



Christ to the World Ministries

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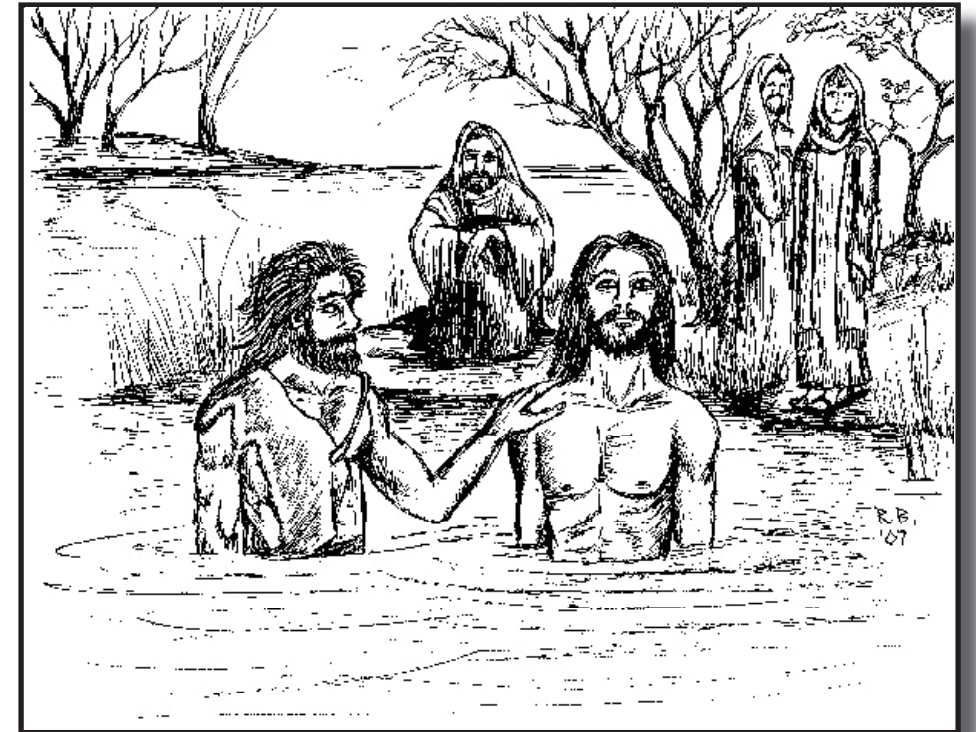
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THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS



CHRIST TO THE WORLD MINISTRIES

The Baptism and Temptations of Jesus

Read Mathew 3:1-17 and 4:1-11 in your Bible.

Jesus marked his first public appearance and the formal beginning of his ministry with his baptism. After his baptism, “*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil*” (Matthew 4:1). This Bible study will help you gain a better understanding of these momentous events in Jesus’ life.

John the Baptist Began His Ministry

John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus. John’s mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus’ mother, Mary, were cousins. John began his ministry before Jesus. He shunned the towns, synagogues, and populated areas to go to the desert. He made his headquarters the wilderness area around the Jordan River. There he preached a new message of repentance and baptism. Large crowds came to hear the rugged prophet preach.

John the Baptist Baptized Jesus

Like many others, Jesus came to be baptized by John. Jesus, free of sin, did not need to repent. But Jesus was baptized in obedience to God--“*to fulfill all righteousness*” (Matthew 3:15). His baptism clearly pleased God. As Jesus came up out of the water an amazing thing happened. God appeared! At the baptism of Jesus, God had both a physical presence and a voice. The physical manifestation was “*like a dove*” (v.16). It was pure and bright and white--a hovering of God’s Spirit. And just as astonishing, God spoke! “*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased*” (verse 17). At that moment the Father himself ordained Christ for his ministry.

Jesus Was Tempted

Strangely, Jesus after his baptism disappeared from public view. He went out into the desert and experienced another dramatic event: direct confrontation with Satan himself.

The Scripture tells us clearly that Jesus did not make this decision on his own. “*Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert*” (Matthew 4:1). Jesus stayed in the desert 40 days. That’s over a month! During this time he fasted, not eating anything. Satan appeared and tempted Jesus. In this context, to tempt means to try to get us to do something wrong, to go against what we know God wants us to do

But how could Jesus be tempted at all since he was divine? Why should he be tempted? It’s the same question we could ask about Jesus’ baptism--why? The answer is the same for both the baptism and temptation. It was in obedience to God’s will and to set an example for us.

The first temptation was straightforward. Jesus was hungry. He had not eaten in 40 days. The devil offered Jesus a quick way to care for his physical needs. He could turn some of the stones scattered around the desert floor into bread and satisfy his hunger. The clause “*If you are the Son of God*” does not imply doubt about Jesus being the Son of God. Satan tempted Jesus as to the kind of Son he would be. There would have been nothing wrong with Jesus satisfying his hunger. But physical needs must be met in God’s way. God will supply our physical needs but we must patiently wait upon him. So Jesus rejected Satan outright.

For the second temptation, Satan took Jesus to Jerusalem, had Jesus stand on the highest point of the Temple, and told him that if he were really under the protection of God he could jump and not be harmed. The devil even quoted Scripture suggesting that angels would rescue him (Psalm 91:11-12). Jesus answered with Scripture: “*Do not test the Lord your God*” (Deuteronomy 6:16). Do not take actions that presume upon God’s goodness. We must take care that we do not recklessly place ourselves in danger and “test God”.

The third temptation is all too familiar to us--what would it feel like to be wealthy and powerful? Satan took Jesus to a “*very high mountain*” and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. Not just Herod’s petty kingdom near the desert, but Rome with its marble buildings, and Persia with its sumptuous palaces--all the empires of the world. He promised them all to Jesus. But Jesus rebuked Satan saying, “*Away from me, Satan! For it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’*” (Matthew 4:10). Today we see people taking Satan’s shortcut to wealth and power. But Jesus reminds us that God is the ultimate owner of everything. Satan’s way can only lead to ruin.

Conclusion

Jesus’ baptism pleased God. Our own baptism also pleases God. Baptism does not wash away our sins or save us. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross does that. But baptism shows a beautiful picture of what God did for us. It portrays the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It also depicts the person dying to an old way of life and rising to walk in newness of life as a follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus later commanded his disciples to baptize believers (Matthew 28:19). So we also follow the example of Jesus.

We should remember that temptation itself is not a sin. The devil may put evil thoughts in our mind and try to convince us to go his way. We may feel conflicted and confused. Temptation is not a happy experience to go through. But we can resist. We can choose God’s way over the tempter’s way. Jesus in the desert showed us how.

Pray this prayer: “*Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.*”

Welcome into God’s family! Share with others that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.