

These readings have a little bit of everything. There is history, moral teaching and preaching by John, the work of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, conquering temptations when face to face with the devil.

1. Have you ever felt that the Holy Spirit was guiding the direction of your life, or giving you strength to avoid temptation?

2. Read Luke 3:1-6 and footnotes. How does Luke illustrate the “fulfillment of prophecy” in this narrative account of John?

Luke 3:1-6 ¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. ³He went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one crying out in the desert:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’⁵ Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, ⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

3. Read Matthew 11:9-10 and Malachi 3:1. What did Jesus say about John the Baptist when he is asked about John by his disciples in Matthew 11?

Matthew 11:9-10 ⁹Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written: ‘Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.’

Malachi 3:1 Now I am sending my messenger—he will prepare the way before me; And the lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple; The messenger of the covenant whom you desire.

4. Read Luke 3:7-14. What are the “good fruits” that John speaks of here? What happens to those who do not produce good fruit?

Luke 3:7-14 ⁷He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance; and **do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.** ⁹Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.” ¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³He answered them, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?” He told them, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.”

5. What do you think is the meaning of “do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones”? See Luke 3:8.

6. What is the difference between the baptism by John and the baptism by Jesus?

Read 3:15-20.

Luke 3:15-20 Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹ Now Herod the tetrarch, who had been censured by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil deeds Herod had committed, ²⁰ added still another to these by [also] putting John in prison.

7. Jesus is baptized by John. How do you think those who witnessed this would have reacted?

Read Luke 3:21-22.

Luke 3:21-22 ²¹ After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

8. When Luke records the genealogy of Jesus, how far back in history does he trace his ancestors? Read Luke 3:23-38 and footnotes.

9. Why did Jesus go to the desert for 40 days just before he began his earthly ministry?

Read Luke 4:1-13.

Luke 4:1-13. ¹ Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert ² for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" ⁵ Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. ⁶ The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ All this will be yours, if you worship me." ⁸ Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written:

"You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve."⁹ Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'¹¹ and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

¹² Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

¹³ When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

10. How difficult would it be for a poor, hot, tired and hungry man to resist these temptations?