

Early Events The Baptism of Jesus

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As we saw last week, some of the trainees of Daniel, the Magi, short for magicians, had traveled from the Parthian Empire, which we would identify as modern-day Iran, to Judea to worship the Messiah they had been taught about. Evidence of spiritual warfare though pops up as they prepare to return home.

Matthew 2:12

“And after being warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.” (NASB 2020)

Spiritual warfare, yes, slipping into the physical realm, absolutely.

Right after being warned to avoid Herod, Joseph receives a visit.

Matthew 2:13–14

“Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him.” So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.” (NASB 2020)

How would the family be able to support themselves while in Egypt? God provided that with the items that the Magi had left.

Joseph apparently sensed an urgency to the angel's commands. The expression "is going to" in v. 13 is best rendered "is about to" or even "is on the verge of." The family leaves during the night under cover of darkness. (Blomberg 1992, 67)

The enemy is behind the actions of Herod.

Matthew 2:15

"He stayed there until the death of Herod; this happened so that what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON." (NASB 2020)

Matthew is quoting from Hosea 11:1 – 2

Hosea 11:1–2

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols." (ESV)

It is important that we pick up on what Matthew is saying here. This is not just a story of survival where God sent an angel to Joseph to provide some information, this is all playing into the entire picture being provided.

Just as God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt to inaugurate his original covenant with them, so again God is bringing the Messiah, who fulfills the hopes of Israel, out of Egypt as he is about to inaugurate his new covenant. This is the first of several instances in Matthew in which Jesus recapitulates the role of Israel as a whole. (Blomberg 1992, 67)

Just as Jacob and his family went into Egypt, so did Joseph and his family.

Just as the nation came out of Egypt with the power of God, in the person of the Angel of the Lord, who we have determined thanks to Jude 5 to be the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, yet failed in the wilderness, we begin to see the signs of a second Exodus leading to an entirely new covenant and the establishment of the Kingdom.

...Hosea 11:1–2 describes the history of the nation since her Exodus from Egypt and her subsequent disobedience to the Lord. Matthew looked back and saw an analogical correspondence between the history of the nation Israel and the history of the Messiah. (Howard 1986, 321)

The choice, by the Holy Spirit who is using Matthew to pen the words we have looked at, point also, when you look at the context of Hosea where they came from, to the final victory over the evil one.

Hosea 11:10–11

"They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD." (ESV)

If Matthew viewed Jesus as the One who would inaugurate a new exodus, then it is likely that he also thought of Jesus as the One who would introduce the new age. Though there is a sense in which this is "realized" today by those who are united to Him by faith, this period finds its ultimate fulfillment and consummation in the future. The promise of Hosea 11:10–11 looks at the time when the nation Israel will be restored from dispersion and will experience blessing in the land in the millennium. Jesus is the Messiah who will lead the nation through the new exodus into that new age with all its wonderful provisions. (Howard 1986, 324)

Jude 5

“Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” (ESV)

Jesus, as the Angel of YAHWEH, led the nation as they departed from Egypt. Remember who the first Exodus was directed against.

The Real Enemy

Exodus 12:12

“I will pass through the land of Egypt in the same night, and I will attack all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of humans and of animals, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the LORD.” (NET)

Numbers 33:3–4

“They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the Israelites went out defiantly in plain sight of all the Egyptians. Now the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them; the LORD also executed judgments on their gods.” (NET)

That was the reason for the crossing. Yahweh used it to demonstrate His power, yes, but for a specific purpose— to make it crystal clear to the Israelites that I AM was unparalleled, unchallenged, and sovereign. It was a demonstration of His authority over the divine entities who’d chosen to abuse the responsibilities He’d given them after Babel. And it was a clear message to the gods that the days of their rebellion were numbered. (Gilbert 2017, Kindle Locations 1664 - 1667)

The second Exodus, already being clearly telegraphed by Matthew, will do the same, but this time it will be YAHWEH in the person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the God Man, achieving the ultimate victory and leading all who would believe into the land of promise. In fact, His victory results in us being grafted (Romans 11) into His people and more than that, we are adopted by YAHWEH Himself (Eph 1:5, Gal 4:5) and we become joint heirs (Romans 8:17) with Jesus Christ.

We are part of the family YAHWEH’s personal family and we have a destiny to be with Him forever and to rule and reign with Him as part of His Divine Council. Eden is His goal.

Other than Luke 2:41–52, the Bible does not tell us anything about Jesus’ youth. From this incident we do know certain things about Jesus’ childhood. First, He was the son of parents who were devout in their religious observances. As required by their faith, Joseph and Mary made the yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. In addition, they brought their 12-year-old son to celebrate His first Feast in preparation for His bar mitzvah at age 13, when Jewish boys commemorate their passage into adulthood. Here we see a typical boy in a typical family of that day. (Got Questions Ministries 2002-2013)

So about the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ, YAHWEH incarnate, here on planet earth. Since Herod was not clear on who it was and he was indiscriminate in his killing, up to this point, it may be entirely possible that Satan, who is finite, and all of those fallen ones who serve him, were not entirely clear on who the Messiah was, there must be some clear message for them to know.

What would be the way to clearly communicate to all who Jesus really was?

John 1:19–23

“This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” And he confessed and did not deny; and this is what he confessed: “I am not the Christ.” And so they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Tell us, so that we may give an answer to

those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am THE VOICE OF ONE CALLING OUT IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE THE WAY OF THE LORD STRAIGHT,' as Isaiah the prophet said." (NASB 2020)

John identified himself by pointing to Isaiah 40:3. Let's take a look at the context of where John is pointing, something the Pharisees understood.

Isaiah 40:1–5

“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” Says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD’s hand Double for all her sins.” The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (NKJV)

Who is the speaker in Isaiah 40? How many commands does He issue?

- Comfort
- Comfort
- Speak
- Call

The plural imperatives comfort, comfort address the three ‘voices’ of verses 3, 7 and 9, but the scene is best understood as a heavenly court on the analogy of 1 Kings 22:19. The Lord has ‘taken counsel’ as to the best course of action and sends his emissaries accordingly. (Motyer 1996, 299)

Both instances of comfort, in the Hebrew, are plural imperatives. Not singular. Additionally, in verse two, speak and call out are also in the plural imperative. So, YAHWEH is speaking, He is telling a group what they must do. Who is that group?

The response in verse three is an unidentified member of the council. It is in the singular. This is what John the Baptist is pointing to.

How long has there been a lack of prophets speaking for YAHWEH in Israel?
What were the qualifications for the office of prophet?
What exactly is John telling the Pharisees?

Like the prophet of old, John the Baptist has “stood in the council” (Jer 23:16–22) and answered the call. To a Jew familiar with the Old Testament, the pattern would not be lost. As had been the case at the time of Isaiah, Yahweh’s council had met in regard to the fate of an apostate Israel. Isaiah had been sent to a spiritually blind and deaf nation. The calling of John the Baptist tells the reader that Yahweh’s divine council is in session again, only this time the aim is to launch the kingdom of God with the second Yahweh, now incarnate, as its point man. (Heiser 2015, 273)

On the very next day, according to John 1:29, Jesus arrives, and John knows who He is.

Mark 1:9–11

“It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (NKJV)

John was known to have baptized at several locations along the Jordan, it is believed that where Jesus was baptized is near the place the nation crossed over to attack Jericho just north of the Dead Sea.

To go from Jerusalem to where John was baptizing was a 15 mile walk that descended 4000 feet and to get there you had to walk through the Judean wilderness.

Matthew 3:1

“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,” (NASB95)

Judean Wilderness



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

Why this location? Main road and major fording point for those traveling on the road might be one reason. Another reason might be, this is where, after 40 years in the wilderness, the nation crossed over in faith to take the land, again they failed.

We will see in the picture of this being a second Exodus, there will be no failure and the battle is going to be fully engaged in against the enemy by the same person who discussed the impending battle in Jericho with Joshua.

Likely raised to take his place among the priesthood (see Luke 1:5–13), John has left behind the accepted dwelling place of God and positioned himself instead along the periphery. A priest and a prophet, he has forsaken his role in the temple, the very center of the created order, to take up residence in the God-forsaken wilderness. This is the world upside-down, and it delivers a subversive critique of the Jerusalem elite and the temple establishment, suggesting that YHWH can no longer be found in the center. (Taylor 2016, Mt 3:1-Lk 3:20)

After 400 years of silence, what is the message for the Jews – repent. The secondary message – the Kingdom is at hand.

Matthew 3:2

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (NASB 2020)

The opportunity for first-century Israel to enthrone Christ and consequently experience all these blessings is known as “the offer of the kingdom.” This idea is captured in the expression “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” as proclaimed to the nation first by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1–2), then Christ (Matt. 4:17), then the Twelve (Matt. 10:5–7), and finally the Seventy (Luke 10:1, 9). What this expression means is that the unchallenged rulership that God experiences in heaven had drawn near to the earth in the person of Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Davidic king. It is called “the kingdom of heaven” since the kingdom will be inaugurated by the “God of heaven.” (Woods 2016, Kindle Locations 1107-1111)

Just as today where there is an expectation, a sense that Jesus is coming back very soon, the world picture reflects this. There was that same sense around His first coming and with John, after 400 years, it was announced.

...the site of Jesus' baptism has been generally sought on the eastern side of the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea, near the mouth of the W. el-Kharrar. Here, an early and reliable tradition places the events in the vicinity of the southernmost fording point along the Jordan River, a location that accords with the geographical referents found in Matt 3:1–6, 13, 4:1, Luke 3:3, 4:1, Mark 1:4–5, 9–12. Accessible from Jerusalem and the Judean Hill Country (Matt 3:10; Mark 1:5), the site would have been busy with traffic in John's day. (Taylor, Wilderness Events: The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus 2016, Mt 3:13-Lk 4:15)

Going back to our text, Jesus has arrived at this location which is east of the Jordan, opposite of Jericho and the Judean wilderness.

Mark 1:9–11

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (ESV)

The Judean wilderness is where the nation fought under Joshua, it is where Elijah went up to heaven and it is where YAHWEH Himself, as seen in Ezekiel 43, will come into His Temple to dwell with man reestablishing Eden on earth.

Ezekiel 43:1–4

“Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory. The vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east,” (NRSV)

As we exam the text from Mark 1, there are two things we need to look at the Greek to catch.

First – verse 10 we see an interesting phrase about the heavens. Remember, this is an announcement, to the physical realm, yes, but also to the unseen realm. They are about to receive clarity about who this is. The Greek says the heavens split or tore open

Σχιζομένουσ – schizomenous – to divide by use of force, split, divide, separate, tear apart, tear off. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 981)

Mark chooses a term that scholars identify as being significant. Let's take a look at Exodus 14:21.

Exodus 14:21

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.” (ESV)

יִבַּעַף – yib-baq - to cleave, divide, break through, break up, rip up, tear. (Oswalt 1999, 123)

Exodus 14:21

“And Moses stretched his hand out over the sea, and the Lord stirred the sea up by a violent south wind throughout the whole night and made the sea dry ground, and the water was split.” (Lexham Press 2020, Ex 14:21)

ἐσχίσθη (eschisthe)– which is from σχίζω (schizo)

The same base word used by Mark. Mark is using the exact same term here for this event and he is pointing back to the first Exodus, which, as we studied, was a battle against the fallen divine beings as well as a physical battle.

The exodus event was a release from exile. Yahweh brought his people out of Egypt to reconstitute them as a nation and re-establish his Edenic kingdom rule on earth. Mark wants readers to see that a new exodus event is happening. The kingdom of God is back, and this time it will not fail because it's being led by the visible Yahweh, now incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. (Heiser 2015, 273-274)

In the days of Moses (Isa 63:11–12), the Lord had sent his Holy Spirit, closely associated with Yahweh's "glorious arm of power," to guide his servant and Israel to victory. So now, in the dawning of a new day of Exodus, the Spirit descends on Jesus and fits him for holy warfare. (Longman III 2010, Kindle Locations 1046-1047)

If nothing else captures the attention of Satan and the rest of the fallen, a dove from heaven coming down onto Jesus should. But YAHWEH is not done yet.

Mark 1:11

And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (ESV)

Another term that we lose in the English, the term beloved, which YAHWEH uses, "is affirming the kingship of Jesus—his legitimate status as the heir to David's throne." (Heiser 2015, 274)

As Son, Jesus is identified as the representative of the true Israel, whose divine sonship was defined in the desert (Ex 4:22; Hos 1:1; cf. also Isaac in Ge 22:12) and particularly focused in her royal Davidic king (Ps 2:7). As object of God's pleasure, Jesus is described as the Isaianic Servant in whom God will delight (Isa 42:1) and whom he will invest with his Spirit in order that he might bring forth justice (Isa 42:1, 3; cf. the hymn of praise to the divine warrior that follows in Isa 42:10–13). Both of these implied ascriptions, Son and Servant, carry with them remembrances of the divine warrior tradition: The Davidic son, to whom Yahweh grants victory,⁶ and the Servant of Yahweh, who, through his suffering, will emerge exalted and triumphant (Isa 52:13; 53:12). (Longman III 2010, Kindle Locations 1052-1054)

David (da'-vid) = Beloved

This name, which is written "defectively" in the older books, such as those of Samuel, but fully with the yodh in Chronicles and the later books, is derived, like the similar name Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:25), from a root meaning "to love." The only person who bears this name in the Bible is the son of Jesse, the second king of Israel. (Orr 1999)

2 Samuel 12:24–25

"Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and slept with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah for the LORD'S sake." (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH loved, in the LXX, agape, Solomon, who is called Jedidiah.

Jedidiah (jed-id-i'-ah) = Beloved of Jehovah; Jehovah is a friend; The beloved of Jah. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 124)

The name in Hebrew is yedydyahu and is related to dawid/dawiyd, the proper name "David," which also means "beloved." Used of Solomon, the term amounts to a title that marked Solomon as the legitimate heir to the Davidic covenantal throne. The same message is telegraphed with respect to Jesus. God's own voice announces, This is the king, the legitimate heir to David's throne. (Heiser 2015, 274)

The announcement has now been made, the enemy knows, clearly, who has arrived and will be engaging in battle. There is no delay in the battle. Jesus crosses the Jordan and enters the Judean wilderness.

Mark 1:12

“At once the Spirit made him go into the desert,” (GNB)

Following his baptism, he enters into the wilderness, mirroring the experiences of Israel and the great leaders that went before him prior to launching his public ministry. Reference to Israel’s own wilderness sojourn in Sinai and southern Transjordan is explicit throughout. The setting elicits correspondence, as does the forty day period of fasting, the nature of the temptations themselves, and the scriptures quoted. In each case, Jesus, as the newly recognized “son of God” and representative of Israel, faces the same struggles that Israel faced in the wilderness, but this time “Israel” triumphs. (Taylor, Wilderness Events: The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus 2016, Mt 3:13-Lk 4:15)

One other thing about the wilderness, as we had previously reviewed, Israel looked at the wilderness as being fully associated with evil spirits, it is unholy ground

Jesus, now identified and “on the record,” engages in real spiritual warfare, one on one with the cherub He created and who, at one time, was a throne guardian for YAHWEH, until Genesis 3.

The enemy will first engage directly, but later will use people that are easily influenced by him, like Romans and Pharisees. But we will also see Jesus being consistently and constantly on the offensive, taking territory from the enemy and reversing what the enemy began in Genesis 3, 6, and 11.

Luke 4:1–13

“Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the desert, where he was tempted by the Devil for 40 days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over. The Devil said to him, “If you are God’s Son, order this stone to turn into bread.” But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Human beings cannot live on bread alone.’” Then the Devil took him up and showed him in a second all the kingdoms of the world. “I will give you all this power and all this wealth,” the Devil told him. “It has all been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose. All this will be yours, then, if you worship me.” Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!’” Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, “If you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here. For the scripture says, ‘God will order his angels to take good care of you.’ It also says, ‘They will hold you up with their hands so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.’” But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the Devil finished tempting Jesus in every way, he left him for a while.” (GNB)

The cosmic war that has raged throughout the ages has now come to center on one person: Jesus. (Boyd 1997, 187)

Jesus quotes entirely during this initial skirmish from Deuteronomy 6 – 8. This is one of the three sermons of Moses that makes up that book. Moses gave these to Israel prior to their entering the land. They had spent forty years learning what it takes to be faithful and obedient to YAHWEH, and they failed.

Jesus will face the same tests over 40 days and He will succeed.

We will go over the three temptations next week and cover the first time seen in the scriptures that a demon is cast out of a man.

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