

Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Title: The Temptation of Christ

Truth: Love and trust for God will keep you from falling into temptation.

Date/Location: Sunday February 28, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

A blasphemous movie was released in 1988 entitled “The Last Temptation of Christ.” This sermon has nothing to do with that because it portrayed events made up in the sinful **imagination** of people. Instead, we are dealing with the **Biblical** material on the incident of Jesus being confronted by Satan.

The outline of this chapter is as follows:

1. Jesus passes test of the wilderness temptation, 4:1-11
2. Jesus moves to Capernaum in Galilee, 4:12-16
3. Jesus preaches repentance and calls disciples, 4:17-25

I. Parallels to Another Famous Incident

This is like Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden, only with an entirely different outcome:

Adam and Eve	Jesus Christ
Genesis 3:1-24.	Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13.
In the Garden of Eden.	In the wilderness.
While all needs were met.	After starvation for 40 days.
Doubt of God’s word and disobedience.	Confidence in and obedience to God’s Word.
Failure and fall into sin.	Victory and defeat of the Devil.
Outcome was death and the curse for all of humanity.	Outcome was pleasing God and launching into public ministry.
Mankind driven from the Garden.	Delivered from the wilderness back to civilization.

II. Setting the Scene, v. 1-2

A. Jesus was led by the Spirit *into* a situation where He would face temptation. That might happen us at times too, to test us. But here the temptation was not of the world or the flesh, but from the Devil himself.

He followed the pattern of Moses and fasted for 40 days and nights (Exodus 34:28). Both men were communing with God during that time.

III. The Three Temptations, v. 3-10

A. First temptation: satisfy hunger. Satan attacks the Son of God by saying “if you are the Son of God.” “Let us assume you are the Son of God, for sake of argument...” Satan knows that Jesus is in fact the Son of God, but He appeals to the pride of that place to get Jesus to deny God. Then he commands Jesus to command stones to become bread. Now, Jesus is undoubtedly hungry after 40 days of fasting.

Doing so would amount proving His deity by doing a miracle when such is not necessary to provide the legitimate need of food. Jesus would be able to get food through other means in the near future. Jesus knew that it was not the will of the Father for Him to miraculously provide for Himself. As a man, he could not do that. He had to trust the Father for His provision, as He was going to teach His followers soon in Matthew 6.

Jesus responded by using the written Word of God. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Deut. 8:3). Human life is not sustained merely by bread; we need God. We need to trust in God to supply our needs. Israel was hungry, Jesus was hungry. Jesus learned the lesson God taught Israel in history and in **Deut 8:3**.

Far from complaining for food, Jesus was trusting in God to provide, apart from the inner divine nature that He had which could create food aplenty in an instant.

About 5 months back in September 2020, we addressed the topic of the impeccability of Christ with regard to His ability to make stones into bread. His ability to do a miracle does not constitute *peccability*; the fact is that He was not willing to do that *in this situation* because it would have shown a lack of trust in God. That what we mean by *impeccable*.

B. Second temptation: put God to the test. Again, Satan says, assuming you are the Son of God, then God will protect you without fail, won't He? So Satan escorted Jesus to the top of the temple, overlooking the great retaining wall down to the Kidron valley. This could have been as high as 450 feet.

Satan twisted Psalm 91:11-12 and suggested Jesus throw Himself down from there and watch God protect Him. Satan was trying to get the man Jesus to sin. If he could do that, then he probably figured he would rule the universe forever.

Jesus knew that the Psalm was not about testing God to see if He would protect you. It was about trusting God in difficulty and trials that come as a natural part of life.

Jesus responded with **Deut. 6:16** that He would not put the Lord God to the test. He was not going to be like sinful Israel.

- C. Third temptation: idolatry. The temptation was spiced up with a reward of reigning over the world, but under Satan's authority. In some sense, Satan does have the authority over the kingdoms of the world (1 John 5:19).

Jesus was promised to rule the world someday, but not at the price of idolatry. Going this route would be a little like Abraham and Sarah using Hagar to produce the promised Son. It was an unauthorized method to try to achieve a promised end. But such is destined to fail.

Jesus correctly cited **Deut. 6:13 and 10:20** that God alone is the proper object of worship. There is only one God, and only one proper place to put your worship.

Jesus told Satan to get out, and he did.

IV. Aftermath, v. 11

- A. Thankfully, the Devil left Him. Luke 4:13 adds that the Devil left until another time. He would not give up after just three attempts to get the Lord off His mission.
- B. Some angels came and ministered to Jesus. *Now* it was time for strengthening by God. Jesus had passed the test, and God's will was that His needs be cared for by angelic ministers. Psalm 91:11-12 was thus fulfilled in the way God designed it, not tested by Jesus.

V. Parallels to the Nation of Israel

- A. In Israel's wilderness time, they complained sorely when they were hungered. They had to learn the lesson of trusting in God.
- B. Israel tested God 10 times (Num. 14:22). Their history was not a stellar example of how to interact with God.
- C. Israel failed in idolatry persistently after the Exodus from Egypt. Think of the golden calf incident. Or Acts 7:43. Or later with Solomon and the marriages that drew his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:4). Or even later around the time of the deportation to Babylon (Jer. 7:18).

Conclusion

We need to know God's word as well as possible so that we can face temptation with success. I had an occasion yesterday to face a trial in my mind. Thankfully, a verse of Scripture came to mind right away that was directly applicable to the test.

The reason that Scripture functions this way is that it comes from God. He has designed the Bible to cover every situation. He is the ultimate authority, so it will overrule any temptation from any source—human or demonic.

In the title for this message, I referred to love and trust for God. If you are related to God with those characteristics, then you will desire to know His word, and desire not to displease Him with idolatry and putting him to the test.

MAP