

## Baptism of Jesus and his 40 days of Temptation in the Desert

*Stop acting so small. You are the universe in ecstatic motion. ~ Rumi*

The number 40 appears 146 times in the bible. Essentially it has the same meaning as the number 4. Inherent within the square is the cross, and 40 represents the length of time that we are nailed 4-square, like on a cross, to the realm of existence of unaware duality, internally split and fragmented. This can be any length of time!

And so, we see the Israelites wandering for **“40 years”** in the desert after they decided to escape bondage to Pharaoh. Pharaoh represents the tyrannical ego that demands servitude, obedience to the rules, hard work, and is punitive and demanding. Are you aware of how within you, live pharaoh *and* the one in bondage, doing the bidding of the tyrant – both victim and perpetrator trapped in a dynamic of power and control?

The decision to leave this realm of existence, does not, however, result in arriving in the “Promised Land,” of “enlightenment” and freedom. It just sets us on the path to wander in the realm of temptation, trial and testing. It sets us on the inner journey through a desert, or a dark night of the soul. In this state we can gradually recognize how our needs were not met as children and are not met by us either now. We discover that there is so much anger, struggle, suffering, fear, shame, jealousy, and envy... Just think of the story of Moses in the desert and how the Israelites complained. Moses finally removed himself from the tribe to contemplate for **40 days** and came up with a set of instructions, the Ten Commandments, to guide them as they continued their journey through the inner wasteland. This represents the moral code for the hurt and angry young soul, to stop it from acting out in destructive ways for itself and others. Basically, learn to love yourself and God and do no harm.

When we discover that this is a long journey and that there are no short cuts to the “Promised Land,” we are tempted to go back to Egypt – the realm of the childhood and ego. How many times have you said something like, “Ignorance was bliss,” or “It was so much easier when I wasn’t aware,” or, “just tell me what to do and I will do it,” or “I am not going on this journey, love and truth demands too much.”

The story of Jesus after his baptism – is about the recognition an inner journey to be embarked on through the awakening within. The dove is a symbol of expansion into a knowing of consciousness. It is the calling of Love. In the alchemical texts the change from the “Black stage of development,” i.e. the stage of unaware ego, to the “White stage of transformation,” or, it is the movement from an external control to an internal one – from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant. You feel behind you, pushing you, and you long for real love. You have recognize the external world cannot deliver the love you this condition that draws you inwards.



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Tintoretto 1519 – 1594 – El Museo de Prado, Madrid



John the Baptist is the “forerunner,” in the story. He represents the stage of development prior to this stage. It is in ego consciousness that we start to recognize that we are Soul, first, just intellectually. It is from here that one witnesses and experiences the inner Spirit. In the story, John the Baptist loses his head. In fact, it is the feminine in the form of Salome who demands his head on a platter. In other words, the intellect makes way for spiritual intuition, wisdom and the dawning perception of the unity of all things. The Soul demands this “sacrifice,” or, shift in allegiance from fear to love, from judgment to wisdom, instead of any part of love being subservient to fear. And this allegiance and collaboration has to be complete, even in the face of death.

There can be no power, hierarchy or competition, rebellion or hatred. Love must infuse ego and soul so that there can be dance in love between all parts of Self.

The next thing that happens in the story is our Hero finds himself being aware of all of his needs and the ways in which had tried to meet those needs in an unaware way, and could still choose to do – through power, addiction and materialism. As he becomes aware of his inner hunger, powerlessness and emotional poverty, there is the temptation to return to the culturally learned ways of coping with the pain and suffering. How many of you have struggled with addictions of every kind to meet your unaware, childhood emotional hunger? How many have entered into the realm of competition and high achievement for recognition, status, and power to calm the inner sense of worthlessness, powerlessness and inferiority. Are you still tempted? How? How many of you have felt the emptiness of worthlessness, fear of surviving, fear that you are not “good enough” and sought to fill an inner hole with material possessions and acquisitions? And does the temptation to just “have a drink or a donut,” almost feel like the devil himself? How many of you cannot find your inner calling, a burning passion, or the deep creative urge within and are “bored by the same old manna from heaven?” Yes, you have your daily bread, a roof over your head and yet, and yet..... Do you return to the drama of the ego to alleviate the intolerable “stuck-ness,” tedium and boredom of walking through the 40 days of the desert? Do you complain and grumble? Do you pretend you are already there and live in illusion? There is great temptation with the awakening to a higher state of consciousness to want to bypass the long walk in the desert, speed up the gradual gestation of potential, or ignore the darkness and “hell” that must be faced. This is where we see people having great spiritual insight, but no inner awareness of their own suffering. They are the gurus who end up abusing their devotees, falling into materialism and pride etc. They are still split in the psyches.

It is only after Jesus has done the deep inner work of shifting allegiance from ego to soul through the awakening of love, and has faced his inner suffering and temptations that the gospels tell us, he is ready for service to the world. This requires the ego to submit to the soul even in the face of death, **and to allow every molecule of the mind and body and instinctual self to be infused with the love that is freely given by the mature soul.** To live in truth and love is no easy task – it is to forfeit any illusions of safety and love in the material world and to fulfill one’s purpose of integrating being fully human and fully divine, in form.

The same story, in principle, is told of Mary. She was impregnated, conceived of, and recognized, the Christ child or the young spirit, within herself at the annunciation. Again, the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost is recognized within and is represented by the White Dove. It is the Archangel Gabriel that heralds the innermost spirit symbolized by the white dove that represents that which is *not* nailed four square to the earth, but is pure, white, virginal and able to fly free of its bondage to the ego realm of existence. Free but not separate. **It is important to understand that nothing actually “dies,” is left behind, or released on this journey. There is nothing to “give up for Lent.” We cannot “wash away,” anything. Burn anything.**



This is all the language of the intellect that knows nothing of love and that seeks to “fix.” “If it is hurting, cut it off, if I don’t like it reject it, if it complains, shut it up. What happens when you include everything into the embrace of love, is a transformation, not a separation. If it is unity and wholeness we desire, then *everything* is incorporated or integrated into the next ring of ever expanding circles of awareness, in a fully transformed way. It results in a beautiful dance between every aspect of being – instinct, ego and soul all infused with the love of the Universe and working together in perfect harmony. And this love comes from the soul’s Source, the Spirit of God within. Every aspect of our being must be willing to be impregnated and infused with this vibration. Listen to the way Rumi explains it.

El Greco – El Museo de Prado

*To a frog that’s never left his pond the ocean seems like a gamble.*

*Look what he’s giving up: security, mastery of his world, recognition!*

*The ocean frog just shakes his head. “I can’t really explain what it’s like where I live, but someday I’ll take you there.”*

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*If you want what visible reality can give, you’re an employee.*

*If you want the unseen world, you’re not living your truth.*

*Both wishes are foolish, but you’ll be forgiven for forgetting  
that what you really want is love’s confusing joy.*

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*Gamble everything for love, if you’re a true human being.*

*If not, leave this gathering.*

*Half-heartedness doesn’t reach into majesty. You set out to find God,  
but then you keep stopping for long periods at mean-spirited roadhouses.*

*~ From “The Essential Rumi” (translated by Coleman Barks)*

Mary becomes pregnant with Christ Consciousness – her own soul is awakening to universal love and spiritual wisdom. She was pregnant for **40 weeks** until this new state of consciousness could actually be born and held by her. The period of gestation and labor can very much feel like a long endless walk in the desert! There are many mean-spirited roadhouses along the way that tempt, distract and lure you in. The voice of rebellion will say, “Haven’t I done enough? When will I get my reward? How much longer? Why do I have to always do the loving thing? Why can’t I have bread, and wealth and power? What’s so wrong with that? And the arguments go on and on, to avoid doing the loving and often very difficult thing and fulfilling your true purpose in this life of living in Truth and Love. We all reach the limit of our capacity. Notice your own edge.

And while there is joyful anticipation during this gestation period, there is also never-ending weariness. There is hard work and labor involved, as there is in continuing through the desert. The Hero’s journey and the Heroine’s journey is the same in principle, but also different in expression.

After Mary gave birth to Jesus, by Jewish law, she would go through a period of purification **for 40 days**, because she had just undergone a spiritual death and birth, herself. Birthing a baby is the great symbol of this inner cyclical dynamic of life and death. Tuma is the Hebrew word meaning the “energy of death,” and comes from the word Tumai – meaning “spiritually impure” or separated from the Love of God. This separation in

awareness is the condition of sin, from which we must be “purified,” “emptied” or “die to,” in order live in accordance with Love and Unity. It starts happening from conception and birth. When birth is seen as symbolic of an internal dynamic, it means Mary is dying to ego and birthing a new level of consciousness. This is the opposite of actual birth which is a baby dying to Life in the Spirit and being born to sin in perception and experience from Spirit (separation.) It is the reverse story of Genesis, where humankind was “born,” into the suffering of separation from Spirit in perception and died to the unaware condition of unity with Spirit. For an excellent discussion on this topic see the link below.

<http://www.womeninthescrptures.com/2016/02/what-does-it-mean-for-woman-to-be.html>

Just like Jesus in the desert, Mary had to remove herself and face the inner temptations now that she had turned inward and birthed the spiritual potential within herself. This same tradition of ritual purification after a birth (death) is in Catholicism and in Hinduism. To understand this story literally as childbirth being dirty, women being dirty and inferior and needing to be punished, rejected and purified is the interpretation of 2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant thinking of a 3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant spiritual event of huge import and deep meaning. Birth is the great symbol of inner transformation and life, as is death. The story symbolizes an inner death and birth, meaning an integration leading to more life and light.



Water is used as the symbol of purification and fertility, both in the baptism of Jesus and in the story of Mary. You wash away the old and water the new. In the story of the Flood, God washes away the sins of the world, but keeps two of everything to bring about new life on earth. There is both birth and death and spiritual birth is again heralded by a white dove bearing an olive branch representing life and peace, just as the Peace Lily is depicted with Mary as symbol of a new state of consciousness.

#### Exercise:

- What is it that you wish to “die to,” during the period of Lent? Start considering how you wish to ritualistically and intentionally retreat into yourself and face the inner temptations
- Consider how the words, die, renounce, release, separate, reject, detach from, wash away, burn, give up etc. all reflect a misunderstanding in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant. Notice how these words inform your practice and start reprogramming your self to turn these words in “I accept with Love, whatever arises,” And for the part of you that is desperately afraid of what this might mean use the words, “I accept the love You offer me.” Create a new relationship dynamic within yourself that is an intimate dance of love.
- What temptations do you still face to protect yourself from your own inner suffering?
- Do you know the temptation to not accept love from your Soul, because it will demand something of you that you do not want? That might endanger your life?

- How have you protected yourself from suffering? Through wealth, power and status, addictions?
- What underlies the temptation? Can you love the one who is suffering and defended against the suffering? Can the part that is suffering and defended accept the love and allow it to infuse your being?
- Can you clearly see that just “giving up” the outward behavior will not ever get you to the “Promised Land?”
- What do your inner “demons or reptiles” as St Theresa calls them, look like? Draw a picture. Create a mandala. Write a poem. How do they tempt you? Can you love them into being tame like St. Martha. Read about this beautiful legend to see the right attitude towards the “Devil” in you. She sprinkled the multi-faceted monster with holy water, put a sash around his neck and tamed him. The monster also had to submit and allow the love in to be transformed. How different to the images of St. Michael murdering his inner dragon demon. This image of St Michael is a gross misunderstanding of what is needed, seen through the masculine, egoic consciousness. We cannot and dare not attempt to destroy any part of ourselves if we want wholeness.

Lent is not a time of sacrifice and deprivation, but a time of abundant compassion and love, that can only happen after the Baptism in the Spirit, or awakening to the love in your own heart, for *you*.



*We stood together hand in hand in primordial time;  
now at last, we are one again.*

*We are all of one soul struggling along one path,  
and all drunk with the same wine.*

*From among the two worlds we chose Love alone  
except for that Love there is nothing we adore.*

*What bitterness did our souls suffer from separation!  
At long last, we are free from separation.*

*A ray from the sun came in through an opening  
and raised us up in dignity, however low we were.*

*O Sunlight! Don't withhold Your loving radiance from us!  
Aren't we sitting in the robes of Your radiance?*

*By Your radiance we are transformed into rubies,  
it is because of You that we exist.*

*Dancing like particles before You;  
in our yearning for You, we abandon all our chains.*

*~Rumi*