

Jesus Was Tempted in the Wilderness

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to live for righteousness by yielding to the Holy Spirit moment-by-moment so that His power works in us and makes it possible for the love of Jesus to flow through us. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus shows us how to have victory over temptation.

We read the first thing that Jesus did after He was baptized by John the Baptist. Matthew 4:1-4 says, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’” In our last topic, we saw that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Here, we see that Jesus was tempted (tested) by Satan in the wilderness. This testing came after forty days of fasting.

The word translated “tempted” can be used in either a good or a bad sense. Jesus showed that God always uses this word in a good sense when He tests us. John 6:5-7 says, “Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” In contrast, the goal of Satan is always to get us to do evil. James 1:13-15 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Here, we see that temptation comes from within.

There are only three ways that Satan can tempt us. Satan tempted Jesus in the same three ways that he tempted Adam and Eve. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” First, let us look at the way the serpent tempted Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:4-6 says, “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” God had said they would die. Satan showed that he is the father of lies by saying, “You will not surely die.” This meant that Adam and Eve had to choose to believe God or to believe Satan.

Once Eve believed Satan, her own desires took over and she was “enticed” (means *to catch by bait*). The bait was his statement that “You will be like God”. First, the lust of the flesh – she saw the tree was good for food. Second, the lust of the eyes – she saw that it was pleasant to the eyes. Third, the pride of life – she heard it was a tree desirable to make one wise (like God). She took it and started to eat and gave some to Adam, since the verse says he was with her, and he joined her in eating the fruit. Jesus is going to show us in these verses that He had victory in the same three areas where Adam and Eve were tempted and committed sin.

Satan came with his first temptation when he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” Satan was trying to get Jesus to satisfy a normal human desire – the desire for food when one is

hungry. However, in this case, it was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. Jesus showed us the way to have victory over temptation by the way that He responded. Jesus quoted the Word of God as He quoted the last part of Deuteronomy 8:3, which says, “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Here, we see that Jesus had victory in the first area where Adam and Eve were enticed because the Word of God was His authority and He quoted it to show that the temptation of Satan did not agree with the Word of God.

This led to the second temptation of Satan. Matthew 4:5-7 says, “Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him 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 shall give His angels charge over you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God.”’” This time we see that Satan tried to deceive Jesus by quoting part of Psalm 91:11-12. 2 Peter 3:16 says, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.” “Unlearned” speaks of those who are ignorant of Scripture. “Unstable” means *those who are unstable and easily deceived*. As 2 Peter 2:14 talks about false teachers, it says, “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children.” Satan uses false teachers to try to entice (to catch by bait) people who are untaught or unstable and easily deceived.

Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. The pinnacle was either the top of the temple or a porch on the southeast corner of the temple. If it was the top of the temple, it was about sixty-five feet above the courtyard of the temple. If it was the porch on the southeast corner of temple, there was a four hundred and fifty foot drop deep into the Kidron Valley. Either place would be a drop that would severely injure or kill most people. Satan was appealing to the pride of Jesus by saying that everyone would be amazed when He was not hurt. This time, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:1,6 which says, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah.” Jesus defeated Satan when Satan tried to tempt Jesus with pride.

Satan only had one more form of temptation that he had used to deceive Adam and Eve. Matthew 4:8-11 says, “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve”.’ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.” Here, we see that Satan was trying to tempt Jesus with the lust of the eyes. Satan was not going to quit until he had tried every possible temptation.

Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain. From that mountain, Satan showed Jesus all of the kingdoms throughout the world and the glory of each of those kingdoms. Then, Satan made an offer to Jesus. He said, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Satan was actually offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world without having to go to the cross to pay the penalty for sin. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed, in Matthew 26:39, to the Father, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.’” Jesus said that if there was any other way possible for our sin to be paid for, other than the cross, for the Father to pay for our sin in that way.

It was not the suffering that Jesus wanted to avoid. Instead, it was the separation from the Father during the

hours that Jesus had our sin placed on Him. That is why Matthew 27:45-46 says, “Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” Satan hoped that this would be a possible way to tempt Jesus by offering Him all of the kingdoms of the world without the cross. The real desire of Satan was to get Jesus to obey him. However, the cross had a greater purpose for God as it related to Satan. John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” When Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished!”, that included more than just the payment for our sin. It also determined that the judgment of Satan had been completed so he is like a person on death row who is waiting for the sentence to be completed. Revelation 20:10 says, “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” All those who continue in unbelief will share with Satan in that judgment because Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Jesus answered this temptation of Satan in the same way He had answered the others. Deuteronomy 6:13-14 says, “‘You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you.’” We see that Jesus defeated Satan and his third form of temptation. Satan was then forced to leave Jesus. Jesus had victory in each area where Adam and Eve had been tempted and sinned. Jesus had used only the book of Deuteronomy. He still had the rest of the Old Testament if Satan came back with other temptations. When the devil left Jesus, we read that the angels came and ministered to Him. We want to show our physical and spiritual children, by our example, how to have victory over each temptation that Satan may use. As we resist the devil with the Word of God and prayer, he will flee. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to have victory over temptation.