

Baptism & the Temptations

Memory Text: “And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22)

Setting The Stage: In ancient times preparations were also made in advance of the announced coming king. Messengers were dispatched to those parts of the realm the king would visit to announce his arrival and call upon his subjects to prepare for the event.

This preparation primarily involved ensuring the road over which the king was to travel was repaired to make his traveling experience more enjoyable. This was done primarily because roads were not kept in condition. There weren't any signs on those dusty roads declaring the citizens tax dollars at work.

The announcement of the arrival of the Messiah, the king of the Jews, was committed to Israel. However, they didn't discern the times and forfeited the privilege of announcing His coming. But there was one whom God chose to herald His arrival.

Sunday – Prepare The Way Of The Lord

Luke 3:1-14; Matthew 3:4; Desire of Ages, chapter 10

Before re-introducing the one God chose to announce the arrival of the Messiah, Luke provides a list of Roman authorities to establish the year the messenger of the Messiah would begin his work and the year the Messiah began His.

Luke 3:1, 2. *Tiberius Caesar* – except for the mention of Augustus in Luke 2:1, the mention of Caesar throughout the gospels always refers to Tiberius. Tiberius won several military campaigns before his appointment as military governor of the provinces. He was known as the “first soldier of the Empire.” He was known for strict discipline and relaxed taxation. The 15th year of Tiberius would have essentially brought us to A.D. 27

Pontius Pilate – he was the fifth governor, or procurator (agent of the emperor rather than by a proconsul responsible to the Senate, of a subdivision of a province; in this case Judea which was a subdivision of the Roman province of Syria) appointed by Rome, succeeded Valerius Gratus (A.D. 26), unbending and mean (he brought to the surface the spirit of revolt among the Jews by first bringing in the banners of Rome's legions into Jerusalem, second, building a needed aqueduct with money from the Temple treasuries, and thirdly, he erected shields in Jerusalem that

bore the name of Tiberius on them), and eventually recalled by Tiberius for misconduct in office (A.D. 36)

Herod – Herod Antipas, appointed by his father Herod the Great, and confirmed by Augustus. He ruled from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. This was the Herod who married the wife (Herodias) of his half brother Phillip and was rebuked by John the Baptist. This was the Herod whom Jesus was sent to by Pilate during the night of His trial. As tetrarch of Galilee he was the governor of the fourth part of a province or a subdivision of a province.

Phillip – Herod the Great's third son to rise to rulership. This is not the half-brother to Herod whose wife Herod had made arrangement with. It is said that Phillip "made his leadership a blessing." He ruled for 27 years (4 B.C. to A.D. 33) and was always open to appeals for justice. Although he ruled over more territory (east of the sea of Galilee) compared to his brothers, they were impoverished. Under his leadership there were never any uprisings.

Annas & Caiaphas – Annas was appointed high priest by Quirinius, governor of Syria in A.D. 6 or 7, but disposed of 7 or 8 years later by Valerius Gratus who preceded Pontius Pilate. Though he no longer served as high priest during the ministry of Jesus he was still considered legitimate by a majority of the Jews. Caiaphas was the son-in-law to Annas and appointed high priest by the governor who disposed of his father-in-law. He was officially the high priest throughout the ministry of Jesus. He was a cruel and mean Sadducee.

By passing all of these high officials, God appoints a man from humble origins to declare the coming of the Messiah – John the Baptist. The list of dignitaries given by Luke also provides the context for the arrival of the prophet, speaking clearly to the longing of the people of God to be liberated from their oppressors.

Matthew 3:4. *Camel hair* – roughly woven garment of hair. *Leather belt* – made from sheep or goat skin, worn to bind the long flowing garment. These were the clothes of the prophets (2 Kings 1:8) indicating that the prophetic ministry had been restored to Israel. They also served as a rebuke to the excess that existed among God's people ("soft raiment" – Matt. 11:8). His "garments reflected a disdain for the things of this world."

Locusts & wild honey – a simple diet to provide physical and mental strength and vigor, especially for one who came in the "spirit and power of Elijah," including those today who bear the Elijah message.

John's lifestyle matched his message. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2) He lived as one traveling to that kingdom, undistracted by the kingdoms of the world. Much like Faithful in *Pilgrim's Progress* who wasn't allured by Vanity Fair, a symbol of the attractions and allurements on planet earth.

Luke 3:3: “He went...preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” John wasn’t the first to introduce the rite of baptism. Before this time Jews followed the practice by baptizing Gentile converts to Judaism. That John required it of the Jews was striking. On top of that it was only a preparatory baptism to the baptism of the Spirit that Jesus would offer (v. 16). If they refused these baptisms then they were no better than the heathen no matter who they claimed as their father (v. 8).

That John chose the Jordan River north of the Dead Sea, between Mount Nebo and Jericho, is also interesting. It was in the same vicinity that Israel crossed over the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. After years of wandering Israel could now cross over and experience a new start, a new lease on life. John wanted the people to recall God’s wonderful leading in the past and His promise of a new start if they would embrace the kingdom, or Promised Land of the Messiah by “repenting” of their sinful ways.

Luke 3:8-14. Repentance, confession, and thus forgiveness were to precede baptism and were the first steps in preparing “the way of the Lord” by filling every “valley,” leveling every “mountain,” straightening the “crooked places,” and making smooth the “rough ways” of the character.

Monday – You Are My Beloved Son

Matthew 3:15-22; John 1:29-34; Desire of Ages chapter 11

Luke 3:15-17. Water and fire – two purifying agents appropriately mentioned in conjunction with conversion. Interestingly, water and fire are two agents that God did and will use to purify the earth (2 Peter 3:5-7). If we persistently cling to sin we will end up being consumed with it. It is far better to allow the Holy Spirit to purge our lives of sin, for we will either be purged of sin or purged with it.

Luke 3:21, 22. What is the significance of Jesus baptism? He didn’t need to be baptized because He needed His sins washed away. He was without sin. He was baptized to set an example for others (Matt. 3:14, 15; **Rom 6:1-6**) 1) Jesus was declared to be the One to take away people’s sin (John 1:29). 2) The heaven’s were opened – the favor of heaven was upon Him. 3) The Holy Spirit anointed him for service. 4) God declared Jesus as his Son to affirm and strengthen Him for His ministry.

Tuesday – Not By “Bread Alone”

Luke 4:1-4; Matthew 4:4; Psalm 37:19; Desire of Ages chapter 12

After His baptism Jesus, Who was full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the same into the wilderness. **Luke 4:1, 2.** Christ went into this solitary place to prepare for His intense, brief ministry. Here the one who had been cast out of heaven came to do hand-to-hand battle with the One who had cast him out (see Rev. 12:7-9). Not trusting this important moment to one of his “confederate angels” he moved in to conquer so he would not be conquered.

Luke 4:3, 4. The word “*If*” gave the devil away, as he normally comes as angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and isn’t always easy to spot. Similar question he posed to Eve – “Has God truly said...” The devil is always seeking to get us to doubt God’s express word. “*Command*” – If Jesus gave in here the plan of salvation would have been over. In responding to the suggestion of the devil Jesus would have given evidence of faltering faith. Also, in performing a miracle to sustain Himself would have left for us an example we could not follow.

“*Stones into bread*” – An appeal to the appetite, just like he had done with Eve. Most of the temptations that come to us fall into this category because he knows he’ll increase his chances of success. He also comes to us at our weakest moments (Moses after 40 years momentarily let His grasp slip from infinite power; Elijah fled from Jezebel after he was hungry and tired). And if he can lead us to do something that will damage the body, the medium through which the mind and spiritual nature are developed, then he knows that he can lead us to ruin.

“*Every word*” – Man is more than an animal. There is more to life than meeting mere physical and material needs. We are to primarily pursue God’s kingdom. Jesus said, “My meat is to the will of Him who sent Me.” (John 4:34) Jeremiah spoke of finding and eating the words of God and their becoming to him the “joy and rejoicing” of his heart.” (Jer. 15:16) Job said, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” (Job 23:12) Paul spoke of tasting “the good word of the Lord.” (Heb. 6:5) Peter referred to the “sincere milk of the word.” (1 Peter 2:2) by which the Christian is to develop and grow.

The devil is always trying to shake our faith in God, but nothing (not even threats from the beast of Revelation 13) should lead us away from faithfully putting all of God’s word above everything else. When we do, He will take care of us.

Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Isaiah 33:16: “He will dwell on high; his place of defense *will be* the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water *will be* sure.”

Psalm 37:19: “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.” And according to Mathew’s account, angels came and ministered to Jesus (see Matt. 4:11). He will care for us too.

Wednesday – “Worship Me”

Luke 4:5-8; Isaiah 14:12-14; Desire of Ages chapter 12

Luke 4:5-8. Why would Satan want Jesus to worship him? What was at stake here? Worship belongs only to God. It’s the one thing that separates the Creator from His creatures. From the beginning this is what Lucifer wanted; to usurp the authority that belongs only to God.

Isaiah 14:12-14: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer,^[a] son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”

Christ was rightful ruler of the earth, yet Satan had stolen it away from Him. Then claiming the ownership (as a de facto ruler) of all that is actually Christ’s, Satan proceeds to offer it to the One who owned it all along. The temporal for the eternal. Trying to get what he’s wanted all along. But Jesus didn’t sell out.

Thursday – Christ The Victor

Luke 4:9-13; Matthew 4:5-7; Desire of Ages chapter 13

Luke 4:9-13. The devil quotes scripture to cause Jesus to prove His loyalty and faith as the Son of God. However he omits the words, “to keep you in all your ways,” an attempt to obscure the fact that the protecting care of God is available to us only when we remain in the way of God’s choosing. But like at all other times Jesus quotes scripture to gain victory over the tempter. Here lay the secret of His strength to meet temptation.

“Man shall not live by bread alone...” came from Deut. 8:3, a truth Christ had revealed to Moses 15 centuries earlier. Then, Christ had sought to prove Israel in the wilderness to see what was in their heart, whether they would obey Him or not, and to teach them that there was more to life than satisfying their personal needs. Christ here declared that even if He must die He would not depart from duty and the right.

“You shall not tempt the Lord your God...” came from Deut. 6:16, words of Moses in response to Israel’s first occasion in the wilderness when they murmured for water. God had given them plenty of evidence that He would take care of His people yet they questioned, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” Here they challenged God to prove His divine power. They came to Him in the wrong spirit. In the same way Satan came to Christ.

“Worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve...” came from Deut. 6:13 where Moses declared the truth that you cannot serve two masters simultaneously. Any philosophy that offers us “all these things” and heaven too is part and parcel of the devil’s own doctrine.

Four things we can learn: 1. No one is free from temptation. 2. When god allows temptation to come to us, He also provides grace to resist and strength to overcome. 3. Temptations do not come the same way every time. 4. No one is tempted beyond his or her strength to bear it.

As Jesus was victorious we also, by depending on His power, can be victorious.

Hebrews 2:18: “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Because we have a Savior like Jesus we don’t have to sell out cheap. We can hold onto Him with confidence today.

James 4:7, 8: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.”

Proverbs 18:10: “The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”

Romans 8:37: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.”

Appeal: Preparation is crucial for the mission that God had given to us. This preparation involves being baptized and being ready to fight every battle that comes our way by fortifying our minds with the word of God.