



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

New Testament Survey

Lesson 3 – John the Baptist and Jesus

The Ministry of Jesus

Read the listed passages as you study each of the events below:

John the Baptist prepares the way (Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 1:80, 3:1-18)

These events took place in the year 26 AD. Tiberius was co-regent with Augustus for about two years before Augustus died in 14 AD. Thus, Tiberius' fifteenth year would be about 26 AD. At that time Palestine was divided into four parts and the ruler of each part was called a tetrarch (ruler of a fourth part):

- Judea and Samaria – The ruler was Herod Archelaus from 4 BC to 6 AD. After 6 AD this part was ruled by procurators or governors. Pontius Pilate began to be procurator in about 26 AD.
- Iturea and Trachonitis – The ruler was Philip (4 BC - 34 AD), but not the same Philip whose wife Herodias was stolen from him by Herod Antipas.
- Abilene in Syria – The ruler was Lysanias (4 BC - 37 AD).
- Galilee and Perea – The ruler was Herod Antipas (4 BC - 39 AD).

John the Baptist had strange clothes and food. His message: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”** (Matthew [3:2](#)). John's baptism was a means of grace – a way by which God conveyed to men the forgiveness of sins, which was later to be won through Christ. John was the forerunner of the Messiah. He said: **“He who is coming after me is mightier than I.”** (Matthew [3:11](#)). He baptized those who confessed their sins, but he refused to baptize those who were unrepentant. He rebuked those who wanted to go through the motions of religion without bringing forth good fruit in their lives. Notice that John was no pacifist. He did not demand that soldiers give up their work in order to become believers in Christ.

John the Baptist baptizes Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23)

John refused to baptize Jesus at first, because he knew that Jesus was a holy person. Yet Jesus wanted to be baptized because He was taking our place and doing everything that was necessary for us to do. In Jesus' baptism the Triune God showed Himself: the Father in the voice from heaven; the Son in Jesus; the Holy Spirit in the dove that came down on Jesus. So also our baptisms are in the name of the Triune God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We become the children of God the Father, we put on Christ as our covering,

and the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. What is always true of Jesus becomes true of us in baptism: we become God's beloved children in whom He is well-pleased through the forgiveness of our sins.

At Jesus' baptism it became obvious that He was the Christ (the Messiah), not anointed with oil, but with the Holy Spirit; He was anointed to be our High Priest, Prophet, and King. **"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him"** (Acts 10:38). Jesus did not become the Christ at His baptism, however. He was already the Christ when He was conceived and born.

The devil tempts Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus was physically weak when He was tempted by Satan, but He overcame Satan with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The first Adam failed when he was tempted, even though he was in the best of places and in the best of health. Jesus, the second Adam, succeeded when tempted, even though he was in the wilderness and physically weak. Jesus was truly tempted, just as we are, yet without sin. See Hebrews 4:15.

All three verses of Scripture that Jesus quoted are from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13). The devil also quoted Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12), but he quoted God's Word incorrectly in a wicked attempt to get Jesus to sin.

The three temptations:

1. Turn stones to bread. But Jesus' miracles were not for Himself alone.
2. Jump off the temple. But Jesus had no promise of protection if He dared God to protect Him. That would be tempting God.
3. Worship Satan to receive the kingdoms of this world. But we should worship God only.

We are to fight against the devil as Jesus did, using the same weapons, which is the Word of God.

The Word became flesh (John 1:1-18)

This is a very important section of Scripture, teaching us that Jesus is true God from eternity, but at a certain time He who has always been God became a human being. This is the incarnation. John the Baptist was the man God chose to tell people who Jesus was.

Note: The man John who wrote the Gospel of John is not the same man as John the Baptist.

The Lamb of God (John 1:19-34)

John the Baptist confesses that he is not the Christ, but only the one to prepare the way for the Christ. John points to Jesus as the Christ: **"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"** (v. 29). Lambs were used for Old Testament sacrifices. Here

is God's choice for a sacrifice, as prophesied in Isaiah 53. Jesus was not only the Lamb of God; John also called Him the Son of God because he saw the Spirit come down on Him at His baptism, even as God had told him beforehand.

The first disciples (John 1:35-51)

Two of John the Baptist's disciples began to follow Jesus. Most likely these two were Andrew and John (the author of this Gospel – John never calls himself by name in his own Gospel). Andrew told his brother Simon (also known as Peter and Cephas): **“We have found the Messiah”** (v. 41). It is possible that John told a similar thing to his brother James. On the next day Jesus called Philip, and Philip invited Nathanael (Bartholomew) to come to Jesus. Philip confessed: **“We have found Him of whom Moses...and also the prophets wrote”** (v. 45). It is amazing how quickly these first disciples recognized that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, even before they saw any miracles.

Jesus changes water to wine (John 2:1-12)

In the presence of His mother and His first disciples Jesus did His first sign or miracle. He **“manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him”** (v. 11). This account shows that Jesus is neither against weddings nor is he against the moderate drinking of alcohol. Notice that Jesus gently rebuked His mother for trying to tell Him what to do in His office as the Messiah.

Jesus cleanses the Temple (John 2:13-22)

This is the first time that Jesus cleansed the Temple. He did it once again shortly before He was killed. At Passover time, people needed animals for sacrifices. Supplying such animals had become a profitable business. This is one time when Jesus used physical force in His ministry. When Jews challenged his authority over the temple, Jesus predicted for the first time His own death and resurrection as the sign of His authority. Notice that as the Temple was God's dwelling place on earth, Jesus is God Himself on the earth. **“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”** (Colossians 2:9).

Nicodemus (John 2:23 – 3:21)

The Pharisees kept the Law very strictly, and they also added many of their own rules to the Law. They believed in keeping themselves separate from others whom they considered less holy than themselves.

Jesus told Nicodemus some of the most profound Christian truths, such as: **“You must be born again”** (v. 3:7). **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”** (v. 3:6). **“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”** (v. 3:16).

Being born of water and Spirit refers to baptism.

Jesus compared His coming crucifixion on Calvary to Moses' lifting up of the brass snake on the pole. The serpent was put on a pole. Jesus was nailed to a cross. The serpent looked like the cause of death. Jesus was made a curse for us as our sin-bearer. By looking up at the brass snake, the Israelites were saved. By looking up at our crucified Savior in faith, we are saved.

Nicodemus later became a believer in Jesus and helped to bury His body (see John 7:50-52, 19:39-40).

John is happy in Jesus (John 3:22-36)

John, his disciples, and Jesus' disciples all baptized people. John's disciples became jealous because Jesus was attracting a greater crowd than their master John. But John said: **"He must increase, but I must decrease"** (v. 30). This is a good motto for every Christian, particularly every pastor and teacher and church leader.

John taught his disciples and the general public the absolute truth concerning Jesus: **"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"** (v. 26). We can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

John in prison (Matthew 4:12, 14:3-4; Mark 1:14, 6:17-18; Luke 3:19-20; John 4:1-3)

Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 3:1), stole his brother Philip's wife. Philip was the tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis. John rebuked Herod for his adultery. As a result, Herod Antipas put John in prison, and there John remained for the rest of his life.

According to other historical accounts of the period, this prison was in the forbidding fortress of Machaerus east of the Dead Sea. After John had been imprisoned, Jesus left Judea and carried out His ministry in Galilee.

According to many Bible scholars, the events of this lesson took place from late 26 AD to the spring of 27 AD.

Questions

1. What was unusual about the lifestyle of John the Baptist?
2. What was the message of John the Baptist?
3. Why is “Lamb of God” a very good name for Jesus?
4. How did the three Persons of God reveal themselves at Jesus’ baptism?
5. What did Jesus use to overcome the temptations of the devil?
6. What is meant by the sentence: “The Word became flesh”?
7. What did Jesus’ first disciples know about Him from the beginning?
8. What do Jesus’ miracles show us about Him?
9. In what way did Jesus’ body resemble the Temple at Jerusalem?
10. What are the points of comparison between the snake on a pole and Jesus on the cross?
11. Why does each one of us needs to be born again?
12. In what ways is John the Baptist a model for every Christian pastor?