

Jesus' Temptation**Matthew 4:1—11**

Jesus just began His public ministry by joining with the remnant of Jewish believers who came out to be baptized by John. Many of these people, I'm sure, were already believers but recognized that the next phase of the Kingdom program was beginning. The promise of the Kingdom was given in the Old Testament and now John the Baptist was proclaiming the actual Kingdom was soon to come. Since the Millennial Kingdom was a topic of many prophetic books in the Old Testament and Daniel gave a timeline of what was to be, it is not unusual that many in Israel were looking for their Messiah and the subsequent formation of the Kingdom. There were probably quite a few unbelievers who came out to John the Baptist to see what was going on, many, I'm guessing, became believers.

Jesus not only identified Himself with the group of believers but also identified Himself with John's ministry when He became baptized. According to John 1:31 John came baptizing with water to make Jesus known to Israel. At His baptism, God the Father and the Holy Spirit confirmed that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God. This was a very public demonstration that had the heavens open and the Holy Spirit coming down and a voice out of the heavens to declare Jesus as the Son of God. There was no room for anyone to deny that Jesus was special.

Order of Events

After His baptism, Jesus was brought into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. This was probably somewhere between Jerusalem and the Jordan River where the topography is very rugged and there were many wild beasts according to Mark. A quick reading of the accounts of His temptations seem to show a period of fasting ending with three temptations. However, in the account given by Luke verse 13, the Devil left until an opportune time meaning the Devil would come back at a later time to tempt Jesus again. Luke 4:1 also says that the Spirit lead Him into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days. Mark 1:13 reinforces this idea. It would then seem that Luke gives an earlier round of temptations while Matthew gives the last set. This would also explain why Matthew and Luke have the temptations in different order. Satan probably came to Jesus many times with the same set of temptations as Jesus became weaker and weaker physically, mentally and emotionally.

All through His ordeal, the Holy Spirit was leading Him (Luke 4:1) and the angels would come to minister to Him (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13). He would need to be sustained in order to be able to endure this 40-day test.

At the end of the 40 days, Jesus met two disciples of John the Baptist, one being Andrew the brother of Simon Peter (John 1:35—40). When Jesus heard that John the Baptist was taken into custody, He went north into Galilee and settled in the city of Capernaum (Matthew 4:12). It was from here that He began to choose His 12 Disciples.

Overview

The 40-day temptation period is covered in Matthew 4:1—11; Mark 1:12—13 and Luke 4:1—13. John does not include this event in Jesus' life because John portrays Him as Deity and God cannot be tempted. Matthew shows Jesus as worthy to take the throne as King. Mark shows Jesus as a Servant being lead around while Luke shows Jesus as a man struggling as we do with temptation.

The number 40 occurs many times throughout Scripture. This is done by design to emphasize a concept. It rained 40 days and nights in the flood, Israel wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, Goliath challenged Israel for 40 days, Nineveh had 40 days to repent, to list just a few. From these few examples we can see that 40 represents a period of testing or judgment. Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness represented the time of

His testing. I believe this was a test of His suitability to be the Messiah and reign as King at His Second Coming and also proof of being the Son of God.

The Temptations

The three temptations presented to Jesus by Satan cover every temptation we ever experience, specifically the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The first Adam was presented with a temptation involving these three areas of enticement. Eve saw that the tree was good for food (the lust of the flesh) and that it was a delight to the eyes (the lust of the eyes) and that the tree could make one wise (pride of life). This was probably the best tasting fruit tree in the whole garden. The more she thought about it the more she wanted to have a taste of it. It also gave great pleasure to look at it. It was the best looking tree in the garden. To top it all off there was the hope that this tree would make her wiser than any other creature. She would be so much wiser if she would only eat some of the fruit. Adam was right there with her not wanting to miss out on the pleasure that awaited by eating the fruit.

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

In each temptation, in the garden and with Jesus, Satan used God's Word to give credence to what he is saying but gave it his own special twist. He does that with us too, making what is wrong sound so right.

•Lust of the Flesh

The first of three temptations Jesus endured involved the simple act of making some bread to eat. There was certainly nothing wrong with eating and Jesus did make much food out of little food so making food from rocks certainly could not be a sin. It would also be proof that He was the Son of God. Jesus replied with Scripture saying, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" (Matthew 4:4) These words were originally said to Israel as God was preparing a new generation of Israelites to go into the Promised Land. They had wandered 40 years in the wilderness and during that time God was testing them getting them to trust Him along every step.

Deuteronomy 8:2—5 ² You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. ⁵ Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.

This temptation was calling on Jesus to bypass the will of the Father to satisfy His own physical hunger in His own way. The flesh would be satisfied but going against the will of the Father would show Jesus not to be the Son.

•Lust of the Eyes

The second of the temptations has Satan bring Jesus up to a high point of the temple. Satan once again asks Jesus to prove that He really is the Son of God, even though this was proven at Jesus' baptism. Satan wants Jesus to cast himself to the rocks below and, as Scripture promises, God would send angels to protect Him from harm. Jesus replied with Scripture; "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" Angels did come to minister to Jesus in God's timing, not when Satan wanted them to come.

Deuteronomy 6:16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah.

This was said to the children of Israel as they were being prepared by God to go into the Promised Land. The test at Massah is found in Deuteronomy 17. Do the Israelites trust God or not? Instead of testing they should be trusting.

Deuteronomy 17:1—7 ¹ ...and there was no water for the people to drink. ² Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" ³ But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." ⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

In the same way Satan was testing Jesus. Is He the Son or is He not the Son? This had already been proven at His baptism just as God had already proven that He would supply Israel with everything they needed.

This temptation would have appealed to the eyes. Seeing the angels swooping down to protect Jesus from harm would have been quite a show.

•Pride of Life

The third temptation had Satan bringing Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. Luke expands on this by stating he showed Him all the kingdoms in a moment of time. This gives us a brief glimpse into the power Satan has. This very high mountain is very possibly an overview of the universe. When man sinned the whole of creation was affected. Man was given the universe as his domain. When man sinned, he lost the rights to the universe to Satan. Satan now has the right to give Jesus the rights to the universe. Satan was also miraculously able to show these kingdoms to Jesus in an instant.

Luke 4:6 And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

The only requirement was for Jesus to worship Satan. Jesus could have bypassed the cross and still be King over all the nations and kingdoms. This will happen in God's timing and after the cross. Satan's plan would have condemned mankind for eternity because sins would not have been done away with. Jesus answered, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" This quote comes from Deuteronomy as a warning to Israel. They would be blessed as long as they put God first.

Deuteronomy 6:12—15 ¹² then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³ You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. ¹⁴ You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, ¹⁵ for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God;...

This last temptation appeals to pride. Man is always looking for glory, honor and praise but this takes it away from the only One who deserves all the glory.

Could Jesus have Sinned?

For hundreds of years, theologians have debated the concept of whether or not Jesus could sin. If He could not have sinned then were the temptations a real test? If He could have sinned then is Jesus Christ really God?

Many understand these temptations were given to see if Jesus would sin. The purpose was actually to prove He wouldn't sin. Adam proved that even with ideal conditions, man would sin. Jesus as the second Adam did what the first Adam could not do. The first Adam condemned mankind while the second Adam saved mankind. Jesus was tested to show Satan and us that He really was the Son of God and that He is the Messiah who will be ruling over all the kingdoms of the world. As gold can be tested for purity by melting to see if there are any impurities that rise to the top, Jesus was tested under fire and proven pure.

If Jesus Christ could have sinned while He was on earth then it would be possible for Him to sin while in heaven. That means He could sin at any time and destroy all of His work, leaving us hopeless sinners. He will never sin because He has no desire to do so.

Tempted in all ways as we are

Obviously Jesus was not tempted with every type of specific sin but was tempted in all three categories of sin: lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life. Every temptation we face can be put into one of these three groupings so He is the perfect advocate and intercessor because He became like us and experienced every type of temptation we have faced, but remained sinless.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.

Handling Temptation

In our Christian walk we are often tempted to follow our own way instead of trusting the Lord. Things that appeal to our eyes often distract us. If we dwell on these types of distractions we begin to covet. Eve looked at the fruit and saw it was good. She found it hard to turn away from it and this eventually led her to think about how good the fruit would taste. The lust of the eyes will often lead to the lust of the flesh. As we look at that second piece of pie we can't stop thinking about how good it will taste. Chances are you'll weaken and have that second piece giving in to the lust of the flesh.

We also universally want to be lifted high in people's eyes. Pride is probably one of the most common sins committed. We are always looking out for ourselves and society actually encourages it by training kids to have good self-esteem. The world trains us to always focus on ourselves. Even people with low self-esteem are completely self-absorbed. Scripture, on the other hand, says our focus should be on God and others. We are never told to esteem ourselves.

Our example is Jesus Christ who never took His eyes off the Father. He got rid of His own will so He would completely follow the will of the Father in every detail. Christ humbled Himself under the Father and became a servant. This is what it means to be Christ-like. When we humble ourselves and allow God to control us then we will live a life free of sin and pleasing to Him in all things. Fortunately God has given us the tools needed (Scripture and the Holy Spirit) and the promise that He will help us in times of temptation.

Philippians 2:5—8 ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

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