

Research on: Temptations of Jesus

Matt. 4:1-11

“All these things being offered Jesus are to a degree a kind of power. He was offered personal power by changing stones into bread. Then he was offered priestly power if he’d go for the argument to be the head of ecclesiasticism. And he was offered political power by being shown all the kingdoms of the world. It’s only in the gospel of Luke that we see that Luke apparently grasped this as a struggle over power. After all of these power bases are offered to Jesus, after the devil is dismissed and angels minister unto Jesus, Luke says (4:14), ‘Jesus went in the *power of the Spirit* into Galilee,’ showing that he knew that it was a question of where power resided for man. It was in the power of Spirit that Jesus was able to exercise his full dominion as God’s Son” (Crisler, *Gospels Vol. 1*, 21).

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

“Of the Spirit—that blessed Spirit immediately before spoken of as descending upon Him at His baptism, and abiding upon Him. Luke, connecting these two scenes, as if the one were but the sequel of the other, says, "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led," &c. Mark's expression has a startling sharpness about it—"Immediately the Spirit driveth Him" (Mr 1:12), "putteth," or "hurrieth Him forth," or "impelleth Him." (See the same word in Mr 1:43; 5:40; Mt 9:25; 13:52; Joh 10:4). The thought thus strongly expressed is the mighty constraining impulse of the Spirit under which He went; while Matthew's more gentle expression, "was led up," intimates how purely voluntary on His own part this action was.

“into the wilderness—probably the wild Judean desert. The particular spot which tradition has fixed upon has hence got the name of Quarantana, from the forty days—"an almost perpendicular wall of rock twelve or fifteen hundred feet above the plain.

“to be tempted—The Greek word (peirazein) means simply to try or make proof of; and when ascribed to God in His dealings with men, it means, and can mean no more than this.

“of the devil: Hebrew Satan = one who opposes, an adversary. The Greek word conveys the additional ideas of (1) deceiving, (2) calumniating, (3) accusing” (Cambridge Bible, www.biblehub.com).

“WILDERNESS. Loneliness; doubt; darkness. Spontaneity of thought and idea; the vestibule in which a material sense of things disappears, and spiritual sense unfolds the great facts of existence” (S&H 597).

IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD. . . . Jesus is really being given an identity test to see if he can maintain who he is in Scripture. He was told in Matt. 3:17 that he was God's beloved son in whom God is well pleased. Now Satan comes to thought to try and get Jesus to question that divine pronouncement.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

“Forty days and forty nights.—Here we have an obvious parallelism with the fasts of Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (1Kings 19:8), and we may well think of it as deliberately planned. Prolonged fasts of nearly the same extent have been recorded in later times. The effect of such a fast on any human organism, and therefore on our Lord's real humanity, would be to interrupt the ordinary continuity of life, and quicken all perceptions of the spiritual world into a new intensity” (Ellicott's Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“The tempter's whole object during the forty days evidently was to get him to distrust the heavenly testimony borne to him at his baptism as the Son of God—to persuade him to regard it as but a splendid illusion—and, generally, to dislodge from his breast the consciousness of his Sonship” (Jamieson 3.16).

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

The word *tempter* in Greek is *peirazo* and it means “to test one maliciously, craftily to put to the proof; to try or test one's faith, virtue, character, by enticement to sin...” (Thayer 498).

“*If thou be the Son of God.* If thou art the Messiah—if God's own Son—then thou hast power to work a miracle; and here is a fit opportunity to try thy power, and show that thou art truly his Son. He had just been *declared* to be the Son of God (Matt 3:17), and here was an opportunity to show that he was really so.

“Command that these stones ... - The stones that were lying around him in the wilderness. No temptation could have been more plausible, or more likely to succeed, than this. He had just been declared to be the Son of God Matthew 3:17, and here was an opportunity to show that he was really so. The circumstances were such as to make it appear plausible and proper to work this miracle. "Here you are," was the language of Satan, "hungry, cast out, alone, needy, poor, and yet the Son of God! If you have this power, how easy could you satisfy your wants! How foolish is it, then, for the Son of God, having all power, to be starving in this manner, when by a word he could show his power and relieve his wants, and when in the thing itself there could be nothing wrong!” (Barnes 15).

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

“ **It is written.**—The words of all the three answers to the Tempter come from two chapters of Deuteronomy, one of which (Deuteronomy 6) supplied one of the passages (6:4-9) for the phylacteries or frontlets worn by devout Jews. The fact is every way suggestive. A prominence was thus given to that portion of the book, which made it an essential part of the education of every Israelite. The words which our Lord now uses had, we must believe, been familiar to Him from His childhood, and He had read their meaning rightly. With them He may have sustained the faith *of* others in the struggles of the Nazareth home with poverty and want. And now He finds in them a truth which belongs to His high calling as well as to His life of lowliness. “Not by bread only doth man live, but by the word, *i.e.*, the will, of God.” He can leave His life and all that belongs to it in His Father’s hands. . . The experience of the wilderness clothed the history of the bread from heaven with a new significance” (Ellicott’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“Jesus decided the best defense was Scripture. This verse is taken from Deut. 8:3. Deuteronomy is a law book. In fact, the word in Greek, *deuteros nomos*, is the second law or the repetition of the law. How did he regard this test by Satan? What was going on in Jesus’ thinking here? First of all, what does ‘*Satan*’ mean in Hebrew? Accuser. It is also the term for prosecuting attorney. If he has the prosecuting attorney accusing in thought, Jesus in his defense cites what? The law. He quotes the law book. He doesn’t need to do anything original. The law is the law and it never varies. Therefore, what is being suggested here by Satan, or the prosecuting attorney, is illegal. It is illegitimate. He proves it by citing the law. That’s a marvelous technique for us in the middle of temptation” (Crisler, *Gospels Vol. 1*, 19).

“These words, taken from Deut 8:3, refer to Israel in the wilderness. There they, like Jesus, had no bread, yet they were fed by the word of God’s mouth, for God commanded manna to fall from heaven. . . In the life of Jesus there is not a single example of a miracle worked for his own advantage. In every case his miraculous power was used for the good of others, to remove the ravages of disease and sin, and to advance the kingdom of God, and for these purposes alone was it entrusted to him” (Dummelow 633).

“Jesus’ response is based solely on Scripture: ‘It is written’” (*EBC* 8.113).

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

“Next thing, take Jesus out of the wilderness and move him into an entirely different

environment, the sophistication of organized religion, ecclesiasticism. ‘Take him to the very pinnacle of the Temple.’ Show him everything that could belong to him ecclesiastically if he would only go via the world’s route by following the devilish suggestions. ‘If thou be the Son of God,’ the same test question again. ‘Cast thyself down.’ Notice the suggestion is that Jesus do it himself. Apparently Satan knew that it would not succeed trying to cast Jesus down. If Satan couldn’t do it, the only way that it could be done would be for Jesus to do it himself” (Crisler, *Gospels Vol. 1*, 20).

“*And setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple* — That is, one of the battlements, for it is not to be supposed that our Lord stood on the *point of a spire*. The roof of the temple, like that of their houses, was flat, and had a kind of balustrade round it, to prevent people falling off, and somewhere on the edge of this we may suppose that Satan placed Christ, in his attacking him with this temptation. This, in some parts of it, and particularly over the porch, was so exceedingly high that one could hardly bear to look down from it” (Benson’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

The Greek word for *devil* is *diabolos* and it means ‘to slander, to accuse falsely; a calumniator, false accuser, slanderer’” (Thayer 135). The word literally means to try to throw in two directions; it cannot be done. Perhaps it might mean to try to think in two directions or to have a sense of dualism in thought.

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

“*And saith, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down* — Thereby to show to all the people about the temple, that thou art indeed the Son of God; which they will fully believe when they shall see thee fly without falling, or fall without being hurt. As in the former assault, Satan tempted Christ to distrust the care of divine providence, so he now tries to persuade him to presume upon it, and to expose himself to danger unnecessarily; nay, in effect, to take the direct course to destroy himself, and try whether God would preserve him as his Son” (Benson’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

The word *tempt* in Greek is *ekpeirazo* and it means “to prove, to test, to put to proof God’s character and power” (Thayer 198).

“Jesus said unto him, It is written again - Again the Saviour replied to Satan by a text of Scripture - a passage which expressly forbade an act like this.

“Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God - This is quoted literally from Deuteronomy 6:16. The meaning is, thou shalt not try him; or, thou shalt not, by throwing thyself into voluntary and uncommanded dangers, appeal to God for protection, or trifle with the

promises made to those who are thrown into danger by his providence. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of his people who are placed by him in trial or danger; but it is not true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke him and trifle with the promised help. Thus, Satan, artfully using and perverting Scripture, was met and repelled by Scripture rightly applied” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

“An exceeding high mountain - It is not known what mountain this was. It was probably some elevated place in the vicinity of Jerusalem, from the top of which could be seen no small part of the land of Palestine.

“The glory of them - The riches, splendor, towns, cities, mountains, etc., of this beautiful land” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“Then the devil made his last effort. He offered Jesus all that he had, ‘all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them,’ if he would but worship him, i.e. acknowledge his usurped authority, and do evil that good might come” (Dummelow 633).

9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

“Worship me - The word here seems to mean, to acknowledge Satan as having a right to give these kingdoms to him; to acknowledge his dependence on him rather than God; that is, really to render religious homage. We may be surprised at his boldness. But he had been twice foiled” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“Since the tempter has now thrown off the mask, and stands forth in his true character, our Lord no longer deals with him as a pretended friend and pious counselor, but calls him by his right name—his knowledge of which from the outset he had carefully concealed till now—and orders him off” (Jamieson 3.18).

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.

“Get thee hence - These temptations, and this one especially, the Saviour met with a decided rebuke. This was a bolder attack than any which had been made before. The other temptations had been founded on an appeal to his necessities, and an offer of the protection of God in great danger; in both cases plausible, and in neither a direct violation

of the law of God. Here was a higher attempt, a more decided and deadly thrust at the piety of the Saviour. It was a proposition that the Son of God should worship the devil, instead of honoring and adoring Him who made heaven and earth; that he should bow down before the Prince of wickedness and give him homage.

It is written - In Deuteronomy 6:13. Satan asked him to worship him. This was expressly forbidden, and Jesus therefore drove him from his presence” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him: to fear the Lord, and to worship him, is the same thing. Worship includes both an internal and external reverence of God: the word "only" is not in the original text, but is added by our Lord; and that very justly; partly to express the emphasis which is on the word "him"; and in perfect agreement with the context, which requires it; since it follows, ye shall not go after other Gods” (Gill’s Exposition, www.biblehub.com).

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The word for *ministered* in Greek is *diakoneo* and it means “to be a servant, to wait upon, to offer food and drink, to supply food and necessities of life, to distribute the things necessary to sustain life. . .” (Thayer 137).

“The angels came and ministered - They came and supplied his wants and comforted him. From this narrative we may learn:

“(a) That no one is so holy as to be free from temptation, for even the Son of God was sorely tempted.

“(b) That when God permits a temptation or trial to come upon us, he will, if we look to him, give us grace to resist and overcome it, 1 Corinthians 10:13.

“(c) One of the best ways of meeting temptation is by applying Scripture. So our Savior did, and they will always best succeed who best wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Ephesians 6:17” (Barnes Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“Jesus had refused to relieve his hunger by miraculously turning stones to bread; now he is fed supernaturally. He had refused to throw himself off the temple heights in the hope of angelic help; now angels feed him. He had refused to take a shortcut to inherit the kingdom of the world; now he fulfills Scripture by beginning his ministry and announcing the kingdom in Galilee of the Gentiles” (*EBC* 8.115).

”ANGELS. God’s thoughts passing to man; spiritual intuitions, pure and perfect; the inspiration of goodness, purity, and immortality, counteracting all evil, sensuality, and mortality” (*S&H* 581).

“*The devil leaveth him.* No longer is there dualism in thought. *Angels came and ministered unto him.* True communication completely governed his thought, it was no

longer a divided kingdom” (Crisler, *Gospels Vol. 1*, 21).

“The narrative, which can only have come from our Lord’s own lips, describes an actual historical fact, the great temptation which he underwent at the very beginning of his ministry. He was tempted at other times (Luke 4:13), perhaps at all times (Heb 2:18), during his earthly life, but the two great seasons of trial were now, and immediately before the Passion: (Luke 22:42; Matt 26:39)...Jesus here appears as the second Adam victorious in the conflict in which the first Adam failed” (Dummelow 632).

Sources:

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