

# Matthew

John the Baptist

February 04, 2024

## I. Introduction

- A. Today, we will look at the baptism of preparation, the baptism of purification, and the three temptations of Jesus.
- B. Pray

## II. The baptism of preparation, the baptism of purification

A. **Matthew 3:11**, “As for me, I (*John*) baptize you with water for repentance, but He (*Jesus*) who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

B. **John’s baptism:** As we know from **vs 3**, John’s role was to prepare, or make ready the way of the Lord. In other words, as the forerunner, John was to get people into the right spiritual condition to receive the person, the work, and the message of Jesus Christ.

1. Therefore, his baptism was not the baptism associated with eternal salvation – like our water baptism is today. His baptism was the baptism of repentance – a baptism that was focused on the outward cleansing of a person’s behavior in preparation for them to receive the inward cleansing of their beliefs, values, hopes, fears, thoughts, and intentions that would come about from being baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit and fire.
2. And though we practice only one form of water baptism today, there is still a need for us to experience what those two baptisms represent:
  - a. A cleansing from the mindset and practices of sin (*repentance*);
  - b. And a purifying of our heart, mind, words and deeds so that it will be in our nature to live a godly life (*Holy Spirit and fire*).
3. Peter urges us to give serious attention to making sure we are in the right spiritual condition to enter into the kingdom of heaven. **2 Peter 1:10-11**, Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; [11] for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.
4. Therefore, as the forerunner for Jesus, John was to prepare the people by getting them in the right spiritual condition to receive the person,

work, and teachings of Jesus. To this end, his baptism was the baptism of repentance.

- C. In contrast to John's more outward focused message and baptism, Jesus' focus is inward – an inward work that grows, transforms, supports, and matures the changes begun by repentance – with the goal of conforming us to His likeness.
1. Part of how Jesus accomplishes this goal is to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire – a work that cleanses and purifies from the inside out.
    - a. Paul speaks of this transforming work as something God intended from the beginning. **Romans 8:29**, “For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that [Jesus] would be the firstborn among many brethren.
    - b. In addition to the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, the church's leadership are to take part in this transforming work. **Ephesians 4:11-13**, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, **to the measure of the stature** which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
  2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit most probably speaks of His indwelling work of purifying, empowering, revealing, teaching, and leading us for the purpose of enabling us to live a Christ-like life.
  3. The baptism of fire most probably speaks of God's purifying work that burns away every bit of evil so that what is left is pure and able to be transformed – so that we can become holy in all our behavior, just as He is holy. (*Removing the old must precede putting on the new.*)
  4. One well-known OT scripture that speaks of all this is **Malachi 3:1-3**, “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. [2] But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. [3] He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.”

5. May we, as individuals and as a group, want to be cleansed and purified by the Holy Spirit and fire so that we can present to the Lord, Christ-like lives – for His glory and honor, for the good of our church, for the good of those we interact with on a daily basis, for the good of our children, and for the good of our marriages.

### III. Three temptations of Jesus – **Matthew 4:1-11**

#### A. First, some background and context for better understanding these temptations.

1. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He remained there for forty days, neither eating bread nor drinking water. At the end of the forty days, the devil tempted Jesus in relation to both real and imagined, or what I call, felt needs. His purpose was to get Jesus to disregard God, the word of God, and the work of God, and to take matters into His own hands in order to gain an easy and quick fulfillment of His needs.
  - a. **Hebrews 2:17-18** gives us one explanation for these temptations: “Therefore, He **had to** be made like His brethren in all things, **so that** He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. [18] For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”
  - b. **Hebrews 4:15-16** urges us to boldly come to Jesus for help in our times of temptation, because He knows our weaknesses and what kind of help to give, having also been tempted: “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. [16] 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.”
2. All three temptations represent short-cuts, that is, easier, quicker, less painful paths to what God had for Jesus, what He wanted Jesus to do, and what He would do for Jesus in His time of need.
3. In my opinion, the devil frequently tempts us in similar ways. Why? Because it is in our nature to seek easier and quicker ways to do things. Therefore, when our longings, when the world’s offerings, when the challenges, hardships, and disappointments of life create a strong sense of need in us, we are prone to want an easier, quicker, more enjoyable way of satisfying our need than the ways God offers.

4. Therefore, beware of this common form of temptation. Though it is very appealing, it will weaken your faith, compromise your conscience, feed selfishness, and lead you to act contrary to God's ways and word.
- B. [4:1] Then Jesus was **led up by the Spirit** into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. *These temptations would test the purity of Jesus' heart, the integrity of His motives, and His submission and allegiance to God – all things that could make or break His service to God.*
- C. **First Temptation:** [2] And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to Him, "**If You are the Son of God**, command that these stones become bread." [4] But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"
1. We can conclude that Jesus was exceedingly hungry and that He had a strong desire to eat. His need was real, and He felt it. We can also conclude that words, even from God, could not satisfy His hunger. So why speak of words when food was what was needed?
    - a. Was Jesus' response based on an unrealistic view of His situation, or of God, or the power of God's words? **NO!**
    - b. His response was based on trusting God, and submitting to God, and waiting for God to act on His behalf – instead of taking matters into His own hands and doing what His sense of need was urging Him to do.
    - c. Consider: how easily and often do we abandoned trust in God, and obedience to God's word, and waiting patiently for God to act in order to meet what we deem to be a pressing, strongly-felt need?
  2. In this case, the devil was urging Jesus to use His position and power to satisfy His sense of need – right now – instead of waiting for God to meet His need. And why not? After all, He had the power, and waiting on God would most likely mean continued suffering for a time, whereas taking matters into His own hands would bring quick relief.
  3. How often are we tempted in this same way?
  4. It is important to note that Jesus resisted the temptation by quoting scripture. And this is important because we can use this same method to resist temptation. In this case, Jesus quoted God's words from **Deuteronomy 8:2-3**, "You shall remember all the way which the **LORD your God has led you in the wilderness** these forty years, that He might **humble you, testing you**, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. [3] **He**

- humbled you and let you be hungry**, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread **alone** (*i.e., **not bread only**, though it is good to have bread when you need it*), but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD (*In His time, God spoke the manna into existence, and He spoke the timing and means for delivering the manna*).”
5. What urges, passions, longings, fears, or other felt-needs commonly press you to take matters into your own hands in order to satisfy your sense of need, instead of waiting for God to meet your need?
  6. When tempted like this, remember that Jesus knows your weaknesses and how strong a sense of need can be. So turn to Him for mercy and help in your time of need.

D. **Second Temptation:** [5] Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, [6] and said to Him, “**If You are the Son of God**, throw Yourself down; for **it is written**, ‘He will command His angels concerning you’; and ‘on their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone (**Psalm 91:11-12**).” [7] Jesus said to him, “**On the other hand, it is written**, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test (**Deuteronomy 6:16**).”

1. Here again, Jesus had a need. He needed the kind of public recognition that would draw a huge crowd so He could spread His message far and wide. Jumping off the highest point of the Temple and having God prevent Him from being hurt would surely meet that need.
  - a. But is it our responsibility to draw a big crowd, or is it to present God and His word in the most honest and practical way we can? Are we to use God to gain importance in the public’s eyes, or are we to present God as the important one? In other words, is God here to serve us, or are we here to serve Him?
  - b. By taking matters into His own hands, Jesus could ensure a following, and probably a large following, but He would have put God in the position of serving Him rather than Him serving God.
2. So even though the scripture quoted by the devil was true, it was not the only scripture to be considered in this situation.
3. Sadly, the devil’s selective use of scripture to support what he wanted is all too common among Christians today.
  - a. We see this misuse of scripture in such things as lopsided theologies, false teachings, ungodly leadership, and ungodly lifestyles that a comprehensive reading of God’s word does not

support. Therefore, I urge you to beware of this kind of shallow and self-serving use of God's word.

4. Jesus resisted this temptation by also turning to God's word and quoting a scripture that brought balance to the application of the scripture quoted by the devil. **Deuteronomy 6:16** "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massa."
  - a. We may not be so foolish as to jump off a cliff and expect God to protect us from harm. Yet, are we not testing/tempting God when we knowingly do what is wrong yet expect Him to protect us from the destructive consequences commonly resulting from the wrong we've done?
  - b. What about complaining about God's provision or protection when it seems He is absent, or at least not obviously present in a threatening or painful or disappointing situation?
5. Though an easier, shorting way to something we want is appealing, beware, for taking such a route often requires putting God to the test, and He will not play along.

**E. Third Temptation:** [8] Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; [9] and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." [10] Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him **only**.'"

1. Though this temptation offered an easier, quicker path, it was the pain-free part that gave this temptation extra strength. After all, in Jesus' case, God's path to glory and honor and power included things like rejection, loneliness, difficult disciples, severe physical abuse, and death on a cross.
2. Which path seems better to you when given the choice between easier, quicker, and pain-free **or** suffering far more than you want to suffer?
  - a. When faced with suffering, whom do you tend to worship and serve? Who or what holds the greatest value to you? Is it God, God's honor, God's word, and God's ways, **or** an easier, quicker, pain-free path?
  - b. We know how Jesus felt about the cross from His prayers the night before. We know that He knew how much God's way would cost – which means He understands our thoughts, feelings, and fears when facing really difficult situations that threaten our well-being and can cause serious suffering.

3. Without question, in moments like these, distrust of God and His ways is easy, and taking matters into our own hands is very appealing. The devil knows this, and he will see such times as opportune times to tempt us.
4. This, then, is the time to cling to God, to fight with yourself – if necessary – to keep trusting God, to call upon God for help and empowerment, to resist the devil, to remind yourself of specific and encouraging scriptures, and to seek the help of brothers and sisters in the Lord to see you through.
5. Here are two scriptures that you might find helpful in such a time:
  - a. **James 1:12**, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”
  - b. **James 5:10-11**, “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”
6. By God’s gracious empowerment and help, we can endure what we don’t want to endure. We can go through what we’d prefer to avoid. We can remain true to God and His word, and we can worship and serve God, only – even when the cost is great.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. [11] Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.
  1. **Luke 4:13**, *When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.*