

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Lessons Learned in the Temptation of Jesus

KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 4:1-11 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Matthew 3:14-17 | 1 Corinthians 10:13

SUMMARY

Because we live in a fallen world and have sinful natures, temptations are an unavoidable part of life.

This problem began when Adam and Eve sinned and has continued throughout every generation. However, as believers in Christ, we don't have to yield to temptations. Yet too many of us do not have a method for dealing with them. In fact, some Christians are ensnared in sin because they don't know how to resist. There is a way to respond which will help us build a strong defense. If we'll go to the One who successfully conquered temptation every time, we can learn lessons from His example.

SERMON POINTS

When Jesus was baptized by John, the Spirit of God descended upon Him as a dove and a voice from heaven declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17).

It was shortly after this high point in His life that "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). This was not a spontaneous or accidental event but one planned by God for His divine purpose. The Holy Spirit deliberately led Jesus into a time of testing in order to prepare Him for ministry. This is the same reason the Lord allows temptations in our lives—for our testing and preparation.

■ **Temptation** is an enticement to act contrary to God's will, and this is exactly what Satan was attempting in this situation with Jesus and what he continually tries to do with us. Every time we

are enticed to disobey God with our thoughts, words, or actions, we must choose whether to walk faithfully with the Lord or go our own way.

■ **The tempter** is called by many names in Scripture: the devil, Satan, accuser, slanderer, and father of lies, just to name a few. He is an intelligent being who is completely evil and is directly involved in perpetrating evil in individuals, and on a larger scale, in the world. Satan is a fallen angel who first appears in the Scriptures in the Garden of Eden where he seduced Eve to believe a lie. He is the original source of sin and continues to spread his lies to this day.

One of Satan's deceptions is convincing people that he doesn't exist. The caricature of the devil in a red outfit with a long tail, horns, and a pitchfork causes some people to discount him as an imaginary creature. But if we fall for this lie, Satan has us right where he wants us. When we deny his existence, he is free to ruin our lives because we have no defense against him. Furthermore, to doubt Satan's existence is to disbelieve the Bible, which testifies that he is a powerful source of evil. The Matthew 4:1-11 account of Jesus' temptation clearly identifies the tempter as the devil.

■ **The timing** of this episode in Jesus' life is also significant. Satan waited until Christ was weak with hunger after forty days of fasting. He also uses the same tactic in our lives by tempting us when we are the most vulnerable physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

■ **The limits** of our temptations are set by the Lord who has established boundaries over which Satan cannot cross. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us, "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.” In our own strength, we are weak and vulnerable, but the Lord is always faithful to give us the strength to endure when we depend upon Him, and to provide the way of escape when we obey Him.

- **The plan** of defense against temptation is reliance upon the Word of God. When the devil came with tempting suggestions, Jesus didn’t argue or engage him in conversation but immediately responded with passages from the Scriptures.
 - First, Satan tempted Jesus to use His divine, supernatural power to satisfy His hunger saying, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread” (Matt. 4:3). Christ immediately answered, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”
 - Then the devil suggested that Jesus jump off the pinnacle of the temple and miraculously land on His feet in order to attract a crowd (vv. 5-6). This time he even used Scripture verses to support his proposal. Again Jesus quoted the Word of God as His defense, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST’” (v. 7).
 - Finally, Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain to show Him all the kingdoms of the world. He offered to hand them all over to Christ if He would bow down and worship him (vv. 8-9). Basically, the devil was offering Jesus a shortcut to the kingdom so as to avoid the cross. But Christ said, “Go Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY’” (v. 10).

We have no power to beat the devil at his game of temptation apart from the Word of God. This is the ammunition the Lord has given us to defend ourselves. Within the Scriptures are the power and promises of God. However, we each need to find the particular verses that apply to our individual temptations. Satan doesn’t use the same enticements on all of us, but instead, he

customizes them to our particular personalities and weaknesses. Furthermore, we will face varied temptations throughout our lives. We may overcome some which once enticed us, but the devil is always ready with new ones.

In order to consistently live in victory, we need to build a wall of truth around ourselves. When our minds are filled with Scripture, we start to think like God and respond as He desires. Each time we successfully fend off a temptation with His Word, our faith is ignited with assurance and confidence because of God’s faithfulness. We never walk through temptations alone because the Lord lives inside us. He will give us the strength to resist temptations when we cling to His Word and use it to defeat the tempter.

RESPONSE

- What are the areas of temptation with which you most often struggle? In the past, what has been your strategy for dealing with these enticements? Using this method, how successful have you been at resisting?
- How would using Scripture as a defense prevent you from entertaining the devil’s suggestions and yielding to them?
- Do you have any specific Scripture passages that you can use to defend yourself against these temptations? If so, what are they? If not, what can you do to find some?

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