

The Messiah Has Come
(A Study in Matthew - Week 7)
Matthew 4:1-11
“When The Tempter Comes”

Introduction

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of The Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possession — is not from The Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.
1 John 2:15-17

Christ’s baptism in the River Jordan marked the beginning of His earthly ministry. And immediately after this ministry began, He was **“led up by The Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1)**. It is important for us to understand that temptation is a part of life, and while Christ was tested by it, He never once gave into Satan’s enticements. This is what qualifies Him to be our substitutionary sacrifice, the fact that He, as a man, was tempted, but never once sinned against God. No one who has ever lived can make this claim except Christ, the God/Man, who was as John the Baptist so eloquently said, **“The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29b)**.

There are some incredible contrasts and comparisons in this narrative of Christ’s temptation with the original sin in the Garden of Eden. First of all, Christ, in Scripture, is called **“the second Adam”**,

So it is written. The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.
1 Corinthians 15:45-47

The first Adam was placed in a garden of paradise and given everything that he could possibly need, and he failed miserably when faced with temptation. Christ, the **“second Adam”**, was led into a barren wilderness and deprived of nourishment for forty days, and yet, He was triumphant! So much for the worthless theory that we have an excuse for our sins, because we are simply **“products of our environment”**. Adam had the perfect environment, and yet, he still fell short of God’s glory, while Christ was in the worst environment imaginable (The Judaeen wilderness) and was victorious. That desolate place has been described by one commentator as **“an area of yellow sand and crumbling limestone”**. And Mark’s gospel tells us that Christ was alone out there **“with the wild animals” (Mark 1:13)**. Doesn’t exactly conjure up images of a loving and comfortable place to be, now does it?

The devil used the very same strategies with Christ that He used on Adam and Eve. However, they failed where Christ overcame. Adam had to have a sacrifice in order to have cleansing from his sin, while Christ became the ultimate Sacrifice for us all. So where the first Adam failed, the second Adam was victorious. We are saved, because He overcame, and **“by His stripes... we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5)!**

There are so many truths that we can and must glean from this passage of Scripture, if we are to be victorious over sin’s temptations. There are many traps and pitfalls that have been set by the enemy of our souls. Spiritual warfare is as real as it gets, though many these days are blissfully ignorant of the devil’s schemes. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to not only be aware of the battles we face, but to also know how to overcome them in the power of The Spirit. For in our own human weakness, we do not stand a chance.

Satan’s tactics are revealed to us within The Scriptures, and we are told that he **“walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8b)**. So would it not be helpful for us to familiarize ourselves with his methods? Sadly, many in this world view his offerings as pleasurable, but in the end they will lead us to our destruction. So let us look together at Satan’s treacherous devices, and as we come to recognize and understand them, and also find the Biblical way to overcome. The temptations of the devil are designed to take our eyes off The Savior and to focus on the pleasures of this world, namely as **1 John** tells us; *The Lust of The Flesh, The Lust of The Eyes, and The Pride of Life*. Please allow me to explain.

The Lust of The Flesh (vs. 1-4)

Then Jesus was led up by The Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. Then the tempter approached Him and said, "If you are The Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." He answered, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." **Matthew 4:1-4**

First off, we should notice that it was The Spirit of God, the very one Who descended upon Christ at His baptism, that led Him into the wilderness to be tempted. God does not tempt us with sin (**James 1:13**). However, He does *allow* us to be tempted in order to test us. The nation of Israel was tested in the wilderness for forty years and failed in their faith. Christ was tested in the wilderness for forty days and emerged victorious. And He did not use His supernatural powers to overcome the devil. He resisted as a man by the power of The Spirit. God had already declared that He was well pleased with His Son (**Matthew 3:17**), so Christ's testing wasn't to obtain His Father's blessing for He already had that. No, His testing was to show us not only His sinless nature, but also, to demonstrate for us how we can resist the devil, and he will also flee from us.

To say that Jesus was "hungry" after spending forty days in fasting and prayer in this barren wasteland was an oversimplification of His true circumstance. Medical professionals have stated that to deprive one's body of nutrients for that amount of time would have a devastating affect upon the body. All fat storage supplies would have been long used up and as starvation set in Christ's body would have begun to consume its own internal organs for the energy needed to survive! This would have brought on a state of incredible exhaustion and weakness, to the point of difficulty to even move about. Yes, He was hungry, and the devil waited for just the right moment, when he was at His weakest point to strike.

That is how the devil works, my friends. He can see when you have reached the end of your tether, when you are to the point of giving up, and then he comes to offer you "his solution". But we must never forget that when we are at the end of ourselves, God is just getting started! Satan would love to convince us that God has somehow let us down, when we are facing hardship. But God has promised to never leave us.

The first temptation was based upon the "lust of the flesh". Satan knew that Jesus was famished, so he attempted to entice Him to do a miracle for His own personal gratification. On the surface, this sounds to us like no big deal. After all, fasting for forty days should have been sufficient time for prayer and communion with God. So, why not turn some simple rocks into bread or even a danish for that matter?! After all, Christ had the power to do so, and there were no bakeries around. And His flesh obviously needed food. So why was this so wrong?

The answer is simple. Christ came to this world to do His Father's will and not His own (**John 8:29**). It was The Spirit that led Him into the wilderness, and He was to fully rely on His Father to meet His needs. This gives a complete new meaning to His words in **Matthew 6:33**:

But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things will be provided for you.

The devil wanted Jesus to do a miracle for Himself, instead of relying upon God to provide for His needs. He wanted to convince Him that somehow God had unfairly deprived Him of what He needed, and therefore, He should act on His own behalf. He wanted Him to place His own personal fleshly needs above the will of God. Jesus didn't fall for the temptation. Weak as He was, He still knew better. And He quoted from **Deuteronomy 8:3**:

Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. **Matthew 4:4**

To obey God comes before all. When our priorities match up with God's priorities, we can always count on Him to give us what we need. Obedience to His Word and His commands are to supersede all other desires in our lives. We need His "spiritual feeding" even more than we need physical feeding. The bread of life is far more important than our daily bread, as it were. The devil may have been able to tempt Adam and Eve with the food their flesh so desired, but the Second Adam didn't bite (pardon the metaphor). Round one: Jesus 1 - Satan 0.

The Pride of Life (vs. 5-7)

Then the devil took Him to the holy city, had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If you are The Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give His angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus told him, "It is also written: Do not test The LORD your God." **Matthew 4:5-7**

Satan's second temptation had to do with pride. He tempted Jesus to prove to the world who He really was by forcing God to do a miracle on His behalf. In essence, He was saying, "If you want to do something for Yourself, prove who You are by making God do something spectacular for You." The pinnacle of the temple overlooked the Kidron valley. To survive a leap from that high would have been spectacular indeed for it was between four and five hundred feet to the ground below!

The devil decided to quote Scripture to Jesus in order to make his point. He quoted from the Psalms, namely **Psalm 91**. Make no mistake, Satan is quite familiar with Scripture, and he often twists it to serve his purpose. In fact, many of his "preachers" today twist God's Word to their own ends. And the punishment they will receive for doing so is justly deserved.

It is interesting to note that the devil omitted a portion of the verses that he quoted. So let us read the entire passage as it is intended.

For He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways. They will support you with the hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. **Psalm 91:11-12**

Notice the omission of "to protect you in all your ways" in the devil's quotation. What was the "way" in which Christ was to conduct Himself? What path was He sent to follow? He was sent to submit to The Father, in all ways. It wasn't The Father's job to do for the Son. It was The Son's responsibility to please The Father in all things. That was to be "His way". The devil was trying to appeal to Jesus' pride. In essence, he was saying, "Show the world how special you are by forcing God to do a miracle for you! Then everyone will believe in You. After all, isn't that what you really want?" Once again Jesus responds from *The Old Testament* book of *Deuteronomy*.

"It is also written: Do not test The LORD you God..." **Deuteronomy 6:16**

I find it rather remarkable that the passage that Satan tried to use against our LORD also continues with these words for the one who would follow after God's ways:

You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the young lion and the serpent. **Psalm 91:13**

My guess is, the one who is known as "the roaring lion" and the "deceiving serpent" in Scripture wasn't particularly fond of that verse! Round two: Jesus 2 - Satan 0.

The Lust of The Eyes (vs.8-11)

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. And he said to Him, "I will give you all these things if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus told him, "Go away Satan! For it is written: Worship The LORD your God, and serve only Him." Then the devil left Him, and angels came and began to serve Him. **Matthew 4:8-11**

The devil's final temptation was the worst of them all, for within it lay the true desire of the his wicked heart. Satan longs to become God and will stop at nothing to be worshipped as such. His last attempt to pull The LORD away from His earthly mission in subservience to God was to appeal to the lust of the eyes. "He took Jesus and showed Him...", The Scripture says. *The Bible* tells us that Satan is currently the "prince of this world" (**John 12:31,14:30, 16:11**), and as such, he had the authority to give

Jesus this world's kingdoms. All that he asked in return was for The LORD to worship him instead of His Father. The Greek is interesting in this request, for it suggests that all Satan wanted was for Jesus to bow down to him *one time*.

So, just think about what the devil was doing here. He was in essence telling Jesus, "You want to be the King of kings and LORD of lords? I can make that happen for you here and now. Just *look* at the all these kingdoms that you could rule! They are there for the taking. If you would just bow before me *one time*, I will give them all to You, and You can forget about the cross. There's no need for You to suffer. You don't have to die for them, like Your Father wants You to do. You could have it all right now!"

If Christ had agreed to this compromise, we would forever be lost in our sins. There would have been no lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. No hope of redemption for fallen man. The devil would have won, and all of humanity would have lost forever. But Christ was victorious, yet again! And once more, He quoted from Deuteronomy. It is written:

"Worship The LORD your God, and serve Him only."

Deuteronomy 6:13

Round three: Jesus 3 - Satan 0

Not only is this important that Christ resisted these three temptations and went on to fulfill The Father's plan, but His example is one for us to follow when we are lured by Satan's schemes. If we are to stand against the wiles of the devil, we must do as Christ did; namely by the power of The Spirit and The Word. *He didn't use His power as God to defeat the devil. He did it as a man, using The Word of God.* Three times The LORD was tempted, and three times He quoted from Scripture! For you see, Jesus is the very embodiment of *The Word (John 1:1)*. He knows it backward and forward, for it is His very own.

To overcome the temptations of Satan, we too must make The Word of God an integral part of our very lives. We must study it, meditate on it, and commit it to memory, so that when temptation comes we are prepared to take our stand. The best illustration that I have ever heard of this was from Pastor David Jeremiah. He said that our *Bible* is like an armory. Inside an armory are the very weapons needed for battle. But if we do not know where the weapons are stored, then we will lose the battle, before it has even begun! For when the devil strikes, there is no time to start looking for the right sword. You must know where it is ***before*** the attack comes.

Jesus knew exactly what Scriptures to use, when countering the devil's attack. And this is how we are able to resist him as well. We pray in the Spirit and familiarize ourselves with The Word of God, so that we know which weapon to use depending on the temptation we face. This is how spiritual warfare is waged, and Paul has warned us that our only offensive weapon is the Sword of The Spirit, which is The Word of God (***Ephesians 6:17***). Your words have no power over Satan, but *The Word* most certainly does. This is why every Believer, who wishes to be able to stand against temptation, must be a student of The Word of God! *The Bible* promises tells us:

Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you...

James 4:7-8b

And how do we resist him? By knowing where the swords are kept within the armory. Knowing God's Word and how to use it in the face of temptation. Or as King David would say:

I have treasured Your Word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.

Psalms 119:11

Matthew tells us that once Christ defeated Satan with the Word of God, the devil left Him, and God immediately dispatched His angels to meet the physical needs of His Son. And I would bet the bread they served Him was all the more satisfying knowing that He had once again proved to be The Son in whom The Father was well pleased!

Trust in The LORD will all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5

TRUTH!!!