

Week 3: Jesus is prepared to establish the Kingdom and Administer its benefits.

MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD: The bite of Scripture upon which you will be mediating upon in this week's guide is Matthew **3:13-4:11**.

BACKGROUND: As you may already know from previous readings of Matthew's account, he gives very little background in certain instances. For example, Matthew tells us very little about this person he refers to as "John the Baptizer." (Matthew, as well as the other gospel authors, is writing many years after Jesus' ministered to people and recruited him.)

However, Luke, in his careful investigation (see Luke 1:3), provides background on who John was, who his parents were, where he grew up and how he was led to begin his ministry to people. Luke reports the amazing details of the angel appearing to and telling John's dad, Zechariah, that his barren wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son. It is this angel who tells the father "*you are to call him John*" (see LK 1:13).

Luke reports what the angel predicted about John:

"He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people for the Lord."

Luke also discovered that this John was a distant relative of Jesus. However, John grew up in the hill country of Judea while Matthew and Luke both report that Jesus grew up in Nazareth of Galilee. Therefore, they did not grow up in close proximity to each other. (Due to the distance between their homes, there is little way to predict with confidence how well they knew each other as some try to assert.) Luke did learn, probably from John's parents, that the angel promised them that their baby "*will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born,*" (See LK 1:15).

As we discovered in using the previous study guide for MT 3:1-12, John was in the wilderness of Judea. He was proclaiming that the reality of the Kingdom of heaven had come near and that, therefore, people needed to repent in preparation for entering into this kingdom, i.e. the government of heaven. So as we dig into MT 3:13-4:11, Jesus comes to where John is proclaiming the kingdom. He is baptizing repentant people as the first and essential part of his preparation to establish the kingdom of heaven "*on earth as it is in heaven.*"

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: To uncover and identify how Jesus was prepared to begin establishing the Kingdom of heaven and to administer

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its benefits to more and more people and extend His kingdom and its benefits into more and more places.

INSTRUCTION 1: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

(For some who are very familiar with the facts the Scriptures reveal, this discipline may seem unnecessary. However, before launching into what it means and what it presses into you to do today, it is important to be very clear about what the text actually says.) Carefully read and dig into Matthew 3:13-4:11 and answer from the text itself the following basic questions.

1. From 3:1, where was John as he called people to repent and baptized those who confessed their sins after they repented?
2. From what place did Jesus arrive to see John?
3. Why did Jesus go there?
4. What was John's response?
5. When John hesitated to do what Jesus asked, what did Jesus say?
6. How did John respond to what Jesus said?
7. As soon as Jesus was baptized what did he do?
8. "*At that moment*", what happened and what did Jesus see?
9. What happened next?
10. To what place did the Spirit lead Jesus next?
11. Who did Jesus encounter in this place?
12. What did Jesus do first in this place and for how long did he do it?
13. After doing this for that length of time, in what condition was Jesus?
14. Who came to Jesus in this condition?
15. What does this person call Jesus?
 - a. Remember: Context always determines meaning! Matthew reports that 40 days before the first temptation, a voice from heaven stated, "*This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased!*"

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- b. Many translators render the original term in MT 4:3 as “***If** you are the son of God,*” suggesting that Jesus is being tempted to question who he really is and to prove himself by obeying the tempter. However, the original word can also be legitimately translated “***since** you are the Son of God,*” indicating that the tempter is tempting Jesus to turn aside from who he really is and disobey his Father.
 - c. For you, which rendering best fits the context the voice establishes?
16. In this condition, what does the tempter propose?
 - a. Do you remember anyone in the OT whom the Lord had speak to a rock to draw sustenance from it?
 - b. In what OT event did this happen?
 17. In warding off the temptation, from what source does Jesus quote?
 18. What exactly does this OT verse say?
 19. Where does the tempter take Jesus next? And where does Jesus stand in this place?
 20. Since the voice from heaven has said, “*you are my son whom I love,*” what is proposed for Jesus to do?
 21. From what source does the tempter make his appeal for Jesus to do this?
 22. What is the exact OT passage that the tempter quotes?
 23. From what source does Jesus quote and what is the exact quote Jesus repeats in order not to give in to this temptation?
 24. Where is Jesus taken next and what is he shown?
 25. What is Jesus promised?
 26. What does Jesus have to do to receive this promise?
 27. What does Jesus say to the tempter and what verse does he quote?
 28. What does this person do in response to what Jesus says to him?
 29. Who now comes to minister to Jesus?

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INSTRUCTION 2: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE MEAN? What are some of the implications of these two passages?

1. What about Jesus' condition would cause him to be vulnerable to the tempter's first proposal?
2. If Jesus acts on this first proposal, what will he accomplish?
3. What does Jesus employ to blunt the force of the first temptation?
4. Since Jesus establishes in the first temptation that his bottom line is to *"live by every word that comes from the mouth of God,"* what is the shrewd tactic the tempter employs in the second temptation?
5. Why do you think Jesus could be vulnerable to this temptation?
6. Why would doing what the tempter proposes in 4:6 be *"putting the Lord your God to the test"*?
7. In the third temptation, what would possibly be the appeal to Jesus for gaining in this way *"all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor"*?
8. In this situation, what is Jesus effectively doing when he commands the tempter, *"Get behind me, Satan"*?
9. From the three verses Jesus quotes, what are the three foundational commitments that Jesus establishes as governing his life, his decisions and his actions?
10. Why do you propose that the Spirit of God concluded it was necessary to test Jesus's foundational commitments under such stressful and appealing conditions?

INSTRUCTION 3: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE PRESS INTO YOU TO DO? What are some of the applications of this passage for you today?

1. When you are under great stress and your circumstances leave you depleted and needy, what is the biggest temptation you face?
2. List some of the ways you have been tempted not to trust and apply God's words in Scripture in certain situations and relationships:

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3. Are there times you have devised creative tests to make the Lord prove he will keep his promises before you become willing to do something he has given you in Scripture to do? If you have done this, describe them.

4. What does a “shortcut” look like for you when it comes to “*living by every word that comes from the mouth of God*”?

5. Where did you end up when you took that shortcut?

6. What is the most important thing you discovered about Jesus in meditating on this passage of Scripture?

7. What is the most important thing you discovered about yourself in meditating on this passage of Scripture?

8. List any questions that meditating on this passage has stirred up for you.

9. How has this passage prepared you to follow Jesus?