

## Temptations of Jesus

### Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13

A slow careful look at the life of Christ becomes a study of the Christian walk as God intended us to live it. 2 Peter 1:3 Here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and early in our study of Jesus, we find Christ's battle and victory over Satan. It is shared with us how to successfully defeat his tactics. Jesus' priorities, confidences, and His determinations are all revealed to us in this incident!

“Jesus was tempted so that every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might know that Jesus Christ is the Conqueror.” Warren Wiersbe (John 16:33; Col. 2:15) **Temptations involve the will. Will we obey God or our desires?! But we know, Jesus came to do the Father's will!**

“Then (“immediately” Mark 1:12) was Jesus (“being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was” Luke 3:1) led up of the Spirit (“driveth him” Mark 1:12) into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (“and was with the wild beasts.” Mark 1:13). <sup>2</sup>And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights (“he did eat nothing: and when they were ended,” Luke 4:2) he was afterward an hungered.” Matthew 4:1-2

#### The Scene Set

A. “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness” – The purpose of the temptation of Jesus:

1) His sinless character tested by Satan – Jesus' worthiness to be Messiah (Heb. 5:7-9) Much was said in correlation between this wilderness experience of Jesus and the wilderness wanderings and testing of Israel. (Deut. 8:2)

2) He might become a sympathetic High Priest and our example. (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16)

- “Immediately” – seems to indicate that there was no time between the baptism and temptation.
- “driveth him” – The book of Mark does not give us a full account of the temptations, but adds details the other two gospel books omit. Here he uses this very strong Greek word. It is the same word used when speaking about casting out demons. It adds emotion to the intensity of the experience not a fear or not willing to go on Jesus' part. Other translations: “sent”; “impelled”; “made him go”; “compelled”; “urged”; “pushed”; “drove”; “forced”
- “wild beasts” – Jesus was alone and His surroundings were hostile. Very few people experience a long period of time without human contact. But then to add the lack of food and dangers, emotions and lack of will power start to fade! Isolation, starvation, constant danger – torture tactics to break the will

B. “fasted forty days and forty nights” – The Greek seems to tell us the temptations lasted the entire forty days. It was an ongoing badgering. These three climax the temptations at the end of those days.

<sup>3</sup>And when the tempter came to him, he (“the devil” Luke 4:3) said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones (“this stone that it” Luke 4:3) be made bread. <sup>4</sup>But he answered and said, It is written, (“That” Luke 4:4) Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:3-4

**Temptation #1 – Category of Physical Appetites (Questions God's care and love) This would center on distrusting God's plan and loyalty. Yet Jesus will assert perfect confidence and loyalty.**

## Devil's Temptation:

- “If thou be the Son of God,” – In the Greek this phrase is not one of doubt or in question, but an affirmation – “in view of the fact that you are the Son of God.” “if” = “since” The whole basis for this temptation is God’s love and care for Christ. ---“Why isn’t God taking care of you and feeding you?” “Why is He making you suffer and be so very hungry?” “Are you sure God loves you and really will take care of you?” “This does not look like the actions of a loving Father?” The Devil is using Jesus’ weakest point – hunger.
- “stones be made bread” – Satan desired Jesus to use His divine nature in the form of a miracle to satisfy His physical desire. This is a tactic of Satan; tempting you to take care of your need - your way!

## Jesus' Answer:

- “It is written” – and then Jesus goes on and quotes Deut. 8:3. Literally this phrase means, “It stands written.” This phrase reminds me of the old gospel song, “The Bible Stands”! It says, “I will plant my feet on its firm foundation, for the Bible stands!” It is on the foundation of the word of God that Jesus sets up His confrontation with the Devil. And so should we!
- “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God – Jesus’ emphasis is on the word “man”! He understood that success in our walk on earth comes not with physical nourishment but by spiritual! Food is a God-given visual to our need of Scripture! Ps. 119:103; Jer. 15:16; I Peter 2:2
- Jesus’ Priorities – Jesus was not given power to meet His own needs for personal comfort. To Jesus spiritual food was much more important than physical food. Jesus was in the wilderness to fast. To make stones into bread and eat before the Father ended the fast, would be sin! Jesus was willing to stay hungry in God’s will than to fill His stomach out of God’s plan! Jesus will go throughout His ministry trusting and following the Father’s will. (Luke 22:42)

*“When we put our physical needs ahead of our spiritual needs, we sin.  
When we allow circumstances to dictate our actions, instead of following God’s will, we sin.”  
Warren Wiersbe*

**Issues with the book of Luke and a chronological order:** We simply do not know why Luke set his order of the temptations differently than Matthew. Most scholars believe that hints within both books indicate Matthew’s is the true order of the event. Luke – “and” Matthew – “then”

**“<sup>5</sup>Then the devil taketh him up (“he brought him” Luke 4:9) into the holy city (“Jerusalem” Luke 4:9), and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down (“from hence” Luke 4:9): for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning (“over thee, to keep” Luke 4:10) thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. <sup>7</sup>Jesus (“answering” Luke 4:12) said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Matthew 4:5-7**

## **Temptation #2 – Category of Doubting God – (Questions God’s faithfulness to His own.)**

**Devil’s Temptation:** This temptation seems to be based on the Devil’s suggestion for Jesus to introduce Himself in a spectacular way to the Jewish world and begin His ministry as the Messiah in this extreme way! Here Satan is pushing Jesus into a measure of daring and presumption on the Father. The Jews loved signs and expected the Messiah to enter the temple in a grand fashion. (Jesus will come and stir up the Jewish norm but not like this!) John 7:1-5 - Jesus’ brothers wanted Him to go to Jerusalem and make Himself known by doing great miracles and signs.

- “setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple” – Please do not visualize Jesus and Satan hanging off some pointed roof top, dangling over the temple courtyards! This phrase is simply describing the highest point of the temple. It would have been a porch on the temple wall overlooking the Kidron valley about 500 feet below. This certainly would have been the “pinnacle of the temple!”
- “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:” – This was not God’s will. An action such as this would be forcing God to do a miracle and foolish to attempt.
- “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:” – This time Satan uses Scripture too! He seems to say, “Well, obey this verse then!” Please realize, this is something the Devil will do. But watch out, he will misuse or misinterpret it!

Psalm 91 – God’s watchful care to the faithful The promises of verses 3-13 should not be taken in a literal sense. We cannot presume on God’s care outside of His will or our foolishness. Still, we know we are secure in the love and watchful care of our wonderful Lord even if harm comes to us. Luke 21:16-18; Rom. 8:28, 35

### **Jesus’ Answer:**

- “It is written again,” – Jesus will return to Scriptures. The word “again” adds strength to the statement. Other translations have the following: “But it also says,” “also” “On the other hand,”
- “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” – Deut. 6:16; “tempt” – put to a test; As believers, we should never have a time we feel as we must test God’s power or His love for us. These points, His absolute power and love, are simply facts! Also, some try and push or manipulate God to bend to our will! He is not obligated to make life work for our pleasure!
- Jesus’ Confidence – Jesus did not have to try tricks to test God’s love and protection. He knew the heart of God and had absolute confidence in Him. And so should we!

*“It is our privilege as children of God to meet calmly whatever comes to us in His providence.” Shepherd*

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world (“in a moment of time” Luke 4:5), and the glory of them; <sup>9</sup>And (“the devil” Luke 4:6) saith unto him, All these things (“this power” Luke 4:6) will I give thee, (“and the glory of them: for that is

delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.” Luke 4:6) if thou wilt fall down and worship me (“all shall be thine.” Luke 4:7) <sup>10</sup> Then saith Jesus (“answered” Luke 4:8) unto him, Get thee hence (“behind me” Luke 4:8), Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” Matthew 4:8-10

**Temptation #3 – Category of Trusting God’s Plan – (Questions God’s will and way)** This seems to be the last and climax of all the temptations given to Christ at this time.

**Devil’s Temptation:** God’s plan for His Son is to sit on the Throne and rule for eternity. But first there was a path to Calvary where His blood would be shed for the sins of the world. Here Satan is tempting Christ to take a shortcut around the suffering ahead. Please be aware, Jesus loved you too much to bypass the cross, He wanted to provide your way to escape hell and be with Him forever!

- “showeth him all the kingdoms of the world” – I found discussions among theologians concerning the method used by the Devil. Were these literal physical or mental visual experiences? Was Satan and Jesus really standing on the porches of the highest part of the temple? Or did somehow, “in a moment of time” did Satan literally flash the future before Jesus? Or were these some kind of mental thought or suggestion within the mind of Christ? For the most part, a visual event is widely accepted. These were real conflicts with a very real, personal, Devil. They were not a dream, hallucination, mental suggestion, or inner thought. It was the Devil bodily and physically appearing and trying to get Jesus to go against the plan of God!

“moment of time” – This seems to suggest that within a very short time the Devil flashed the realities of the world’s kingdoms before Jesus. Realize, we certainly have electronic means today to put hundreds of years into a short video presentation! The “prince and power of the air” could do it 2000 years ago!

“glory of them;” – The Devil loves to tempt with “vain” glory! The world’s glory passes away so quickly and often it only looks like glory to those observing. To those in the world who live “glorious” lives without Christ, find it’s ultimately very empty and it is very short lived!

- “if thou wilt fall down and worship me” – The Devil’s ambition is always to be worshiped and served! The devil wants all of us to obey him – that is ultimately bowing the knee to him!

“all shall be thine.” – Here the Devil promises all the kingdoms of the world, their power, and their glory. Remember, Jesus will someday have all the power and glory but Satan is tempting Jesus to get it without following the will of God. Weirsbe said, “There are not shortcuts to the will of God.” p, 17

- “for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.” – Don’t miss this phrase, it is amazing! The world really is the Devil’s! Here he is identifying himself as the “prince and power of the air!” John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; 6:12-13 **But** the Devil cannot transfer the world to a man long term! Those that believe this lie, will die without any of it! But if we die in Christ, we have life eternal! John 3:16-

## Jesus' Answer:

- “Get thee behind me Satan” – “Then saith Jesus unto him,” – is a very strong command. It was over; this indicates the last temptation had been given and victory had been won! Though all these temptations were very real, Satan had no power over Christ! (John 14:30)
- “for it is written,” – again Jesus goes to the Scripture for His defense against the tricks of the Devil!
- “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,” Deut. 6:13 Worship only belongs to God! Ex. 34:14; John 4:23
- “and him only shalt thou serve.” – Jesus’ answer brings together worship and service. Don’t miss this, **who or what** you worship is what you are willing to serve! possessions, career, position, prestige
- Jesus’ Determination – Jesus will have the throne but only after the cross! He was determined to do the Father’s will and not take any shortcuts to the glory that awaited Him!

*“Satan regularly tempts Christians in the same way – with the success syndrome, empire building, or alleged guarantees of health and wealth.” Blomberg*

<sup>11</sup> (“And when the devil had ended all the temptation,” Luke 4:13) Then the devil leaveth (“departed from” Luke 4:13) him (“for a season.” Luke 4:13), and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” Matthew 4:11

## Comforts from Heaven

- “the devil leaveth him for a season.” – This was not the last time the Devil will bombard Jesus. Even the words “departed from” has the idea of standing off to the side and waiting. Don’t forget Jesus’ words to Peter after the apostle tried to downplay and talk Jesus out of the cross! “Get thee behind me Satan.” (Mark 8:33) If you look at the rest of that verse, we see the problem with Peter is the same as it is with us when wanting our own way! Peter wanted his will to be done! “thou savorest (Lt – “are not mindful of”) not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.” Our minds are so earthly and pulled away from the things of God!

“for a season” – The Greek for this phrase is translated several different ways into the English language. “until a suitable time”; “until a opportune time”; “until the next opportunity”; “until a favorable time”; Jesus will struggle throughout His ministry with those who would pull Him away from the will of His Father!

- “angels came and ministered unto him.” – This is the first of two times angels will minister to Jesus. The second time will be in the garden just before the cross! In the Greek, this incident was a long-term time of encouraging to Jesus there in the wilderness. Jesus had passed the tests and now had to recover physically and be refreshed spiritually! What a blessing those “heavenly beings” from the throne room of God must have been!

## Believers Application:

1. The Scripture in I John 2:16, divided sin into three categories. It is interesting to note Luke's order of Jesus' temptation does parallel the order of I John 2:16. But we often see sin divided into specific areas.

- "lust of the flesh" – make bread for your hunger - meet your own physical needs Genesis 3:6  
"good for food"
- "lust of the eyes"- power and kingdoms of the world – coveting of possessions "pleasant to the eyes"
- "pride of life" – force God to take care of you - position, power, and control "make you to be wise"

A good soldier knows the tactics of the enemy but more importantly that same soldier knows the tactics of defeating the enemy! With the warfare against the Devil it is in **knowing** and **obeying** the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:10-18

2. Lessons learned from the Temptation of Christ:

1. The Devil is a real person not an influence or force of evil. Ezekiel 28:12-17; Isaiah 14:12-15
2. The Devil is very subtle - tricky in his ways. 2 Cor. 11:14 twists scripture; discourages; over-emphasizes natural desires; plants doubts; get us out of God's will
3. Christ used the Word of God to defeat the Devil. "Jesus exposed the tactics of the enemy and revealed to us how we can overcome when we are tempted." WW p. 147 Eph. 6:10-18 "Sword of the Spirit" – Know it and obey it! Ps. 119:9-11
4. Christ is separate from sinners and able to save us. Jesus had the moral right to be the perfect, sacrificial Lamb. Sinless even under intense temptation! 2 Cor. 5:21
5. Christ's humanness is proven. Heb. 4:15 - Jesus was tempted in the same areas in which we are tempted. He was God yet in the flesh and He was tempted yet without sin!
6. Christ gives us an example in our temptations. James 4:7-10 Resist the Devil, he likes an easy fight. Too many times we just roll over without much resistance!
7. God's plan for Jesus' ministry is to defeat Satan. Eph. 2:1-10; I John 3:8 The Devil is truly putting up a fight against God and His people. It is a true attempt but futile! It's like a canoe against a battleship! We know Who will win! John 16:33