

Small Group Discussion

One Hell of a Day *Jesus' Temptation*

This week begins a journey with Christ through His life-mission, His final week, death and resurrection. Jesus followed God's mission for His life so that we could live our life as God designed it to be lived.

As we begin our journey, please understand that this series is not merely a study where you seek to discover and understand the life, death and resurrection of Christ, this is a journey where we will take steps to walk with Christ to learn by doing and to receive His gifts and become like Him.

Therefore, each week we will unfold some core element of Christ that you will be asked to experience through a discipline or an exercise. I hope you will take these on and experience Christ's love for you and His Church in a very personal way.

The first week you saw a baptism, where the Church is called to follow Christ in an act that allows you to physically feel what Christ does for you when you accept His forgiveness, and the love God expresses for all who are His. You will be called to a 40 Day fast,

a sacrifice of some regular habit to replace with a time to be with God. You will walk with Christ through three temptations that He conquered through a trust in Scripture. You will be asked where you are struggling and invited to trust God's plan for you in that area.

This season has been called Lent and used by the Church for 2,000 years. It's a first at Harvest, we hope you will experience Christ through it in a fresh and personal way.

So, let's get started!

Today's Walk With Christ...

1. **Baptism** – Jesus is commissioned by John the Baptist's baptism, and affirmed by His Father as the Son like no other.
2. **Temptation** – Jesus imposes the discipline of fasting to seal His trust in God's best plan for Him and rejection of any short-cut.

Jesus Baptized

READ Matthew 3:1-3, 11-17

Based on John's message in 3:2-3, what was John's role? *To prepare the way for Christ's coming*

How did he prepare the way for Christ? Matt. 3:6 *He moved people beyond the rituals of cleansing (like animal sacrifices & mikveh baptisms) to genuine confession of their sins.*



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When Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized, what was John's response? (3:13-14)

His response was "I don't need to baptize you, you should baptize me!" Jesus didn't need to repent of His sin, he had none, John needed to be washed by Jesus.

Jesus' response to John was "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." John's baptism had two purposes: 1) To prepare people for Messiah and 2) by admission of their sins, and thus their need for a perfect sacrifice. Jesus was the Messiah and began His ministry through John's baptism. From that point on John's ministry declined while Jesus' influence rose. Thus, Jesus' baptism was His identification as the fulfillment of John's mission and God's commissioning of Jesus to ministry.

While John accepted Christ as Messiah, there was a greater authority that acknowledged Christ's identity: God the Father & the Holy Spirit. What was the message of the Father to His Son? 3:17 *This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy!*

The Gospels show that three voices—scripture, a prophetic voice in the wilderness and the heavenly voice—all attest Jesus' identity. The heavenly voice alone would have been inadequate, but here it confirms the witness of scripture and a prophet. Jesus is not a mere prophet but the subject of other prophets' messages.¹

Why did Jesus bring His Father great joy? *Jesus had not accomplished any of His mission, yet He still brought His Father great joy.*

Read Ephesians 1:4-5 Why are we a source of joy to God?

While Jesus was the source of our holy and without fault in God's eyes, because God gave us forgiveness, that is why we are a source of joy to Him. Not from what we do through religious acts, but because He simply chose you and invests into you, you are His forever, a source of His joy.

Jesus launched His ministry with God conferring His pleasure in Him. How do you think that would help Him walk into His ministry, knowing His Father was already proud of Him? How does that help you live your life knowing that God is already proud of you?

Jesus Tempted

READ Matthew 4:1-11

The Judean desert where Jesus went to be alone and be tempted was a difficult place to survive. To get an idea of the environment check out this website: <http://www.bibleplaces.com/judeanwilderness.htm>

Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness (4:1)? Why would this be the second step of launching Jesus' ministry (step #1 was His baptism and confirmation of the Father's pleasure)?

¹ Craig S. Keener, vol. 1, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament commentary series, Mt 3:16 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

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4:3-4 Note the picture on the website above of the camel in the wilderness (notice all the stones). Why would it be an act of mistrust for Jesus to turn stones into bread? *Jesus' fast was self-imposed discipline to learn to trust God's Word more than food. More than that, Philippians 2:7-8 tells us that Jesus gave up the use of His divine power in any way that would be an advantage for Him that we could not use. Jesus never used His power for His own benefit during His lifetime.*

The devil cites Psalm 91:11–12 out of context; 91:10 makes clear that God's angelic protection (cf. Mk 1:13) is for events that *befall* his servants, not an excuse to seek out such dangers.²

4:5-6 What would have happened if Jesus would have jumped from the highest point of the Temple? Would He have been caught by the angels? What would happen to you if you jumped from the Rims of Billings to the street below? Would the angels catch you? (Harvest does not suggest that you try this by the way!!)

4:7 To test God means to impose your will on Him by doing something that you want and expecting God to make it work out for you. When the Bible gives you an action, and you follow it, you can expect God to follow through on His part.

Jesus imposed a fast on Himself to learn to trust God's promises more than food. Since Satan couldn't get Him to break His trust, he tries to get Jesus to force the Father's protection. Christians can do this today by promising God's blessing if you give to their project or if you obey a rule that the Bible doesn't impose. The first test is to stop trusting God's word, the second test is to try to get God's support of your will.

4:8-10

Satan could have made Jesus the ruler over the Kingdoms of the earth by acts of magic (like turning stones into bread), or by making claims and backing them up (like jumping from the highest place of the Temple), or by political conquest (as in this temptation).

What was the price of Satan's offer in 4:9?

What would Jesus sacrifice by accepting Satan's offer? (see Matt 16:26)

Note Jesus' response in 4:10. What things do we go after that forfeit our relationship with Christ?

From Vern's message this last weekend, have you chosen your area for fasting over the next 40 days? Discuss this with the group.

² Craig S. Keener and InterVarsity Press, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament*, Mt 4:5 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993).