

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW; YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH

Week 8 – Jesus’ Temptation...Proof That He Is The Son Of God

March 16, 2021

At Jesus’ baptism, God the Father declared that He, Jesus, is the Son of God. After identifying with sinners in His baptism, Jesus then identified with them again in His temptation.

Matt. 4:1 - *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* Jesus was announced to Israel as the Messiah and His public ministry began. He was led by the Holy Spirit to confront the adversary Satan! Jesus’ conflict with Satan was prompted by the Holy Spirit. Satan did not come after Jesus. The Spirit of God led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. WHY?

Mk. 1:12 – *Immediately* (following Jesus’ baptism) *the Spirit DROVE Him into the wilderness.* The Greek word for *drove* means to drive out with force!

Here we have the battle of the ages displayed. WHY?

The setting: the “wilderness” – the Gk. word, *eremos*, means solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited by people.

WHY is this conflict at the outset of Jesus ministry?

Who is this Satan? HaSatan (in Hebrew). He is the adversary. Devil means to slander, to attack. He was Lucifer – “shining one” – “light bearer” (in Hebrew).

II Cor. 11:14 - *...Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.* Satan is NOT an angel of light. Satan masquerades as an angel of light. Satan puts on a disguise in his attempt to deceive.

John 8:44 - Jesus tells us that Satan *was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

As believers we need to remember that Satan is a defeated enemy!

C.S. Lewis/Screwtape Letters – “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devil. One is to disbelieve in his existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in him.”

The foundational/bottom line “WHY?” for the temptation: At His baptism, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God. At His temptation, Jesus proved that He is the Son of God.

Contrasts between Jesus’ baptism and His temptation:

The location changes from the cool waters of the Jordan to the desolate wilderness.

Huge crowds had surrounded Him at the Jordan. Now, in the wilderness, there is isolation.

At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove – to anoint, to empower, to foreshadow Jesus' sacrifice which was provided for ALL. Immediately after the Holy Spirit DROVE Jesus by force into the wilderness (Mk. 1:12).

The voice of God the Father called Jesus, "...My beloved Son." Jesus now hears the deceiving lies of Satan.

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At His baptism, Jesus was anointed of God...He is now attacked by the adversary.

Jesus saw the heavens open at His baptism. Now He sees the one for whom hell has been prepared. In Matt. 25:41 we read Jesus' words concerning the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Jesus' temptation was part of God's plan!

Jesus endured temptation so that He could identify with us.

Heb. 2:18 – *For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

Heb. 4:15 – *He was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin.*

Through His temptation, Jesus demonstrated His holy/sinless character.

Jesus is without sin from eternity past through eternity future.

Heb. 13:8 – *Jesus the Messiah is the SAME yesterday, today, and forever*

...tempted as we are.... We are tempted in this fallen world.

BUT, here at Jesus' "temptation," we don't see the "normal" temptation that the fallen world through Satan's attempts throws at us. As we read of Jesus' temptation, we are witnessing the direct, full onslaught fierce attack by Satan whose intent it is to destroy Jesus as the Messiah...as the Son of God!

We need to rejoice in this account. We need to know about our Messiah...that He has the power to crush the enemy...to destroy sin and death! In this account our Messiah is spotlighted as the answer regarding sin for the curse placed upon the earth and man's being reconciled to God! In this account we are witnesses of our Jesus Who came to overturn the curse – to restore the earth, to restore Israel, and to reconcile man to God!

Jesus came to identify with mankind so that He could serve mankind...so that He could bear our sin...so that He could wear the crown of thorns and be pierced through for

us...so that He can now sit at the right hand of God as our GREAT HIGH PRIEST and intercede for us when the adversary accuses us before God. And, Jesus is our great High Priest because He was tempted in all points like we are yet without sin!

And, now was the time to enter into intense conflict with the enemy.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into a 35 by 15 square mile area of precipitous cliffs and ravines, a place of scorpions, snakes, and wild animals...a place uninhabited by man...a place where nothing grows. And there Jesus remained for 40 days and 40 nights in intense battle with the devil. Then he became hungry. It is said that when hunger pains return after such a fast, it indicates the subject is beginning to starve to death.

Jesus is totally focused on the conflict/battle and He is totally focused on the will of the Father. During His earthly ministry, Jesus was consistently focused on submission to the Father. And now He is engaged in an intense conflict with the devil to demonstrate His deity!

We need to know that because Jesus is God He is not capable of sinning.

Lev. 19:2 - ...*You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*

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Isaiah 59:2 – God cannot look upon sin.

I John 1:5 – ... *God is light and in Him is no darkness AT ALL.*

II Cor. 5:21 – *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

John the Baptizer confirmed Jesus' sinlessness by stating that he, John, should be baptized by Jesus – not the other way around.

John 14:30 teaches us that Jesus said, "Satan has nothing in Me" – there is nothing in Jesus into which the devil could get to with any temptation.

I Peter. 2:21b-22 – ...*Christ...Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.*

Heb. 4:15 – *tempted in all points as we are yet without sin.*

CONSIDER: All temptation that came at Jesus came from the outside...none of it came from within Jesus because He is eternally God! For sin to occur there must be an inward response to the outward temptation. Since Jesus did not possess a sin nature, there was no possibility of Jesus succumbing to the temptation!

How do we understand “temptation”?

Matthew 4:1 – *Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* In the Greek, the word for tempt, *peirazo*, can mean a temptation or a testing. It could be a testing for good; it could be a tempting for bad. The English word carries a bad connotation. When we see the word tempt we think of a negative happening...to entice someone to sin. The Greek word can carry the idea of enticing to evil; however, it can mean a test of a positive nature.

Regarding Jesus’ temptation, from God's viewpoint it is a way to prove that the Son is worthy. From the devil's viewpoint it is a way to tempt the Son to be unworthy – to destroy the Son of God!

Whatever comes our way from the enemy to entice us are negatives...to cause us to sin. God may orchestrate tests as ways to strengthen our faith.

James 1:2-4 - *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials (peirasmos). We don’t have the negative sense within the context of this passage. Knowing this, that the testing of your faith works patience. And let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

James 1:13 - *Let no man say when he is tempted (peiraso), ‘I am tempted of God’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

God will orchestrate a test to prove righteousness. God will never entice someone into sin.

James 1:14-15 - *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.* When we veer from carrying out God’s desires, we can be enticed to sin! That’s our own doing. Rom. 7:15-25 – Paul stated, *...what I will to do, that I do NOT practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

But, we read that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. If God tempts no man, how then can the Holy Spirit drive the Son of God into a

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conflict with the devil? From God’s viewpoint it was a test to prove His righteousness. Jesus is God. There is NO QUESTION re: His righteousness.

At the baptism of Jesus, He said that He came to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). At the temptation of Jesus, His righteousness was tested.

At the baptism of Jesus, He was declared to be the Son of God (Matt. 3:17). At the temptation, He was driven into the wilderness, into the battle, to prove it (Matt. 4:3).

The accounts in Luke and Mark specifically tell us that Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days. The time of trial consisted of forty days and forty nights of fasting (Matt. 4:2) during which there was a constant barrage of temptation by Satan.

In both Matthew and Luke, the three temptations recorded comprise Satan's final all-out assault against Jesus during the 40 days. The three recorded temptations directed at Jesus Christ are unique to Him. These three temptations hurled at Jesus by Satan represent a less costly way (short cuts eliminating the cross) to do God's work than what God required of His Son in His plan of redemption!

First Temptation

Matthew 4:3-4 – *Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'* The word “if” in the Greek is better translated as “forasmuch as You are the Son of God.” WHY? CONSIDER: We need to remember that Satan never questions the deity of Jesus, the demons don't even question the deity of Jesus, only religious liberals question the deity of Jesus. Satan and the fallen angels knew Jesus before they fell. They were at one time holy angels. They knew Jesus to be God.

James 2:19 - ...*Even the demons believe—and tremble!*

Matt. 8:28-29 - . . . *in the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'*

The first temptation is a temptation to distrust God's love...to distrust God's plan for the Son of God. Satan was attempting to get Jesus to rethink God's plan.

Regarding changing the stones into bread...Jesus had the power to do so. He turned water into wine – for others! He fed 5,000 hungry people with a child's lunch. He fed another 4,000. Satan was attempting to get Jesus to divert His power to serve Himself. At no time did Jesus use His miraculous powers to gratify Himself. The work of God cannot be accomplished through self-indulgence. The gifts that God gives to us as believers are for the purpose of equipping others for the work of the ministry.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 – *Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.* God had led the children of Israel into the wilderness and they had no alternative but to trust Him. They had to

depend on God for food. Even their food, the manna, was decreed by the word of God because the manna came by God's command (Ex. 16).

Second Temptation

Matthew 4:5-7 – *Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, If (forasmuch as) You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’*

It appears that the devil somehow physically transported Jesus to the temple pinnacle...a platform where a trumpeter sounded the call to the morning sacrifice from on top of the temple walls. It was a 450-foot drop to the Kidron Valley below. Satan told Jesus to throw Himself down and trust God to take care of Him – to test God. What a sensational feat for all to see. Instantly the people would accept Jesus as Messiah. Jesus could forego the agony of the cross! Was this going through Satan’s mind?

Jesus didn’t come to be swept up by the crowd. He didn’t come to be accepted. He came to be rejected. He came to die.

Jesus quoted Deut. 6:16 – *It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’*

For Jesus, was the temptation then real? YES!

Heb. 4:15 – *“He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Jesus’ temptation was REAL.*

Because Jesus could not sin, He could never succumb to the temptation.
CONSIDER: Jesus was tempted to the absolute limit of the capability of Satan to tempt.
Jesus never gave in. Every temptation ran to its limit.

When we’re tempted, many are the times that we give in.

Jesus withstood every temptation to its full limit!

CONSIDER: the temptation could be presented to Jesus because of His humanness. Sin could not occur because of His deity!

Third Temptation

Matthew 4:8-9 – *Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’*

Psa. 2:8 - God the Father said to God the Son, *Ask of Me and I’ll give the nations for Your inheritance and the ends of the earth for Your possessions.*

These are the words of God the Father to God the Son – speaking of what would happen in the Millennial Kingdom – after the humiliation, after the suffering on the cross, after three days and three nights in the grave, after the resurrection, after Jesus’ ascension,

after sitting at the right hand of God, after the rapture. Satan was offering this to Jesus NOW! Again, Satan offered the means by which Jesus could bypass the cross.

How could Satan offer Jesus all the kingdom of the world?

John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11 – he is called “the ruler of this world.” Satan is NOT the ruler of the universe. He is the ruler of the world system.

I John 5:19 – *The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*

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II Corinthians 4:4 – he’s called “the god of this age.”

These passages do not proclaim that Satan literally possesses all the nations of the world. He rules the system of evil that dominates the nations of the world.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, praised the Most High God Who rules over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes (Dan. 4:17).

Satan doesn’t possess the kingdoms of the world. Satan does not determine the nations or who rules the nations. Satan is essentially telling Jesus, "I can make life easier for You. You're supposed to have the kingdoms of the world for Your own, You're supposed to be the ruler. You can go right to the crown. You can forget the cross. However, there's one condition..."

Matt. 4:9 – *All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.*

Isa. 14:13-14 - *For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; ... ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, ... I will be like the Most High.'* And, with those words, Lucifer was kicked out of his place in heaven. He wanted to be worshipped.

But Jesus knew that before He would wear His crown of glory, He would first wear His crown of thorns. Jesus’ baptism signified His death and resurrection. Jesus’ baptism announced that He would be the ultimate sacrifice offered to everyone!

Jesus had to submit to the Father – there was no other way.

Jesus had to go to the cross to bear our sin – there was no other way.

Jesus told John that He had to fulfill all righteousness.

And so Jesus proclaimed...

Matthew 4:10-11 – *‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.*

Jesus had to conquer Satan in the wilderness. He had to destroy Satan and his power over death at the cross (Heb. 2:14). Resurrection was VICTORY. When the 1,000 years of the Millennial Kingdom have “expired,” Satan will be released from the pit (Rev. 20) and will go out to deceive the nations – to gather them to battle, surrounding the camp of the saints and Jerusalem. God will devour Satan and his minions with fire. And the devil

will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

At the outset of His public ministry, Jesus, Who was declared to be the Messiah/the Son of God at His baptism, proved that He is the Messiah/the Son of God at His temptation! This is our GLORIOUS ALL-POWERFUL GOD!

QUESTIONS:

What was your V8 moment?

What is the connection between Jesus' baptism and Jesus' temptation?

Why is the temptation account in Scripture?

How does this temptation account speak to you in your walk with the Lord?

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In what ways has God gifted you?

What are some of the temptations prompted by these gifts?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread the Week 8 handout with Bible references.

Make observations. Ask questions. Begin to find answers from Scripture.

Write up how the account of Jesus' temptation along with Heb. 7:25 impacts your walk with the Lord.

Share with at least one person.

Pray about inviting a Jewish friend to the upcoming Passover Seder on 3/30.

Read the Week 9 handout upon receiving it.