



Satan Tries to Tempt Jesus

Luke 4

FAMILIES IN TRUTH



Immediately after Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God led Him into the desert to be tempted by Satan. Satan tried to tempt Jesus in the areas of physical need, pride, and greed. Jesus remained focused on His mission from God, and He never gave in to Satan's attempts.

Day #1: Why Tempt Jesus?

This week we will study Satan's effort to tempt Jesus in the desert. To "tempt" means to try to get someone to do wrong. We should first look at who Satan is and why he wanted to tempt Jesus. The Bible tells us that it is important to understand what Satan is up to, so we can be on guard against him (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Satan, also known as the devil, was once named Lucifer. He was a high-ranking angel who lived in heaven. He was beautiful and full of wisdom (Ezekiel 28:12). But, he became full of pride (Ezekiel 28:17). He became so proud that he wanted to be like God, so God cast him out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15; Luke 10:18). Satan is full of violence (Ezekiel 28:16), and he is the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan sinned before any human beings were created. And Satan was the one in the Garden of Eden who tempted Eve to doubt God's love and character (Genesis 3:1-5).

After Adam and Eve chose to trust Satan instead of trusting God, God promised that one day there would be a man, an offspring of Eve, who would come to crush Satan (Genesis 3:15). Satan knew God always keeps His promises. He also knew that Jesus was the promised One who would destroy him (Hebrews 2:14). Satan tried his hardest to tempt Jesus so that God's plan for saving the world would be ruined. Satan did not want Jesus to remain sinless so that He could die for the sins of man.

We may wonder why God allowed Satan to tempt Jesus. In fact, the Bible tells us that right after He was baptized, it was God's Spirit that led Jesus into the desert to be tempted.

+ *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.* - Luke 4:1-2 (NIV)

In the Bible, there are times when God allows His people to be tested, in order to prove what is in their heart (Deuteronomy 8:2; 13:3; 1 Chronicles 29:17). This was the case with a man named Job. Job was a good man who had many blessings. He loved God. Satan accused Job of loving God only because God gave him so many good things. God allowed Satan to take away everything that Job had, because it would prove that Job loved God, even when he did not have the blessings. This test proved what was in Job's heart.

In the same way, God allowed Satan to tempt Jesus to "prove" the righteousness of Jesus. Even when face-to-face with the devil, himself, Jesus did not fall into sin. He stood firm in the truth of God's Word. Jesus did not choose temporary things, but instead, kept His eye on the thing that was greater. Hebrews 12:2 says Jesus focused on "the joy set before Him" - the salvation of mankind. After God announced that Jesus was His Son, Jesus proved Himself to be without sin. Satan failed to thwart the plan of God. Surely, the time was right for Jesus to show the world that He had come to save all men.

***** This week, watch carefully to see the "tools" that Jesus used to oppose the devil. God gives each of us these same tools!

Day #2: First Temptation

The Bible tells us Jesus was in the wilderness, or desert, for 40 days, being tempted by the devil. Jesus fasted for the entire 40 days. Fasting is going without food for a certain time. God instructs believers to fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:15). People fast to draw near to God. Very often, the Bible shows that people fast to get clear instruction from the Lord (Acts 13:2; Daniel 9). After 40 days of fasting, Jesus was hungry.

Satan saw Jesus fasting and knew how hungry He must have been. Satan is very crafty and knows all about those he tries to tempt (Genesis 3:1).

+ *The devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" - Luke 4:3-4 (NIV)

After 40 days without food, eating may have been much more of a *need* than a *want*. But Jesus did not give in to his need for physical food. It was God's Spirit who had led Him into the wilderness to fast and to be tempted. Jesus did not take matters into His own hands. Instead, He had submitted His will to the will of the Father (John 6:32).

Notice how Satan began his sentence: "**If** you are the Son of God." Of course, Jesus was the Son of God. And for any of us, it would have been tempting to prove that we had divine power to turn a stone into bread. We know Jesus could have done this. Later in Scripture, we are told of two times Jesus made bread miraculously. Satan's words sound a bit like a child daring another child to "prove it." But Jesus did not have to "prove" His authority to the devil. Satan wanted Jesus to go against the will of God who had led Him there. Ironically, Satan was offering bread to "the Bread of Life" (John 6:35). **Jesus answered Satan by quoting Scripture.** By quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus made it clear that there is something much more important than physical needs. It is the need to know God.

Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. - Deuteronomy 8:3b (NIV)

***** Jesus was armed with Scripture. **Knowing and saying Scripture is the best way to fight temptation.** Our feelings and emotions change. You might be angry with one of your parents. You might think one of their rules is silly and that you should not have to obey it. But when you know the Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." - Colossians 3:20, you will not be tempted to disobey.

What tempts you? Learn some Scripture about that particular area of life. Write the verses on cards and put them wherever you will see them - next to your bed, in your book bag, taped to your bathroom mirror. And best of all, memorize them. Then you will have your "tool" with you wherever you go!

Day #3: Second Temptation

Have you ever really listened to the commercials on television? The announcer describes the item he wants you to buy as though it will change your life instantly. He tells you all the great things it can do, how it works every time, and how it will last forever. Then he mentions that it is worth hundreds of dollars, but for a limited time you can get it for just \$19.95 (plus shipping and handling). Something tells you this offer is too good to be true. Be aware that though Satan offers may seem good, he is the father of lies, and there is no truth in him (John 8:44).

Then the devil led Jesus up to a high place. In an instant, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He said to Him, "I will give you all their

Day #3 continued:

authority and glory. It has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours."

Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God. He is the only One you should serve.'" - Luke 4:5-8

Satan offered Jesus the power to rule the earth. We have to wonder if Jesus had to keep from laughing at this offer. The world was not even Satan's to offer (Psalm 22:28; Isaiah 37:16). And, this was the very temptation that ensnared Satan. It was *Satan's* overwhelming greed for power that caused *him* to rebel against God. Satan is the one who desired to become more than he was. Just the opposite, Jesus already had all power and glory, but willingly gave it up to come and give His life for mankind.

In his very nature He (Jesus) was God. But He did not think that being equal with God was something He should hold on to. Instead, He made himself nothing. He took on the very nature of a servant. He was made in human form. He appeared as a man. He came down to the lowest level. He obeyed God completely, even though it led to His death. In fact, He died on a cross. - Philippians 2:5-8

Satan was offering Jesus temporary control of the world in exchange for His eternal rule. Perhaps Satan thought he could play on the goodness of Jesus. Maybe he thought Jesus would seek worldly control in order to stop the sin and suffering that abounds on the earth. But Jesus saw the big picture. Jesus kept His focus on the **eternal** - it was far better for Jesus to remain sinless so He could become the substitution for all men so those who believe could gain **eternal life**.

Satan was only asking for a moment of Jesus' worship. But "worship" means to kneel down in reverence. We worship God because we want to acknowledge His greatness. The One being worshipped is greater than the one who is worshipping. Satan is NOT greater than Jesus is! Satan is not even in the same category as Jesus. Jesus is the *Creator*, Satan is the *created*. If Jesus had bowed down to worship Satan, even for one second, He would have been guilty of breaking the first commandment. Notice, once again, **Jesus quoted Scripture in order to refuse Satan's offer**.

Are you ever tempted to give up what is eternal in order to gain what is temporary? One example is the temptation to treat someone badly in order to impress someone else - popularity will fade, but treating others well has eternal rewards (Matthew 25:34-40). What are some other examples of this?

Day #4: Third Temptation

We have seen that Satan is always scheming. Today we will see one of his most underhanded tricks. Seeing that Jesus resisted the devil's offers using Scripture, Satan quoted Scripture in his next temptation! Did you know the devil could quote Scripture? He will use anything he can to derail God's plan and to throw believers off God's path.

Then the devil led Jesus to Jerusalem. He had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. It is written, " 'The Lord will command his angels to take good care of you. They will lift you up in their hands. Then you won't trip over a stone.' "

Jesus answered, "Scripture says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" - Luke 4:9-12

Satan quoted Psalm 91:11, 12 **out of context**. That means he took God's Word, and tried to make it apply where it does not apply. The Scripture Satan quoted is true, of course, but the protection that is promised is for those who are resting in God's protection (Psalm 91:1) and those who trust in God fully (Psalm 91:14). It is not a promise to those who chose to sin against God by testing Him. Jesus did not even feel the need to address this with Satan. Satan knew he was twisting God's Word. **Jesus used Scripture** to cut to the most important issue. He would NOT test God.

We have seen that God tests man to prove what is in his heart, but man is NEVER allowed to test God. God does not need to prove that He is good!

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Satan tried to get Jesus to do something that would force God to help Him. We are not to do this, because we are not in authority over God. He is in authority over us. We do not force God to serve us. Several times, the Israelites tested God in the wilderness. Even after seeing God's miraculous power in Egypt, they doubted God's ability to provide for them, and they practically dared Him to give them bread (Psalm 78:17-20). God was very angry and punished them severely (Psalm 78:21; 106:14-15). God will NOT tolerate being put to the test.

We, as believers, must be aware that Satan always mixes truth with lies. We must know the whole truth so we do not fall into his traps! The only way to know the whole truth is to use the "tools" God has given us - the Bible and prayer. Thank God for His power over the devil and for giving us tools with which we can resist the devil.

Day #5: Our Temptation

Scripture reveals times when Jesus was troubled (Luke 22:42-44; John 11:33), but during the temptations Satan offered, Jesus did not struggle. Because Jesus' focus was on eternal things, and Scripture was always on His mind, these temptations were not what Satan had hoped they would be. Jesus was able to dismiss them easily. But be certain, Satan will do his best to tempt every follower of Jesus (1 Peter 5:8). Unlike Jesus, we are all born with a sin nature (Romans 5:12; 7:18). This means, without God's help, rebelling against God is natural to us. Therefore, we **MUST** rely totally on the power of God to resist the devil's snares. We tap into God's power by following Jesus' example. As we have seen this week, **Jesus knew and quoted Scripture**. Jesus quoted the Old Testament repeatedly throughout the Gospels. **Jesus also prayed often** (Luke 5:16). The Bible is filled with times Jesus went to pray to the Father, many times for hours at a time (Luke 6:12). **Jesus praised God and always sought to glorify God** (John 12:28).

The awesome news is that we all have access to these devil-defeating tools every day. Do not be fooled! Good intentions will not defeat the evil one! Only the divine tools God has given us - **God's Word, prayer, and praise** - will do the work of defeating such a crafty, deceitful enemy.

Sometimes, a situation is clearly a temptation from the devil and we know it is wrong. Other times, a situation is presented in a gentler, more subtle way and we must carefully consider whether it is right or wrong. Get into the habit of thoughtfully considering all of your actions through the "tools" God has given us:

1. First of all, **check the Bible** (Psalm 119:24)! What does God's Word say about it?
2. **Pray about it**. God's Holy Spirit who lives inside of all believers will guide you and remind you of God's truth (John 14:26).
Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. - Mark 14:38
3. **Get wise counsel** (Proverbs 11:14). Ask advice from people that truly want what is best for you. These people would include your parents, grandparents, Bible teachers, and solid Christian friends.
4. Ask these **important questions**: Can I trust the person who wants me to do this? Does he or she want what is best for me? Can I take my time to think about this carefully? Do I want to do this because it will impress someone? Why do I really want to do this? If I do this, will it look wrong to someone who is watching my Christian walk? What is the long-term cost of this action?
5. **Live a life of praise**. There is great power in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:1-21; 16:18). Praise is used on many occasions to defeat the enemies of God's people (2 Chronicles 20:22; Acts 16:25-26). God speaks to those who praise Him (Psalm 16:7).

You are tempted in the same way all other human beings are. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted any more than you can take. But when you are tempted, God will give you a way out so that you can stand up under it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13