

MATTHEW

Lesson 2 w/Answers

Matthew Chapters 3-4

We continue our study of Matthew with a look at a very familiar story to many of you. I am referring to the story of John the Baptist, wandering in the wilderness preaching repentance from sin, and Christ being baptized but then led into the wilderness to be tested by Satan. My prayer is that God will give you new insight regarding the significance of these verses, and that you will grow in your walk with Him as a result.

In conjunction with your study of this lesson, you may want to access some online or book reference materials to learn a little bit about Herod and John the Baptist. We will discover as we study Matthew that many people and characters pass through the chapters of his Gospel—and none are recorded there by accident. I pray that you will learn as much about them and their actions as you can; since we know that God has a purpose in all that He does and in every word contained within the Bible.

We pick up our study now in Matthew Chapter 3. The baby Jesus has grown up to be a man and He approaches John the Baptist as the first step in the beginning of his earthly ministry.

Read Matthew Chapters 3 and 4 and consider the following:

1. As John the Baptist is preaching, certain religious leaders approach him. Compare what he says in Matthew 3:7-10 with what Paul writes in Acts 26:20. What is scripture telling us is a sign of true repentance?
 - a. ANSWER: When we bear fruit—our fruit, our works or acts will tell the world if we are repented sinners and followers of Christ, or just pretenders relying on our works for our righteousness.
2. Read what John the Baptist says will happen in Matthew 3:11. Was he correct? (see Acts 2:1-4)
 - a. ANSWER: Absolutely, it was the beginning or birth of the Church that he was telling about, when God sent His Holy Spirit to empower and bring life to the Church, and to each of us.
3. Read Matthew 3:16-17, which describes events occurring in the overall tapestry of Christ's baptism. Can you identify the Holy Trinity within these verses? Please elaborate how in your answer?
 - a. ANSWER: Clearly we see the Trinity represented here in Jesus, the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, and God who literally speaks from heaven.
4. Read Chapter Matthew 4:1-11. How does Christ being led by God into the wilderness compare with God leading his chosen people out of Egypt and into the wilderness? (There are many similarities. Can you identify some? Why were they both led into the wilderness?)
 - a. ANSWER 1: The wilderness pulls us out of the world around us, just as it did for Moses and the slaves, and just as it did for Christ. In the wilderness, God can tear us down to build us up anew on a stronger and eternal foundation based on Christ.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In the wilderness Moses and the slaves had to rely on God and not their own resources. They had to go where God was leading them and not where they wanted to go, and the time they spent in the wilderness allowed their reliance and memories and of past idols to fade and be replaced with worshipping the one true God.
5. What does your answer to Question 4 above say to you regarding your own personal experiences with God?
 - a. ANSWER 1: God will do the same with us, i.e., pull us out of this world so that we are "not of this world", just as Jesus is not of this world.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Romans 12:2 tells us to not be conformed to the ways of this world. In leading us into the wilderness God helps us to begin that transformation.
6. Over how many days was Christ tempted in the wilderness by Satan? (and no; 40 days is the wrong answer; look again.)
 - a. ANSWER: It would appear that he was only tempted for a single day, that day came after forty days of fasting. Christ was not tempted for forty days.
7. How long did Christ fast in the wilderness? Why do you suppose he fasted for so long?
 - a. ANSWER: Forty days; it was the beginning of his ministry, and there was much to pray about and to consider before he was ready to begin his ministry and head toward the cross.

8. What is the value of fasting?
- a. ANSWER: Read Isaiah Chapter 58. God tells us that the fast He chooses for us is, "To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke." He goes on to say, "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you;"
9. Have you ever considered fasting?
- a. ANSWER: If you have not it is definitely something you should pray about. God will speak to you in ways you cannot imagine, even on short twenty-four fast.
10. Match the following verses to Christ's responses to each of Satan's 3 tests. Simply list a number, e.g., 1, 2, or 3, beside the verses that apply to each of the temptations.
- a. Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20
 - i. ANSWER: Test 3
 - b. Deuteronomy 8:3
 - i. ANSWER: Test 1
 - c. Deuteronomy 6:16
 - i. ANSWER: Test 2
11. How do Satan's various temptations of Christ compare with Satan's temptations of Eve?
- a. Compare Genesis 3:1 with Matthew 4:3. What do they have in common?
 - i. ANSWER: Food, he was tempting both Eve and Christ with food.
 - b. Compare Genesis 3:4 with Matthew 4:6. What do they have in common?
 - i. ANSWER: God won't kill you. If you listen to Satan, he claims that you will not die.
 - c. Compare Genesis 3:5 with Matthew 4:8-9. What do they have in common?
 - i. ANSWER: You can be like God, in fact Satan wants you to think that, that you and God are equals.
12. Given your answers to the two questions above, what have we learned about Satan when he tempts us, and how we should handle it?
- a. ANSWER: Satan always appeals to the "lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life" when he tempts us. We need to be on guard that when these things begin to appeal to us, and we need to watch out—Satan is trying to lead us into the world rather than allowing us to be "not of the world". He knows how weak we can be and how easily deceived we can be if we are not careful. But James tells us that if we resist the devil, "he will flee".

From before the beginning of Christ's ministry Satan was out to destroy Him as well as God's overall plan for mankind. From the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden through the entire Old Testament, we see Satan trying every trick that he can to thwart God's plan.

Matthew conveys to us that when Christ was walking the earth to begin his earthly ministry, Satan became very aggressive and confronted Christ in the wilderness; once again trying to alter God's plan. Once again, we see that Christ was victorious over Satan, and He is still faithful today as our Lord and Savior.

As you reflect on this lesson, I encourage you to faithfully consider Christ's reactions to Satan, His use of scripture, His daily prayer, and yes, His fasting as well. These are all examples which Christ provides us. They serve as a model for our how we should respond to Satan temptation.

May we grow spiritually from our study of this great gospel message. Christ is real, He's alive, and he is coming again. Let us, like John, actively proclaim his second coming and praise him for saving us.

In Christ,

Wes