

... *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt. 3:17)*

### I. INTRODUCTION

A. The early life of Christ is one that is marked by *obedience*. When we observe the actions of Christ through His incarnation (God becoming a man), His early childhood, His teen years, His ministry, and finally the cross, one thematic element comes into view: the obedient nature of Jesus.

***Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. (Col. 3:20)***

B. Christ shows us that through obedience to man we grow in obedience to God. For how can we learn to obey He whom we cannot see (God) if we cannot obey those we can see (earthly authority)? The only early acts of Jesus that are recorded in the gospels are acts of obedience.

1. Jesus was obedient to His heavenly Father.

***<sup>49</sup> And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. (Lk. 2:49, 50)***

2. Jesus was obedient to His parents

***<sup>51</sup> Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject [obedient] to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Lk. 2:51, 52)***

a. Christ’s obedience increased His wisdom and stature

b. It brought him into *favor* with God and others. Favor here is *grace*. It means an attitude that leans forward to extend blessing.

C. This obedience of Jesus in His early life and ministry were preparing Him for the ultimate (sub)mission: *the Cross*. We may wonder the outcome of His being obedient to the point of the Cross had He had not undergone these previously noted events.

D. Obedience has a purpose; through it the subject is *prepared for a death* (to self; our own desires/ accomplishments), but death is not the end. The resurrection is the end. We must not fixate on the *difficulty* of obedience without the *prize* in view. That would be like exercise without results, labor pains without the birth of a child, or work without pay.

### II. THE OBEDIENCE OF BAPTISM

A. John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the ministry and revelation of Jesus. His ministry was one marked by baptism. This sign showed that people were washed from the guilt of their sins.

B. Baptism was for the sinner, those who needed cleansed, not the righteous. The Pharisees wrongly assumed that they didn’t need to be washed from their guilt, believing that they were already justified (made clean) before God.

- C. Yet, in a seemingly odd event Jesus submitted to the baptism of John.  
*<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. (Mt. 3:13-15)*
- D. There are several reasons that John baptized Jesus.
1. Jesus did it to further identify with humanity. Though He had no sin He identified with sinful people, taking on their guilt and showing their need for cleansing. The innocent became branded as guilty.  
*...And He [Christ] was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Is. 53:12)*  
*<sup>21</sup> For He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21)*  
*<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us<sup>f</sup> to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, (1 Pt. 3:18)*
  2. Jesus did it to fulfill the requirement of the law on our behalf.  
*But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. (Mt. 3:15)*
  3. Jesus was baptized to signal the beginning of his public ministry.
  4. Jesus was baptized to show that He was qualified as a priest. Baptism was a priestly ritual. Priests became qualified at the age of 30 (1 Ch. 23:2-5; Num. 4:1-3). Jesus was 30 when He began His ministry (Lk. 3:23). Scripture attests that Jesus is the Great High Priest who mediates between God and man (Heb. 4:14; 1 Jn. 1:16, 17; Heb. 9:11-15).
  5. He was baptized to reveal the affections of His heavenly Father; this established His identity before others and confidence that He “had the goods” to accomplish His mission.  
*... “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt. 3:17)*
- E. In the Old Testament, the Lord commanded 3 “baptisms” for the qualification of the priests. Jesus’ ministry was largely a priestly ministry, though not in the strict expression but in the spiritual truth. Christ would undergo these 3 baptisms throughout His life and death.
1. The baptism of water.  
*<sup>6</sup> Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. (Lev. 8:6)*  
*<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. (Mt. 3:13)*

2. The baptism of oil. Oil in the scripture often refers to the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 4:18; Is. 61:1, 2)

***<sup>12</sup> And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him. (Lev. 8:12)***

***<sup>16</sup> When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. (Mt. 3:16)***

a. The dove was the offering that the poorest in the nation would make for their sins. The lamb and the dove were the symbols of the sacrifice of sin (see Lk. 2:24).

b. The dove was the symbol of *gentleness and peacefulness*. This underscores the lowly and gentle nature that Christ took upon Himself as He identified with mankind.

***...I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Mt. 11:29)***

3. The baptism of blood.

***...Then Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, <sup>23</sup> and Moses killed it. Also he took some of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. (Lev. 8:22-23)***

***Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. (Lk. 22:20)***

a. The blood on the priest on the ear, thumb and toe speak of the cleansing of all that the priest would *hear, do* and places he would *go*.

b. The blood of Christ qualifies us to become sons.

### III. THE WILDERNESS

- A. After Jesus' baptism we are told that He was driven into the wilderness to be tested. The wilderness was the notable place of preparation for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (and Paul). It's also a place that is synonymous with *death* and was used as a powerful symbol to God's people. In the wilderness that everything of strength and comfort is removed so that the vessel can be filled with power from God.

***<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. (Mt. 4:1, 2)***

- B. Many times we rely on human strength or wisdom to conquer the mission before us. The mission of Christ was so great and so glorious that He needed to be emptied entirely of any human solution. The mission that lay before Him was *the cross* where He would die without a fight. There is only one-way to accomplish the cross and secure salvation for the world: to die upon it. Before He faced the death of the cross, He had to be sure that *all short cuts were dead*.

### IV. THE TEMPTATION TO SHORTCUT

- A. There is an unwritten law across the universe: you cannot win a crown without gaining victory in the struggle. The same is true for the crown that Christ sought. If He were to obtain the *salvation of the world* and become *heir to the throne of David* He too must pass through the clash of conflict to show that He was indeed the victor.
- <sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)**
- B. Jesus is the pattern by which we ought follow and emulate. Through this testing He shows the way through the *battle of temptation* and into holiness. Though sinless, Jesus was tempted so that He proven able to aid His people.
- For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Heb. 2:18)**
- C. Coming off the bold declaring of the Father, “You are My Son...” Jesus now goes into the wilderness where Satan would suggest 3 options to Him on how to accomplish *His mission*. The enemy would craftily seek to undermine the *beloved Son* by giving his own advice. The temptations of Satan are his attempt to appeal to *Jesus’ humanity*, just as he did with Adam, in an endeavor to establish *his authority* over Christ (a counterfeit father).
- D. If Jesus’ mission was to *save the world* through men realizing that He was God, then surely the issue at hand (in the devil’s mind) was men. If Christ could convince men who He was, then might He be able to short-cut the cross? Short-cut death?
- E. Peter would later attempt to talk Christ out of the cross; Jesus would rebuke him reminding him that he was only conscious of the things of men, not the things of God.
- <sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must ...be killed.... <sup>22</sup> Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him... <sup>23</sup> But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Mt. 16:21-23)**
- F. How foolish it is to talk men out of the very crosses that qualify them!
- G. The temptations of Satan are fairly predictable (though not to be taken lightly) when it comes to tempting men. They fall into 3 categories: *the temptations of the flesh* (lust/gluttony), the mind (pride/envy), and *the love of things* (greed). All 3 of these temptations were aimed at avoiding the cross.
1. A note on temptation. They are often aimed at us as a shortcut *out of suffering*. (i.e. lust is aimed to shortcut the present suffering of desiring physical pleasure; fulfillment comes through the covenant of marriage).
  2. Yet, it is *in and through the suffering* that we are proven and attain the greater reward (see James 1:12).

3. People can resist temptation. Some wrongly believe that because their desires are so strong that they are unable to resist. We are not the sum of our desires but children of God.

***...God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)***

## **V. THE FIRST TEMPTATION – FEED THE POOR**

**<sup>3</sup> Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” (Mt. 4:3)**

- A. The first temptation that Christ face was the desire to be merely a *social reformer* of sorts. Jesus was Himself hungry and so felt the plight of all people. They were hungry. Many would follow Him simply because they would fed them at various times (see Jn. 6:26).
- B. As God, He had the power to turn stones into bread. Here the enemy tempts Him, “*Get out of the pain of your hunger by turning these stones into loaves.*” Had He given in, he certainly would have been tempted to turn the stones of Israel into bread for the hungry, dazzling them with His supernatural power. Then would they believe in Him? Would His mission be accomplished?
- C. However the problem of the world was not their physical hunger. They needed more than social reformer to give them bread (even Dictators can do that); they needed a spiritual reformer who would shame the serpent, break the power of sin and loose the shackles of death! Mere loaves of bread fall short of the *everlasting bread of life* (see John 6).
- D. This temptation tried to remove Jesus from pain, hunger and the identification with the human condition. This same temptation would face Him upon the cross. Why would He need to suffer the humiliations of humanity if He really were the Son of God?

***...If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” (Mt. 27:40)**

- E. The people may have accepted Him as a *miracle worker* but their souls would still remain under the bondage of sin. The revelation of Jesus as a miracle worker does not save the soul. Many wrongly see Him only as that and believe that they are saved.
- F. Every generation has its young zealots who rise up and attempt to shame the true worshippers by blaming the social problems of the poor on them. They beg that the church would be more practical; that it would *give bread* and that would be enough. The church is not called to merely give bread but to *be Christ* to earth, a city set on a hill, burning and shining lamps. The world attempts to tell the church she would be accepted if she embraced her role as simply a bread giver and not a repentance declarer.

*There are deeper needs than crushed wheat, greater joys than a full stomach...<sup>1</sup>*

## **VI. THE SECOND TEMPTATION – USE MIRACLES**

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<sup>1</sup> *Fulton Sheen*

<sup>5</sup> **Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. (Mt. 4:5, 6)**

- A. Here the enemy tempts him to use extraordinary power to convince men that He was the Son of God. The enemy attempt to lure Him from the cross with the display of a great miracle. It's like Satan saying, “If you trust in your Father, then throw yourself down! He won't let you die because you're the beloved Son!”
- B. He even quotes Psalm 91 to Jesus that guarantees the Lord's safety from being crushed against the “stone.”
- C. The cross would prove to be an incredibly long process of interrogation, beating, humiliation, torture and a slow painful death.<sup>2</sup> In the suggested scenario, the Son would escape the longevity of the suffering, or more likely, be entirely spared by the Father if He would fling Himself off of a high building.
- D. The crowds of men would undoubtedly be convinced of His divinity if He were spared from such a feat. By what other means could one explain survival after such a mind-bending display? This temptation appeals to the desire of man for the spectacular rather than the ordinary.
- E. Scripture affirms the tension of the *ordinary nature* (human) of Jesus mixed with the divine. Jesus chose to live, walk, speak and accomplish His mission in such a way that it defied human logic and reason.

***For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness (physical/outward appeal); and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.<sup>3</sup> He is despised and rejected by men (Is. 53:2, 3)***

- F. The temptation was to be so extraordinary that through sheer miracles and the bending of the laws of nature men would accept and receive Him as Messiah. Yet in Jesus' ministry He repeatedly showed that miracles alone to do not convince everyone.

***And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, “This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet (3 days in the fish; Christ – 3 days in the grave). (Lk. 11:29)***

- G. The Lord knew that the masses wouldn't be convinced by some marvel but by the cross. Through the cross alone, the demonstration of God's extravagant love (Rom. 5:8), men would be drawn to Him

**<sup>32</sup> *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*<sup>33</sup> *This He said, signifying by what death He would die. (Jn. 12:32, 33)***

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<sup>2</sup> Crucifixion was designed to maximize suffering while prolonging death. It was one of the cruelest forms of capital punishment contrived. It often took subjects more than day to finally expire; the cause of death was usually suffocation. Jesus hung on the cross for 6 hours after being subjected to previous torture and beating.

- H. Jesus in His humility consistently restrained His glory rather than displaying it. Christ, Himself was a Diving Sign; a Divine Sign means not drawing attention; mankind would expect a supernatural spectacle but not a Suffering Servant; they would expect fireworks and displays of power, not a robed servant washing feet.

*"I want men who will believe in Me, even when I do not protect them; I will not open the prison doors where My brethren are locked; I will not stay the murderous Red sickle or the imperial lions of Rome, I will not halt the Red hammer that batters down My tabernacle doors; I want My missionaries and martyrs to love Me in prison and death as I loved them in My own suffering. I never worked any miracles to save Myself! I will work few miracles even for My saints. Begone, Satan! Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God."<sup>3</sup>*

## VII. THE THIRD TEMPTATION –

***<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." (Mt. 4:8-9)***

- A. The third temptation, and a very boastful statement of the enemy was that the kingdoms of the world would be delivered to Christ if He would worship the devil. But had the enemy overplayed his hand? Had the kingdoms really been given to the devil for him to give away?
- B. The authority of the earth in fact had been given to man. It was man who has resigned this authority over to the Serpent, who now was the "*prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2).*"
- <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all<sup>[b]</sup> the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."<sup>27</sup> ...God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:26-28)***
- C. Even if Christ had agreed to *worship* Satan it would inevitably mean *servicing*, for the two are connected. Christ could rule through this short-cut but He would be limited by the following ways:
1. It would only be an earthly rule. This is what many of His followers expected and wanted. Christ would avoid death through the cross but He would also avoid the resurrection. He could not rule eternally as a man for all men die.

***Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. (Jn. 6:15)***

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<sup>3</sup> Fulton Sheen

2. As only an earthly man with an earthly rule, Christ could not redeem the souls of mankind. The only way for the sins of humanity to be atoned (paid) for was through sacrifice. Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb slain on behalf of sinful humanity. If there were no sacrifice, there would be no redemption.
  3. The kingdom under this scenario would not be a heavenly kingdom that shattered all the kingdoms of man, but simply a continuation of the old one.  
**<sup>34</sup> You watched while a stone (Christ) was cut out without hands, which struck the image (earthly kingdoms) on its feet...<sup>35</sup>... and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:34, 35)**
  4. The Father, the Ancient of Days, is the only One who can only fully give the kingdoms of this world.  
**<sup>13</sup> “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. <sup>14</sup> Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13, 14)**  
  
**... ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. <sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. (Ps. 2:8)**
- D. Jesus would later affirm to Pilate the passing of an earthly kingdom and the establishment of His future eternal one. There was only one way to receive the future kingdom He was alluding to: He must go to the right hand of the Father by conquering sin through His death on the cross.
- Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” (Jn. 18:36)**
- <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. <sup>34</sup> “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand...(Acts 2:32-34)**
- E. Christ’s conquering of earth wasn’t to be through a shortcut or the militant campaigns of his followers but through entering the heart of tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners and broken people like us.