

The New Exodus Begins

Matthew 3–4

What We Found

- John preaches at the Jordan announcing, in Isaiah's words, that the long exile is over and the Lord himself is returning to his people.
- At Jesus' baptism the Trinity is manifest: heaven opens, the Spirit descends, the Father declares his beloved Son. The same pattern is spoken over every Christian at baptism, which gives the Holy Spirit and is far more than a symbol.
- The Father's voice braids together Psalm 2 (the King) and Isaiah 42 (the Servant), and many readers from the earliest centuries have also heard Genesis 22 (the beloved son offered): the whole Gospel in one sentence.
- Forty days in the wilderness replay Israel's forty years. Jesus answers every temptation from Deuteronomy, standing firm exactly where Israel fell. He is the New Israel, rewriting the story from inside.
- Temptation opens by attacking identity: "If you are the Son of God." Jesus does not debate who he is; he answers with the word of God.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Gregory Nazianzen (Oration 39, On the Holy Lights)

Christ is baptized so that we might go down into the water with him and rise with him. The Light needed no cleansing; he sanctified the Jordan for our sake and made water the beginning of new birth.

Voices of the Church: St. Gregory the Great (Homilies on the Gospels)

The ancient enemy tempted the Lord by the same approaches through which he conquered the first man. Christ overcame him with the patience of the word of God, teaching us how the battle is fought.

Voices of the Church: St. Hilary of Poitiers (Commentary on Matthew)

What was manifested over Christ at the Jordan is bestowed on the baptized: the heavens opened, the Spirit given, the Father's voice declaring sonship. We become sons in the Son.

Live It This Week

- Find out the date of your baptism and write it somewhere you will see it. If you can, thank someone who was there.
- Memorize this week's verse and pray it once each day before your first meal.
- Notice this week where temptation begins with “if”, with doubt about your identity as God's beloved child, and answer it out loud with Scripture.

Scripture Memory

Matthew 4:4 (RSV2CE): *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*

Before Next Session

Read Matthew 5, and keep your running count of the places Matthew quotes the Old Testament.

Catechism References

CCC 535–537 · CCC 538–540 · CCC 1223–1225