deny that he is God's Son and that the Father is well pleased with Him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The Gospel reading for Lent I is always the temptation of Jesus. The parallels to Mark 1:12-13 are Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. See the author's Notes on these parallels in Series A and C for Lent I. The Notes on Mark 1:12-15 do not repeat what is said there. The Gospel of John records neither Jesus' Baptism nor His Temptation. But both are found in the Synoptics. Matthew treats the Temptation in 11 verses, Luke in 13 verses, Mark in only 2. (Buls)

The longer the author of these Notes studies the Gospels, the more he becomes convinced that the two-source hypothesis (Mark and Q), as the basis of the composition of Matthew and Luke, is false. The Gospels were very likely written in the order in which they stand in the manuscripts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) quite independently of each other. A quote from Lenski is in place: (Buls)

The idea that Mark presents the original tradition, out of which the longer accounts of Matthew and Luke were elaborated, is cancelled by the other idea of the critics that Mark is the one who brings the detailed touches which Matthew especially is thought to lack. In this narrative the reverse holds true. The fact is that, even while heavily abbreviating, Mark adds touches that neither Matthew nor Luke has. What he wrote so briefly is plainly an independent product. (Buls)

Furthermore, how did Matthew, Mark, and Luke know about this Temptation? Only Matthew of the three, was a disciple of Jesus. It is commonly accepted that Mark wrote upon information received from Peter.

Did Jesus tell the disciples about the Temptation? There is no record of that. And, it is obvious that they were not there. The critics resort to a nebulous "tradition" idea. But whence the tradition? The only sensible and Scriptural answer is that the Holy Spirit gave this information to these individual writers. See John 16:13,14. (Buls)

The reading for today includes verses 14-15. Note the "for" in the Nestle/Aland Greek text between verses 13 and 14. The entire early Judean ministry of Jesus, not recorded by the Synoptics, lies between these verses, of about a year's duration. The exposition of verses 14-15 has already been covered in the *Notes* for the reading for Epiphany 3 Gospel Series B. Very likely these verses are included with this reading because Lent is a season of repentance, beginning with Ash Wednesday. We shall comment briefly on these verses after the exposition of verses 12- 13. (Buls)

The Temptation of Jesus reminds one immediately of Genesis 3:15 and Luke 10:18. The first thing that God spoke in the presence of Adam and Eve, naked in body and convicted of sin in the conscience, was spoken to Satan. First He told Satan that the serpent, cursed, would henceforth crawl on his belly. And then He personally told Satan that the Seed of the woman would crush his (Satan's) head. Victory was announced then and there. In Luke 10:18 Jesus told the seventy that He saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven, completely conquered. Commentators differ among themselves as to the exact point of time meant. It is beyond our comprehension. But, from Jesus' point of view, victory was already assured. (Buls)

The evolutionist denies Scripture from Genesis 1:1 on. Those who deny the existence of the devil and the person and work of Jesus, begin their denial at Genesis 3:15. There isn't much difference between the two denials. (Buls)

1:12-13 Immediately after being revealed as God's Son, Jesus' archenemy, Satan, begins to assault Him. Jesus emerges from His time of testing perfectly, without succumbing to temptation in any way. He thus achieves something greater than all those tempted before Him and foreshadows the climax of the Gospel. There, He will undergo greater temptation but will rise victorious over the grave. (TLSB)

1:12 *At once*. A distinctive characteristic of Mark's style is his use (some 47 times) of a Greek word that has been variously translated "at once," "immediately," "quickly," "just then" (see, e.g., vv. 18, 20, 23, 28-29, 42-43). (CSB)

"At once," immediately after Jesus' baptism. Jesus and the Baptist didn't stand around chatting needlessly. They did speak important words to each other before the baptism. (Buls)

eujquv", "at once." This is a favorite word in Mark's Gospel (occurring 40 times). Here it marks the rapid transition from the place of washing to the place of temptation, from the water of life to the wilderness of death, from the divine presence to the (seeming) divine absence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

Immediately the Spirit sent Jesus into the desert for his first recorded encounter with Satan, the devil who had caused Adam and Eve to fall into sin and thus bring sin upon the entire human race. Jesus faced him alone; no fellow believers were present to comfort and strengthen him. (PBC)

Here it marks the rapid transition from the place of washing to the place of temptation, from the water of life to the wilderness of death, from the divine presence to the (seeming) divine absence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

Spirit drove him – The spiritual dove of peace that landed on Jesus in his baptism now becomes the spiritual hawk of war, as the Spirit send Jesus into combat with the devil. God takes the initiative; he sends his Son to war that he might overthrow the tyrant of hell. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

to; pneu'ma, “the Spirit.” The spiritual dove of peace that landed on Jesus in his baptism now becomes the spiritual hawk of war, as the Spirit sends Jesus into combat with the devil. God takes the initiative; he sends his Son to war that he might overthrow the tyrant of hell. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The Holy Spirit, Who had anointed Jesus for His work, is the subject of this sentence. "Sent" from "drive," a stronger verb than used by Matthew and Luke, doesn't mean that Jesus went against His own will. On this point read Hebrews 10:5-10 and John 10:17-18. One of our Lenten hymns begins. "A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth." (Buls)

The Father was not tempted, nor the Holy Spirit. Only the incarnate Son was tempted. Now read John 4:34. Hebrews 10:9-10 brings out that truth. In verse 9 it's the will of the Father. In verse 10 it's the will of the incarnate Christ. These wills are absolutely consonant. (Buls)

Lenski: The idea is not that Jesus was forced against His will, or that he was reluctant to go and thus had to be driven. The intention is rather the opposite. The strong urge of the Spirit met the consent of Jesus. He did not go into this temptation against his will. But more is brought out by the verbs which the evangelists use: Jesus did not throw himself into this temptation of his own accord, when, in human judgment, at the beginning of his ministry he might have been wise to avoid such a decisive conflict. We often rashly put ourselves into temptation. Jesus was brought into his by his Father's own Spirit. (Buls)

Commentators are exercised over the fact that Jesus was already in the wilderness. That is mentioned about the Baptist in verse 3, where it literally means "in the wilderness." But Mark has not mentioned that specifically in verses 9-11, the baptism of Jesus. Furthermore, Mark is stressing the fact that the Spirit drove Jesus into an area which was uninhabited. The meaning is an area which was desolate and uninhabited by people. That's all. (Buls)

One senses determination and purpose in this action and its connection to Christ's baptism. Mark uses this same verb eleven times to describe the expulsion of demons and to describe Jesus' action in driving the money changers out of the temple grounds. It is also used to describe the expulsion of the heir from the vineyard in the parable of the wicked tenants. Combined with the use of the historic use of the present, it denotes a strong, forceful, intended act. As such, it denotes God's will that this testing occur at this time, at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and immediately following his baptism.

ekballo, meaning to *eject* (literally or figuratively):—bring forth, cast (forth, out), drive (out), expel, leave, pluck (pull, take, thrust) out, put forth (out), send away (forth, out). (QV) – The idea is not that Jesus was forced against his will, or that he was reluctant to go and thus had to be driven. The intention is rather the opposite. The strong urge of the Spirit met the consent of Jesus. He did not go into this temptation against his will. But more is brought out by the verbs which evangelists use: Jesus did not throw himself into this temptation of his own accord, when, in human judgment, at the beginning of his ministry he might have been wise to avoid such a decisive conflict. We often rashly put ourselves into temptation. Jesus was brought into his by his Father's own Spirit. (Lenski)

out into the wilderness – ermos. The locale of the temptation is significant in light of the OT narratives with which it compares and contrasts. First, the contrast to Adam, who was tempted in a paradise garden, the Second Adam is tempted in a barren desert. Second, in comparison with the Israelites, who sojourned 40 years in the wilderness as punishment for their rebellion, Christ remains 40 days in the wilderness. Unlike Adam and Israel, however, Christ (the Second Adam and Israel reduced to one) remains faithful to the Word of his Father, and in so doing, earns salvation for all humanity and constitutes a new Israel (i.e., his church). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

1:13 *wilderness* – e[rhmo], “wilderness” (NIV: “desert”). The locale of the temptation is significant in light of the OT narratives with which it compares and contrasts. First, in *contrast* to Adam, who was tempted in a paradise garden, the Second Adam is tempted in a barren desert. Second, in *comparison* with the Israelites, who sojourned 40 years in the wilderness as punishment for their rebellion, Christ remains 40 days in the wilderness. Unlike Adam and Israel, however, Christ (the Second Adam and Israel reduced to one) remains faithful to the Word of his Father, and in so doing, earns salvation for all humanity and constitutes a new Israel (i.e., his church). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

forty. – The battles was arduous and long. It lasted forty days with no breathing spells (CSB)

Totally unlike the forty days Moses had spent on the mountain with God (Exodus 24:18), totally different from the forty days Elijah spent on the way to Horeb sustained by the food God had provided (1 Kings 19:8). For Jesus they were forty days of continuous testing. Matthew and Luke relate three specific attacks of Satan; Mark simply presents the antagonists, Jesus and Satan. (PBC)

tempted – Do not think this battle was relatively simple for Jesus because he could not possibly sin. As a man he could suffer hunger and thirst, appreciate power and wealth, and thus he felt the pressures of these temptations. Nor was it simple for him because he was the Son of God. Though Jesus during his ministry often used his almighty power to heal and to bless, he seldom used it to defend himself. He faced temptation in the same way you and I must face it – with the Word of God. This was also not the only time Jesus had to face the devil. Jesus continued to fight him until the moment on the cross when he said, “It is finished.” (PBC)

It is the evangelist’s distinctive understanding that Jesus did not win the decisive victory during the forty days nor did he cease to be tempted. Jesus is thrust into the wilderness in order to be confronted with Satan and temptation. It is this confrontation which is itself important, since it is sustained throughout Jesus’ ministry. This explains why Mark does not say anything about the content of the temptation: his whole Gospel constitutes the explanation of the manner in which Jesus was tempted. (Lane)

This verse involves us in three separate thoughts. The subject of the first two clauses is Jesus. Luke 4:2 makes very clear that the temptation lasted forty days. “Satan,” “THE Adversary,” an Old Testament expression, which means “the one who lies in ambush for.” The devil did not entrust this job to one of His underlings. He did it himself. (Buls)

Luke 4:13 “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”

Satan – tou Satana meaning THE Adversary which was an OT expression which means “the one who lies in ambush for.” The devil did not entrust this job to one of his underlings. He did it himself.

wild animals. In Jesus’ day there were many more wild animals—including lions—in Palestine than today. Only Mark reports their presence in this connection; he emphasizes that God kept Jesus safe in the desert. (CSB)

Likely meant to evoke prophetic depictions of the messianic age (cf Is. 11:6-8; 65:25). (TLSB)

In the OT blessing is associated with inhabited and cultivated land; the wilderness is the place of the curse. (Lane)

"With wild animals." This clause has evoked much discussion. There are three interpretations: (Buls)

1. One view is that here we have a touch of Paradise, that Jesus walked among the wild animals as did Adam in Paradise. On this Hendriksen remarks: "The idea that the animals gathered about Jesus as a friend runs contrary to the context which stresses the difficult and terrible conditions surrounding the Lord." Some extend this idea in that they say that here Jesus is restoring the sin-cursed creation to its pristine innocence. But all the passages which deal with the state of Jesus' humiliation militate against such a thought. (Buls)
2. A second view is that espoused by Lenski: "These wild animals prowled around Jesus, more or less endangering him. And Mark throws these dangerous animals into contrast with the blessed angels who finally ministered unto him." (Buls)
3. A third view is espoused by Ylvisaker and Fahling. The former says: "Mark says that Jesus was with the wild beasts in the desert. This would emphasize the circumstance that Jesus was separated from His fellow men at the time of His temptation. No human being should, nor could, help Him." And Fahling: "The wild beasts are not mentioned to hint at the danger in which our Savior was, but rather to indicate the uninhabited nature of that region." (Buls)

These *Notes* consider view #3 the correct one. (Buls)

Here we must add some observations on the Temptation of Jesus. There are those who say that if victory for Jesus was already promised (Genesis 3:15; Luke 10:18) and assured to Him, then the Temptation of Jesus on this occasion was a mere sham, a mere going through motions, needless motions. (Buls)

If that were true, parallel examples would be true too. For example: At Mark 8:31 Jesus told His disciples that it was necessary that the Son of man suffer, be rejected, be killed, but would rise again on the third day. Was that death a sham death, going through needless motions? Perish the thought! According to that view all of Isaiah 53 would be a sham. Genesis 3:15 and the promise at Psalm 16:10-11 would become sham promises. (Buls)

Lenski makes some pertinent observations at this point: (Buls)

The Son could be tempted, because he became man. . . He alone (of the three persons of the Trinity), by his human nature, was made dependent on His Father. . . Temptation was possible for Jesus only from the side of his human nature. . . The greatness of the strength tested changes nothing about the reality of the test to which it is subjected. The strain applied is just as real when the strength endures it, as when the strength is too weak to endure it. Jesus as the Stronger stood unmoved under all the force that Satan, the strong one, could bring to bear against him. . . The test or temptation was real in every way and no illusion. . . When the test was made, the outcome was not in doubt for a single moment. Yet the agony and the death was real, though Jesus bore them triumphantly. (Buls)

Well said. Lenski does not mean, of course, that the divine nature of Jesus was not operative in His Temptation. Just as we say that in the case of Jesus, the God-man, God truly died for us, so we also say that in the case of Jesus, the God-man, God was truly tempted for us. But He truly endured all that we

justly deserved and all the forces of hell which are against us. He endured victoriously. We are more than conquerors through Him (the God-man) Who loved us. Romans 8:37. (Buls)

The Temptation of Jesus is a great comfort for us. He was tempted vicariously for all men, though He was sinless. Read Hebrews 2:14-18 and 4:14,15. He was tempted IN ALL THINGS JUST AS WE ARE TEMPTED but He was without sin. What a comfort! (Buls)

Furthermore, Satan tempted Jesus during His entire earthly life. For example, when the people wanted to make Him an earthly king (John 6:15), He dismissed the disciples and the people and went to the mountain alone to pray. And when Peter objected to His suffering and dying, Jesus turned on Peter, telling him that, as Satan's agent, Peter was presenting a trap for Jesus. Satan worked through Jesus' enemies and Jesus plainly told them so at John 8:44, where He described Satan as a murderer and liar. So thoroughly wicked and vicious is Satan that he thought He could conquer God Himself and he used and still uses people to try to accomplish this. (Buls)

angels attended him. As they had attended Israel in the desert (see Ex 23:20, 23; 32:34). (CSB)

Ministering angels contrast sharply with Satan, the fallen angel who brings temptation rather than help. (TLSB)

The final clause of Mark 1:13 reads "and the angels were serving Him (Jesus)." This implies that Jesus conquered Satan when He was tempted. These angels were not sent to help Jesus in His temptation. Matthew 26:53-56 rules that idea out. Jesus could have asked the Father for the help of legions of angels. But He did not. He was tempted and suffered alone, all alone, in our stead. Matthew 4:11 makes it very clear that only after Satan had left did the angels come and serve Him. And, because of what Jesus did for us, Hebrews 1:14 is a wonderful comfort. He sends His angels to serve us. Our struggle in this life is not with people. It's with Satan and all his hellish forces. On this point read Ephesians 6:10-17. (Buls)

The Word of God is the sole instrument which we must use in our constant fight with Satan. That's what Jesus used in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. People cannot win in their struggle with their own flesh and Satan unless they hear the Word of God and keep it. (Buls)

When he had won the battle in the wilderness, Jesus was completely exhausted. It is then that "angels attended him." Noting this, we are moved to pray as Luther did in his morning and evening prayers: "Let your holy angel be with me, so that the devil may have no power over me." Our Lord leaves the battlefield qualified to meet every challenger and every challenge. His credentials are perfect: he is acknowledged by the promised forerunner; he is accepted by the Father and blessed by the Spirit; he meets and defeats Satan. Thus he enters on his ministry. In reading the Gospel of Mark we observe his deeds, hear his words and learn to rejoice. (PBC)

There is no indication in Mark that the service of the angels is withdrawn nor that it serve to mark the termination of the temptation. (Lane)

Hebrews 4:14-16 ¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

1:12–13 Jesus' successful struggle against temptation in the wilderness prefigures His final victory at the cross over our ancient foe. From the days of Adam and Eve, we have continuously fallen into Satan's traps. Jesus, after uniting Himself with fallen humans through Baptism, won a preliminary victory over the evil foe's temptations. At the cross, Jesus gained an even more wonderful victory for us. His resurrection proves that Satan cannot prevail. • Lord, when we are tempted, remind us of Your own struggles and trials. You have broken Satan's power once and for all. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Begins His Ministry

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

1:14-15 As noted above, verses 14-15 have already been covered in the *Notes* for The Gospel for Epiphany III. Therefore, they are not treated here. But several observations are made here. (Buls)

There is a sense in which the Temptation of Jesus and also His suffering and death is the preaching of Law. They show us how dearly it cost the Son of God to redeem us from sin, death and the devil. He came not to be served but to serve, to give His life as a ransom for many, which means all. The sinless Son of God took my place when He was actually and severely tempted by Satan for forty days. The sinless Son of God took my place when He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The sinless Son of God took my place when He laid down His life and took it again. If it cost Him that dearly I must confess my sins. But I must also believe the Gospel. "If ever we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. (Buls)

1:14 *After John was put in prison* – Mentioned in passing; 6:14-29 gives the full account of the prophet's imprisonment and execution. Mark focuses on Jesus and the ministry He is beginning. (TLSB)

It is significant that Jesus does not enter his own distinctive ministry until after John has been arrested. Mark's formulation suggests that Jesus is restrained by God from his ministry of proclamation until the Baptist is removed from the scene. His arrest indicates that the time has come for Jesus to act. Jesus enters into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. NOTE: When Jesus ascends the Holy Spirit leads the disciples in their proclamation. (Lane)

came into Galilee – Since the days of the Judges this large territory had been exposed to political and military aggression from the north (Syria, Assyria, etc) and to the corrosive moral and religious influences of a pagan environment. At the time of Jesus the people of Galilee were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, pagan people, by and large. These people who were sitting in spiritual darkness saw a great Light, Jesus. (B)

ēlthen He "came." Directly, with business on his mind. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

the good news of God. The good news from, as well as about, God. (CSB)

"the gospel of God." Mark does not spend time defining the Gospel of God. He wants us to find our place in it. So our interest in whether the genitive means the Gospel is about God or from God (perhaps both are intended) isn't what Mark has in mind. He wants us to repent and believe! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:15 *the time – peplērōtai*: This is the *kairos*. The time of waiting has been filled. Now is the decisive time for action. Seize the opportunity. This is Kingdom time. Mark, like Luke and John, uses the term “kingdom of God.” Matthew uses “kingdom of heaven.” The evangelists equate the Kingdom itself with Jesus himself, who is God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

The time that has come is *kairos*, the decisive time. It is that moment when things change. Here the prophecies of the Messiah have been fulfilled. The perfect tense indicates Jesus’ arrival has come, but it also has lasting significance. The passive shows this momentous moment is God’s doing and not some natural course of events. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

The kingdom of God – The “kingdom” is the rule, or reign, of God. The Kingdom was present then as Jesus stood proclaiming—in authority. It is present now as Jesus’ ascension has him sitting at God’s right hand ruling, particularly on behalf of the Church. But God’s kingdom will come on the Last Day, when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess him as Lord. The expectations of the people whom Jesus is calling to repent and believe were close to the mark: sin destroyed; God’s people released from poverty, hunger, and disease; economic prosperity; safety and peace in a new garden, where children and animals play together; and liberty from foreign domination. They just had the timing wrong for the complete fulfillment of this wondrous Kingdom. That Last Day ultimate expression of the Kingdom first needed to go through his Kingdom that comes to us in suffering and death. So he chooses four fishermen to follow him rather than raising up an army as the Kingdom was inaugurated then. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Jesus declares that the critical moment has come; God begins to act in a new and decisive way, bringing his promise of ultimate redemption to the point of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is a distinctive component of redemptive history. It belongs to the God who comes and invades history in order to secure man’s redemption. The emphasis falls upon God who is doing something and who will do something that radically affects men in their alienation and rebellion against himself. (Lane)

It is not a confined geographical territory, but wherever and whenever people are ruled by God through their faith in His Son. The kingdom has come in the advent of Jesus (the verb “is” emphasizes completed action), for He came to fulfill all of God’s promises about the salvation of the world. Throughout His ministry, Jesus invites people to enjoy God’s kind of rule by living under His grace and righteousness. Luther says, “Once we have His Word, true doctrine, and true worship, we also pray that His kingdom may be in us and remain in us; that is, that He may govern us in this doctrine and life, that He may protect and preserve us against all the power of the devil and his kingdom, and that He may shatter all the kingdoms that rage against His kingdom, so that it alone may remain. (TLSB)

is near. The coming of Christ (the King) brings the kingdom near to the people. (CSB)

Or, “here.” (TLSB)

The kingdom of God has drawn near, meaning that the Kingdom of God is present in its fulfillment in the person, Word and work of Jesus. (B)

repent and believe – Echoes John’s call for a public show of contrition and an adoption of a new way of life (cf vv 2–4). (TLSB)

Only through repentance can a man participate with joy in the kingdom when it does break forth. Jesus accordingly calls men to radical decision. In Jesus men are confronted by the word and act of God; he

himself is the crucial term by which belief and unbelief come to fruition. The either/or character of this decision is of immense importance and permits of no postponement. (Lane)

Metanoete and *pisteuete* reinforce the sense of urgency that Mark brings to us. Again, he “cuts to the quick.” No time for fooling around. When Christ is present, the time is *kairos*. Consider the quick response of the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

His message led its first hearers back into the Scripture which they had heard in their synagogues and which some of them did understand in its proper religious sense. (PBC)

gospel – In its proper sense, “Gospel” does not mean the preaching of repentance, but only the preaching of God’s grace. This follows directly after the preaching of repentance. (TLSB)

1:14–15 On the one hand, Jesus’ message sounds much like the message of John and the prophets. On the other hand, the arrival of the Messiah fulfills prophecy and ushers in a new era. The Church’s message today has the same combination of new and old. True, it focuses on the age-old problem of sin and human failure. However, the Gospel delivers the forgiveness of sins and with it the hope of an eternal future with God. • Lord, help us to see You clearly and so believe that Your kingdom is still among us. Move us to a steadfast hope for the future and to daily repentance and new life. Amen. (TLSB)