

#19 - Baptism/Temptation of Jesus - Matthew 3:1-4:1-11

Engage:

- What had been anticipated in the Old Testament story of God's Redemptive plan has arrived in the New Testament story: Jesus, the Messiah!

- This story comes from the gospel of Matthew. It is important to know that this gospel was written with Jewish people in mind. This is evident because of the many times when the Old Testament is either quoted (53x in Matthew) or alluded to. Some phrases that should catch your attention are: "what the Lord said through the prophet", "it is written", "you have heard that it was said", "fulfilled the prophecy of", "haven't you read", or something similar or in a slight variation to these phrases. When you go back to the Old Testament and see the background behind these statements, you will see that God's Redemptive Story is a process that has been fulfilled piece by piece – and we are still in that process. We can be glad that God has kept His word in sending Jesus. We can look forward with hope to when Jesus will return to bring the curtain down on God's Redemptive Story.

Thoughts about the story:

3:1-6 - John the Baptist – About 30 years had passed since the birth of Jesus. Over 400 years had passed since the voice of a prophet had been heard. Shortly before Jesus made Himself known, John the Baptist became the prophet who prepared the way for Jesus by calling people to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (See Isaiah 40:3 and Luke 16:16-17). Some even thought that John was a "second" Elijah – and he was so to speak (Matthew 11:13-14; 17:12-13; Luke 1:5-17). Note: The baptism of John was not Christian baptism (see Acts 19:1-7). Yet part of the reason for John's baptism was to reveal Jesus to Israel (John 1:31).

3:7-12 - The Pharisees and Sadducees came to John – Jesus was further revealed by the baptism He would bring: 1) a baptism of the Holy Spirit - see Acts 1-2 (the day of Pentecost) and the inclusion of the Gentiles - Acts 11:16; and 2) a baptism of fire - a judgment to be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus. Note: The Pharisees and Sadducees refused to submit to John's baptism of repentance because they thought they were already good enough to please God.

3:13-17 - Jesus came to be baptized by John – Why? God's word says: "to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). It was the proper thing for Jesus to do. Thus, Jesus gave credibility to John by coming to him. After all, the Jewish religious leaders had rejected John, just as they would soon reject Jesus. Jesus identified with people who are sinful by being baptized, just as He identified with our sin on the cross. Right after His baptism He was led out into the wilderness "by the Spirit" to be tempted by Satan. (Could this be symbolical of the "scapegoat" that carried the sins of the people into the wilderness (see Leviticus 16:1-10)?

When Jesus was baptized, a "voice from heaven" proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. The Spirit of God descended "like a dove" and came to rest on Jesus. It was evident that Jesus was both God and the Messiah! This event marked the beginning of the ministry of Jesus that would eventually end with the cross and the resurrection!

Note: At Jesus' baptism **God the Father** is heard but not seen. The **Holy Spirit** is seen but not heard. And **Jesus** is both seen and heard. All three persons of the Godhead are involved in this significant moment as Jesus began His ministry!

Note: This is the first of three times when "a voice" from heaven proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God (see Matthew 17:5 and John 12:28). These times marked both the beginning and ending of the ministry of Jesus. Today and until Jesus returns, God speaks to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

4:1-11 - The temptation of Jesus – Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights in preparation for His encounter with being tempted by Satan (4:1-2). There were 3 temptations:

#1 (4:3-4): First, Satan appealed to the physical hunger that Jesus experienced after 40 days of fasting. Satan suggested that if Jesus was the Son of God, He should not be going hungry. For Jesus to give in to this temptation would have been to go against the will of God – and that would mean defeat. In our lives, Satan uses the same tactic to try to convince us that God is not taking care of our needs.

Jesus met this temptation head on with Scripture from Deuteronomy 8:3. Jesus lived by the authority of God's word and so should we. Point: Jesus not only had the word hidden in His heart, but he was able to apply it to real life situations!

Note: When we put our physical "needs" ahead of our spiritual needs, we sin! When we allow the situation to determine our actions, rather than the will of God, we sin!

#2 (4:5-7): Next, Satan tried to get Jesus to prove that God was faithful since Jesus was using the truth of God's word to resist temptation. The temptation Satan tried to get Jesus to do was to jump from the pinnacle of the temple and prove Himself to be the Son of God by allowing the angels of God to rescue Him. Satan even quoted—actually misquoted Scripture—to make his point. (Satan left out an important phrase: "to guard you in all your ways" - Psalm 91:11-12.) Point: Satan twisted the teaching of the Bible to support his claim. We must be very careful not to take God's promises out of context. Just like the first time, Jesus answered from Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:16.

#3 (4:8-10): Last, Satan offers Jesus an easy path to become king of the world—bow down and worship Satan rather than go to the cross. Again, Jesus applied Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:13) in His response to this temptation. Jesus knew that whatever a person serves is his or her god. We cannot worship God and anything or anyone else (see Exodus 20:3-6 and Matthew 6:24; also Romans 1:24-25) and be pleasing to God. The control that Satan has on the world now is limited and will end when Jesus returns! (See the message of the book of Revelation.)

(4:11) – Matthew's account says that the "devil (who is a fallen angel) left" Jesus after the third temptation. By that time, Jesus must have been physically and emotionally spent since other angels came to minister to Him. But this wasn't the end of the story. Luke's account of the temptation of Jesus says that Satan would return again to tempt Jesus at another, more "opportune time" (Luke 4:13).

Note: Jesus' experience of being tempted without sinning enables us to better understand how He can now be our faithful and sympathetic High Priest (Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:15-16).

“Interestingly Satan's temptations of Eve in the Garden of Eden correspond to those of Jesus in the desert. Satan appealed to the physical appetite (Gen. 3:1-3; Matt. 4:3), the desire for personal gain (Gen. 3:4-5; Matt 4:6), and an easy path to power or glory (Gen. 3:5-6; Matt 4:8-9). And in each case Satan altered God's Word (Gen 3:4; Matt. 4:6). Satan's temptations of people today often fall into the same three categories - see 1 John 2:16. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Quote:

- “You can never starve the person who feeds on God's promises.” (Unknown)

Extra:

Find ten pennies, shake them up in your hand, and pour them out in front of you. Did all ten come up “heads”? If not, try again . . . and again . . . until they do. (By the way, the average person will have to pour out those coins more than a thousand times before he can expect to produce all “heads” even once!)

Now think of those ten coins as ten prophecies concerning the Messiah. Would you consider it a coincidence . . . or convincing proof . . . if any one individual fulfilled all ten? How about if there were twenty? Or how about if there were over thirty (and there are)? . . . And He did it to convince the world that His claims are true. Are you convinced? (Adapted from *DW*, October, 1981)

Note: There was a period of over 1,000 years in which God spoke through men like Moses, David, Isaiah and Micah so we would know how to recognize the Messiah when He came. Then there was a period of roughly 400 years of prophetic silence when there was no revelation from God. This period has been called “between the testaments”. But when John the Baptist came announcing the coming of Jesus, God's Redemptive Story proved to be live and well.