

We can learn how to resist temptation by studying how Jesus resisted the temptations of Satan in the wilderness. Examining the temptations that Satan chose to use against Jesus also reveals just how sinful we are in comparison to our Lord even while He dwelt among us in human flesh. Jesus resisted each temptation perfectly, maintaining His trust and dependence completely on His Father.

¹ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Notice that Jesus did not wander around until He happened to find Himself in the wilderness being ambushed by the devil. Rather, it says that He was led by the Spirit to go into the wilderness for the express purpose of being tempted by the devil. Matthew uses a softer phrasing when describing the timing and the forcefulness of the Spirit's leading, using the words "then" and "led up." Mark's gospel uses the stronger words "immediately" and "driveth" (**Mark 1:12** "*And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.*") The Greek word for "driveth" means "*to forcibly compel one to depart.*" As soon as He was baptized and filled with the Spirit Jesus was compelled by the Spirit to go into the wilderness so to face the temptations of the devil. It was not that Jesus refused to go and had to be forced, but the Greek indicates the necessity for Jesus to leave the Jordan and go into the wilderness to face the devil.

Why did the Spirit compel Jesus to expose Himself to the temptations of the devil? Jesus had just identified Himself with sinful humanity by undergoing John's baptism of repentance and now He was identifying Himself with our temptations (**Heb. 2:18** "*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*"); **Heb 4:15** "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*"). Commentators point out that Satan used the same formula to tempt Jesus as is described in **1 John 2:16**: "*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*"

² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. ³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights" – Jesus, as a human being, spent 40 days and nights fasting and praying in the wilderness alone with His Father. Apparently this period was a time of preparation so that Jesus could consecrate Himself to the mission His Father had for Him as Savior of the world.

"he was afterward an hungred" – Commentators suggest that Jesus was supernaturally prevented from feeling hunger until after the forty days were complete. This view also seems to be supported by the way Luke describes the situation: **Luke 4:2** "*Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*" After going forty days without food, Jesus was no doubt weak from His hunger and this is the time that Satan chooses to tempt Him. Satan frequently chooses to tempt us at our weakest time and at our weakest point.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" – Knowing the extreme hunger that Jesus was experiencing, Satan uses "the lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16) to tempt Him to sin. He says "If you are the Son of God, then you have the ability to satisfy your own hunger by turning these stones into delicious loaves of bread."

⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Jesus responds with a scriptural principle, quoting from Deut. 8:3. We must examine the context of the original passage in order to understand what Jesus is saying to the devil. In Deut. 8 Moses is giving a speech reminding the children of Israel how the LORD had taken care of them over the past forty years in the wilderness: **Deut. 8:2-3** "*And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. ³ And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."* Moses informs the people that it was only by the word of the LORD that they were able to eat for they were not able to feed themselves. The LORD wanted to teach them to depend on Him for their needs and not themselves. Satan wanted Jesus to take matters into His own hands to feed Himself but Jesus maintained His dependence on His Father. If Jesus had turned the stones into bread then He would have been saying through His actions that He could not depend on His Father to meet His needs and would also have been following His own will rather than the will of His Father. His Father had sent Him into this wilderness to fast and pray and Jesus would not break that fast without His Father's permission.

⁵ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Commentators do not agree whether the devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple literally or only in a vision. The pinnacle was the highest point on the roof of the temple overlooking the Kidron Valley some 200 feet below. Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-12, using "the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) in this temptation. Psalm 91 celebrates God's protection of His people, but Satan uses the quotation out-of-context, implying God's protection even when foolishly acting contrary to the will of God. If Jesus had jumped off the pinnacle and made a miraculous soft landing then the Jews would have praised Him as their Messiah. However, such an exhibition would have been contrary to His Father's will and would have forced His hand in order to save Jesus.

⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again Jesus meets Satan's temptation with the word of God, this time quoting from **Deut. 6:16**: "*Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.*" What happened in Massah? We must turn to Exodus 17 to find out:

Exodus 17:2-7 "² Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? ³ And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? ⁴ And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. ⁵ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?"

There was no water at Massah but instead of asking the LORD for water, the children of Israel demanded it and were angry enough that Moses was concerned that they would stone him. They tempted the LORD by saying "Is the LORD among us or not?" They wanted the LORD to prove that He was with them by giving them water when they wanted it. They tried to force the LORD to comply with their will rather than submitting to His will. By jumping off the pinnacle of the temple Jesus would have been forcing His Father to act to protect Him rather than only doing so if it was His Father's will. People still tempt God today when they do presumptuous things like handling snakes or drinking poison, expecting God to protect them from their foolish choices, or when they expect God to give them what they want. We must beware that we do not cross the line between faith and presumption when making our daily decisions. The will of God should guide our choices rather than expecting Him to bless the choices we've already made.

⁸ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Satan's third temptation uses "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) as he shows Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world (most likely in a vision) along with their power, prestige and wealth. He offers to give them all to Jesus in exchange for His worship. Jesus will rule the world during the Millennial kingdom, but Satan offers Jesus a shortcut, bypassing the cross.

¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Jesus responds by again using the word of God. He quotes Deut. 6:13, but we need to examine the context to understand why Jesus chose this verse. Moses is addressing the children of Israel at the end of the forty years in the wilderness and is talking about the LORD's plan to bring them into Canaan.

Deut. 6:10-13 "¹⁰ And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, ¹¹ And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; ¹² Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. ¹³ Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."

Moses is warning Israel that when they are enjoying the benefits of living in Canaan they should not forget that it was the LORD Who provided these things for them. As a result they should always fear and serve the LORD because He is more important than the benefits. Jesus is telling Satan that His faithfulness to His Father is more important than gaining everything that the world has to offer and that He is willing to wait until it is His Father's will to give Him the kingdoms of this world (**Rev. 11:15** "*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*")

¹¹ Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

"Then the devil leaveth him" – This phrase does not mean that Satan left Jesus and would never bother Him again, but simply that this intense round of temptations had come to an end. **Luke 4:13** "*And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.*"

"and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" – The angels came to meet Jesus' needs. Satan had tempted Jesus to give up on His needs being met by His Father but they were provided once the temptations were over. No doubt Jesus was fed (Satan's first temptation) as the angels ministered to Him, fulfilling the true meaning of the verse that Satan had taken out of context (Psalm 91:11-12) concerning God providing angels to take care of those who are His. Only the temptation involving the kingdoms of this world was not yet fulfilled because that time has not yet arrived.

Verses 12-25: Jesus begins His preaching ministry, making Capernaum (a village on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee) His "base of operations." He calls Simon Peter and his brother Andrew to follow Him and then also calls the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, to follow Him. Jesus travels throughout the area around Galilee, preaching and healing, which begins to gain Him some notoriety in the region.