

## Day One – Recap of Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist: Yet another classic example that what people do in the Bible is not always prescriptive, that is, necessarily the way that we should act. There is nothing inherently righteous about living on the fringe of society, nor is John's lifestyle a model for a 60's-style "back to the land" movement. Many Christians find weirdness some sort of virtue, but I would disagree and I don't think John lends much support to this kind of thinking, either. John was actually just playing a part, establishing an undeniable connection between him and Elijah.

I had never thought much about the Baptizer until fairly recently when I started a study through John, where we find out quite a bit more about him. John the Baptist is a genuine model for living, not for his dress or lifestyle but because he was absolutely committed to Jesus Christ. John was a popular man (except with the Pharisees!), indeed as popular as Jesus ever was during his ministry. He held large crowds captive with his teaching, large enough that the powers-that-be took notice of him and feared him. Despite his status, he gladly retreated into the background when Christ came upon the scene. He understood his position, that of one who prepares the way for the Messiah. When his role was over, he handed over leadership to Christ, perhaps even encouraging his own disciples to begin following the Messiah. He had a great deal to lose with a commitment to Christ, indeed far more than we do, and was faithful.

I'm not exactly sure why he reacted so harshly to the religious leaders when they approached him. It certainly doesn't seem the most effective to win converts. Perhaps they had come to heckle him before, or perhaps he had some divinely-given discernment about their intentions. Whatever the case, his words to them were pointed. Even the religious elite cannot escape repentance, and it is no good to plead one's place within God's chosen people, Israel. If Matthew is beginning to sound like a broken record, he's done his job well. Israel had missed it, was missing it, and still miss it today. John the Baptist's prediction that God would raise new children out of stones is precisely what happened with Jesus' extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Do you often imagine Jesus as the one with a winnowing fork in his hand, or do you prefer the image of a forgiving Savior with arms wide open, ready to forgive? Both are true.

Do you live and breathe a repentant heart, or just leave that to the sinners? Perhaps you should re-read the chapter...

What are some tangible ways you might be more committed to constant repentance?

## Day Two – Read 3:13-17

What was John's response to Jesus coming to him to be baptized?

What was Jesus answer?

Challenge: What does the phrase "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," mean?

What happened when Jesus went up from the water (v. 16)?

What do you think the primary meaning of Jesus baptism is, and **how is it significant to your life?**

## Day Three – Read 4:1-11

Who led Jesus into the wilderness? Why?

How do you understand the statement *tempted by the devil* in verse 1?

Read James 1:12-15. How do these verses change the way you understand *temptation*?

What do you think is significant about the fact that Jesus was hungry?

Are you ever tempted? How do you deal with temptations?

## Day Four – Read Deuteronomy 6 – 8

Jesus drew his responses from these chapters.

## Day Five

**4:1–11 Jesus is tested in the desert (see Mk. 1:12–13; Lk. 4:1–13).** ‘Temptation’ suggests a purely negative experience; but this was a divinely intended (1) preparation for Jesus’ mission. The word more commonly means ‘test’, and this is a better translation here.

The focus is on Jesus’ recently declared status as Son of God (3:17; 4:3, 6): what are its implications for his relationship with his Father? The three tests examine aspects of that relationship, and the ways in which a misuse of that status could ruin Jesus’ ministry. He must be ready to accept privation in fulfilling his God-given task without ‘pulling rank’ (2–4); to trust his Father’s care without the need to test it by forcing God’s hand (5–7); and to reject the ‘short cut’ to the fulfillment of his mission which would be achieved at the cost of compromising his loyalty to his Father (8–10).

Each suggestion is rebutted by a text of Scripture, all of which come from Dt. 6–8. That passage relates Israel’s experience of testing in the desert (‘as a man disciplines his son’, Dt. 8:5; *cf.* 8:2), and the texts quoted focus on the lessons Israel should have learned by that experience. Now a new ‘son of God’ is being prepared for his role, and the same principles of obedience, imperfectly learned by Israel, must be the basis of the ministry of Jesus, the ‘new Israel’.

**Notes. 1** *The devil* was the agent and tempted Jesus to misuse his position; but his hostile purpose was put to the service of God’s testing of his Son. **2** Jesus’ *fasting* and *hunger* show that the Son of God was not free from real human suffering. **6** The devil’s quotation from Ps. 91:11–12 was quite accurate (and no doubt, if tested, would have proved reliable), but even a correct quotation of Scripture can be misapplied. **8** Contrast 28:18, where, by the path of obedience, Jesus has received all authority not only on earth but also in heaven!

*(Taken from the New Bible Commentary, edited by D.A. Carson)*

As you conclude your study of 3:13-4:11 write a one sentence summary of the following texts.

3:13-17

4:1-11

Finally, write a prayer of praise for your Savior.

## Day Six

If you are looking to go a little bit deeper in your understanding of the text for this week, try one of these resources:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getBookSections&cid=1&source=1>

<http://www.evangelibrary.org.uk/members/com/nt/jcr/mt/mat-Index.html>

### Sermons Transcripts:

Ligon Duncan - [http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/matthew/matthew\\_vol\\_1-2/matthew\\_vol\\_1-2/index\\_Matthew\\_vol\\_1-2.html](http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/matthew/matthew_vol_1-2/matthew_vol_1-2/index_Matthew_vol_1-2.html)

### Audio:

John Piper - <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/14/>

S. Lewis Johnson - [http://sljinstitute.net/sermons/new%20testament/gospels/matthew/matthew\\_master.html](http://sljinstitute.net/sermons/new%20testament/gospels/matthew/matthew_master.html)

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