

## Matthew 3:13-4:11 – Baptism and Testing in the Wilderness

***Mat 3:13-15 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.***

Why was Jesus baptized? There may be several answers, but the primary reason is stated right here: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Jesus is identifying Himself completely with sinful mankind. Isaiah had prophesied that He would be numbered with the transgressors (see Isa\_53:12). Here is a King who identifies Himself with His subjects. Actually, baptism means identification, and I believe identification was the primary purpose for the baptism of the Lord Jesus. Again, the reason Jesus was baptized was not to set an example for us. It was not a pattern for us to follow. Christ was holy—He did not need to repent. You and I do need to repent. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was baptized to completely identify Himself with humanity.

There was a second reason Jesus was baptized. Water baptism is symbolic of death. His death was a baptism. You remember that He said to James and John when they wanted to be seated on His right hand and on His left hand in the Kingdom, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mat\_20:22). You see, Christ's death was a baptism. He entered into death for you and for me.

There is a third reason for the baptism of Jesus. At this time, He was set aside for His office of priest. The Holy Spirit came upon Him for this priestly ministry. Everything that Jesus did, His every act, was done by the power of the Holy Spirit. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co\_5:21). There was sin on Him, but there was no sin in Him. My sin was put on Him, not in Him. That is an important distinction. Therefore, you and I are saved by being identified with Him. He identified Himself with us in baptism. And Peter says that we are saved by baptism (see 1Pe 3:21). In what way? By being identified with the Lord Jesus. To be saved is to be in Christ. How do we get into Christ? By the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I believe in water baptism because by it we declare that we are identified with Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "... him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh\_6:37). We must recognize that we have to be identified with Christ, and that is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Our water baptism is a testimony to this. One time an old salt said to a young sailor in trying to get him to accept Christ and be baptized, "Young man it is duty or mutiny!" And when you come to Christ, my friend, you are to be baptized because it is a duty. If you are not, it is mutiny.

This subject of baptism needs to be lifted out of the realm of argument to the high and lofty plane of standing for Christ. How we need to come out and stand for Christ! – McGee

**Have you been publicly identified as in Christ and followed your Lord in baptism? If not, why not?**

***Mat 3:16-17 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."***

Here we have a manifestation of the Trinity. As the Lord Jesus is coming out of the water, the Spirit of God descends upon Him like a dove, and the Father speaks from heaven.

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The Father says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Lord Jesus is now identified with His people. What a King! Oh, what a King He is!

**Do you think this is what you will here when you see Jesus? What is the criteria for God to well pleased in you and I?**

### Chapter 4 - THE THREEFOLD TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Let us follow the movement of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus came down to be born among us and so to be identified with us. He grew up as any other child would, except that He was harmless and without sin. Now, in His baptism, He has been identified with us. He has put on our sin. Now He is going to be tested because there are some real questions to be answered. Is the King able to withstand a test, and can He overcome?

The word tempt has a twofold meaning:

1. “Incite or entice to evil; seduce.” There is something in each of us which causes us to yield to evil. This was not true of Jesus. “... the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh\_14:30). He was “... holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ...” (Heb\_7:26). So the temptation for Jesus had to be different from that which would cause me to fall, in that it needed to be a much greater temptation.

2. “Test.” God does not tempt men with evil according to Jas\_1:13. Yet, we are told “... God did tempt Abraham ...” (Gen\_22:1). This means that God was testing the faith of Abraham.

Jesus is now to be tested. Could Jesus have fallen? I want to answer that with an emphatic no! He could not have fallen. If Jesus could have fallen, then you and I do not have a sure Savior at all.

Perhaps you are asking, “Well then, if Jesus could not have fallen, was His temptation a legitimate and genuine temptation?” May I say to you that His temptation was much greater than any that you and I have ever had. When a new model Chevrolet or Ford or Dodge is developed, it is thoroughly tested to prove it can stand the test. And every genuine diamond is tested to show that it is not a phony. In a similar way, the Lord Jesus Christ was tested to demonstrate that He was exactly who He claimed to be.

Let me illustrate with this little story. When I was a boy, I lived out in West Texas. It was a sparsely populated area in those days. The Santa Fe railroad came through our little town, but it went on by and stopped in the next little town. But it crossed the left fork of the Brazos River near our town. In the summertime there wasn't enough water in that river to rust a shingle nail, but in wintertime you could float a battleship on it. One winter we really had a flood, and it washed out the Santa Fe bridge. We were without a train for a long time. Finally, they put in a bridge. They worked a long time on it. Then one day they brought in two engines, stopped them on the bridge, and tied down their whistles. Believe me, that was more whistling than we had ever heard in our little town! All twenty-three of us ran down to see what was happening. As we were standing around, one brave citizen went up to the engineer in charge with our question, “What are you doing?” The engineer answered, “Testing the bridge.” Our man said, “Are you trying to break it down?” The engineer almost sneered, “Of course not! We're testing it to prove that it can't be broken down.”

May I say to you, that was the exact reason the Lord Jesus was tested. It was to prove, to demonstrate, that He could not be broken down. His testing, therefore, was greater than ours. There is a limit to what we can bear.

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You give me enough temptation, you build up the pressure, and finally I'll succumb to it. That is true of you too. But Christ never gave in although the pressure continued to increase. In other words, a ten-pound fishing line will break when twenty pounds of pressure is put on it, but a hundred-pound line can bear more than twenty-five pounds of pressure. Now, I'm the ten-pound fishing line, and He is the one hundred-pound line.

Another really interesting feature of this temptation is the comparison and contrast with the testing of Eve in the Garden of Eden. To begin with, Christ was tested in a wilderness while Eve was tested in a garden. What a contrast! – McGee

**Does it comfort you to know that our Lord & Savior has already been tested and is the only one risen from the grave?**

***Mat 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.***

Why should the Holy Spirit lead Him into such an encounter? The answer is that this temptation was necessary to demonstrate His moral fitness to do the work for which He had come into the world. The first Adam proved his unfitness for dominion when he met the adversary in the Garden of Eden. Here the last Adam meets the devil in a head-on confrontation and emerges unscathed. - BBC

***Mat 4:2-3 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."***

After fasting forty days and forty nights, Jesus was hungry. (The number forty in Scripture is frequently used in contexts of testing or probation.) This natural appetite provided the tempter with an advantage which in many people he could exploit. He suggested that Jesus use His miraculous power to convert the stones of the desert into loaves of bread. The introductory words, "If You are the Son of God," do not imply doubt. They actually mean "Since You are the Son of God." The devil is alluding to the words of the Father to Jesus at the baptism, "This is My beloved Son." He uses a Greek construction which assumes the statement to be true and, thereby, he calls on Jesus to exercise His power to appease His hunger.

Mat 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.' "

Jesus answered the temptation by quoting the Word of God. Our Lord's example teaches that we don't have to live, but we do have to obey God! Getting bread is not the most important thing in life. Obedience to every word of God is. Since Jesus had received no instructions from the Father to turn stones into bread, He would not act on His own and thus obey Satan, no matter how intense His hunger. – BBC

**Do you test things and temptations by scripture?** If you don't you are open season for the spiritual warfare which is abounding currently.

***Mat 4:5-6 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU,' and, IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'***  
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The second temptation took place in Jerusalem on the pinnacle of the temple. The devil challenged Jesus to throw Himself down as a spectacular display of His divine Sonship. Again, the opening word if does not imply doubt, as is seen in Satan's reference to the protection promised to the Messiah by God in Psa\_91:11-12.

**Does it concern you that the devil knows scripture better than we do? Knowing this, how does it change your priorities on studying the Word?**

***Mat 4:7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.' "***

Again, Jesus resisted the attack by quoting Scripture: "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God'." (see Deu\_6:16). God had promised to preserve the Messiah, but that guarantee presupposed living in God's will. To claim the promise in an act of disobedience would be tempting God. The time would come when Jesus would be revealed as Messiah, but the cross must come first. The altar of sacrifice must precede the throne. The crown of thorns must precede the crown of glory. Jesus would await God's time and would accomplish God's will.

**Jesus wanted God's will above all. How about us? Are we content with His will when it conflicts with our plans, comfort, or timelines?**

***Mat 4:8-9 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."***

In the third temptation the devil took Jesus up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. He offered them to Jesus in exchange for His worship. Although this temptation had to do with worship, an exercise of the spirit, it was an effort to induce our Lord to grasp imperial power over the world by worshiping Satan. The reward offered, all the kingdoms of the world with their grandeur, appealed to "the lust of the eyes" (1Jn\_2:16). -BBC

***Mat 4:10-11 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE.' " Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.***

For the third time, Jesus resisted temptation by using the OT: "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve." Worship and the service that flows from it are for God alone. To worship Satan would be tantamount to acknowledging him as God.

The order of the temptations as recorded by Matthew varies from that in Luke (4:1-13). Some have suggested that Matthew's order parallels the order of the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness (Exodus 16; 17; 32). Jesus showed Himself in perfect contrast to Israel's response to hardship.

From the temptation of Jesus, we learn that the devil can attack those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit, but that he is powerless against those who resist him with the Word of God. – BBC

**Do you know the Word of God? If not, you maybe entering a sword fight unarmed!**