

THE DEVIL – THE UNHOLY GOD - Part 8

II Corinthians 4:3-4

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

In our previous studies we covered the following: The Devil’s Origin, Original State, Downfall, Nature, Names, Domain, Demons, Dangers, Strategies, Devices and the Devil’s Temptation of Jesus – Part 1. We continue with the Devil’s Temptation of Jesus – Part 2.

THE DEVIL’S TEMPTATION OF JESUS – Part 2

Matthew 4:1-11

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 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.’” Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If 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.’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” 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.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘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.”

In the previous study on the temptation of Jesus, we focused upon the Tempter and the Tempted One. Now we move on to look at the Temptation and the Triumph of Jesus over the Devil.

What Is “Temptation?”

First, I want to make sure that we know what is meant by the word “temptation.” The dictionary gives this meaning: “To rouse desire, to be attracted, to induce; a cause or occasion of enticement to do wrong, violate a law or compromise one’s conscience.” Synonyms are: “Allurement, lure, seduction.” (Webster’s New World College Edition Dictionary)

Illustration: I read about a method that some naturalists use to catch butterflies. They cement the wings of a dead butterfly to an outline of a butterfly that has been sketched on cardboard. The object is then cut out of the cardboard and covered with cellophane to protect it. It is then suspended from a twig by a thread and it moves about in a lifelike manner whenever a breeze strikes it. While real butterflies will not touch it, they will hesitate and flutter around it so that the naturalist has the opportunity to catch them in his net.

God's people also make the mistake of fluttering around some temptation of the world and consequently get caught in the Devil's net! God's Word tells us to "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" (1 Thess. 5:22) And, "*Flee youthful lusts.*" (2 Timothy 2:22)

However, we cannot always keep from being tempted for we have eyes, ears, the sense of smell, etc. but we can keep from yielding to temptations. Temptations, when resisted, can make us stronger and resistant to other temptations that will come. The song, "Yield Not To Temptation" needs not only to be vocalized but realized in our daily lives.

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each victory will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue,
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.

Refrain

Ask the Savior to help you,
Comfort, strengthen and keep you;
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through."

Jesus can help us because, Hebrews 2:18 states: "*For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*"

THE TEMPTATION

The situations that confronted Jesus were three: first, the timing of the temptations and second, the tactic of the temptation and third, type of temptations.

A. The Timing Of The Temptation.

1. *The suddenness of it.*

All the while our Savior was in His father's carpenter shop everything seemed to be fine, but when He embarked upon a ministry that's when the devil struck. At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, recorded here in Matthew chapter 4, the devil attacked Jesus. Matthew writes, "***Then*** Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

Notice the word, "***then.***" Christ was baptized; the Spirit of God descended like a dove, anointing Him; God's voice came out of heaven saying, "*Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,*" and Christ began His public ministry.

"***Then***" – After the testimony in the water came the trial in the wilderness. Immediately after His public recognition, His anointing, the Father's confirmation – "***then***" He immediately has a direct confrontation with Satan.

Watch out for temptation when you have had a high point in your spiritual life. No sooner was Christ out of the waters of baptism than He was in the fires of temptation.

2. The subtleness of it.

“And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.” (Matthew 4:2)

The Devil did not test Jesus the first day in the wilderness. Being the subtle and sinister person he is, he waited for the most opportune time. Jesus had fasted for 40 days and was physically weak. When he was at his weakest, the devil attacked him. Our arch enemy avails himself of every physical and spiritual weakness to take advantage of us. Shouldn't this teach us to keep up our spiritual strength for the devil is lurking and waiting to attack us when we are weak.

B. The Tactic of The Temptation.

“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” (v.3)

“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.” (v.6)

The first word Satan said was *“If.”* Satan's ever present *“if”* is always there. Doubt is the Devil's favorite way to get his foot into the door of our minds. That's the way he approached Eve. He said, *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”* (Gen. 3:1) He put doubt in her mind.

The Devil knew that Jesus was God's Son, and Jesus knew that Jesus was God's Son, but Satan still began with a seed of doubt, that is how he began the temptation of Christ and that is the way he tempts us. He always begins by trying to create doubt – he tries to get us to think: *“Is this really wrong?”* Or, *“Will God not understand that I could profit by doing this?”*

He said, *“If You are the Son of God”*, implying that Jesus needs to prove who He was. He knew Jesus was God's Son, and Jesus knew Jesus was God's Son but that didn't stop Satan from starting with *“if.”*

So he sows seeds of doubt in our minds - doubts about who we are in Christ, doubts about the veracity of God's written revelation, doubts about God's power, doubts about God's love, doubts about our salvation. Doubt is the continuous tactic of the Devil.

C. The Types Of Temptation.

The devil's temptations came at Jesus in three separate attacks. These temptations followed a pattern found elsewhere in Scripture. I John 2:16 says, *“For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.”*

In that verse are three phrases that describe our vulnerabilities and the Devil capitalizes upon them. The phrases are: *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”* The Devil focuses his temptations like a laser beam upon these three areas.

1. The lust of the flesh – the temptation to enjoy something physically – make and eat bread;
2. The lust of the eyes – the temptation to be something publicly – be sensational, jump!
3. The pride of life – the temptation to be someone powerful – rule the world's kingdoms.

The first temptation appealed to the lust of the flesh - enjoy something. Satan came to Jesus and said, *“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”* Eating bread is not sin. The temptation was that Jesus was being tempted to yield to the devil’s suggestion. If Jesus had turned stones into loaves of bread, which He had the power to do, He would have been doubting His Father’s ability to provide bread for Him and He would have been obeying the Devil. That was the sin that Jesus was being tempted to commit.

The devil was saying, “Satisfy your appetite, your cravings, respond to your hungerings and desires.” What is that? That is the Devil enticing Jesus to let the flesh dictate one’s actions – the lusting of the flesh. The devil is always saying, “You need this” – “You must have your physical needs met even if you have to sin to get what you want.”

There is a TV commercial with a young man advertising a soft-drink and saying, “Thirst is everything; obey your thirst.” That is what the devil was tempting Jesus to do and that is what he is constantly dangling before us.

The second temptation appealed to the lust of the eyes - be something publicly – be sensational, jump! *“Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.”*

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says it’s a dizzy height of 450 feet from the portico of the Temple down to the bottom of the Kedron Valley on the East side of the Temple. Jumping off the pinnacle of the temple and being caught by angels would certainly get the attention of the city. The whole town would say, “That’s the Messiah!” This temptation had at its root the enticement to presume that God would deliver Him.

The Devil said, “Jump! Throw Yourself down, You’ll be a hero, You’ll have instant prestige, You’ll really be somebody.” Jesus refused the way of sensation. He refused to collect a crowd of thrill seekers. A Faith which depends on signs and sensationalism isn’t Bible faith, it’s doubt looking for proof. If faith can’t believe without sensation it’s not faith at all. Jesus refused the way of sensation, for it was the people’s way, it was the wrong way, it was the way to failure.

The third temptation appealed to the pride of life - be someone powerful – rule the world’s kingdoms. *“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.”*

The Devil tried to appeal to pride that is inherent in human nature. He shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world and says in essence, “See all that? Bow down to me and I’ll give it to you and you will be a powerful person. What’s that? Ambition. Pride.

Yielding to any temptation would mean that Jesus would have sinned and would have been disqualified to become the Savior of the world. Again:

The first temptation was something logical – You are hungry, turn stones to bread;

The second temptation was something sensational – Jump and become an instant celebrity;

The third temptation was something damnable – Fall down and worship me.

It is here, in this last temptation, that the Devil's real motive in all this temptation is revealed. He finally shows his true colors and says, "What I really want is for You to worship me! That's the bottom line of the whole thing. That's the reason he was thrown out of heaven wasn't it?"

QUESTION:

Did the devil transport Jesus physically to the temple and to a high mountain?

William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, volume 1, page 64: "We must not regard this experience of Jesus as an outward experience. It was a struggle that went on in his own heart and mind and soul. The proof is that there is no possible mountain from which all the kingdoms of the earth could be seen. This is an inner struggle." And, page 68, "In a vision he took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple." Also, page 70, "The tempter tried his third avenue of attack. It was the world that Jesus came to save, and into his mind that there came a picture of the world. The tempting voice said: "fall down and worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of this world."

Ivor Powell, *Matthews Majestic Gospel*, page 77, "This was a battle within the Lord's thoughts; there is not a mountain anywhere from which all the nations of the world may be viewed. The Savior's mind brought pictures before him."

Patrick Fairbairn, *Life of Christ*; page 84, 85 "A man may be tempted through the senses, the imagination, or the reason. Perhaps it (temptation) is never so powerful as when its forces approach the mind together and at once through the senses, the imagination, and the reason." And, page 87, 88 "When he stood on the temple tower, whether in bawdy or invasion it matters not, it was imaginative."

G. Campbell Morgan, *The Crisis of The Christ*; page 183 "He made to pass before the vision of Christ a gorgeous and magnificent scene, not merely a few and imperfect kingdoms of Palestine, but all the kingdoms of the world. Any literal interpretation contradicts the real story."

Adam Clark, *Commentary on the Bible*, Matthew 4:8 "If the words, 'all the kingdoms of the world', be taken in a literal sense, then this must have been a visionary representation, as the highest mountain on the face of the globe could not suffice to make evident even one hemisphere of the earth, and the other must of necessity be in darkness."

I cannot conceive of Jesus permitting the Devil to physically transport Him to the temple or a high mountain. To do so would be surrendering control of Himself to the Devil.

After the temptation, Jesus was yet in the wilderness and angels came and ministered to

Him. Did He leave the wilderness at any time during the temptation? I think not.

THE TRIUMPH

We would not be reading about the temptation of Jesus if He had yielded to the Devil's suggestions, for in yielding to the temptations He would have sinned, disqualified Himself to be our Savior and His story would not be written in God's holy Word. We are reading this account in the life of Jesus because He was triumphant over the Devil.

As the record closes on this episode in the Life of Christ, note two important developments:

A. First, The Response to The Devil.

How did Jesus triumph over the Devil? The answer is plain. Three times Satan advances and three times Jesus repulses him with a thrust of the Sword of the Word of God.

1. To the first temptation Jesus said, "*it is written*" - v.4

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

He quoted [Deuteronomy 8:3](#). It is a reminder to Israel of God's tender care for His people during their wilderness wanderings. They were reminded that life consists not in bread alone but every word that comes from the mouth of God. Jesus' answer can be paraphrased like this, "Satan, there is something more important than physical bread, there is spiritual bread – man must live by every word coming out of the mouth of God."

2. To the second temptation Jesus said, "*it is written*" - v.7

"Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

Jesus reminded the Devil that He, the Lord Jesus, was Jehovah! "*You shall not tempt the LORD your God.*" When the word LORD is capitalized it means Jehovah. And yet, there are those who say that Jesus never claimed to be God. They neither know the Scriptures or the Savior!

3. To the third temptation Jesus said, "*it is written*" - v.10

"Then Jesus said to him it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

God's Word is the Sword which will drive Satan from us. In Ephesians chapter 6, where we have listed the pieces of the Christian's armor, we are told to "*take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*" (v.17)

Jesus relied on the Scriptures. We can also and then say with David, "*Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*" (Psalm 119:11) Familiarity with God's Word and constant use of it will give us victory in temptation.

B. Second, The Retreat of The Devil.

What happened after the temptations? Verses 10 and 11 tell us: "*Then Jesus said to him, '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 passed the test - the temptation was a success, as it related to Jesus. He proved that He was who He claimed to be.

The temptation failed, as it related to the Devil. He did not succeed in getting Jesus to yield to the temptations. And then what happened? Verse 11 tells us: "*And then the devil left him.*" He vanished for the time being. He would be back later, for the Devil is a relentless foe.

CONCLUSION

Temptation is common to all of us. 1st Corinthians 10:13 reminds us that "*There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*"

James 1:12 tells us, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*"

There is a way of victory, a way to win over temptation. And that of course is to respond to temptation in the way that it was fought by the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know how to handle temptation, you've got to learn from Christ.

This account of Jesus' triumph over the attack of Satan will show us:

- Christ's power over His arch enemy, the Devil;
- It establishes Jesus as the true Sovereign King of the universe;
- It proves that He is stronger than the Devil and therefore has the power to rescue sinners from the kingdom of darkness;
- It shows that He is sinless and thus has a right to be our Holy Redeemer; and,
- It also reveals to us the practical path to our triumph in temptation and that is "*take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*" (Eph. 6:17)

Illustration: A traveler in South America saw a bird screaming and flying in circles above a tree. When he came closer he saw a snake crawling up the trunk of the tree to devour the baby birds in a nest. Then he saw the darting bird disappear and return in a few moments with a small branch with leaves on it. The mother bird laid the leafy branch upon the nest and watched as the snake approached. The snake reached the nest and abruptly turned and scampered back down the tree. The traveler discovered that the leaves were poisonous to the snake and the baby birds were protected.

Upon the leaves of God's written revelation is truth, which when appropriated, will give us strength to overcome the Tempter's attacks and will, when used against the Devil, drive him from us. Praise the Lord!