

The experience of Israel in the desert under Moses for forty years is a story of unbelief and God's judgment against that unbelief. Israel failed to live up to the honor of being "God's son," and failed like Adam their forefather to live according to the Lord's commands. Just as Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden because of the Fall, so Israel was exiled from the Promised Land for forty years until all met the judgment of seeing life run out and their bones buried in the desert. But Israel in her failure *set the stage for* One greater than Adam to come in obedience and live a life of faith in the wilderness. Christ is our new Israel!

Mon/Tues: Read Leviticus 8:1-13; 9:22-24 and Luke 3:21-23

Priestly Ordination

God the Father underlines in the Gospels His approval of His Son entering public ministry at His baptism. Christ was the obedient Son of God, the faithful Suffering Servant and the perfectly qualified High Priest. But notice especially that His baptism *was a priestly act, ordaining Him as our High Priest*.

Just as Aaron the first High Priest was washed with water, as well as anointed by Moses with oil (Leviticus 8:1-13) so Jesus Christ in His baptism was anointed with the oil of the Spirit of God for His priestly work and washed with water by *another son of Aaron*, John the Baptist. Moses, being from the family of Aaron, washed Aaron and prepared him for his ordination as a priest. In the same way, John the Baptist, the son of the priest Zechariah, performed the ritual of washing/baptism for Christ Jesus as He was publicly ordained for His work.

There are more parallels between Christ's baptism and the high priest's ordination in Leviticus. After sacrifices for sin, seven days of ceremonial washing, anointing with oil and dressing in holy garments, Aaron showed the whole congregation of Israel that he was the chosen priest over Israel by raising his hands and giving the congregation the Aaronic blessing.

And what was the Lord's response? The Lord responded with approval from heaven (Lev. 9:22-24):

Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Leviticus 9:22-24

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks for the holy power of Christ's ordination as our High Priest at His baptism. May God open our ears of faith to hear God's voice from heaven: "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Most important, may we see in the descent of the Dove that God the Father has sent His fire down from heaven to show all the world that He has accepted Christ as His priest – able to bring down upon our lives the blessings that flow from His uplifted arms.

What then is to be our final response? All the people rejoiced when they saw the glory of God as a consuming fire. When they saw the sacrifice of their High Priest accepted, then they knew they had found forgiveness and saving communion with the Lord. May we likewise shout and fall on our faces, realizing that our Priest did not sacrifice on the Cross for His own sins – but for ours.

Weds/Thurs: Read Mark 1:9-13 & Luke 4:1-2**Exercising our Faith**

The first creature to object at the joyful event of Christ's ordination is Satan. Therefore, the first conflict of Christ's public ministry was with the Accuser of the brethren, that great deceiver, the Devil. How does our Lord fight this arch-enemy? He uses the Word of God to combat three eruptions of temptation. Each time Satan questions the veracity of God's Word and Law overarching Christ's life, He hurls a Scriptural stone at the Devil until the evil one leaves, defeated by the Word Christ spoke and "waiting until a more opportune time" (Luke 4:13, NIV).

Meditate and Pray: Let us give thanks that the Word of God is such a protection in our lives also. It is by the Word of God that we are assured of God's love for us, the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for our sins, and the life-changing ministry of the Holy Spirit within our breasts. In short, we have the gift of faith joining us to Christ and His Word and can therefore exercise that faith in response to God's Word.

By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace. *The Westminster Confession of Faith XIV, paragraph 2*

Fri/Sat/Sun: read Deuteronomy 6:10-19 and Luke 4:9-15**Impeccable Savior**

Satan, full of his own foolish self-confidence, believed he would find a time in the future in which to successfully tempt the Son of God to switch allegiances. After the Temptation, he left the scene of his defeat, comforting himself that there would be another time of temptation during which he could attack Christ (Lk 4:13).

The Devil placed his hope in his assumption of the *peccability* of Christ (believing that it was possible for him to find the temptation that would make Christ's fall *possible*). This is one of the fatal flaws of Satan's strategy against the Son of God – in Christ's day or in ours – assuming that Christ could actually sin if the right temptation could be found. In fact, He resisted sin *to the very utmost* because it was impossible for Him to sin! That is what Christ's impeccability means.

Yes, there are plenty of opportune times in which *we*, sinful saints, can be tempted on a daily basis. We cry with the Apostle, "wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7). And yes, Satan showed up again in Christ's ministry to tempt Him, even through His nearest and dearest disciples. For example, Christ recognized Satan's tempting words in Peter (Mt 16:22-23) when Peter sought to dissuade Him from going to the Cross. Christ responds by saying to Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" And elsewhere, Christ declares that He recognized the approach of Satan in His betrayal by Judas (John 14:30). There Christ triumphantly asserts: "The prince of this world has nothing in me!"

In other words, one of the doctrines which we are to *treasure* when it comes to our Savior, is His *impeccability*. This means that Christ was not only sinless in behavior, but that He was incapable of sinning, since He did not only refuse sin, but did not even "know sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In short, the *impeccability* of Christ means that, because of His Divine power and holiness, though Jesus could be tempted, He could never give into the

temptation. Sinning was not possible for Christ, and so Satan's waiting "for an opportune time" to tempt Christ was doomed to failure from the start.

As William G. T. Shedd puts it:

The amount of energy which the total complex person (of Christ) possesses to resist temptation, must be measured not by the human nature but by the Divine; and the amount of energy to resist temptation determines the peccability or impeccability of the person. Jesus Christ, therefore, is as mighty to overcome Satan and sin, as His mightiest nature is. His strength to prevent a lapse from holiness is to be estimated by His Divinity, not by His humanity, because His Divinity and not humanity is the source of His personality, and dominates His whole person. ... Human nature, whether in the God-man or a mere man, is a temptable and fallible nature. A mere man can be overcome by temptation, but a God-man cannot be ...

The omnipotence of the Divine Christ preserves the finite human nature of Christ from falling, however great may be the stress of temptation to which our finite nature is exposed ... The Divine nature cannot *innocently* and *righteously* leave the human nature to its own finiteness without any support from the Divine.

Because there is no conflict (as there is in us) between *wanting to sin* and *resisting sin* in the God-man, Christ can never confess what the Apostle Paul does, "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" (Rom 7:19, 20, 24)

On the contrary, there is the calm inquiry of Christ: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (Jn 8:46); and the affirmation of 1 Jn 3:5: "In Him was no sin."

Shedd, *Christology*, Vol. 2, pgs. 332-335

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks that Jesus Christ met Satan's temptations with an almighty energy of opposition and so endured a fiercer trial than any other man ever experienced. Shedd concludes on page 340 of volume 2,

Christ was exposed to a severer test and trial than Adam was. And this, for the very reason that His resistance was so steady, and so mighty. Had He showed signs of yielding, or had He succumbed in the outset, the stress of the temptation would have been far less than it actually was. Had the first temptation in the wilderness succeeded, it would not have been followed by the second and the third. But the more the God-man baffled the tempter, the more the tempter returned to the charge, and intensified his attack.

Shedd, *Christology*, Vol. 2, pg. 340

Sing with joy about Christ's complete defeat of Satan, in *Trinity Hymnal* # 441:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.

*Where He displays His healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more:
In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.*