



The Temptation of Jesus Christ

Story Elements

- **Text:** Matthew 4:1-11; **Parallel Passages:** Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13
- **Setting:** circa 26 AD in the Judean wilderness
- **Characters:** God the Father, Jesus Christ, and Satan
- **Plot:** Before Christ begins his public ministry, he fasts and prays in the wilderness for forty days and is tempted to sin by the Devil.
- **Key word(s):** "it is _____" is the key phrase because it shows how our Perfect Example defeated temptation and gave us a pattern for victory in our own Christian lives.
- **Climax:** *Matthew 4:10 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.* This is the point at which Christ decisively defeats Satan's temptations.

Our Champion Prepares for Battle

1. (Matt. 4:1-2) After Christ's baptism and before commencing his public ministry, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he would spend forty days in prayer and fasting. What other Bible characters spent many days in prayer and fasting in the wilderness? _____
2. The Holy Spirit is described as leading Christ into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1). Mark gives a stronger description of the Spirit's part, saying that he *driveth him into the wilderness*. (Mark 1:12). Some may ask, "Why would the Spirit lead the Son to be tempted?" Notice:
 - (a) Since Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, every person ever born has always fallen to temptation. No man could successfully repel all of the Devil's attacks – no man until Jesus of Nazareth.
 - (b) Matthew Henry explains, "Christ was *led to be tempted of the Devil*, and of him only. Others are tempted, *when they are drawn aside of their _____ and enticed* (Jam. 1:14); the Devil takes hold of that handle, and ploughs with that heifer; but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, and therefore he was led securely, without any fear or trembling, as a champion into the field, *to be tempted purely by the Devil*."¹

The Devil's Playbook

3. Notice Satan's strategy as a tempter:
 - (a) He casts doubt on God's _____. He said to Jesus twice, "***If*** you are the Son of God..." Previously at Christ's baptism the Father had audibly proclaimed that Jesus is his Son (Matt. 3:17). Satan used this same tactic with the first sin when he did the very same thing to Eve in the Garden saying, *Yea, hath God said?* (Gen. 3:1)
 - (b) Satan then attacks his target along three fronts:
 - i. (Matt. 4:2-3) **The lust of the flesh** - Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread. We may wonder how such a thing could be sinful. Jesus shows us in his answer: he quotes from Deuteronomy 8 and points us to the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness.
 - A. The children of Israel were humbled in the wilderness...they were led to suffer so that they would learn that what man needs is not material satisfaction, but _____.
 - B. The children of Israel needed to understand what the Savior said of himself, *My _____ is to do the will of my him that sent me.* (John 4:34)

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1622.

- C. Essentially, the devil was appealing to the Savior's bodily appetites in an effort to promote distrust in God's _____ – that is, Jesus was being tempted to place serving his own flesh before trusting the Father.
- ii. (Matt. 4:8-9) **The lust of the eyes** – Jesus was tempted to worship Satan in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world. Satan is the *god of this world* (2 Cor. 4:4) and the *prince of this world* (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He is the world's ruler in the sense that, in its sinfulness, the world serves Satan's power.
- A. The sin of the lust of the eyes is the desire to want more and more. It is never being satisfied. Behind this sinful desire (materialism, consumerism, etc.) is a lack of being _____ in God. It is the result of not finding in God all that he claims to be for us.
- B. Conversely, we are commanded to *walk by faith, not by* _____. (2 Cor. 5:7)
- iii. (Matt. 4:5-6) **The pride of life** – This sin is arrogant presumption and a spirit of entitlement. It assumes God owes us something and demands that God prove his love. The Savior quoted from Exo. 12:2-7, where the Hebrews demand that Moses give them water where none was available. There, the children of Israel tempted God. Tempting God is testing God - it is trying to put God in a position where he must do as we think he should, not as he _____ he would.

Faith is the Victory

4. Each time the Savior was tempted he responded by quoting Scripture -this is the key to our victory over temptation. When we trust God's _____ we exercise faith, and with faith we can overcome the wiles of Satan.

➔ Charles Spurgeon said of Christ's usage of the written Word, "Out flashed the sword of the Spirit. Our Lord will fight with no other weapon. He could have spoken new revelations, but He chose to say, 'It is written.' **There is a power in the Word of God which even the devil cannot deny.**"

The Second Adam

5. The story of the Savior's temptation in the wilderness juxtaposed to Adam's fall in the garden is startling in its contrast:
- (a) Adam was tempted in a lush garden, his belly filled with the bounty of Paradise; Christ was tempted in the harsh desert, his body weak from 40 days without _____.
 - (b) Adam fell easily with the first temptation; Christ persevered after three Satanic attacks.
 - (c) Adam sinned, knowing the sinfulness of his act (1 Tim. 2:14), in order to join his wife in her rebellion; Christ did not sin, but remained holy, in order that his wife (the _____) could join him in his righteousness.

Answer Key: Key word(s): "written" • 1. Moses (Deut. 9:9) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) • 2. b) own lust • 3. a) Word; b) i. A. God; B. meat; C. care; b). ii. A. satisfied; B. sight; iii. promised • 4. Word • 5. a) food; c) Church