

Day 4 THE BAPTISM & TEMPTATION OF JESUS

MATTHEW 3:13-17; MATTHEW 4:1-11

Before Jesus begins his public ministry, there are two things he undergoes. He is baptized and he is tempted. These two episodes define who Jesus is, who Jesus will be, and what kind of ministry Jesus will have. They are defining moments; they are foundational experiences.

In particular, study the temptation. See how Jesus resists the great temptations of power, status, wealth, self-reliance, and independence. He rejects the way of the world and he embraces the way of the faithful, obedient, trusting Son who will do the will of his Father in heaven.

Jesus chooses to be a humble servant, whose way will lead to suffering and sacrifice for the sake of the world he loves. The devil tried to abort the mission of God before it began. That is what all temptation is for — to abort the mission of God, the ways of God, and the blessings of God in your life.

To discover more on resisting temptation, read 1 Corinthians 10:12-14 and James 1:12-15.

Day 5 HIS MINISTRY BEGINS

MATTHEW 4:12-25; LUKE 4:14-30

As soon as the baptism and temptation are finished, Jesus launches into his public ministry. Your final devotional reading is two different perspectives on what that ministry looked like.

For the final devotional of the week, read these two chapters and make a note of the things Jesus begins to do in his ministry. Pay attention to Jesus calling his disciples.

Also, notice how Jesus defines his ministry in Luke and how the initial positive reaction of the people turned very antagonistic!

We are always responding to Jesus. Sometimes it is positive, other times it is quite negative. Think about your own responses to Jesus. I am sure they vary quite a bit. Sometimes you respond in faith, other times you don't. Why do you have these different responses to Jesus?

DID YOU KNOW?

All four gospels are anonymous. None of the authors actually identify themselves, although there are allusions, especially in John. But very early, the church attributed the various gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels. Synoptic means “seeing together.” These three gospels have many parallels. Mark was the first gospel, and Matthew and Luke used Mark as a foundation for their own gospels. John was the last to be written. They were written between 45 AD and 70-80 AD.

Except for brief birth narratives, the gospels cover about 3 1/2 years of focused ministry. Jesus began his public ministry about age 30 and that ministry lasted for 3 1/2 years.

Manuscripts are handwritten copies of a text. We have almost 5,700 Greek manuscripts (varying in length) of the New Testament and another 19,000 manuscripts of the New Testament written in Syrian, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic. That is far, far more manuscripts than any other ancient literature. Manuscript scholars say we have 99.5% accuracy of the New Testament documents.

Over the years, there have been about 900 different translations of the Bible into English. Today, there are about 25 main translations used. The New Testament has been translated into 1,521 languages of the world.

FOR EACH DEVOTIONAL TIME

Spend a few minutes in silence and prayer. Ask Jesus to be with you. Ask him to make the Scriptures clear. Ask Jesus to give you a humble heart of wisdom to hear, to believe, and to respond.

Read the gospel passages first. I highly recommend using a Bible and not a Bible app. You will see and feel the story of Jesus better with the actual Bible. Also, try reading the passage out loud for that experience.

Then read the devotional words and re-read the gospel passages as you need. It is a good practice to use a journal or notebook to write down observations and reflections.

Always finish with prayer, asking for grace and strength to live faithfully in response to the stories, the words, and the encounters you have had with Jesus.

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all things, never I fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

The Hatred of the World

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are of the world, the world hateth you.

20 Remember the words, which I have spoken unto you, that the prince of the world cometh, because he is the son of perdition, because he receiveth the sign of the seven angels, which have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse of them.

23 He that hateth me, hateth my Father that sent me.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse of them.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the world might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he will testify of me:

27 And ye also shall testify, because ye have been with me, and have seen the works which I have done in you, and which ye have not seen in any other man.

away: that it seen and hated both me and my Father that sent me.

spoken that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

ear fruit ye, except you first receive the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he will not abide in you, neither shall ye see him, neither shall ye know him, neither shall ye abide with him, and ye shall not see his glory.

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REJesus

STORIES, WORDS, ENCOUNTERS

**The Jesus I Never Knew,
The Jesus I Need to Know**

PASTOR BRIAN RICE
JANUARY 6, 2019

Day 1 WE NEED TO KNOW THE REAL JESUS

MATTHEW 16:13-20; JOHN 12:21; MATTHEW 8:23-27

The focus of this first week of devotionals is to give you an introduction to Jesus and the very beginning of his public ministry. Today's devotional is based on the biblical passages that support the series *reJesus*.

Who is Jesus? How do people experience Jesus? How do they define and describe Jesus? What categories are big enough to explain the extraordinary impact Jesus had on everyone he encountered?

Matthew 16 is the starting point passage. As you read it, notice that some pretty impressive categories and possibilities are offered to explain how Jesus is being described by the crowd. But then Jesus asks the single most important question he will ever ask:

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Who am I for you? How do you experience me?

John 12:21 shows us that people wanted to see Jesus. He was intriguing, attractive, and mystifying. Still "we would like to see Jesus." And when you read Matthew 8:23-27, remember, the disciples do not yet have categories big enough to describe "this man."

So, who do you say Jesus is? Make a list of words, phrases, titles, and descriptions of Jesus. Make the list as long as you want.

How much do you want to see and know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, follow him more nearly ... day by day?



Have some fun this week. Conduct some informal and friendly surveys of people you work with. Ask them, "Who is Jesus for you?" Don't argue, just create room for conversation. And let them know you are exploring more about Jesus in our series, *reJesus*.

Day 2 WHY THE GOSPELS WERE WRITTEN

LUKE 1:1-4; JOHN 20:30-31; 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

Why do we need to read, study, and reflect on the stories, the words, and the encounters people had with Jesus?

The famous prayer from Godspell says:

*Three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day.*

That's why the gospels were written, so you and I would see/know Jesus more clearly. So that we would love him with all our heart. So that we would follow him in a close and obedient repatterning of our lives after his own.

Dr. Luke gives a very careful explanation of how and why he wrote his gospel. The beloved John summarizes why he wrote his gospel. Be sure to note every phrase and theme in those passages that explains why we have the gospels.

The Apostle Paul tells us why the inspired and sacred Scriptures are so vital for us. What is the nature of Scripture and what end results will happen in your life as you read, study, reflect, and pray through these daily devotions in the weeks to come?

For a little bonus passage, turn to John 6:60-69. This is a story of some disciples no longer following Jesus. Why did they leave? And what does Jesus ask of his core followers? What reason does Simon Peter provide for why they will stay awhile with Jesus?

Bottom Line: Why will we stay awhile and, in fact, stay forever with the One called Jesus? What do you need from Jesus? What does Jesus offer to you?

Spend time in conversation with Jesus, praying as you need and for what you need to continue following him with love and joy.

Day 3 JOHN THE BAPTIST

LUKE 3:1-20; JOHN 1:6-9, 15, 19-34

I have always been fascinated with this strange, enigmatic, fiery, passionate prophet of God. John was a cousin to Jesus, a little bit older, and a forerunner who was to prepare the way for the Messiah.

John the Baptist is mentioned 90 times in the New Testament. Only Jesus, Peter, and Paul are named more often! That gives us a clue to how important John was, or perhaps it is better to say, how important was the role and purpose of John the Baptist.

The two passages you read today will do several things. They will describe the relationship of John and Jesus. They define the core ministry John had as a forerunner.

Be sure to notice the phrase in Luke 3:18 that describes the message of John the Baptist. It is a message of good news. It is the gospel. Look back over the features of John's preaching. What were the most essential ideas in his preaching and ministry?



"What should we do?" the crowd asked John. Why do you think the crowd responded the way they did to John's message?

What does it mean to be a witness? Or a signpost? Or a forerunner? That is the essential role John had concerning Jesus. What is involved? What is needed?

In what ways do you understand your role to be the same as that of John the Baptist? Do you see yourself more and more as a forerunner, witness, signpost to help people connect with Jesus? It is a great way to live. It is a great way to love the world. Help the people around you *reJesus* (connect, learn, discover, explore, and encounter Jesus).