

One Story: Baptism and Temptation

Topic

Temptation and baptism of Christ

Theme

Jesus' baptism and victory over temptation showed He is approved by the Father and qualified to be the Savior.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will acknowledge Jesus as the approved and qualified Savior, realizing his need to grow to be like Him.

Materials

- Resources 1, 8, and 9
- Store or Web ads
- Juices, pitchers, and cups

Scripture Focus

Matt. 3; 4:1–11; Mark 1:1–13; Luke 3:1–23

Summary

This lesson traces Jesus' life from His boyhood, through His initiation into public ministry (His baptism), to His temptation by Satan in the wilderness. Both Jesus' baptism and temptation demonstrate that Jesus' is sinless and qualified to be the Savior.

Outline

I. Jesus' Boyhood

II. Jesus' Baptism: Approved

- A. God sent John to prepare for Christ
- B. God disapproved of the religious leaders
- C. God approved of Christ

III. Jesus' Temptation: Qualified

- A. Test 1: To provide bread
- B. Test 2: To win popular acclaim
- C. Test 3: To gain kingdoms to rule

Memory Verse

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"
(2 Corinthians 5:21).

Living in the -er Days

Display a few store ads from the newspaper or project a few ads from the Web that promote products that promise to make life better in some way. Organize the learners into groups of four or five. Have each group list comparatives that companies use to get people to buy their products (e.g. greener, thinner, healthier, more modern). Give the groups three minutes to come up with as many comparatives as they can. When the time is up, congratulate the team with the longest list and ask each group to share a few of their answers.

We could call the days in which we live the *-er* days to reflect the drive consumers have to be better and have better things. But no matter how greener, faster, thinner, healthier, or whatever *elser* we make our worlds, it doesn't change the fact that each one of us is a *sinner*. Only Jesus lived sin free. And even though His teeth could have probably been whiter, He lived on earth as perfectly holy. His holiness qualified Him to be our Savior. This lesson presents two events from Jesus' life that demonstrated He is the sinless Son of God.

Taste Test

Set up a taste test using one hundred percent pure fruit juice and a fruit drink with artificial flavors and ingredients. It is best if both drinks are the same flavor (e.g., orange, apple). Pour the fruit drinks into pitchers so the learners don't see the original labeled containers. Provide small disposable cups for the learners to use to taste each drink. Have them vote for which one they think is the purest. Keep track of the results and then reveal which drink was pure and which one had artificial flavors and ingredients.

ASK: What evidence did you use in picking which juice was pure and which one was artificial?

ASK: What could we do to make the artificial juice pure? *Nothing.*

The juice with artificial ingredients will never be one hundred percent pure fruit juice. It could never reach that standard.

In this lesson we will examine the beginning of Jesus' ministry and learn that He was qualified to become the Savior of the world. Both His baptism and His temptation in the wilderness gave evidence that He is perfectly holy. As the perfect Son of God, Jesus could redeem us from our sins.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Jesus' Boyhood

The Bible does not record much about Jesus' childhood and youth. But we know that because He assumed a body, He limited Himself to the requirements of

that body. We know that He grew strong and wise and that the grace of God was upon Him. He increased in all the qualities of a complete person—in body, mind, and soul (Luke 2:40, 52).

READ: Luke 2:52. **ASK:** Why would it be important for Jesus to grow in favor with both God and other people? (Q3) *Growing in favor with the Father demonstrated on a spiritual level that He was perfect and did everything the Father wanted Him to do. Growing in favor with His fellow men demonstrated on a practical level that Jesus was sinless in His relationships.*

The Gospels afford us only one glimpse of Jesus during His years at Nazareth. That glimpse concerns His journey to Jerusalem at the age of twelve.

READ: Luke 2:47. **ASK:** What does the astonishment of those who heard Jesus indicate about Jesus' questions and answers? (Q4) *The questions and answers showed Jesus was wise beyond His years. He had unheard of knowledge and understanding for His age.*

Jesus' meeting with the temple leaders demonstrated His unusual knowledge of the Old Testament and His insight into its meaning. The doctors of the law couldn't believe a child could know so much and communicate so well.

Joseph and Mary had started heading for home when they discovered after a day's journey that Jesus was missing. They weren't being bad parents, they assumed He was with their relatives traveling with them. They quickly returned to Jerusalem, where they found Him in the temple. Jesus was on His own for a total of three days. Mary then asked, *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing* (2:48). Any parent would understand Mary's reaction. Knowing your twelve-year-old was on his own in a big city would be rather unsettling.

READ: Luke 2:49. **ASK:** What did Jesus' response reveal about His awareness of Who He was and why He was on earth? (Q5) *He knew He was God's Son and that the Father had a mission for Him to accomplish on earth.*

God the Father protected the baby Jesus when Herod sent soldiers to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:13–15). Certainly under the Father's care Jesus was safe as a nearly adolescent boy, not to mention the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and more than capable of taking care of Himself. Mary and Joseph did not follow those lines of reasoning. And they didn't understand what Jesus meant by being about His Father's business. One day they would. Dutifully Jesus returned to the routine of life at Nazareth, obedient to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51).

II. Jesus' Baptism: Approved

When it was time to begin His public ministry, Jesus sought out John the Baptist. He found him at the Jordan River baptizing people.

A. God sent John to prepare for Christ

In the closing verses of the Old Testament, the last of the prophets had proph-

esied, *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse* (Mal. 4:5, 6). Four hundred years of silence had passed since that prophecy. Then an angel of the Lord announced to Zacharias that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would be blessed with a son, John, who would *go before him [the Messiah] in the spirit and power of [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord* (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy at least in part. The Jews' rejection and eventual beheading of him kept him from fulfilling it completely (Matt. 17:10–13). So Elijah will come in the future to fulfill the prophecy. It is plausible that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses to appear during the Tribulation (Rev. 11).

In the desert John preached, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 3:2), not to call his fellow Jews to insurrection, revolution, or riot against Gentile rulers, but to stir them to a personal sense of sin and need of reconciliation to God, since the promised kingdom would be a kingdom of righteousness. The Baptism of John was merely a sign of true reconciliation with God. John's baptism never brought salvation. Simply being baptized by John would be worthless without repentance and faith in God.

B. God disapproved of the religious leaders

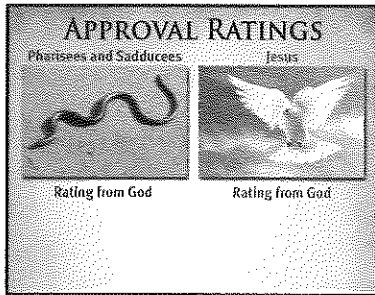
The Sadducees and Pharisees were among those who came out to John in the wilderness to be baptized by him. But their motives were not pure. They weren't actually interested in genuine repentance. They were there for attention. John saw through their pretense and called them a *generation of vipers* (Matt. 3:7), meaning they were the offspring of a viper, possibly a reference to Satan (cf. Gen. 3:14, 15; John 8:44). Vipers were highly poisonous snakes that lived in the wilderness. John the Baptist would have been quite familiar with such snakes. He made a correlation between the viper's poisonous venom and the religious leaders' beliefs. The Pharisees were self-righteous followers of the many traditions they wrote and imposed on the law. They believed God was pleased with their works, so they saw no reason to repent. The Sadducees were religious liberals who compromised the law. They didn't believe in anything miraculous. They denied there was a resurrection. They sought to get all they could from anyone they could in the here and now. They believed they controlled their own destiny. The two groups strongly opposed each other, but their high view of self was essentially the same. That common self-righteousness was their venom. Their position of leadership made them dangerous to the Jews.

As the religious leaders drew near to John the Baptist, he asked them who had warned them to flee God's wrath (Matt. 3:7). The picture is of vipers fleeing before a fire. John understood that the religious leaders viewed his baptism as another outward act that could benefit their standing before men and add to their acceptance before God. John did not indulge their poisonous self-righteousness by baptizing them.

READ: Matthew 3:8. **ASK:** What would be true of the religious leaders if they repented? (Q6) *They would bear fruit of repentance.*

The Pharisees and Sadducees gave no evidence of actual repentance. They were fruitless.

John the Baptist went on to debunk the Jews' belief that simply being Jewish made them acceptable to God (Matt. 3:9). He pointed out that God could choose to make even lifeless stones, which were perhaps a reference to Gentiles, to become children of Abraham. Instead of being guaranteed a place in God's Kingdom, those Jews who never bore fruit of repentance would eventually be judged by God by fire (3:10–12).



RESOURCE: Display resource 8. **READ:** Matthew 3:10–12. **ASK:** Describe the approval rating God gave to the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Record or reveal answers.) (Q7) *They got a zero approval rating from God.*

ASK: Were the religious leaders without hope? Explain. (Q8) *No. They could acknowledge their sin and respond to God.*

One might conclude that John the Baptist was rather harsh to the Pharisees and Sadducees. But he actually was kind to them in that he exposed their self-righteousness and told them how to avoid God's wrath.

C. God approved of Christ

Jesus came to John to be baptized sometime after John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees and after John baptized a crowd of people (Luke 3:21).

READ: Matthew 3:13, 14. **ASK:** Why did John feel inadequate to baptize Jesus? (Q9) *John was baptizing those who had received remission of sins. John felt that Jesus should baptize him as a sign of his remission of sins. Jesus didn't need remission of sins and therefore would not need baptized.*

Why did Jesus come to be baptized with a baptism of repentance? Of all the people who attended John's baptisms, Jesus alone stood sinless. When John argued against baptizing Him, Jesus responded that they needed to carry through with His baptism *to fulfil all righteousness* (Matt. 3:15). Jesus had lived a perfect life in complete obedience to God's law. In submitting to the baptism, He was not confessing sin, for He had none; He was completing another act in His continual submission to God's will.

Through His baptism, Jesus Christ identified with the transgressors who had expressed repentance by submitting to baptism (Matt. 3:2, 5, 6; cf. Isa. 53:12). Jesus recognized that the sin of the world demanded a Redeemer. His baptism demonstrated His willingness to be counted as a sinner to bear our sin (2 Cor. 5:21). His baptism prefigured His death for sin, the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18).

READ: Matthew 3:16, 17. **ASK:** How did God use Jesus' baptism to show His approval of Jesus? (Q10) *The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and God the Father said He was well pleased with His beloved Son.*

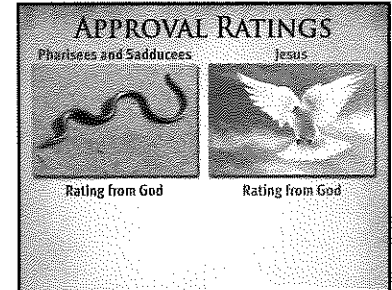
It seems appropriate that some *inauguration*, some expression of approval from the Father, would take place as Jesus began His public ministry. The voice

from Heaven (Matt. 3:17) confirmed that the Son of Man was also the Son of God. It also testified to the perfection of Christ. His baptism was not to confess His sins but to testify to His obedience. He always pleased the Father.

ASK: How was Jesus' baptism important to the crowd at the Jordan? (Q11)

They needed to know that Jesus is God's Son and has God's authority.

RESOURCE: Display resource 8. **ASK:** Describe the approval rating God gave to Jesus. (Record or reveal answers.) (Q12) *Jesus approval rating was as high as it could be. He was acceptable to the Father in every way.*



III. Jesus' Temptation: Qualified

Having been approved by God at His baptism, Jesus moved to the temptation in the wilderness, the next phase of the beginning of His ministry.

READ: Matthew 4:1. **ASK:** Why is it important to know that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted? (Q13) *It shows that there was a purpose that God wanted to accomplish through the temptation.*

For forty days Jesus lived in the wilderness without food. His *meat* was the will of God (John 4:34), and the living *water* of the Holy Spirit's presence in His prayer life sustained Him and prepared Him for the contest with Satan.

A. Test 1: To provide bread

Going without food for forty days takes an incredible amount of strength and fortitude. The normal human response to such prolonged food deprivation is severe weight loss, pain, extreme listlessness, and confusion. So Satan started with offering Jesus food. In response Jesus directly addressed the real issue: *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3). What God says is more important than what Satan says and more important than what our own needs and desires tell us. God's will should always determine the choices we make.

Did Jesus have a right to have bread? After all, He had sacrificed His physical needs for forty days and nights in devoting Himself to God. Wasn't it time to meet His body's nutritional needs again? Hunger in the will of God should never be satisfied out of His will. Hunger, or need, within God's will is better than bread, or satisfaction, out of the will of God. Jesus Christ refused to satisfy His physical need for food outside the will of God. Had He yielded to that temptation, He would have disqualified Himself from being the Savior of the world. Of course that was never a possibility. Jesus couldn't sin because He is the perfect Son of God.

ASK: Satan attacks humanity using the lust of the flesh. What is universal record for all humanity in facing temptations that appeal to the lust of the flesh? (Q14) *All have failed at some point.*

Jesus faced Satan with the Word of God as His only weapon, and Satan lost the first round in the battle to break the Son's loyalty to the Father.

B. Test 2: To win popular acclaim

Having failed in his first attempt to entice Jesus away from His program of ministry, Satan shifted his attack to something more precious to Jesus than the satisfaction of physical needs. Satan took Him from the desert to the holy city and its glorious temple, the heart of worship and service to God and the highest point in the city. Acknowledging that Jesus is the Son of God and therefore in a special relationship to God, Satan urged Him to throw Himself down from that dizzy height in a demonstration of His trust in God (Matt. 4:5, 6). It was a subtle, clever suggestion, underlined with a passage of Scripture. Jesus had used the Old Testament, and Satan began to argue from the same basis.

Satan's second test of Christ probed His confidence in God: *Cast Yourself down; You're the Son of God. It will be a miraculous display of Your relationship to the Father as we see God take care of You.* The Jews expected the Messiah to come in a spectacular way: *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple* (Mal. 3:1). Here was an opportunity to announce the beginning of His ministry in a dramatic way and thereby gain the attention and support of the leaders of the temple and the city.

Notice that Satan did not attempt in any way to force Jesus to jump. The Devil does not *make* us sin. Temptations may come to us, but we must consent to them before they become sins. Consistent with his behavior with Adam and Eve, Satan misquoted the Scripture, leaving out *to keep thee in all thy ways* (cf. Ps. 91:11, 12; Matt. 4:6). *Cast thyself down* is not part of the passage in Psalm 91. Daring God by putting oneself deliberately in danger is not trusting God. We do not invite trouble just to claim God's protection.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16, saying, *It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt [test] the Lord thy God* (Matt. 4:7). He emphasized that Scripture is more than occasional texts. God's words are not to be used out of context to support someone's desires. Jesus did not need a miracle to prove that He had confidence in God.

ASK: Satan seemed to be looking out for Jesus by giving Him an opportunity to get ahead. Satan does the same to us. Why is that wily tactic so effective? (Q15) *Because the end is positive. We use the end to justify the means.*

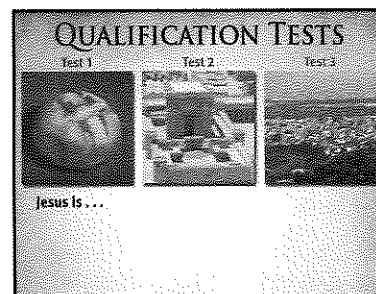
C. Test 3: To gain kingdoms to rule

The vision of a worldwide network of lands and people in a unified government has been the goal of a number of ambitious leaders. Jesus of Nazareth, descendant of King David, would be eligible to assume the throne of a united Israel and restore the nation's ancient glory. Satan supposed that having that position, plus making Israel the head of all the nations and ruling them, would appeal to Jesus. Showing Christ all these kingdoms, he made to Jesus the grandiose offer of all the kingdoms of the world if He would just acknowledge Satan as an object of worship (Matt. 4:8, 9). Satan was offering a compromise; the kingdoms came with a price tag: Satan would retain his position, and Jesus would worship him. He could have the kingdoms without the cross. But no one can serve two masters (6:24), and we must worship the one we serve.

Satan's offer provided immediate authority over kingdoms, but Psalm 2 draws a more accurate picture of the prospect for world leadership. God has promised the uttermost parts of the earth for the Son's possession. The psalm advises the kings and judges to serve the Lord with fear: *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way* (Ps. 2:12).

Jesus answered, *It is written* and then ordered Satan to leave. The Devil left for a season, defeated but not destroyed.

RESOURCE: Display resource 9. **ASK:** Based on the account of Jesus' temptation, what would you conclude about Jesus' qualification to be the Savior? (Record or reveal answer.) (Q16) *Jesus is perfectly sinless and therefore the only One qualified to be the Savior of the world.*



MAKING IT PERSONAL

Expression of Appreciation

Jesus' qualification to be the Savior of the world is a glorious truth. Without Him, we would be hopeless. Give your learners an opportunity to communicate to God their appreciation for sending His Son, the only One qualified to be their Savior. (Q17)

The -ers in My Life

Studying about Jesus' qualification to be the Savior should remind us that we need Him as our Savior. It should also remind us that once we are saved, our focus in life should be about growing spiritually and glorifying God. We need to evaluate whether we have become like the Pharisees and Sadducees who thought highly of themselves and made life all about pleasing self. Have we become focused on -ers?

ASK: What are the -ers that threaten to draw your focus in life? (Q18)

ASK: How satisfied might you hope to become in striving to look better, feel better, and have better things? (Q19)

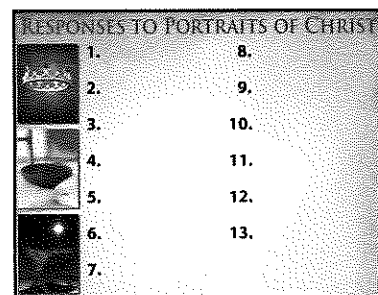
We need to be careful that we don't make goals like getting whiter teeth, a slimmer waistline, or a smaller carbon footprint a substitute for spiritual growth.

ASK: What are the -ers that should capture our focus as we seek to live for God in the power of the Spirit? (Q20) *Holier, kinder, humbler.*

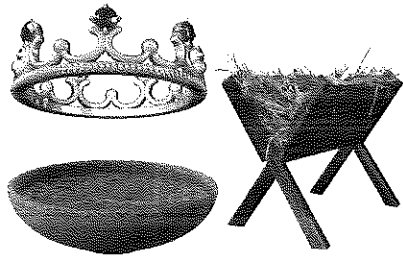
Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 6 or use the following: Recognize Jesus as the approved and qualified Savior.

Encourage learners to memorize 2 Corinthians 5:21. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.



One Story: Miracles



Topic

Jesus' compassion

Theme

Jesus used His power to demonstrate His compassion.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will plan a way to demonstrate the compassion of Christ.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 10

Scripture Focus

Matt. 14:22–36; Mark 3:1–12; Luke 8:22–56

Summary

In Luke 4:18 and 19 Jesus outlined His mission on earth. This lesson considers the different ways He demonstrated His compassion by using His divine power over nature, sickness, Satan, and death.

Outline

I. Compassionate Power over Nature

- A. The obedient fish
- B. Calming the storm
- C. Feeding the five thousand

II. Compassionate Power over Sickness

- A. Healing the paralyzed man
- B. Cleansing the lepers
- C. Giving sight to the blind

III. Compassionate Power over Satan

IV. Compassionate Power over Death

Memory Verses

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19).