

# GOD WITH US

## Part 8: JESUS

### Message 4 – Baptized and Tempted

#### Introduction

The public ministry of Jesus was preceded by the ministry of John the Baptist, who was called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah. John stirred a massive following of ordinary people who came out into the wilderness of Judea to hear his prophetic messages concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God. When Jesus arrived, John pointed the multitudes and his own disciples to follow Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah. John was soon imprisoned by Herod Antipas and disappeared from public view, while Jesus' popularity and following grew rapidly. John himself said: *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3:30).

#### The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus did not *need* to be baptized for the same reason everyone else was being baptized. The multitudes were confessing and repenting of their sins in preparation for the arrival of the Savior and Messiah. Immersion in water was a symbolic way of declaring that one's sins were 'washed away.' Jesus was baptized to identify Himself with the community He came to save. He would be taking their sins upon Himself at the cross. Thus, His immersion in water pictured the sins of the people washing over Him.

#### 1. John the Baptist begins baptizing: Matt.3:1-6; Lk. 3:1-6

John appeared in the wilderness of Judea, east of Jerusalem by the Jordan River. He looked and acted like Elijah the prophet from of old. Many thought he *was* Elijah raised from the dead. He began calling people to "repent" (a change of mind leading to a change in actions) to prepare for the soon arrival of the kingdom of God. Multitudes were going out to him and being baptized in the Jordan River. His ministry was in fulfillment of Isaiah 40.

*"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God's salvation'"* (Isaiah 40:3-5).

## **2. The leaders from Jerusalem question John: John 1:19-28**

The Jewish leaders (Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, priests) did not like it when the common people flocked to John the Baptist. They went out to interrogate John as to his identity and mission. John told them that he was the voice that Isaiah had prophesied, the one that would “*make straight paths for the Lord*” (Isa.40:3). He then told them that someone greater than he was about to arrive:

***“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie” (John 1:26,27).***

## **3. John rebukes the leaders: Matt.3:7-10; Lk.3:7-9**

John knew that the religious leaders were trying to maintain their power. As they mingled with the crowds and pretended that they also were “repenting,” John called them out on their motives.

***But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt.3:7-10).***

Children of Abraham? Yes, by Jewish descent. But in their hearts these proud leaders were children of snakes! John did not mince words. If these leaders came out to partake of John’s baptism, this confrontation stopped them in their tracks. According to Luke 7:30, the Pharisees *refused to submit* to baptism by John.

## **4. John tells the crowds what repentance involves: Lk. 3:10-14**

When the common people who were sincere heard John’s warning about the judgment of God falling upon the “*children of snakes,*” they feared and asked: “*What should we do?*” John told them to be charitable to those in need (3:11); he told tax-collectors to collect only what was due (3:13); soldiers to refrain from using their power unjustly and to be content with their wages (3:14). True repentance always involves *action*.

The Greek word “hypocrite” means “to speak from under a mask.” It was the term used to describe Greek stage players. God can see right through the masks people wear. He is looking for sincere hearts, not good acting; for hearts that want to have a relationship with Him and to walk in fellowship with Him. And such hearts will always maintain a disposition of repentance – sorrow over sin, confession of sin, and a desire to change. We will never achieve perfection in this life; but we can seek to become more and more like Jesus. Ask God to help you see clearly what He sees in you. Pray for insight as to what changes He wants you to make.

## 5. John says Jesus is greater than he: Lk. 3:15-17; Matt.3:11,12

*The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them (Luke 3:15-18).*

What did John mean when he said that the coming one (Jesus) would baptize them **“with the Holy Spirit and fire?”** Based on Jesus’ later comment (Acts 1:5), the baptism **with the Holy Spirit** occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Church was born. At that time, there were also “tongues of fire” that fell upon the disciples; but it is unlikely this was what John was referring to when He said that Jesus would **“baptize with fire.”** In the immediate context of John’s words (Luke 3:15-18), he used the imagery of the threshing floor being cleaned with the wheat being gathered in and the chaff being **burned up with fire**. This end-times judgment imagery occurs again in Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt.13:24-30 and 36-43). Thus, when John said that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit and fire, he was predicting both the *beginning* and *end* of the Messianic age: The Church was born when Jesus baptized people with the Holy Spirit, and the end of the age will culminate when Jesus judges the world (baptizes the world with fire).

## **6. John sees Jesus arriving: John 1:29-34**

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One” (1:29-34).*

John the Baptist made many clear declarations about Jesus:

- One more powerful than I.
- One whom you do not know.
- One whose sandals I am unworthy to untie or carry.
- One who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
- One who will bring judgment on earth.
- One who takes away the sins of the world.
- One who is God’s chosen servant.

## **7. John baptizes Jesus: Matt.3:13-15**

When Jesus came forward to be baptized, John tried to stop him, knowing He was the Messiah. But Jesus told him it was necessary.

*Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented (Matt.3:15).*

Hebrews 2:17 says: “*He had to be made like His brothers in every way... to make atonement for the sins of the people.*” Jesus was baptized so that he could *identify with* those He came to save. They were baptized as a sign of repentance from sin. He was baptized as a sign of coming to remove their sin by taking it upon Himself as a sacrificial lamb.

## **8. Jesus anointed and affirmed: (Lk.3:21,22; Mt.3:16,17)**

After Jesus was baptized, he was praying. God the Spirit and God the Father both moved in this moment to anoint and affirm God the Son (a display of the tri-unity of God).

*When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.*

***And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:21,22).***

Jesus was uniquely affirmed as the beloved Son of the Father. Yet, each of us are affirmed as beloved children IF we have received Jesus as Savior (Jn.1:12). “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God...” (Romans 8:15,16). Do you feel the Father’s affirmation over you? Do you rest securely in His love for you? Your relational world may set you up to feel unloved and unaccepted. Through time focusing on Christ’s words you will grow to experience God’s unconditional love.

### **The Temptation of Jesus**

The baptism of Jesus prepared Him publicly – by identifying Him with the repentant community that He came to save. The temptation of Jesus prepared Him privately – through prayer and fasting, in His obedience to the mission given to Him by the Father and His determination to do battle with the devil.

#### **1. Jesus led into the desert: Lk.3:1; Mk.1:12,13; Mt.4:1,2**

***“Then Jesus was carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil: and having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he hungered” (Matt.4:1,2).***

Several things become clear when you compare the accounts:

- Jesus was “compelled” by the Spirit to go out into the wilderness.
- He was tempted by the devil throughout the 40 days.
- He was with the wild beasts of the wilderness.
- Angels ministered to Him the entire time.
- He fasted and prayed and became *very* hungry.
- Three culminating temptations came at the end of the 40 days.

This period of testing not only prepared Jesus for His immediate mission; but it also prepared Him for His future role as our great High Priest in heaven, who is now faithfully interceding for us.

***“Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).***

***“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15,16).***

Jesus experienced all forms of temptation so that He can now sympathize with us and intercede for us. When you are being tempted, talk to Him. He knows what you are feeling. He can help you. “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1Corinthians 10:13). Your merciful High Priest cares for you!

## **2. The three final temptations: Matt.4:1-10; Lk.4:1-12**

Three specific temptations occurred at the end of the 40 days. Matthew and Luke have them in different orders, based on what they wanted to emphasize. A more accurate translation of Satan’s temptations would be: “*SINCE you are the Son of God, then do x, y, z.*” Satan was not questioning “IF” Jesus was the Son of God. Even the demons would later say: “*We know who you are. You are the Holy One of God!*” Satan was tempting Jesus to *use His identity (His divine authority and power) in the wrong ways.*

### **- Stones to bread (EAT and LIVE): Matt.4:3,4; Lk.4:3,4**

Satan was saying: *Since you are the Son of God, you have the right and ability to assert your power to change stones to bread and satisfy your hunger. Do it!*

***Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Mt.4:4).***

Jesus cited Deuteronomy 8:3. He was submitted to the Father’s will (He lived by every word that came from God’s mouth). Later in His ministry Jesus would say: “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work*” (John 4:34).

Satan will tempt us today to “eat and live.” To look for ways to “self-fulfill” instead of trusting our Father to meet our needs (Matt.6:25-34). Satan’s original lie to Adam and Eve was: “God is not looking out for you. Look out for yourselves. Eat and live!” (Genesis 3:1-5.) When Satan says, “eat and live,” he is really saying, “eat and die.” (“Death” = alienation from God.)

**- Temple-top dare (JUMP and SHINE): Matt.4:5-7; Lk.4:9-12**

Satan transported Jesus (in spirit, in vision) to the pinnacle of the Jerusalem temple. From that height to the ground below was a drop of between 300-600 feet (a 30-60 story building).

***“Since you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Matt.4:6).***

Satan used Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12) to tempt Jesus. Satan was saying: *You have the position to display your grandeur, and you know you will be protected by the Father. So, do it! Jump!*

Jesus knew that His purpose was to serve humanity by dying on a cross; not to look wonderful by jumping off a temple and having angels give Him a safe landing! He cited Deuteronomy 6:16.

***Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not test the Lord your God’” (Matt.4:7).***

Scripture says: *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you at the proper time” (1Peter 5:6).*

Satan will tempt us today to “jump and shine.” To determine our own agenda and then to jump into action, expecting God to show up to support us and help us succeed. But Satan knows that God does not exist to serve our agendas or to make us look great. God is not interested in helping ‘our will’ to be done on earth. So, when Satan tempts us to “jump and shine,” he is really inviting us to “crash and burn.”

**- Worship me (BOW and WIN): Lk.4:5-8; Mt.4:8-10**

***The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours” (Lk.4:5-7).***

Spiritual conflict is a key theme in Luke, therefore he gave more attention to Satan’s offer to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Elsewhere Satan is called *“the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11)* and *“the god of this world” (2Cor.4:4).*

Satan was saying: *If you want this kingdom, you don't have to fight me for it. Bow down to me and you can have it all, right now.*

***Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (Luke 4:8).***

Satan will tempt us today to "bow and win." To take shortcuts to get to the goal, rather than staying on God's path; to look for the easy road rather than endure hardship; to cheat just a little (or a lot) to get ahead, rather than doing things in a God-honoring way and trusting God to measure out to us His blessings in His time. Satan will whisper: 'You can have the gain without the pain.' 'You can get rich, fast.' Beware of Satan's "bow and win" propositions. What he really means is: "Follow me and lose."

### **3. The conclusion to the temptations: Matt.4:11; Lk.4:13**

Matthew and Luke have different notes at the end of their temptation narratives. These differences reflect themes that are important to each author. As for Matthew:

***"Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him" (Matt.4:11).***

Matthew was writing primarily to a Jewish audience, for whom angels had special significance. The ministry of angels' points to 1) the depth of the battle Jesus had gone through, and 2) the favor of the Father upon His Son. In the Father's timing, He *did* send His angels to "carry His Son on angel's wings" (Ps.91:11,12).

Luke wanted to emphasize the battle between Jesus and Satan.

***"When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13).***

Luke wants the reader to know that this temptation sequence was only the *beginning* of an ongoing conflict between Jesus and Satan that would play out throughout the rest of the story.

Satan is "the father of lies." Lies are his greatest weapon to mislead and defeat us. Thus, it is important to immerse yourself in God's truth so that when the devil tries to plant lies in your heart they won't stick. "Stand firm (against the devil), having girded your loins with truth" (Eph.6:14). Our ability to walk in victory over the lies of the Evil One will be directly related to the depth of our devotion to God's Word. If Jesus had to use Scripture to defeat the devil's lies, how much more us!

## Discussion Questions

1. Jesus was publicly baptized to identify with those He came to save. How does His willingness to be baptized impact you? Have you been publicly baptized to identify with Jesus as your Savior? If not, what is holding you back?

Jesus prayed, fasted, depended on the Spirit and knew Scripture. Thus, He countered Satan's temptations with authority, knowing that the TRUTH He believed and used was His power to prevail. Consider how you might overcome these temptations as Jesus did.

2. The 1<sup>st</sup> temptation was to turn stones to bread (EAT and LIVE). Have you been tempted to say or do something, but your conscience brought truth to mind and you chose to do God's will instead? Can you share an example?

3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> temptation was to leap from the temple (JUMP and SHINE), proving that Jesus was God's Chosen, and worthy of being glorified. How have you ever pressed your own agenda and then expected God to show up to support you and give you success?

4. The 3<sup>rd</sup> temptation was to bow to Satan and attain the goal of universal authority, without a painful path, (BOW and WIN). Satan often tempts us to avoid the hard path and take the easy road. Think about a time you took a short cut to avoid hardship and get to your goal (at work, school, in a relationship).