CHAPTER 4
The Temptation of Christ

Satan’s Strategy

The temptation account is found in Matthew 4:1-11 (also in Luke 4:1-13 and Mark 1:12-13). Three specific temptations are described by Matthew and Luke:

1) The First Temptation—To Command Stones to Become Bread (Matthew 4:2-4)
SATAN DOES NOT WANT US TO LIVE BY THE WORD AND WILL OF GOD.

Christ fasted in this barren wilderness for how long (Matthew 4:2)? _____
How much did the Lord eat during this time (Luke 4:2)? ________________
Was it a partial or a complete fast?
Following these days of fasting, how was the Son of Man’s physical condition described (Matthew 4:2)? ________________
Does Satan often attack us at our times of weakness and weariness? Is the desire for food a sinful desire?
Was it God’s will for Christ to be hungry? Compare Matthew 4:1—Jesus was led to this place of trial by the _____________. Would God the Father allow Christ to perish in the wilderness due to hunger (compare Matthew 4:11)? ______
Did Satan know that Christ had the ability merely to speak to the rocks and instantly they would be transformed into bread? (Matthew 4:3—the devil knew who the Creator really was!) Read Deuteronomy 8:1-3. Is there something more important than food? Is there something more to life than eating and drinking and seeking to survive? What is more important—doing God’s will or satisfying my physical needs?
__________________________
If we put the Lord first, will He take care of all our physical needs (Matthew 6:33)? ______

2) The Second Temptation—To Throw Himself Down from the Temple (Matthew 4:5-7)
SATAN DOES NOT WANT US TO TRUST THE LORD OUR GOD.

How is Jerusalem described in Matthew 4:5? ________________
The "pinnacle of the temple" was probably that part of the temple known as Herod’s royal portico which overhung the valley (or ravine) of Kedron and looked down to a depth of 450 feet (the length of one and a half football fields!). Josephus the Jewish historian who lived in the first century A.D. wrote the following description of this pinnacle:

"This cloister deserves to be mentioned better than any other under the sun; for while the [Kedron] valley was very deep, and its bottom could not be seen, if you looked from above into the depth, this further vastly high elevation of the cloister stood upon that height, insomuch that if any one looked down from the top of the battlements, or down both these altitudes, he would be giddy [dizzy!], while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth."

—Antiquities, Book XV, Chapter XI, Section 5
The Temptation of Christ

Are you surprised that the devil quoted the Scriptures (Matthew 4:6)? Are you amazed that Satan also said, "IT IS WRITTEN"? Can you think of examples of how Satan's children today (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10) are busy quoting the Bible and twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16)? Read Psalm 91 (the Psalm from which Satan quoted). Does this Psalm teach that God will protect and deliver those who trust in Him? What is the difference between trusting God and tempting God? If Christ had followed the devil's advice in Matthew 4:6, would it have been faith (doing what God says) or presumption (doing some daring thing that you were never told to do)? Satan wanted to make it look like trust when it was not really trust at all! Today, many people claim to be trusting the Lord when they may not be trusting Him at all! Can you think of some examples?

3) The Third Temptation—To Worship the Devil (Matthew 4:8-10)
SATAN DOES NOT WANT US TO WORSHIP GOD ALONE.

Was it God's plan for the Lord Jesus Christ to rule all the kingdoms of the world (Revelation 11:15; Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 2:8)? Was it God's time for the Messiah to rule all of these kingdoms (John 18:36—notice the word "now")? Though Christ rejected Satan's offer, will there be a future day when this offer will be accepted by another man (Revelation 13:1-7; and compare John 5:43)? Read Deuteronomy 6:13-15. Does God alone deserve our worship and love and fear? Can you think of examples where men or women have compromised with evil in order to gain power or position?

(1) The First Temptation—To Command Stones to Become Bread
Satan wants us to put our own physical needs above our spiritual needs, whereas God wants us to seek Him first and then He will take care of all the needs that we have (Matt. 6:33).

(2) The Second Temptation—To Throw Himself Down from the Temple Pinnacle
Satan wants us to tempt God by doing what He never really told us to do, and then to foolishly think that God will step in and protect us. God wants us to simply trust Him and do that which is right, leaving the results with God.

(3) The Third Temptation—To Worship the Devil
Satan wants us to worship and honor him in order to achieve a higher position or station in life, but believers must never bow down to anything or anyone except the Lord our God. He alone deserves and demands our whole-hearted allegiance. We must never seek to advance ourselves at the cost of abandoning God and that which is right.

The following is an exercise to help you to see how the three temptations of Christ relate to our daily life. Satan's strategy has not changed too much in the past 2000 years! In the following examples, read each sentence or quotation or Bible verse and decide which of the three temptations best fits each example (put either 1, 2, or 3 before each example). The first two are done for you:
Some religious fanatics (especially in certain sections of the southern United States) handle poisonous snakes. They base this practice on Mark 16:17-18. There have been times when misguided people have even died from such practices.

"I’m too tired to go to prayer meeting tonight."

Keep in mind, as you do this exercise, that the first temptation (1) entices us to put our own physical needs above our spiritual needs; the second temptation (2) entices us to tempt God by doing what He never really told us to do (hoping that God will take care of us as we do what He never told us to do); the third temptation (3) entices us to worship and honor someone or something other than God who alone deserves our whole hearted worship and service.

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| 1 | "The Bible says, ‘The Lord is my Helper’ (Hebrews 13:6) and I know He has promised to help me in tomorrow’s exam, so I’ll just relax and get a good night’s sleep. My non-Christian friends might need to study, but I’ll just go into class without doing a great deal of study because the Lord will keep me from failing!"
| 2 | "I’ve been offered a wonderful position at the company where I work. My salary will be greatly increased and the benefits are great. It’s too bad, though, that I’ll have to miss Prayer Meeting each week and I’ll have to work every other Sunday."
| 3 | A pastor once read Psalm 34:19-20 and he believed that God would protect him from ever having a broken bone. One night as he tried to find his way in the dark, he stumbled and broke his toe!
| 4 | The alarm clock sounds at 7:00 a.m.—"(yawn) I have one hour before the school bus comes. I’ll do my morning exercises and listen to the radio and then have a big breakfast. Perhaps tomorrow I’ll have time for prayer and Bible study."
| 5 | Many politicians make false promises and even deliberately lie so that they might be elected into office.
| 6 | "It’s not possible for me to come to church at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday evening because that’s our supper hour."
| 7 | Since I’m going to heaven and God has promised me eternal life, it doesn’t really matter how I live. My Sunday School teacher always says, "Once saved, always saved!"
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<td>8)</td>
<td>Unsaved husband: &quot;Judy, if you want our marriage to continue to be what it should be, then go to church on Sunday morning only. I'll gladly let you go to that one service only, but no more.&quot;</td>
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<td>9)</td>
<td>&quot;I often pray that the Lord will keep me from getting cavities. This is an important prayer request for me because I eat candy almost every day.&quot;</td>
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<td>10)</td>
<td>Student taking exam: &quot;I'll just look at Steve's answers, and that will help me pass this crucial test. I'll then be able to graduate and find a good job.&quot;</td>
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<td>11)</td>
<td>&quot;When the boss is watching I'll really work hard; when the boss is not around I'll really slack off. I'm sure he will promote me before long!&quot;</td>
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<td>12)</td>
<td>&quot;My boyfriend and I know that God has given us a physical desire for each other, and since we believe that it's the Lord's will for us to be married some future day, we do not see any problem with beginning to get to know each other in this way now. Our burning desire for each other is too great and we just can't wait.&quot;</td>
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| 13) | Many people today (especially those in the Charismatic movement) believe that God will miraculously heal them through "faith healers." If a person goes to a doctor or to a hospital, it means he does not really trust the Lord. 
**Note**: Did Jesus teach that some people need a doctor (Luke 5:31)? |
| 14) | Some of the early Christians had to decide whether to confess Christ and be killed or to acknowledge Caesar as lord and live. |
| 15) | "I don't feel like making the effort to talk to my friends about the Lord here in the cafeteria. I'd rather forget about witnessing and just enjoy my lunch." (Does this remind you of the disciples in John 4?) |
| 16) | "God will keep me safe whether I drive over the speed limit or not." |
| 17) | Job 2:7-9 |
| 18) | Matthew 26:41,43 |
| 19) | 1 Timothy 3:6 |
Can you think of other examples of how Satan seeks to tempt us (entice us to sin) today?

Let us now learn how to win the victory, even as our Lord Jesus did!

**The Temptation Of Christ**

**Christ’s Victory**

When the Tempter came to the first Adam, he was totally successful and victorious (Genesis 3:1-6). When the Tempter came to the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), he failed miserably and was defeated (Matthew 4:1-11). The first Adam was tempted in a garden paradise (Gen. 2:7-15); the last Adam was tempted in a wild wilderness (Mark 1:12-13). The first Adam could freely eat from "every tree of the garden" (Gen. 2:16); the last Adam was famished with hunger (Matthew 4:2). The defeat of the first Adam brought woe and judgment upon all men (Romans 5:12-21); the victory of the last Adam brought hope and encouragement:

"For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (weaknesses), but was in all points like as we are, yet ________ ______ " (Hebrews 4:15; compare Hebrews 2:17-18)

How did Christ defeat Satan? Did He win the victory by His supernatural powers as the Son of God? Did He rely upon His divine omnipotence to put the devil to flight? If Christ had used His divine powers to defeat the devil, then this would be very discouraging to every believer who also must resist Satan’s attacks:

"It’s great that Jesus won the victory over Satan, but it’s too bad that there is no hope for me. After all, I’m not God, and I don’t have any supernatural powers, so how could I ever defeat the devil? Certainly I’m no match for Satan!"

But this is not what the Bible teaches. The Lord Jesus did not use His supernatural and divine powers to defeat the devil. Rather, He faced Satan as a man (compare Jesus’ quote in Matthew 4:4, "man shall not live by bread alone"), and this gives great hope and encouragement to every believer. We can win the victory in the same way that Jesus won the victory! We can resist Satan just as Christ did! We can do exactly what He did! Yes, the temptation of Christ was a wonderful demonstration that man, walking in the Spirit, using and relying upon the Word of God, is more than a match for Satan!
The devil is a great enemy and foe. We dare not underestimate his power. He is diligently seeking to tempt and destroy believers (see 1 Peter 5:8), just as he was out to get Christ in the wilderness. How did Jesus resist Satan? How can I resist Satan?

In James 4:7 the believer is given this important command: "____________ the devil"

The word "resist" means to "stand against." God never tells us to be afraid of the devil. Who should we be afraid of? See Matthew 10:28; 1 Peter 2:17. God never tells us to run away from the devil. What should we run away from? See 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Timothy 6:10-11; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; compare Genesis 39:12. God tells us that we must STAND against the devil and he will run away from us (see James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will ______ from you."). As one believing child once said, "When Satan knocks at my door, I send God to the door, and when the devil sees God he runs away!"

Did the devil run away from Christ (Matthew 4:11)?

James 4:7 also says, "____________ yourselves therefore to _________." The word "submit" means "to rank under, to take my proper place UNDER God, realizing that the One who is OVER ME is my Lord and my Commander in Chief, and I must obey Him." Likewise, in 1 Peter 5:6 the command is given: "__________ yourselves therefore ________ the mighty hand of God." Believers must STAND in that humble and submissive place UNDER God! Once you are in that place, don't budge one inch! Keep your ground! Just STAND there!

1 Peter 5:9 tells us that we are to resist (STAND against) the devil "in the ______." "The Faith" is that body of truth which we believe--namely the Word of God. We are to be steadfast in the faith, standing on the Word of God. If I am in the proper position, standing UNDER GOD and UPON THE WORD OF GOD, then there is nothing Satan can do except retreat and flee away (and hope to find some believer who is not standing under God and on the Word, so he may devour him—1 Peter 5:8).

Read Ephesians 6:11,13,14. In verse 13 the word "withstand" means "resist, STAND AGAINST." What word is repeated four times in these verses (this is the key word when it comes to resisting Satan)?

Verse 11--S_________ Verse 13--WITHS_________ Verse 13--S_________ Verse 14--S_________

How did the Lord Jesus STAND against the devil?

Matthew 4:1-11
The obedient Lord Jesus was under the Holy Spirit's control (Luke 4:1) and was standing firmly on God's Word.

"leaveth Him"
Matthew 4:11

"It is written"
Matthew 4:7,10
Resisting the devil involves two things:

1) STAND under God (trusting Him, obeying Him, looking to Him to help us overcome Satan, "sending Him to the door" as the child did)

2) STAND upon God's Word (believe what God says and do what God says)

THE RESULT:

Satan

The Devil flees — James 4:7

WARNING:

1) DON'T MOVE OUT FROM UNDER GOD!

2) DON'T MOVE OUT FROM UPON GOD'S WORD. IF YOU DO, SATAN WILL GET YOU!!!

How did Eve fail to STAND against the devil?

GENESIS 3:1-6 (1 Tim. 2:14; 2 Cor. 11:3)
How did Peter fail to STAND against the Devil? Let's look at two examples:

1) *MATTHEW 16:21-23*

"I must be killed and rise again" (Matthew 16:21)

"LORD, THIS SHALL NOT BE" (Matthew 16:22)

2) *LUKE 22:31-32, 39-46, 54-62*

"Watch (stay awake) and pray", Luke 23:31

FIRST HE SLEPT, LATER HE DENIED!
2 Peter 3:16-18

Peter, in his last epistle, encouraged all believers to stand firmly on the Word of God, in submission to the God of the Word:

**GROW IN GRACE:**

Humble yourselves UNDER God and realize that He is everything and you are nothing. I’m no match for Satan, but my great God is! Therefore, I must submit to Him and take my proper place UNDER His Lordship.

**DEVIL**

He runs away!

**GROW IN KNOWLEDGE:**

Grow in the knowledge of Christ and His Word and stand upon it! Satan will then have no choice but to flee! Don’t twist and corrupt the Scriptures like those wicked men described in 2 Peter 3:16-17.
Remember, the believer who walks in the Spirit (STANDS UNDER GOD), and who uses and relies upon the Word of God (STANDS UPON THE WORD), is more than a match for Satan!

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C. H. Mackintosh has written the following about the manner in which Christ overcame temptations:

Yes, blessed be His name, and there for man,—there to show man how to meet the enemy in all his varied temptations, there to show man how to live. We must not suppose for a moment that our adorable Lord met the adversary as God over all. True, He was God, but if it were only as such that He stood in the conflict, it could not afford any example for us. Besides, it would be needless to tell us that God was able to vanquish and put to flight a creature which His own hand had formed. But to see One who was, in every respect, a man, and in all the circumstances of humanity, sin excepted,—to see Him there in weakness, in hunger, standing amid the consequences of man's fall, and to find Him triumphing completely over the terrible foe, it is this which is so full of comfort, consolation, strength, and encouragement for us.

And how did He triumph? This is the grand and all-important question for us,—a question demanding the most profound attention of every member of the Church of God—a question the magnitude and importance of which it would be utterly impossible to overstate. How, then, did the Man Christ Jesus vanquish Satan in the wilderness? Simply by the Word of God. He overcame not as the almighty God, but as the humble, dependent, self-emptied, and obedient Man. We have before us the magnificent spectacle of a Man standing in the presence of the devil and utterly confounding him with no other weapon whatsoever save the Word of God. It was not by the display of divine power, for that could be no model for us; it was simply with the Word of God, in His heart and in His mouth, that the Second Man confounded the terrible enemy of God and man.

And let us carefully note that our blessed Lord does not reason with Satan. He does not appeal to any facts connected with Himself—facts with which the enemy was well acquainted. He does not say, I know I am the Son of God; the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the Father's voice, have all borne witness to the fact of My being the Son of God. No; this would not do; it would not and could not be an example for us. The one special point for us to seize and learn from is, that our great Exemplar, when meeting all the temptations of the enemy, used only the weapon which we have in our possession, namely, the simple, precious, written, Word of God.

*Notes on Deuteronomy*, see his discussion under Chapter 8.