

# Following Jesus Through Temptation

## The Three Stages of Temptation

Date: 1/23/11 WBCFWB

Text: Matt. 4:1-11

Introduction:

- From the high and holy experience of blessing at the Jordan, Jesus was led into the wilderness for testing.
- Jesus was not tempted so that the Father could learn anything about His Son, for the Father had already given Jesus His divine approval. (3:17)
- Jesus was tempted so that every creature in heaven, on earth, or under the earth might know that Jesus Christ is the Conqueror.
- He exposed Satan and his tactics, and He defeated Satan.
- Because of His victory, we can have victory over the tempter!
- Our Lord's experience of temptation prepared Him to be our sympathetic High Priest. (**Heb. 2:16-18**) For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

In discussing temptation it is important to remember that God does not tempt man (James 1:13).

- God allows man to be tempted for the same reasons He led Christ to be tempted.
- God allows man to be tempted...
  1. To **prove and demonstrate his faith.**
  2. To **strengthen and prepare him for heavier responsibility.**
  3. To **demonstrate the mercy, grace, and power of God in a human life.**

### I. Stage One - The **Coming** of Temptation (v.1-2)

#### A. **Two facts** about Jesus' temptation.

1. Jesus was **tempted immediately after His baptism.** (v.1a) "Then" = (3:16-17)
  - He had just had a mountaintop experience, then, immediately, **Satan attacked Him.**
2. Jesus was **led by the Spirit** to be tempted by the devil. (**Tested in the will of God** v.1b). "Christ was directed to the combat. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves." (**Matthew Henry**)

#### B. **Three realities** about the **Christian that is set on serving God.**

1. **The more a person seeks to serve God, the more he can expect to be tempted.**
  - Note how heavy and intense the temptation was against Christ.
2. **The more a person seeks to serve God, the more he needs communion with God.**
  - Time alone with God is essential. A quiet time in God's Word—meditating, communing, and worshipping—is an absolute essential for the believer.
3. **Spiritual strength and maturity, do not exempt a person from temptation.**
  - Everyone is tempted, even the Son of God Himself. No one is exempt (1 Cor. 10:13).

### C. The Setting of the Temptations;

1. The Place “the wilderness” (v.1) – **(Temptations can take place anywhere at anytime!)**  
“the desert valley of the Jordan, thinly populated- bare pasture, a little north of Jerusalem.”  
(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary)
2. Jesus fasted forty days - forty nights (v.2) **(Temptations come to ALL spiritual or Not!)**
  - **Having fasted** - Doubtless he received more abundant spiritual strength from God.
  - **Forty days and forty nights** - As others have done- Moses and Elijah.
  - **He was afterward hungry** – So Jesus was prepared for the first temptation.

## II. Stage Two - The **Confronting** of Temptation (v.3-10)

“It is important to note that Jesus faced the enemy *as man*, **not as the Son of God**. His first word was, “*Man shall not live by bread alone*”. We must not think that Jesus used His divine powers to overcome the enemy, because that is just what the enemy wanted Him to do! Jesus used the spiritual resources that are available to us today: the power of the Holy Spirit of God (Matt. 4:1), and the power of the Word of God (“It is written”).” (W.W.W.)

### A. The First Temptation – To Use Jesus’ Power for Personal Gain – (v.3-4)

1. (v.3) “If” – Satan says show your Power off – perform a Miracle - prove You are God’s Son.
  - Christ was tempted to trust Himself, not God, to choose another way- not God’s way.
  - God’s way was the way of faith which included suffering the trials of life—and the cross.
  - The devil was saying “**trust yourself, take a shorter route**”.
    - 1) **Man needs more than bread** - more than his physical life and needs being met.
    - 2) **Man needs God’s life.** He needs eternal life and he needs his spiritual needs met.
2. (v.4) The **Answer for Temptation number One – God’s Word**: “**Quotes the scripture**” (Deut. 8:3) 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.

### 3. **Temptation is to be resisted by using the Word of God.**

- **Believers must study and learn the Word of God in order to withstand temptation;** (Ps. 119:9, 11) Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.  
(2Tim. 2:15) Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.  
(2Ti m. 3:16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

### B. The Second Temptation - To prove Jesus was God by **a spectacular act** - (5-7)

1. (v.5) Taketh him up” does not mean that he bore him through the air, - **means**, to conduct on- to lead one; to attend or accompany one; or to induce one to go.
2. (v.6) Devil tempted Christ to prove that He was the Son of God by doing spectacular acts.
  - **Devil intentionally misquoted scripture – (Ps. 91:11-12)“to keep thee in all thy ways”**

a. Christ was tempted to **test God**. *Tempting Jesus to do the spectacular.*

b. Christ was tempted to **attract attention by the spectacular**.

- The worshippers at the temple, seeing such a spectacular event, would accept and proclaim Him to be the Son of God. **(They needed to believe God's Word)**

3. There are **two things** wrong with the **reasoning behind this temptation**. (from Satan)

a. **God is not to be tested.**

- **His will, His power, His protection, His promises** *are not to be presumed upon or taken advantage of or misused.*
- **God is not to be tested or tried; God is to be trusted.**
- **His will and His Word are to be trusted** and obeyed just as they are laid down; all things are to be done exactly as He says.

b. **God is to be trusted, not the spectacular.**

- **God wants men to believe Him because they love Him as their Father, not because of events and happenings, whether they be spectacular or commonplace.**

(Mark 11:22) "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God".

(John 6:28-29) "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*".

4. **Believers are often tempted the same as Christ (1 Cor. 10:13).**

- a) They are tempted to test God, **to lay hold of some Biblical promise and take it out of context, to misuse and misapply it.**
- b) To **center people's attention upon the spectacular**, *not upon God and faith in God.*
  - God is to be trusted, *not the spectacular.*
  - **God is to be the focus and center of *all that is said and done*, not the spectacular.**

5. **Two things are absolutely essential in order to conquer this temptation.**

- a) **Living with God moment by moment**—genuine constant communion with Him.
- b) **Living in God's Word**—really knowing His promises - using them faithfully and correctly.

6. **Satan knew Scripture and knew it well.**

- ***It is possible to know the Scripture and not know God.***
- **It is even possible to know the Scripture and to stand against God, abusing and misusing His Word.**

**NOTE: Jesus Answers with the Word of God! (as it is written)**

**C. The Third Temptation - To prove Jesus is God by compromise. (v.8-10)**

1. Christ was tempted to **compromise His ministry and His mission**.

- He was tempted to secure the world without the cross, **without paying the price.**
- If He bowed down and worshipped the devil, **the kingdoms of the world and the loyalty of men were to be His.**

2. Christ was tempted to compromise **His life and His loyalty** to the Father.

- He was offered the world and the sovereign leadership of the world if He would just do one thing: **worship the devil.**

**Note two things wrong with the reasoning behind this temptation. (by Satan)**

- a. Compromise with the devil and the world is **not God's way or will.**
- b. **God alone is to be worshipped, not the devil nor the world and its power.**

**Observe four significant lessons in this point.**

- 1) **A believer** is often tempted to compromise both his life and his work or ministry.
- 2) **Satan deceives and lies.** Kingdoms of this world - only temporary-few short years.
- 3) Believers cannot receive from Satan what God has promised them, eternal life.
- 4) ***Temptation must be resisted immediately.***

**NOTICE (v.10): Jesus did not hesitate a moment in resisting temptation with the WORD.**

**III. Stage Three - The Comfort of Temptation - (v.11) Triumphant and Victory**

- **Christ resisted the temptation: by doing exactly what the Word of God said.**
- **He simply obeyed God;** therefore, **He never got out of the will of God.**
- **The devil left Jesus alone for awhile and some angels came and ministered to Him.**

**A. The devil is a defeated and conquered enemy.**

**(Col. 2:15)** "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it".

**(Hebrews 2:14)** "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil".

**B. There is always an escape from temptation.**

**(1 Cor. 10:13)** "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it".

➤ God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation.

**(2 Peter 2:9)** "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished".

**C. When temptation is resisted, the devil flees and the believer is relieved for a while.**

**(James 4:7; 11)** "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you".

Close / Inv.

1. Are You in one of the Phases of Temptation right Now? (Know that God will be with You)
2. Are You Yielding to any Temptations in Your life? (Will You seek repentance and God's forgiveness today?)
3. Are You His Child? Are You sure that you have been born again?

**The Load** - Mark simply tells us that Jesus was “*tempted of Satan*”. This implies that He was attacked by the devil during the entire forty day period. Matthew tells us that it was at the end of the forty days, when Jesus was weak from fasting, that Satan came against Him with his strongest and most pointed attacks, **Matt. 4:2**.

To understand what Jesus faced and what it teaches us, we need to look at Matthew's account of these events. Turn to **Matthew 4**. Let's examine the three temptations that are mentioned here and see what lessons we can glean from them.

1. **The First Temptation - Matt. 4:3-4** - In this temptation, Satan questions the Son's relationship with the Father. No doubt, Satan had heard the Father's declaration in **Mark 1:11**. Now, Satan calls that relationship into question. He mocks Jesus and says, “***Look at You starving here in the wilderness! If You are really the Son of God why are You starving to death in the wilderness? Use Your power and turn these stones to bread. Feed Yourself since You are the Son of God.***”

Now, there is no question that Jesus could have turned the stones to bread has He wanted to. He had the power to do so. And, it is not a sin to want to meet a legitimate need. But, to use His power in that way at this time would have shown a lack of faith in the Father. The temptation here is for Jesus to act independently of the Father and the Spirit. The devil wants Jesus to do His Own thing.

Christ's answer to the devil showed the condition of His heart. He would rather starve to death than be out of His Father's will! Being in the center of the Father's will meant more to Jesus than food or life.

(III. What a challenge to us! How easily we sell out to get our hands on the things we desire. How easily we give in to compromise and sin so that we can satisfy the lusts of our flesh. Like the foolish Jews, we love bread more than we love the Father at times, **John 6:26!**)

2. **The Second Temptation - Matt. 4:5-7** - Here, Satan tries to get Jesus to perform the miraculous apart from the will of the Father. Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple. This spot was said to be 450 feet high. Satan misquotes **Psalms 91:11-12**. Satan left out the phrase that says “***to keep thee in all thy ways***”. This is God's promise to protect the Messiah as He carried out the Father's will. Satan was trying to get Jesus to step outside that will and work a miracle to prove that He was Who He claimed to be. He was also trying to get Jesus to accept immediate fame. If He had stepped off the pinnacle of the Temple and floated to the ground, He would have been instantly famous.

Again, Jesus responded in the proper way. His response was one of faith. Jesus is saying, “***It is never right to operate contrary to God's will regardless of the outcome.***” God honors obedience, not outcomes. (III. Saul - **1 Sam. 15:1-33.**)

(III. Again, there is a lesson for us. Far too many people and ministries in our day seem to think the ends justify the means. They have the mentality that everything is all right as long as a few people are brought to the Lord, and as long as things turn out all right in the end.

God does not bless programs, people, puppets and petting zoos. He blesses His Word and He blesses obedience to His Word. The increase belongs to the Lord, **1 Cor. 3:7**. Obedience to His Word is our responsibility! External prosperity does not mean that God approves of what we are doing. God always has and always will bless obedience! He may not bless it in external ways, that men recognize, but He always honors those who honor Him!)

(III. Moses and the twice smitten rock - **Num.20:1-12** - Moses was commanded to speak to the rock so that water might be given. He struck the rock twice instead. God graciously gave the water, but Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he disobeyed. I would rather have the blessings and presence of God than the prosperity that can be achieved through human means!)

3. **The Third Temptation - Matt. 4:8-10** - Here, Satan, as the god of this world, offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world. Satan is attempting to get Jesus to take the crown and bypass the cross. For a simple bow to the limited sovereignty of Satan, Jesus could skip the pain of Calvary and have the world fall at His feet.

Apparently, Satan had the power to grant this promise. But, Jesus responds in a way that honors God once again. He reminds Satan that only God is worthy of worship. You see, Jesus did not come to this world just for a crown. Oh, there is a crown in His future, but for Jesus, the path to the crown leads by the cross! Jesus came to this world to die. He would obtain the crown by laying down His life on the cross.

(III. Again, there is a lesson here for us. Satan would have us take the easy, painless way. He promises us an easy path if we will just allow him to be the ruler of our lives. But, if you give the devil an inch, he will become your ruler!

God's will is that we walk in His ways, and that we trust Him to give us the things He desires to bring into our lives in His time, **Psa. 37:5**.)

#### IV. v. 13 **THE TESTIMONY OF THE TEMPTATION**

- A. Luke says, "***and when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season,***" **Luke 4:13**. This would certainly not be the last encounter Jesus would have with the devil. He would ultimately defeat Satan forever when He died on the cross. But, here, in His temptation, Jesus won a great victory over Satan.

It needs to be said here that the temptation of Jesus was not about trying to get Him to sin. Jesus Christ was God in human flesh and it was impossible for Him to sin. The Bible is clear in this matter. First, **He knew no sin, 2 Cor. 5:21**. Second, **He did no sin, 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15**. Third, **He had no sin, 1 John 3:5; John 14:30; Heb. 7:26**.

Yet, He was tempted in every way that mankind is tempted, **1 John 2:16; Heb. 4:15. He was tempted in the physical realm, the emotional realm and the spiritual realm, just like we are.**

If He could not have sinned, were His temptations real? Yes, they were real. The temptation of Jesus was not to see whether He would commit sin or not, but to prove that He could not sin. He proved that He was the sinless Son of God in that wilderness!

There are some lessons we can learn from His temptation; lessons that can help us in our day of testing.

- B. Jesus overcame because He was sinless. We fall because we are sinful. How can we obtain victory in our own battle with sin?

Watching Jesus in His trial can help us through ours. There are two things we need to take note of. First, **He was filled with the Spirit, Mark 1:10**. Second, **He was filled with the Word of God**. Three times Jesus was tempted and three times He reached back in to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, (**Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13**), for just the word He needed.

The Spirit of God gave Him the ability to stand against the attacks of the devil. The Word of God gave Him ammunition to defend Himself while He attacked back.

If we want to be successful in our battle with the flesh and the devil, we need to be sure that we are living lives that are controlled by the Spirit of God, **Eph. 5:18**, and filled with the Word of God, **Psa. 119:11**. We need Him and His power if we are going to have the victory in our own times of testing.

- C. The first Adam was placed in a beautiful garden. He was in a perfect setting, and he still failed. Because of Adam's fall, all of his children have been born in sin, **Rom. 5:12**. We are all in need of a Savior and we all have trouble with sin and temptation.

The Second Adam, the Lord Jesus, was driven into a barren wilderness. There, He did battle with the devil and He walked off with the victory.

Jesus went into that wilderness and faced the devil on his own turf. He did this so that He might help us when our own times of testing come. He understands because He has been there. He is able to help those who will look to Him for the power to overcome their own trial and temptations, **Heb. 4:15**. He fought the battle so that He could hand us the victory!

**Conc:** In 1961 a man by the name of Adolph Eichmann went on trial for his crimes as one of the principle architects of the Jewish Holocaust. One of the men who testified against the ex-Nazi was a concentration camp survivor named Yehiel Dinur. A film clip from Eichmann's 1961 trial shows Dinur walking into the courtroom, stopping short, seeing Eichmann for the first time since the Nazi had sent him to Auschwitz eighteen years earlier. Dinur began to sob uncontrollably, then fainted, collapsing in a heap on

the floor as the presiding judicial officer pounded his gavel for order in the crowded courtroom.

Was Dinur overcome by hatred? Fear? Horrid memories?

No; it was none of these. Dinur explained that when he saw Eichmann he realized Eichmann was not the godlike army officer who had sent so many to their deaths. This Eichmann was an ordinary man. "***I was afraid about myself,***" said Dinur. "***. . . I saw that I am capable to do this. I am . . . exactly like he.***"

Mike Wallace, of CBS' 60 Minutes summed up Dinur's terrible discovery by saying, "***Eichmann is in all of us.***" That is a horrifying statement; but it captures the central truth about man's nature. For as a result of the Fall, sin is in each of us, not just the susceptibility to sin, but sin itself.

How true that is! The possibility to do the greatest of evil exists within each one of us. The only hope we have; the only help we have, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, you need to be sure that you are in a personal faith relationship with Him. Are you?

Second, if you are saved, you need to be sure that you are filled with the Spirit and the Word of God. Are you?

We all fight battles with temptation, but there is help in the Lord if you will receive it. He is waiting to save you if you are lost. He is waiting to strengthen you if you are weak. He is waiting to forgive you if you have fallen.

### **THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST. ([4:1-11](#))**

Concerning Christ's temptation, observe, that directly after he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, he was tempted; great privileges, and special tokens of Divine favour, will not secure any from being tempted. But if the Holy Spirit witness to our being adopted as children of God, that will answer all the suggestions of the evil spirit. Christ was directed to the combat. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves. Others are tempted, when drawn aside of their own lust, and enticed, [Jas 1:14](#); but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, therefore he was tempted only by the devil. In the temptation of Christ it appears that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring; but he can be resisted. It is a comfort to us that Christ suffered, being tempted; for thus it appears that our temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only. Satan aimed in all his temptations, to bring Christ to sin against God. 1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him. It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition; and those who are brought into straits have need to double their guard. Christ answered all the temptations of

Satan with "It is written;" to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the Scriptures. This method we must take, when at any time we are tempted to sin. Let us learn not to take any wrong courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing: in some way or other the Lord will provide. 2. Satan tempted Christ to presume upon his Father's power and protection, in a point of safety. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls. Satan has no objection to holy places as the scene of his assaults. Let us not, in any place, be off our watch. The holy city is the place, where he does, with the greatest advantage, tempt men to pride and presumption. All high places are slippery places; advancements in the world makes a man a mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. Is Satan so well versed in Scripture as to be able to quote it readily? He is so. It is possible for a man to have his head full of Scripture notions, and his mouth full of Scripture expressions, while his heart is full of bitter enmity to God and to all goodness. Satan misquoted the words. If we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection. This passage, [Deut 8:3](#), made against the tempter, therefore he left out part. This promise is firm and stands good. But shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? No. 3. Satan tempted Christ to idolatry with the offer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary; by that men are most easily imposed upon. Christ was tempted to worship Satan. He rejected the proposal with abhorrence. "Get thee hence, Satan!" Some temptations are openly wicked; and they are not merely to be opposed, but rejected at once. It is good to be quick and firm in resisting temptation. If we resist the devil he will flee from us. But the soul that deliberates is almost overcome. We find but few who can decidedly reject such baits as Satan offers; yet what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Christ was succoured after the temptation, for his encouragement to go on in his undertaking, and for our encouragement to trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to suffer, being tempted, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being tempted; therefore we may expect, not only that he will feel for his tempted people, but that he will come to them with seasonable relief.

—Matthew Henry Concise