

# NEW TESTAMENT



## GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

### Lesson 4: "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" (Matthew 3-4; John 1:35-51)

- John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist.
- Jesus withstands Satan's temptations in the wilderness.
- Some of John the Baptist's disciples decide to follow Jesus.

A study of this lesson will inspire us to draw near to the Savior by repenting of our sins, keeping our baptismal covenants, and withstanding temptation.

### Introduction



Above is the Hebrew word **Messiah**, which means anointed. The Jews had waited centuries for the coming of the Messiah, who, according to prophecy, would be their anointed King and Deliverer. The Greek for Messiah is Christ. Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Messiah, and John the Baptist was the prophet sent to prepare the way for him.

### John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 3:1-12)

**Isaiah 40:3; 1 Nephi 10:7-**

10 Centuries before John's birth, many prophets foresaw his ministry and testified of his greatness as the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

In preparation for John's ministry:

- **Luke 1:13-19** - the angel Gabriel announced John's forthcoming birth
- **Luke 1:67-79** - Zacharias prophesied on the day of John's naming and circumcision
- **D&C 84:27-28** - and an angel ordained eight-day-old John to his mission
- **Luke 7:28** - The crowning statement of John's greatness came from the Savior himself, who said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist"

John was born about six months

before Jesus. Shortly after Jesus' birth, Herod, feeling threatened by the announcement that a new king of the Jews had been born, "slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (Matthew 2:16). To protect Jesus, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and directed him to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). To protect John, "*Zacharias caused [Elisabeth] to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey*" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 261). John began his public ministry many years later, first preaching in the wilderness and then in Jerusalem and "*all the region round about Jordan*" (Matthew 3:5).

**Luke 1:76-79; 3:3-4** foretells the mission of John the Baptist. It was

important that someone prepare the way by teaching salvation through repentance and God's mercy and to give guidance unto peace.

**Matthew 3:1-2** tells us that John preached to prepare the people for the coming of the Savior. Repentance requires at least the following steps:

- **2 Corinthians 7:9-10** Feeling godly sorrow for sin.
- **D&C 58:42-43** Confessing and forsaking sins.
- **Luke 19:8** Making amends, where possible, for wrongs done.
- **D&C 1:31-32** Obeying the commandments.
- **Mosiah 7:33** Turning to the Lord and serving him.

NEXT WEEK:  
#5 "Born Again" (John 3-4)

**3 Nephi 27:19** - Repentance prepares us to dwell with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by giving us an opportunity to come unto Christ, cleanse ourselves, demonstrate faith, and endure to the end.

**Matthew 3:7; Luke 7:29-30** The Pharisees and Sadducees witnessed baptisms performed by John but chose not to be baptized.

**Matthew 3:35 (JST)** John rebuked them, urging them to “repent ... and bring forth fruits meet for repent-

ance” (Fruits refers to results and that the word meet means worthy or appropriate).

**Moroni 8:25-26** The fruits of repentance include baptism, fulfilling of the commandments, remission of sins, development of meekness and humility, the reception of the Holy Ghost, being filled with hope and perfect love, being diligent in prayer, and enduring to the end.

**Matthew 3:11** John baptized “with water unto repentance” and prom-

ised that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”. We are baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire when we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands (D&C 20:41). “*The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to have, whenever one is worthy, the companionship of the Holy Ghost. ... It acts as a cleansing agent to purify a person and sanctify him from all sin. Thus it is often spoken of as ‘fire’*” (Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” 704).

## Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. (Matthew 3:13-17)

**Matthew 3:14** John was hesitant to baptize Jesus because he felt unworthy compared to Jesus.

**Matthew 3:15; 2 Nephi 31:6-7, 9-11** Jesus need to be baptized “to fulfil all righteousness”, meaning that even though he had no sin, he would commit a sin of omission if he did not covenant to keep the Father’s commandments and set a righteous example for all mankind.

**2 Nephi 31:5, 12-13, 17-18; D&C 20:71; D&C 49:13-14** We need to be baptized to receive remission of sin, make a covenant of obedience with the Father, follow the Savior’s example and do what he did, and to enter into the gate to the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life.

**D&C 20:37** The covenants we make when we are baptized include: taking the name of Christ, serving Him to the end, doing good works, and joining His Church.

**Mosiah 18:8-10** These covenants should affect our daily actions, causing us to be true “Christians”, serve our brothers and sisters, keep the commandments, and be guided by the Spirit.

## Jesus withstands Satan’s temptations in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-11)

**Matthew 4:1 (JST)** Soon after Jesus was baptized, the Spirit led him into the wilderness to be with God. The spiritual strength he gained there prepared Jesus to withstand Satan’s temptations. Fasting, prayer, and being “led ... of the Spirit” can also fortify us against temptation by strengthening our spiritual control over our physical appetites and needs.

**Matthew 4:2-3** Satan tried to appeal to the desire to satisfy physical appetite when he tempted Jesus, who had been fasting, to turn the stones into bread. Satan tempts us to give in to physical appetites by making those appetites seem overwhelming and important. We can recognize and resist these temptations by retaining an eternal perspective on what is important.

**Matthew 4:5-6** Satan tried to appeal to pride when he tempted Je-

sus to cast himself down from the pinnacle and prove that he had the power to be saved by angels. Satan tries to appeal to our pride. We can recognize and withstand temptations to gratify prideful desires only if we have developed humility.

**Matthew 4:8-9** Satan offered Jesus worldly riches and power if Jesus would worship him. Obviously, he uses those same temptations on us today.

**Matthew 4:10** We can recognize and resist temptations by worshipping and serving only God.

**D&C 104:14** Satan’s offer to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world was false. Satan makes some false offers to us today to entice us to sin.

**Matthew 4:3-4, 6-7, 8-10** Jesus responded to each of Satan’s temptations by quoting the scriptures.

**Helaman 3:29-30** The scriptures give us strength to withstand temptation by overcoming the “wiles” of Satan and lead us “across that everlasting gulf of misery” to “the right hand of God”.

**Matthew 4:3, 6** Satan twice questioned whether Jesus was the Son of God. Think about it: Why did Satan raise this question? How does he raise this question in the world today?

**Moses 1:12-22** When we face temptation, it helps to know that we are children of God because it strengthens our resolve to be like our Father and reach our true potential.

**Hebrews 4:14-15** It helps us to know that Jesus, the Son of God, faced temptations similar to those we face because we can then follow his example when such temptations are presented.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said: *“The Lord is well aware of our mortality. He knows our weaknesses. He understands the challenges of our*

*everyday lives. He has great empathy for the temptations of earthly appetites and passions”* (Ensign, May 1996, 34).

## Some of John the Baptist's disciples decide to follow Jesus. (John 1:35-51)

**John 1:35-37** When Jesus began his mortal ministry, John the Baptist encouraged his own disciples to follow the Messiah.

**John 1:38-39** When Jesus saw two of John the Baptist's disciples following Him, He asked them what they sought. Think about what you seek by following the Master.

**John 1:40-42** When Andrew heard and recognized the Savior, he went to alert his brother, Simon Peter.

**John 1:43-46** After receiving a witness that Jesus was the Messiah, Philip answer Nathanael's doubts by inviting him to come and see for himself. Consider what we can do to invite others to “come and see” the Savior.



## Conclusion

John the Baptist was called to prepare the way for the Lord. His ministry was involved in assisting individuals to prepare themselves to participate in the kingdom of God. He taught them to repent, to be baptized, seek for the true Messiah, and to live a good life. Jesus set the example by being baptized and resisting temptation. We need to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord by following in the footsteps of Jesus and heeding the counsel of John.

### Gospel Doctrine Notebook

- Record your thoughts on the baptism of Jesus and his temptations. What can you do to resist temptation?
- How can you better prepare yourself to become a forerunner to the Lord's second coming?