

LESSON 3

THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER; THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS; FROM THE FIRST PASSOVER TO THE SECOND, PART 1

JOHN'S MINISTRY (MT. 3:1–6; MK. 1:1–6; LK. 3:1–6)

The prophets had foretold that one would come before the Messiah to prepare the way for Him (Is. 40:3–5; Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6). Zacharias, the priest, had been told that his son, John, was to be that forerunner (Lk. 1:17). [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 93–95.]

1. How do the gospel writers signal the importance of John's ministry?
2. What do we know about John's lifestyle?

JOHN'S MESSAGE (MT. 3:7–12; MK. 1:7, 8; LK. 3:7–18)

Baptism was an indispensable part of John's ministry. Some try to find precedent for John's baptism in Jewish ceremonial washings, but John's baptism was unique. John became known as "the Baptist" (Mt. 3:1), because that was his distinctive vocation. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 96–99.]

3. What were the nature and function of John's baptism?
4. How did John's baptism differ from that initiated by the Great Commission?

**JESUS BAPTIZED BY JOHN
IN THE JORDAN RIVER
(MT. 3:13–17; MK. 1:9–11; LK. 3:21, 22; JN. 1:31–34)**

At the height of John’s popularity and the height of anticipation regarding the Messiah, Jesus came to him to be baptized. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 103–105.]

5. Why was Jesus baptized?
6. How did John recognize that Jesus was the Christ?

**JESUS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS
(MT. 4:1–11; MK. 1:12, 13; LK. 4:1–13)**

As Christ was about to begin His public ministry, He met the foe. Evil appeared before Him in all its tremendous strength and naked horror. Never had such an attack occurred before, and never would such an attack occur again. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 105–115.]

7. How do God and Satan view temptation differently?
8. What were the natures of Satan’s three attacks upon Jesus?
9. What were some of the “opportune time[s]” referred to in Lk. 4:13?

**JOHN’S TESTIMONY CONCERNING JESUS
(JN. 1:19–34)**

Apparently, the popularity of John had disturbed the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The Pharisees (Jn. 1:24) thus sent priests and Levites to question the prophet. They wanted to know if he was the Messiah (the Christ), Elijah, or “the Prophet.” John emphatically answered, “No” (Jn. 1:19–21). [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 115–117.]

10. Why did John deny being Elijah, despite the prophecy of Mal. 3:1?
11. What did John reveal about Jesus’ mission on earth by calling Him the Lamb of God?

JESUS' FIRST DISCIPLES (IN JUDEA)
(JN. 1:35–51)

Christ's call to discipleship then and now is "Follow Me" (Jn. 1:43). With this call, Jesus gained His first small band of disciples (see Jn. 2:2). Five disciples are specifically mentioned in John 1:35–51: four named and one unnamed, who was probably the author of the book. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 117–120.]

12. How did each of Jesus' first disciples come to follow Him?
13. What level of understanding did the first disciples have of the Man whom they followed?

JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE
(AT CANA IN GALILEE)
(JN. 2:1–11)

Jesus and His disciples headed north to Galilee. On the third day, they reached Cana of Galilee. They had come to attend a wedding (Jn. 2:1, 2). Jesus' mother, Mary, was also present (Jn. 2:1). Perhaps a relative or a friend was getting married. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 120–123.]

14. What was the nature of Jesus' response to Mary's statement about the wine?
15. Why did Jesus decide to use His miraculous powers after His initial refusal?

THE FIRST PASSOVER OF JESUS' MINISTRY
(JN. 2:13—3:21)

The Passover feast commemorated God's "passing over" the Israelites in Egypt who had the blood of a lamb on their door posts (Ex. 12:1–28). This was the first Passover of Jesus' public ministry. It was also Jesus' first public appearance since His ministry began. It began in a dramatic fashion, with His first cleansing of the temple. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 127–132.]

16. Why had commerce initially developed at the temple?

17. What statements did Jesus make by beginning his public ministry with the cleansing of the temple?
18. What was Jesus' purpose in telling Nicodemus that one must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God?

**THE FIRST MINISTRY IN JUDEA
(AND FURTHER TESTIMONY BY JOHN)
(JN. 3:22–36)**

After the feast in Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples moved into the Judean countryside to preach and teach. Christ was spending time with His disciples; He was teaching them and allowing them to get to know Him. He was also baptizing (Jn. 3:22) as His forerunner had done. Jesus' ministry in Judea was evidently successful. [See *Life of Christ, 1*, pp. 132–134.]

19. What was the nature of the baptism being performed in Jesus' Judean ministry at this time?
20. How did John hush his disciples' jealousy over Jesus' success?