



Jesus is Baptized

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Luke 3

God sent John to prepare the people for the Messiah. In God's perfect timing, Jesus stepped into the public eye. He came to John and was baptized. God announced from heaven that Jesus was His Son. Would those around Him listen?



Day #1: Malachi

Have you ever had to wait for something you really wanted? Maybe it was waiting for your favorite holiday to come. Maybe it was the birth of a baby brother or sister. Waiting is very hard to do.

Let's take a look back at the Old Testament. The prophet Malachi wrote the last book in the Old Testament. We know the Israelites had been promised a Savior (Isaiah 9:6-7). He would be the king of the Israelites, and the King of all kings. God's timing is always perfect, but the Israelites had grown tired of waiting. They started to doubt God's love and God's justice (Malachi 1:2; 2:17). They stopped caring about following God's laws and stopped honoring God (Malachi 1:7-8; 2:11; 3:8-9).

God used Malachi to deliver an important message to His people (Malachi 1:1). It would be the last message God had for His people for the next 400 years. The last words spoken before four centuries of silence must have been very important! Malachi told the people they were wrong to doubt God and behave as they had been. Malachi's message was a very firm reminder of God's love, justice, and holiness. He instructed them to keep the laws given to Moses. Malachi ended God's message with a promise of hope.

+ *The Lord who rules over all says, "I will send my messenger. He will prepare My way for Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are looking for will come to His temple. The messenger of the covenant will come. He is the one you long for."* - Malachi 3:1

Malachi also gave some information that the Israelites might not have wanted to hear. It was a warning that when the Lord that they had been looking for came, it would be a time of judgment. When the Savior arrived, people would have a decision to make. Would they believe in God's provision or not? When their waiting was over, God would judge the hearts of men (1 Corinthians 4:5).

But there was great news for those who would believe. They would be set free! Keep in mind the bondage sin had over all men. For hundreds of years, the Israelites failed to keep God's Law, and they were bound to the temple and the sacrificing of animals. Listen to the word picture Malachi spoke to all who would believe, "You will go out and leap like calves released from the stall." (Malachi 4:2b)

***** What amazing freedom was proclaimed by God's prophet! You can rejoice like the calf running freely from his pen. Jesus came to set free all those trapped in their sin (Luke 4:18).

Day #2: The Way-Maker

After speaking through Malachi, God was silent for 400 years. Then one special day, when the time was perfect, the silence was broken. God sent His angel, Gabriel, to the temple to speak to a childless priest named Zechariah. The angel told Zechariah that he and his wife would have a very special baby who would prepare the way for the Lord. His name would be John (Luke 1:8-17). Gabriel's words were amazingly similar to those of Malachi. Any temple priest would know of the prophesies of God. Surely, Zechariah understood that his son would be the messenger promised centuries before.

+ Malachi: *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."* - Malachi 4:5-6a (NIV)

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before Me." - Malachi 3:1 (NIV)

Gabriel: *"And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* - Luke 1:17 (NIV)

The Bible tells us God's hand was on John BEFORE he was even born. He grew up in the desert, and became strong in spirit (Luke 1:66, 80). John wore clothes made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4). One day, God prompted John to begin telling everyone they must turn from their sins. John listened and obeyed (Luke 3:3). People from all over the region came to hear him preach about repenting. People confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:5-6). This fulfilled the words of another Old Testament prophet, Isaiah.

A messenger is calling out, "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord. Make a straight road through it for our God. Then the glory of the Lord will appear. And everyone will see it. The Lord has spoken." - Isaiah 40:3, 5

***** John told people to **repent**. To repent means to change your mind. It is to agree with God that your sin is wrong. It is not merely saying, "I'm sorry." Remember, God sees the heart of every person (Psalm 44:21).

Day #3: Bear Fruit

What do you think it would have been like to be John? What would it feel like for a 400 year old prophesy to have been spoken of you? It might seem that John would have liked the attention, or felt like he was famous. But God's Spirit was on John and he certainly was not out to gain popularity. He lived differently than other people. He was set apart. And when people came to hear him speak, he did not say things that would make everyone like him. He spoke only the truth.

Day #3 continued:

Along with the crowds of people, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to hear John teach. These were the religious leaders who looked good on the outside, but inwardly they were proud of their position and thought they were better than everyone else was. If John had been seeking popularity, he would have flattered these men. But, instead, listen to what he said:



He said, "You are like a nest of poisonous snakes! Who warned you to escape the coming of God's anger? Produce fruit that shows you have turned away from your sins. And don't start saying to yourselves, 'Abraham is our father.' I tell you, God can raise up children for Abraham even from these stones." - Luke 3:7b-8

John warned them not to think that just because they were physical descendants of Abraham that God would accept them. Abraham's **faith** is what made him acceptable to God (Genesis 15:6). Notice what John instructed them to do. He told them they must first turn away from their sins (repent) and then do things that showed they had repented. John called these good deeds "fruit." Remember, you cannot have fruit without first having the tree! **First**, repent - get their heart and mind aligned with God. **Then**, do good things. Doing good deeds comes as an overflow of a heart surrendered to God (Acts 26:20).

The crowd wanted to know more. John told them to be generous, and not to cheat anyone. He told them to tell the truth and be content with what God had provided. These things sound a lot like the commandments God had given centuries earlier. God's requirements had not changed.



The Bible tells us what the fruit of **God's Spirit** is. We cannot obtain these things in our lives until we have placed our faith in God and have yielded our heart to Him.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. - Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

Day #4: Jesus Baptized

John was certainly different from anyone in his time. The people who came to hear him wondered if he might be the Messiah God had promised. John clearly stated, "I am not the Christ," (John 1:20).



John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But One who is more powerful than I am will come. I'm not good enough to untie the straps of his sandals." - Luke 3:16a

John was telling the people about Jesus. John explained that he (John) could only baptize with water, but Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. John also used symbols to tell the people that this "One" who was coming would one day judge between those who were righteous and those who were not (Luke 3:16b-17). This was an echo of the message Malachi gave to the Israelites.

The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, "Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) There was no mistaking what John meant by this. Every person there knew of the temple and God's requirement of a blood sacrifice to cover the peoples' sin. Those who heard this must have been amazed at John's bold statement. Jesus wanted John to baptize Him. John did not feel worthy to baptize Jesus, but Jesus told him it must be done (Matthew 3:14-15). In this baptism, Jesus identified Himself with John's message. He affirmed that John's message was true.

Day #4 continued:

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened. The Holy Spirit came down on Him in the form of a dove. A voice came from heaven. It said, "You are my Son, and I love You. I am very pleased with You." - Luke 3:21-22

The time was finally right for Jesus to be made known as the Messiah, Emmanuel - God with us! This was the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.



John was happy when people followed Jesus. John did not want any recognition for himself. He only wanted to lead people to Jesus. Discuss what you think John meant in John 3:30, when he said, "He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease."

Day #5: Baptism is a Symbol

Most people who are married wear a wedding ring. This ring shows everyone that they are married. The ring is not their marriage. The ring is a **symbol** of their marriage. There are some people who are married who do not wear a wedding ring. Are these people still married? Yes. What if a little girl plays dress up and puts on her mother's wedding ring? Does this mean she is married? No. The ring does not make someone married. It is a symbol.

In the same way, baptism is an outward **symbol** of the change that has been made on the inside of a person. Baptism does not "wash away" our sin. We must trust and believe that Jesus' blood was the perfect sacrifice to pay for our sin. Jesus died in our place to take away our sin and to make us right in God's eyes. We must trust and believe in Jesus to receive His gift of eternal life.



Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. - John 3:18 (NIV)

The **relationship** is the most important thing. Relationship is much more important than the **symbol**. Consider our wedding ring illustration. Just as trying on a wedding ring does not make a person married, if a person is baptized without having faith in Jesus, they will not be saved (Mark 16:16). They would have the **symbol** without the **relationship**. Conversely, just as a person can be married without the symbol of a ring, the Bible makes it clear that someone can be saved by their faith in Jesus without ever being baptized. They would have the **relationship** without the **symbol**. One example of this came three years after Jesus' baptism, when Jesus died on the cross as our substitution. There was a thief who hung on a cross next to Jesus. The thief admitted that he, himself, deserved his punishment, but declared that Jesus had done nothing wrong.

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise." - Luke 23:42-43

This thief would never have the chance to be baptized, but Jesus assured him that he would be in heaven that very day because of his belief in Jesus.



Whenever possible, God wants every believer to be baptized. It shows those watching that he or she has trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of his or her sins (Acts 19:4-5). It is a way for us to be identified with Jesus (Galatians 3:26-27). If you have placed your trust in Jesus, will you obey God by being baptized?