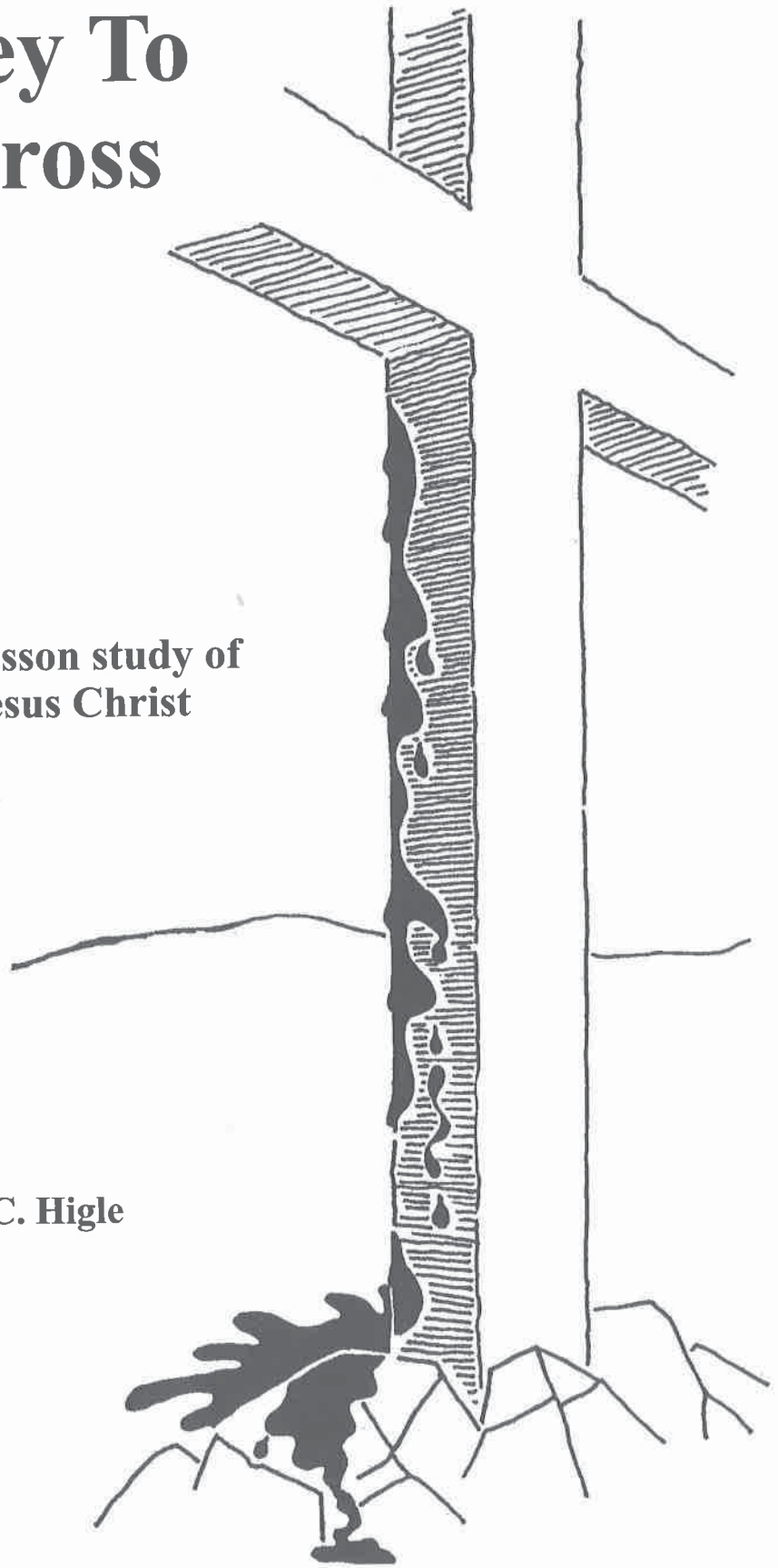


Journey To The Cross

A twenty-six lesson study of
the life of Jesus Christ

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Journey To The Cross

LESSON 4 . . .

III. HIS JOURNEY: The Beginning of the Earthly Ministry

A. The Preaching of John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18

About 18 years had passed since Jesus, at the age of 12, amazed the teachers in the temple. Therefore, at this point in His “journey,” Jesus and His cousin, John the Baptist, were about 30 years of age.

Since the time of Malachi, which was about 400 years earlier, God had been silent. Then, suddenly a prophet appeared in the wilderness of Judea near the Jordan River. This messenger, John the Baptist, was to be the last of the OT prophets.

John played a very important role in the life of Jesus as described in the Gospels. All four gospel writers introduce John at the beginning of their books and give more space to him than any other figure except Jesus.

John was bold and fearless in preaching the message God had given him to call the people to repentance. This kind of preaching had not been heard for more than 400 years, and it stirred the land. The revival made the people expectant for the Messiah’s coming. Vast numbers of people eagerly became John’s disciples and submitted to his baptism, so John quickly became the most popular Jewish figure in more than four centuries.

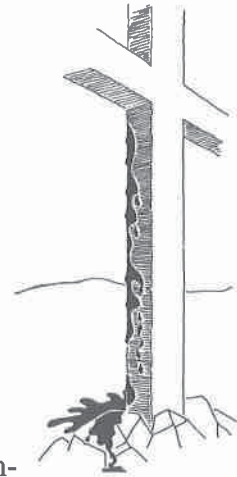
However, in the midst of his success and popularity, John never wavered in his loyalty to Jesus Christ. He knew he was only the forerunner, and he clearly prepared the people for One yet to come.

What did John mean by his words in Matthew 3:14, Mark 1:7, and John 3:30?

B. The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-33

The synoptic Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, and Luke*) record the baptism of Jesus, and John refers to it in John 1:29-34. When Jesus came up out of



Notes

the water praying, He and John the Baptist saw the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove upon Jesus. What OT prophecy was fulfilled at the baptism of Jesus (see Isaiah 42:1 and 61:1-2)?



At the baptism of Jesus the three persons of the Trinity are seen together for the first time in the Bible. Which person of the Trinity is seen in each of the following?

Voice from Heaven _____

Dove descending _____

Jesus _____

C. The Temptation of Jesus

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

The Bible records numerous temptations, but two stand out above all others. Notice the distinct contrast between them. In the first of these two, Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the paradise called Eden, which was a beautiful and plentiful garden that lacked nothing. In the second temptation, Satan tempted Jesus in a barren wilderness, where there was nothing for Him to eat. This contrast pictures the effect of sin on the world.



Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted*, which is better translated “tested.” The reason God allowed these temptations is very clear. Read Hebrews 2:17-18, and explain why Jesus was tempted:

The phrase *suffered being tempted* in Hebrews 2:18 shows this was not play-acting, but head-on spiritual warfare. The temptation of Jesus was just as real and agonizing to Him as our temptations are to us.

The English word *tempt* generally has a bad meaning. It always means to entice one to do wrong, or to seduce into sin. But the Greek word translated *tempt* in the account of Jesus’ temptation has quite a different meaning. It means to “test.” The same is often true of the word *tempt* in the OT. In Genesis 22:1 the Bible says, *God did tempt Abraham*. It is inconceivable that God would entice anyone into sin or wrongdoing. However,

this verse is quite clear when we understand it should be translated, “God did ‘test’ Abraham.” God always tests a person He intends to use in His work. God tests us not to make us bad but to make us better. Therefore, God’s Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be “tested.”

Let’s consider the first temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:3. What did Satan tempt Jesus to do?

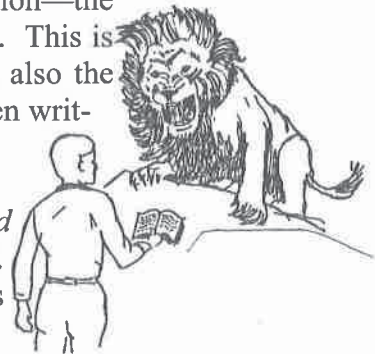
Notice the tactic of Satan: *IF thou be the Son of God.* “**IF.**” Satan did not deny point-blank that Jesus was the Son of God. He simply raised the question and demanded proof. How was this similar to the temptation Satan tried at the Cross through the mouths of the multitudes (see Matthew 27:40)?

In neither instance did Jesus yield to Satan’s temptation. There was nothing sinful about turning stones into bread or coming down from the cross. Jesus indeed had the power to do either, but to do so at the request of Satan and to depart from God’s plan for Him would have been sin.

Satan actually tempted Jesus to depend on His own resources rather than on God. He said, “Turn these stones into bread and fill your belly.” In what similar way does Satan tempt us today?

Notice the weapon Jesus chose to use during this time of temptation—the Word of God. His first reply was *It is written . . .* (Matthew 4:4). This is in perfect tense in Greek, which indicates completed action and also the state of being continued. The full meaning in Greek is, “It has been written and still stands written.”

Jesus then quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* Therefore, the Pentateuch (the first five books in the OT) was stamped as the Word of God by Jesus Himself.



Jesus’ second temptation is found in Matthew 4:5-7. Jesus had not surrendered to the temptation of physical appetite and hunger, so the Devil tried another side of His human nature. He took Jesus to the pinnacle of the

temple, which was the highest part of Herod's temple, and challenged Him to jump off, quoting Psalm 91:11-12. Satan took this scripture out of context and said, "If you really believe the Word of God, you can jump from this high place, and God will send angels to rescue you, or else He is a liar."

Jesus quickly answered Satan with another scripture from Deuteronomy 6:16, *Thou shalt not tempt (test) the Lord thy God*. This scripture clears up the passage the Devil had misquoted from *Psalms*. How?

The third temptation is in Matthew 4:8-10. Knowing Jesus would reign over the world through the path of suffering, agony, and death, Satan offered Him another way. He promised Jesus he would give Him all the kingdoms of the world, and He wouldn't have to die. Satan said, "I will give it to you the easy way. Just fall down for a moment and worship me." This was probably the greatest temptation of all. However, again Jesus answered with Scripture—Deuteronomy 6:13, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*.

In 1 John 2:16 the Bible tells us that all temptation falls into three categories: *lust of the flesh*, *lust of the eyes*, and *pride of life*.

Lust of the flesh refers to those desires that lead one to gratify physical desires and appetites. This suggests one's highest good and happiness comes from fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

Lust of the eyes refers to a more refined operation—fulfilling psychological lusts, such as looking at some object or place of authority that could build your ego if you had it. "Feast your eyes on that" is a modern equivalent of this temptation.

Pride of life refers to trying to attain or doing something to draw attention to oneself. The Greek word translated *pride* was often used to describe a boastful person trying to impress people with his importance or actions. People have always tried to impress others.

All temptation falls into one of these three categories. There are no new temptations or sins. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*.

Each of Jesus' temptations fits into one of these three categories. To better understand temptation, complete the chart on page 29.

Understanding Temptation

Temptation	Circle the Category	Jesus' Answer	Present-day Application
<p>Matthew 4:3</p> <p><i>"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."</i></p>	<p>"Lust of the Flesh"</p> <p>"Lust of the Eyes"</p> <p>"Pride of Life"</p>	<p><i>"Man shall not live by bread alone."</i></p>	
<p>Matthew 4:5-6</p> <p><i>"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down . . ."</i></p>	<p>"Lust of the Flesh"</p> <p>"Lust of the Eyes"</p> <p>"Pride of Life"</p>		<p><i>We are not to put God on the spot. That is: Take a scripture and say, "God, this is what You said. Now, perform." That is sin.</i></p>
<p>Matthew 4:8-9</p> <p><i>"All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."</i></p>	<p>"Lust of the Flesh"</p> <p>"Lust of the Eyes"</p> <p>"Pride of Life"</p>	<p><i>Worship God only.</i></p>	