

LESSON 8

CHRIST BAPTIZED AND TEMPTED

Scripture Texts: Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 4:1-11

This lesson discusses Jesus' baptism and temptations and relates His victory over these temptations to situations that we face today. Of the eighteen years since the events of our last lesson God is silent. He Who had been a village carpenter now becomes a man of destiny. Let us try to put ourselves in His place and see if we can understand the problems that He had to meet. Two important events follow His baptism. God witnessed that His Spirit was on Christ, and God approved Him as His Son. By this the people had no reason to reject Him or His teachings.

MEMORY VERSE: *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Hebrews 2:18

The Heavens Open

Matthew 3:13-17 Then cometh Jesus . . . unto John, to be baptized—to be immersed. John forbid . . . I have need—John felt inferior to Jesus. Suffer it . . . now . . . it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness—Jesus' life was to lack nothing. He is our perfect example in all things. Jesus . . . went up straightway out of the water—He had been down in it. Heavens were opened—that those people on hand could see and understand that the message was from God. The Spirit of God descending—the Spirit of God already dwelt in Christ, but God wanted everyone to know that Christ was beginning the work He was sent to do. Like a dove—He was not a dove but took its form in order to be seen plainly. Here the symbol of peace rested on the Prince of Peace.

When Jesus came up out of the water, the Heavens were opened, the Spirit of God came down upon Him as a dove, and a voice from Heaven said, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**—testified of His divine Sonship and the perfection of His life. The Jews had charged Christ with blasphemy when He claimed to be God's Son. God was verifying this truth and proving them wrong. This was the Voice of God, clearly heard by all. What happened to Christ symbolizes what always happens to the consecrated heart. When we renounce sin and declare to the world our intention to do God's will the Heavens always open. Then the Spirit descends upon our souls.

Temptation Follows Exaltation

Matthew 4:1-3 Led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil—a planned combat. Jesus knew from the beginning of the purpose of His coming—to do the will of God. Now He was to receive exact instruction and be prepared for His mission to the world. Here we find the power of evil being directed against that spotless life to destroy it and render it useless to the world's spiritual needs. Why did God not shield His Son from this agonizing experience which might indeed have destroyed His usefulness before He began? Character grows by testing. He had to be tempted in all the ways that human nature is subject to be tempted. It was part of the price He had to pay in order to be our example in all things (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).

Here are two precious truths that will be a help to us in temptation: (1) Our Lord was tempted; we can expect to be also. (2) Throughout His temptation Jesus was in the power of the Spirit. The first Adam met temptation and yielded. He made the mistake of feeling that he could better guide his own life. The second Adam met temptation and resisted. To Him there was no life worth the living apart from a yielding to the will of God. Because Jesus met and conquered the foe He is able to succor us. We often seem to think that surrendering our lives to God will eliminate all our struggles. Yet in many instances the exact opposite is true. **The tempter came to him**—Christ had been exalted by the Father; now He was to be tempted. A good thing to remember is that when we are high in the Spirit the devil is just waiting to spoil it all by tempting us in some way. **If thou be the Son of God**—he made the issue to be whether or not Jesus was the Son of God—a deceitful trick. Christ had been forty days without natural food. Through God's miraculous powers the processes of nature were temporarily changed in some way. But at the end of forty days a physical hunger of a great nature swept over this very human Jesus. **Command that these stones be made bread**—an appeal to Jesus' desire for food. This was the same tool he used in the garden.

By Bread Alone

Matthew 4:4 He answered . . . It is written—Jesus appealed to the authority of God's Word (Deuteronomy 8:3). **Man shall not live by bread alone**—Jesus thought of the much greater importance of spiritual life than physical. He did not need to trouble His mind about physical needs. God put Him there, and God would take care of Him. **But by every word . . . out of the mouth of God**—God's Word sustains life. The bread theory is in prevalent use in modern life by politicians and leaders in education. The theory is to give men all they need to be well-fed and comfortable, and their lives will be rich. The bread theory is based on materialism that man can live by bread alone. It is deception that only leads the world into further dissatisfaction (Matthew 6:25).

Matthew 4:5-7 **Devil taketh him up into the holy city—Jerusalem—pinnacle of the temple . . . If thou be the Son**—as before, a challenge to prove it—**cast thyself down: for it is written . . .** Now Satan quotes Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12). Having failed with the bread theory, Satan now brings his power theory before Jesus. This evil theory is based on compromise. Satan was suggesting that Jesus avoid the Cross and take the easy route to world conquest. Christ did not come to conquer the world but to save it. He needed no forced proof for God had spoken it (John 10:25). **Jesus said . . . it is written . . . Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God** (Deuteronomy 6:16). **It is written** is our greatest defense against the deceiving powers of Satan today.

Get Thee Hence

Matthew 4:8-11 Again—the devil is persistent—**taketh him up into . . . high mountain . . . sheweth . . . kingdoms . . . glory . . . All these things will I give thee, if**—A small price? No, the complete surrender of Himself, His position, authority, purpose and future, the loss of all that Jesus came to accomplish, He would no longer have had that life to give which is **the light of men**. Having failed in presenting the bread theory and the power theory, Satan now presents the main aim he desires--what he will give Jesus if He will **worship me**. This evil philosophy

is based on control by man rule. The trouble with all Satan's suggestions, both then and now, is that they leave God out of the picture. Satan worked through Christ's mind just as he works through ours. There is no such literal mountain that Christ was taken to, and Satan had no kingdom to give then, as he has none now, just talk. **Then saith Jesus . . . Get thee hence, Satan**—a complete separation, no compromise. It was the only way for Jesus; it is the only way for us (James 4:7). **Thou shalt worship the Lord . . . and him only**—Worship of God allows no sharing with another (Deuteronomy 8:19). **Devil leaveth**—when the devil had completed every temptation he departed from Him for a season. **Angels . . . ministered**—the decision was all for Christ to make, but when it was made the Father sent help and comfort, both spiritual and physical. Resist the devil, decide for the Lord, and you will be surprised at the sudden abundance of strength and peace that is yours. Continue to resist in the power of the Spirit and have continuous victory. If the Son needed the Spirit how much more do we?

JUST A THOUGHT

Satan tempts us as he tempted our Lord, and when he leaves us let us know that he will return again.