

The Mind of Christ

The Temptation of Jesus – Part Two

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Following the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River, we are told that Jesus withdrew into the wilderness of Judah – a desolate and lonely place.
 - A. In fact, Mark's account says, *“And He was there in the wilderness forty days... with the wild beasts...”* (Mark 1:13)
 1. His purpose for going into the wilderness was to be alone with God, fasting and praying for a period of 40 days and 40 nights.
 2. But there was also another purpose for going into the wilderness – namely to be tested by Satan.
 - a. Matthew's account says, *“Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. . .”* (Matthew 4:1)
 - b. Mark's account gives even more emphasis by saying, *“Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan...”* (Mark 1:12-13a)
 - c. The word *“drove”* used here by Mark is the same word that is used to describe casting out, or driving out, demons – to expel, or eject, to cast forth.

- d. This doesn't mean that Jesus was forced against His will, but rather than the Spirit deliberately led Jesus to go into the wilderness for a specific reason.
 - e. The same word is also used in Matthew 9:25, when Jesus arrived at the home of the Jurias to restore life to his little girl, and the crowd of mourners "*was put outside*" – told to leave the house and go outside to wait.
 - f. So, the Spirit led, or deliberately caused Jesus to withdraw into the wilderness for a specific purpose – to be tempted by the devil.
- B. As we mentioned last week, the popular view of the Messiah was a triumphant liberator of the Jewish people, the conqueror of Rome, the victorious Lord Who would reign over all the earth from the throne of David from the city of Jerusalem.
- 1. This is what the Jews in the days of Jesus were expecting of the Messiah – people still believe this is the kind of Messiah Jesus will eventually become – and it would have been easy for Jesus to fit into this popular mold if He had chosen to do so.
 - a. But this was not the kind of Messiah Jesus had come to be.
 - b. His kingdom would not be "of this world" – rather it would be a spiritual kingdom that would encompass all mankind (both Jew and Gentile).

- c. And rather than reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem, Jesus would reign as Lord of Lords and King of Kings from His throne in heaven till the end of time.
3. Therefore, Jesus would encounter Satan face-to-face in an attempt to persuade Jesus to fit into the popular mold – to get Jesus to compromise.

BODY:

- I. So, with this in mind, let's turn our attention to the story of the temptation of Jesus, and look at each temptation carefully.
 - A. The story of the temptation is found in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke).
 1. Mark's account doesn't give any details, and Matthew and Luke's accounts differ in the order of the temptations.
 2. So, since it doesn't make any difference as to the order of the temptations, let's take a look at Matthew's account (Matthew 4:1-11)
- II. Essentially, there were three specific temptations recorded here. But as we take a closer look, we'll see that each specific temptation contained other, more subtler, temptations.
 - A. The Scriptures tell us that the first temptation was to turn stones into bread. Nothing could be more tempting for a man who had been fasting for 40 days.

1. Matthew says, *“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.’”* (Matthew 4:2-3)
 - a. Luke’s account tells us, *“...And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.”* (Luke 4:2)
 - b. Some commentators suggest the area of the Judean wilderness where this event took place is filled with small stones that resemble loaves of bread (like Shepherd’s Bread).
2. But Jesus countered: *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”* – a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3.
3. When we take a closer look at this temptation we find there were really two temptations here.
 - a. First, there was being tempted to use His power selfishly.
 - (1) He had been fasting for 40 days and was hungry, and He had the power to do the very thing Satan was asking of Him.
 - (2) But Jesus could never allow Himself to use His powers for His own selfish motives – those powers had to be used for the benefit of others.

(3) Beside, if Jesus used His powers to ease His hunger on this occasion, He could just as easily have used His powers to remove Himself from the cross and avoid all the pain and suffering that went along with it – of course, if He had, we wouldn't have had a Savior.

b. But there was also a more subtle temptation here – the temptation to win followers by material gifts.

(1) If Jesus could satisfy His own hunger, why not use this power to satisfy the hunger of the masses all the time.

(2) This would certainly be in keeping with the popular concept of the Messianic age – the people believed the Messiah would bring great prosperity and plenty.

(3) But Jesus knew that loyalty won through a bribe would be the kind of loyalty that could be won by another with a bigger bribe – which isn't loyalty at all. (see: John 6:47-51, 61-63, 66-68).

B. The second temptation was to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, and to be able to land without being harmed at all.

1. Matthew 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.'"* (Matthew 4:5-6)

– this time it was Satan who was quoting Scripture (from Psalm 91:11-12).

2. It's been suggested by most commentators that the time of this temptation is as important as the place.
 - a. Most believe that Satan was testing Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple at a time when the Temple Courts would be filled with the priests and with thousands of worshippers.
 - b. If that's true, this would be a spectacular event that would be witnessed by an enormous audience of devout worshippers.
3. Again, Jesus countered by quoting Scripture: *"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"* (Matthew 4:7) – quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16.
4. Like before, there are really two temptations here as well.
 - a. First, there was attempting to get Jesus to give a sensational demonstration of His power – a demonstration that would not be in keeping with God's plan.
 - (1) Jesus would eventually demonstrate His power, proving His deity and bring glory to God, by His resurrection from the dead.
 - (2) However, that demonstration of power would not be for the purpose of dazzling the people with cheap sensationalism (employing Hollywood-style glitz and

glamour), but rather to demonstrate His deity, and His power over death and Satan.

- b. But we also see another temptation here – an attempt by Satan to get Jesus to imitate the techniques of the so-called Messiah's of the past.
 - (1) Many who has risen up in the past and claimed to be the deliverer of Israel had promised great demonstrations of power – of course, none of those great demonstrations of power ever came to pass.
 - (a) One would-be Messiah claimed he would part the waters of the River Jordan.
 - (b) Another said that he could make the walls of Jerusalem collapse with a single word.
 - (2) Sadly, these leaders and their followers were defeated and perished in revolts crushed by the Romans.
 - (3) However, if Jesus performed such a sensational feat in the presence of thousands of worshippers, He could instantly win a following, raise an army and launch a crushing blow to the Romans.
- C. This brings us to the third and final temptation – when Jesus could receive all the kingdoms of the earth by worshipping the devil.
 - 1. Matthew 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.’ (Matthew 4:8-9)

a. Ironically, God had already promised Jesus that He would be given all the kingdoms of the earth.

(1) *“Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your heritage, and the ends of the earth Your possession” (Psalms 2:8)*

b. Did Satan have the power to do what he promised?

(1) In Luke’s account of the temptation, Satan says, *“All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.*

Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”

(Luke 4:6-7)

(2) Personally, I think the Devil lied – after all, Satan is *“a liar and the father of it.”* (John 8:44)

(3) It should come as no surprise that Satan makes this same offer today – promising the gullible Satan-worshipper that he will give them great powers or possessions if they will simply bow down and worship him. Sadly, he doesn’t give them anything. He takes. He takes away their soul, and gives nothing in return.

2. Jesus once again countered the temptation of Satan by quoting from the Law: *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.'" (Matthew 4:10) – quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13.

3. Like before, there are really two temptations here as well.
 - a. First, Satan was attempting to get Jesus to compromise – to strike a bargain with Satan.
 - (1) Remember, Jesus had come into the world for the purpose of gaining all the kingdoms of the world and bringing them back to God.
 - (2) But Satan's way was to compromise – to avoid going through all the trouble of dying on a cross.
 - b. But the second, more subtle temptation, was to get Jesus to take a quick and easy way to success.
 - (1) It was the temptation to become Lord of Lords and King of Kings without dying on the cross.
 - (2) What Satan may not have realized was that Jesus would soon to rob him of all his control over the kingdoms of the earth anyway.
- D. Although Jesus came through these temptations victorious – the victory was only temporary.
 1. Satan would slip away for the moment – waiting for a better opportunity: *"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."* (Luke 4:13)

2. However, Satan would dog the steps of Jesus all the way to the cross. He won't be satisfied until he sees the Savior nailed to the cross, writhing in pain and agony, dying a most horrible and humiliating death.
 3. What Satan may not have realized was that in sending Jesus to the cross, the Devil is sealing his own fate – Jesus would certainly die on the cross, but He would also be resurrected from the dead by the power of God, winning the ultimate victory over Satan and over death – and giving us the same victory.
- II. Have you noticed one common thread that ran through 2 of the 3 temptations? Satan tried to provoke Jesus into proving WHO He was – proving that He was the Son of God.
- A. The phrase, *“if You are the Son of God,”* appears twice in this story – first in verse 3, and then again in verse 6.
 1. This attack came not only on this occasion, but it also came when Jesus was hanging on the cross.
 - a. On that occasion, the enemies of Jesus said, *“If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross”* (Matthew 27:40; Luke 23:35-37)
 2. Both here in the wilderness, and on the cross, the Devil was trying to get Jesus to distrust Himself, to doubt His call, to question His task and His ability to complete it.

- B. In the two challenges Satan hurled at Jesus, he was in essence saying, “how can You, a penniless, uneducated Galilean carpenter, possibly be the Messiah? Whoever heard of a Messiah starving in the wilderness? And whoever heard of a Messiah dying on a cross?”
1. There is nothing quite as paralyzing as doubt.
 2. Jesus was well aware of the popular view of the Messiah.
 - a. The people of His day believed the Messiah would come as a victorious leader who would conquer the Romans and restore the nation of Israel as a world-leading empire.
 3. Satan challenged Jesus to turn from the way God had chosen – a way that would lead to the cross – and follow the way the people were expecting.
 - a. But if He had, Jesus could not be the Redeemer for the sins of the world.

CONCLUSION:

- I. So, why did Jesus endure all this temptation – being tempted (tried or tested) just as we are – with lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (cf. 1 John 2:15-16)?
 - A. If you remember the conclusion of the lesson last week, I promised that I would remind you why Jesus endured all this temptation and suffering.
 1. The writer of the letter of Hebrews wrote, “*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,*

Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

2. Jesus endured these temptations and suffering so that WE would know He knows – not because HE needed to know – but so that WE would know He knows.
 - a. We have a Savior who left the glories of heaven, took upon Himself the form of man, lived like us, suffered like us, and eventually died like us – so that WE would know He knows.
 3. That’s the same Savior who is offering the gift of eternal life to you at this very moment.
- B. Depending on where you are in your relationship with Jesus, you can come to that throne of grace this very moment in one of two ways.
1. Either in obedience to the gospel, or. . .
 2. As a child of God, needing forgiveness of past sins.