

Lesson 3: John the Baptist- Jesus' Baptism and temptation

[3:1 → 4:11]

Servant's preparation:

https://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_03.pdf

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_04.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson we told the story of the magi traveling a long trip to worship the newborn king and give Him gifts. Herod got angry when the magi did not report back to him, so he killed the newborn boys, Joseph took the Holy Family and hid in Egypt for about three years till he was told to return to Israel.

Memory verse:

3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

Lesson opener:

"Guess the Gift" Game

Prepare a beautifully wrapped package or gift bag and display it for your class. Inside the gift bag or box, place something completely worthless like a brick, a rock, a piece of wood, or nothing at all.

Tell your class that the contents of the package are really special, valuable, interesting, expensive, etc., and have the class try to guess the contents.

After a little while, open the package and reveal the worthless contents. Explain to the class that today they are going to learn that this is what Satan does. He offers us something that looks really beautiful. He even lies about the contents, but once the paper is taken off, what he has offered is revealed to be completely worthless. He is a liar through and through.

Lesson Goal:

God's word in our heart keeps us from sinning.

Lesson body:

St. Matthew skips ahead about thirty years to describe events that prepared Jesus for His public ministry. Before the Lord Jesus began His work among His people as the spiritual King, a coronation of the enthronement of the real king at the River Jordan had to take place. That has been prepared by the King's forerunner, St. John the Baptist, who was like the Lord's angel paving the way for Him.

John the Baptist prepares the way (Read 3:1-12)

- ❖ John did not go to the biggest cities or the capital city Jerusalem to take his message. Instead, he preached in the wilderness. The message he preached was from God and this drew many people out from the city to listen to him. The people who went to listen to John were willing to travel to do so. They didn't sit in air-conditioned rooms with padded seats. They were willing to sacrifice because they believed the message John was teaching was important. God's Word is powerful. It changes people's hearts. It transforms. It convicts. It inspires. It draws.
- ❖ John wore camel hair, and a leather belt, and ate locusts and honey. His food was just a means to sustain him, nothing more. What can we learn from this? **John was goal driven.** He wasn't easily distracted. He put the top priority on the most important things, namely his service to God.
- ❖ No permanent home, no luxurious foods, no fancy meals, no expensive clothes, no iPhones, no TVs. Do you think he was satisfied? He was satisfied because God satisfied Him. We don't need things to make us happy. We need a strong relationship with the Lord.
- ❖ John the Baptist's message → John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Basically, he told people to repent of their sins. If they were willing to do so, they could be baptized as a public symbol of their faith in God and the new direction in their life. Baptism itself is a burial in water, a baptism into death, a symbol of the burial of one who dies to the old life, is a confession of sins. There was also a verbal confession. The acknowledgment of sin, repentance and baptism are prescribed as conditions of pardon.
- ❖ He was bold to call the Pharisees what they were. He was also bold to warn Herod about living with his brother's wife. Basically, John was a truth speaker. He didn't sugarcoat things and had no desire to tickle people's ears or make them feel comfortable. He said what needed to be said.
- ❖ John the Baptist's mission → His mission was simple, verse 3. It was to point people to Christ. It was to prepare their hearts for the coming Messiah. He didn't care about being popular. He didn't care about hanging on to his own followers. His mission was all about Jesus. **What is our mission? Our mission is the same. Our job is to point people to Christ. Our job is to reflect the light of Christ to a dark world.**
- ❖ John the Baptist's character – What can we learn about his character from these verses? humility. He rightly recognized that Jesus was far superior to him. He realized that he didn't deserve to even be associated with Jesus as a slave (slaves were normally the ones who untied people's sandals upon entering a home). He did not claim to be Jesus' peer or equal or even a lowly servant. John the Baptist willingly endorsed Jesus' ministry even when it meant that he was shrinking. He uttered the famous line, "He must increase. I must decrease."

- ❖ John went against the grain of the prideful Jews who looked down on all others and considered that they would be saved because of their heritage. Know that being in a Christian family doesn't save you. God doesn't have any grandchildren. We will all be held personally responsible for our own actions and choices in God's sight.
- ❖ Verse 12: The wheat is the righteous, the chaff is the wicked, and Christ is the winnower; the barn is heaven, the unquenchable fire is hell.

Take-home message:

John reminds the people that their lives should be fruitful – We see this in verse 10. A good tree is a person who has repented. If that is true, there will be evidence of that in the way of a changed life.

Application – Examine our own lives to see if we have fruit or not. John said that the ax is at the bottom of the tree ready to chop it down and throw it into the fire if that tree doesn't bear good fruit. I'm assuming none of you want to be chopped down and thrown into hell. If that is the case, we should evaluate our own lives, not based on a past decision of faith, but based on our life right now, based on our actions right now. Are we living a life for God? Are we living in sin? If we are living in sin, we need to repent, which means real change.

Jesus' Baptism (Read 3:13-17)

The Savior is now introduced as about to enter His work, or as about to be set apart to His great office of Messiah and Redeemer. Baptism was not in His case a symbol of personal reformation and repentance, for He was sinless; but it was a way by which He was set apart to His great office.

It is true that baptism was for sinners; Jesus was sinless; but He humbled Himself, accepted the burden of human duties, and must set a perfect example to men. He obeyed the Jewish law, and it was needful also that He obey the Divine rite that John had inaugurate. In order to fulfill all righteousness, show forth a perfect obedience, set a perfect example, it became Him to submit to the institution of baptism, and it became St. John to administer it to Him.

As per Fr Tadros: The church celebrate the baptism of Jesus Christ since it is God's appearing, in which the Holy Trinity is declared is Him. Here we have the Trinity as if separated: the father in the voice, the Son in man, and the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove. Here we can see the Holy Trinity distinguished One from the Other. They are the one God, and yet, the Son is other than the Father, and the Father other than the Son, and the Holy Spirit is not with the Father or the Son. This Trinity as we know is unutterable and inseparable.

Lord had accepted to go into the baptism waters instead of us. He had opened the way to heaven, granting us the right of being the Father's children in Him.



The Temptation of Jesus (Read 4:1-11)

When the king is enthroned, it is essential for Him to present for His people something appropriate for His kingly role. This is why there starts a conflict against Satan for the account of His people . The Lord gets into this battle for their sake, and every triumph is only given for their account.

The Lord has fasted for forty days, and the church likewise sanctifies this forty-day fasting, since it has been sanctified by the Lord Himself. The church presents the issue of temptation' at the beginning of the fasting reading to announce to its children that where there is struggle there comes war. And where war is, there must be spiritual struggle, through fasting and prayer.

The three great temptations mentioned by St. Matthew are the three great classes of temptations to which men are now exposed.

In each of Jesus' three tests, Satan tempted Jesus to rebel against God. The tempter (Satan) came at Jesus in the wilderness, just as the serpent (Satan) came at Adam in the Garden of Eden.

First temptation: [Turn stones to bread]

Satan says, "If you are the Son of God." Satan did not know that Jesus was the Son of God. He was confused about Him, when He saw His miraculous birth, Satan thought it must be Him. He couldn't understand how God can live like a poor man and get hungry like other people because Satan is arrogant, he would imagine that the son of God would show His power and glory all the time. He came to Jesus at a seemingly weak moment for Him, being hungry, so to challenge Him at the point of His need. Satan challenged Jesus to prove His divinity and, in so doing, meet his own need for food by turning stones to bread.

Jesus did not respond by performing a miracle. Rather, He replies by citing Deut. 8:3. The Word of God is always a powerful antidote to temptation.

The point is not that we should ignore food. Jesus is not teaching a spirituality which overlooks physical need. Jesus declared that man does not live by bread "alone." It is good that He includes, as does Deuteronomy, the word "alone." Certainly, man does require food. So did Jesus. We must eat or we will die. We can broaden the scope of temptation to all material things. Satan tempts us with money, education, prestige, and many other things. All these things, like food, are fine in themselves. It is our attitude toward them that counts.

Jesus sets the right priority. Doing the Will of God and being obedient to His every word is more important than food or any other material thing. Even though our want may lead to our death, the will of God is still more important. Most of the time, however, we are simply called upon to trust God to provide our needs in His time, in His way, and with His result.

Second temptation [Throw yourself down]

The Devil dared Jesus to cast Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple. Satan seldom gives up with one try! One more time, he tries to get Jesus to prove He is the Son of God by throwing Himself down.

Satan, who knows Scripture, quotes from the Psalms. He tests Jesus with the promises of Ps. 91:11-12. The temptation was to misapply a wonderful promise of God. Satan wanted Jesus to precipitate a crisis and demand the fulfillment of the promise. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, God demonstrated His watch care over His Son. However, there were times when Jesus went through difficulties undelivered by the Father. Satan used this to push the Lord Jesus to tempt His Father. Also, Satan wished to ruin His mission away from that of carrying the cross, to exposing His ability to ask the angels to protect Him instead of passing through the life of suffering.

In response, Jesus once again quotes scripture. Again, He selects a verse from Deuteronomy (6:16), not to test God. He teaches us how to overcome Satan not by miracles, but by being tolerant and long suffering, and not to do anything with the aim of pride and vain glory.

Third temptation: [Worship me]

At this point, Satan drops his taunting about Jesus being the Son of God. However, he does not give up his efforts to cause Jesus to sin. Satan says, just one small act of worship and the ownership of the kingdoms of this world will be yours!

Once again, the temptation is to claim immediate results. Both Satan and Jesus knew that the kingdoms of the world ultimately belong to God and that Christ, His Son, would be King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The temptation was to bring this about now. The plan of God was different. Jesus would fulfill God's plan. The price of immediate gratification would have been idolatry.

He quotes Deut 6:13, Jesus, who was both God and man, would not compromise. No illicit gain, whether short-term or long-term, could tempt Him. He would fully trust the Father who would give Him, in His time and in His way, the kingdoms of the world. Throughout His ministry, Jesus performed incredible miracles. But never once did He do so to "show off." His miracles were always to help someone.

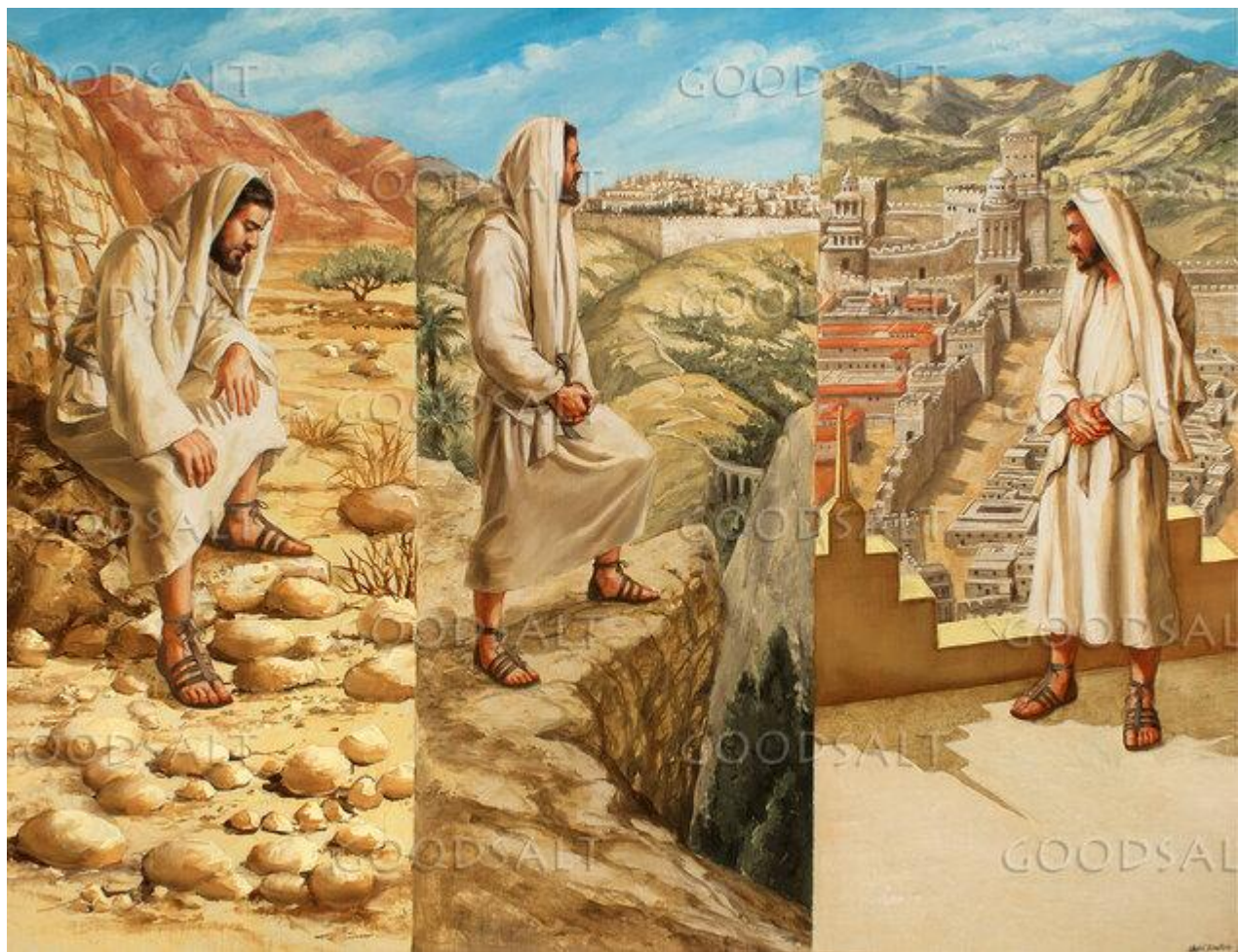
Satan will do his best to tempt us to gain power through idolatry. He will offer us much if we put him before God. If we put anything before God, it is idolatry. When we worship other things, or other people, we have misplaced our allegiance, our minds, our affections, and our will. Even though this may empower us in the short run, the result will be spiritual disaster.

Let us follow the example of Christ in worshipping God alone. When we follow Christ closely, we are following God. When we are in Him, we are doing God's will. This will not allow us to worship anything else.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

Satan tempted Christ to seek immediate gain through unprincipled action. He wanted Christ to turn bread into stones, to cast Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, and to fall and worship him. In every case Jesus turned Satan back by quoting Scripture. Let us follow His example.

Jesus knew He would be tempted when He went to the wilderness but went anyway in order to teach us a valuable lesson. Do temptations that we face take God by surprise? No! He knows everything that we are facing. We need to be careful not to think that temptations in our lives are more powerful than the Holy Spirit who lives in us. God is never surprised by the temptations that come our way. We can be confident that God will be with us to strength and guide us through those times as we look to Jesus to help us resist the devil.



MAP 8: TRAVELS OF JESUS

• DATE: 23-26 AD

