

Simply Jesus

The Life and Ministry of God's Son

Inductive: Lesson 2

Introduction

Jesus' public ministry began with His baptism at the Jordan River. John was already there, baptizing individuals who were willing to confess their sin and need for a Savior. He preached of One who would soon come. His message was simple, preparing the way of the Messiah: "A voice cries out in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord! Make His paths straight!" With these words four hundred years of silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament were ended, and a new era had come.

John mission was plain, to bear witness to Christ by turning people to Him: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29) I did not know Him, but He who send me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:33–34). Void of compromise, and with a determination brought on merely by God's power and authority, John fulfilled his mission. Once in prison, experiencing a moment of his own doubt, John sent his messengers to inquire of Jesus whether He was in fact the Messiah. And Jesus responded, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard, that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke 7:22; see also vv. 24–28). Then Jesus went on to uniquely commend John: "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."

Did You Know

Tradition holds that the Apostle John was aware of the other three synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Although he wrote with them in mind, he did not depend on the other accounts for their information in writing his Gospel. Instead, under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit, John relied heavily on his own personal experience and memory as an eyewitness. John's Gospel is second to Luke's (1:1–4) in stating his exact purpose in writing: "these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

John's focus is expressly evangelistic, with the word "believe" appearing over one hundred times in his Gospel. He wrote with the intention of assuring all believers that they would receive eternal life. He chose to emphasize the deity and work of Christ to reinforce the theme of salvation in Him alone, which is set forth in the opening chapter (1:1–18). It is also mentioned in John's first epistle (1 John 1:1–4), where it states: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life—the

life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declared to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read Matthew 3:1–17; Mark 1:1–11; Luke 3:1–23a; John 1:6–8, 19–34.

First Impressions: Group Discussion

Reflect for a moment on the passages you have just read.

Respond by recording your first impressions from your initial reading of the text. Be prepared to share one of your impressions with your discussion group.

Heartbeat: John 3:16 (Memory verse)

(Write out the verse in the spaces below. Practice it each time you open your lesson.)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 1:1-34 NKJV

The Eternal Word

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John's Witness: The True Light

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Word Becomes Flesh

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

A Voice in the Wilderness

19 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.'" 24 Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them, saying,

“I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27 It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Lamb of God

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

(Scripture from the New King James Bible, © 1980 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.)

OBSERVATION: Look!

Pray. Read through the Bible passage several times, trying to get a big picture of what is going on.

Left Column (Facts): Following the writer in the order he tells the story, briefly describe who is involved, what is happening, when and where the events are taking place.

Right Column (Observations): Look more closely to observe details. Some questions you may ask:

- What do you know about the people involved in the story? What questions does the story raise? What sources of conflict do you see? What does Jesus identify as true and important to life?
- Put yourself in the Biblical character’s shoes. What were his ambitions? How did the character relate to others or to God? What problem did he think he faced? Did Jesus identify a different problem in his life? What did he discover about God? How did he respond?
- Are there any words that you are not familiar with? Look up the definition.
- Are there words or phrases that are repeated or emphasized? Why do they seem to be key?
- Identify comparisons, such as “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven...” What do you know about leaven (yeast)? Identify contrasts, such as “You have heard it said...but I say to you...”.
- Extra: Record information you may find in Bible dictionaries, maps, handbooks, or encyclopedias. Understanding the culture/time in which Jesus lived will help you discover the meaning of the text.

John 1:1-5 The Eternal Word

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

John 1:6-13: John's Witness to the True Light

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

John 1:14-18: The Word Becomes Flesh

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

APPLICATION: How Does it Apply to Me?

Pray. **Practicing Biblical truth day-to-day** is the only way to grow in Christ and reflect the glory of God. To apply the spiritual lesson you have learned from the text, you have to take deliberate action. Take the time to examine yourself, and ask: Does this spiritual lesson point out error in my thoughts about God? Does it point to error in my attitude or actions? How does this lesson relate to my home life, my work, my relationships, how I spend my time, etc? What change is required? What practical steps will I take to make that change? ***Write your application in the form of a question to help make it personal.***

John 1:1-5

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

John 1:6-13

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

John 1:14-18

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

John 1:19-34

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Take A Closer Look: Dealing With Temptation

Review Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13

Have you ever found yourself entertaining the notion that once you came to Christ, life would become a bed of roses; that if you are walking in the will of God, it will get easier, not harder? If so, the Bible presents us with a good reality check: “Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the Devil.” The word “then” (Luke 4:1) attaches Jesus’ baptism to the satanic confrontation immediately following the Father’s declaration: “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him” (Luke 3:21–22).

As Christians committed to obeying God’s Word, what are we to do when we are tempted to sin? Will we fail or prevail? The truth is we will do a little of both at different times. The key is to look at the example of Jesus, who was fully tempted in every way just as we are, yet He was without sin. He constantly relied upon the Holy Spirit for strength and God’s Word for guidance.

1. Using Luke 4:1–13 as your anchor text, what was the first area in which the devil tempted Jesus? vv. 3–4 How did Jesus respond to this temptation?

The words “if You are the Son of God” in the Greek translates to “since You are the Son of God,” meaning that the devil himself acknowledged Jesus’ deity. Jesus indeed had the power to command that rocks be turned into bread or to make manna appear, but the Father had not yet directed Him to use that power to feed Himself. Satan was tempting Jesus in the area He was presently most vulnerable—the lust of the flesh.

- a. According to John 6:47–51, what did Jesus become for everyone who receives Him?

Every moment spent in God’s Word is nourishment for the soul. By following Jesus’ example we are able to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”

- b. Look up Isaiah 55:1–2 and note the benefits that come to you from God’s Word. Think about what a difference this could make in your life.

Growing up in Christ means moving on from the “milk” of the Word as a babe to the more solid portions of Scripture, making you able to discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:12–14).

2. How did Satan tempt Jesus a second time? vv. 5-8 What was His response?

Every nation of the world was up for grabs at that moment; everything was Satan's to give but the stakes were high. The price tag meant bowing down and worshipping Satan, the god of this world. Originally, God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth but when they yielded to Satan's temptation, they forfeited their dominion to his control. Until the day when God will ultimately create a new heaven and a new earth, this world is the devil's domain.

Satan offered Jesus a shortcut but acceptance of his terms would mean choosing a path other than the one God intended for Him. Jesus had come to die for the sins of the world and, had He accepted Satan's terms, we could not be saved. Jesus declares God's Word as His answer: worship is to be offered up only to God Almighty! There remained one more temptation to endure.

3. What is the third temptation? vv. 9–12 How does Jesus respond?

Satan is revealed in the Word as the "father of lies." In his third and final temptation he quotes the truth of God's Word but attempts to twist it to his own advantage. The approach is much more subtle but extremely dangerous.

Think about it: Have you ever witnessed anyone saying or doing something bizarre supposedly to bring glory to God while intentionally drawing attention in their own direction? Some people will go to extraordinary means, exhibiting crazy behavior like walking through fire, charming snakes or drinking poison. Jesus called all such foolishness tempting God.

- a. Remember, God's children are not called to put themselves into harm's way; rather we are called to be what, in order to draw people to Jesus? Matthew 5:13–16

- b. All sin fits into one of three categories; list them below. See 1 John 2:15–17.

- c. Personal: In which of these three areas are you currently wrestling with temptation? How should you respond?

4. When Satan ended his attacks on Jesus, what did Satan do? Luke 4:13

"Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him" (Matthew 4:11). Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit and quoting the Word of God, resisted Satan's every attempt, gaining the victory on our behalf!

- a. Similarly, what are you to do when facing your spiritual enemy? 1 Peter 5:8–9

Behold & Be Transformed

What did you **see** as you beheld God's Son?

How does beholding (looking upon) Him, motivate you to change your thoughts, habit, attitude, speech or actions?

Pause . . . What is the most significant lesson you have learned this week?

Ponder . . . How will you put it into practice?

Pray . . . Write out your prayer and be specific.

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