

Matthew Chapter 4

Matthew 4:1 "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

You can understand from the above Scripture that this happened soon after the Spirit descended on Jesus at His baptism.

Most Christians do not realize that the minute you really give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, temptation comes from every direction.

Following His public baptism, Jesus was

“led up of the Spirit into the wilderness”:

Referring to the elevation of the Judean wilderness.

The historical settling of the temptation, which was directed against Jesus’ human nature, indicates that this was a literal experience, which He really conquered, not merely a mental victory over His own thoughts.

That Jesus was “Tempted of the devil” is clearly presented as a fact.

The attack against Christ’s humanity was a genuine temptation that would have overcome any ordinary man.

However, Jesus was no mere man.

And God Himself is never the agent of temptation (James 1:13), but here, as in the book of Job, God uses even satanic tempting to serve His sovereign purposes.

As the virgin-born God-man, His divine nature could not sin (1 Sam. 15:29), and this held His human nature in check.

Some have objected that the impeccability of Christ (that He was not able to sin) denies the reality of Satan’s temptation.

Such an objection is meaningless when one remembers that Satan’s rebellion against God has already been defeated in Christ’s atonement, but his rebellion is nevertheless real, even though the outcome of God’s victory is certain.

The same is true of the temptation of Christ.

One may attack a battleship with a canoe.

The outcome of the attack will be certain defeat for the canoe, but the attack is nonetheless real.

The Bible says Jesus was tempted in every way that we are. Job was tempted, as well.

You see, the devil believes that under heavy temptation we will not be able to withstand.

He believes, that just like Adam and Eve fell to temptation in the garden, that with the right temptation we will fall, also.

He believed he would be able to tempt Job, but worse than that, the devil felt if he could make the temptation great enough that even Jesus would succumb to the temptation.

Hebrews 4:15 "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin."

Jesus came to conquer sin and the devil.

He faced temptation (greater than we face) and yet, He did not fall to temptation.

Temptation comes to all, and it is not sin until it is acted upon in a negative way for self-gain.

Verses 2-3:

Jesus had "fasted forty days and forty nights," a remarkable feat of human endurance, indicating the physical strength of the former carpenter.

While the three major tests followed this period, other tests evidently had occurred throughout the 40 days (Luke 4:2).

Matthew 4:2 "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered."

All temptation comes when we are at our weakest point, and when we are alone (usually). In the case of Jesus, here, the devil realized that Jesus had not eaten for forty days. He tempted Jesus at this point of need.

Similarly, Moses was without food or drink on Sinai for "forty days and forty nights" (Deut. 9:9), and Elijah also fasted that long (1 Kings 19:8).

What the devil was not aware of is that Jesus (or anyone else for that matter) is much stronger when they are fasting. God miraculously feeds the inner man. During a fast to God, I seldom get hungry. It is only when I fast to lose weight, that I nearly starve.

Take note of the 40 here: (time of testing). With every test (if we depend on Jesus Christ our Lord), there is a way out.

Matthew 4:3 "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

"If thou be the Son of God,":

Indicates Matthew's purpose for including this record of Jesus' victory: it proves that He is, in fact, the Son of God!

Notice in verse 3, the devil approached Jesus with a question, as he did Eve.

"If thou be the Son of God.":

He was trying to plant a doubt in Jesus' mind that He was the Son of God.

The conditional "if" carries the meaning of "since" in this context.

There was no doubt in Satan's mind who Jesus was; but Satan's design was to get Him to violate the plan of God and employ the divine power that He had set aside in His humiliation (Phil. 2:7).

Matthew 4:4 "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."

Jesus set an example for us with this answer.

He said, "It is written.":

Our answer, when the devil or our lusts tempt us, should be, "It is written".

The victory in each aspect of the temptation is related to Jesus' use of Scripture.

First, He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The source of bread is more important than the bread itself.

Later, Jesus would say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:32).

His source of strength was obedience to the Father's will and He would not even work a miracle to avoid personal suffering when such suffering was a part of God's purpose for Him.

We are instructed to eat the Word of God.

Our source of help in every situation is to have the Word of God so engraved in our inner being, that we will be able to draw our strength from the Word.

In each of these verses above, God is telling us that it is our responsibility to prepare for the battles we will face.

It is, also, our responsibility to stand head to head with the devil in combat.

We must stand and fight, if we are to win over the devil.

Our weapons are not physical, they are spiritual.

It is important to prepare and be ready.

Our day of combat is here.

The church is being shaken.

All who have not prepared will fall to the devil.

There must be no compromise of the Word of God.

We must make it even more important to consume the Word of God, than to eat physical food.

A more important source of sustenance than food, it nurtures our spiritual needs in a way that benefits us eternally, rather than merely providing temporal relief from physical hunger.

We cannot win battles with the devil in our own power and might.

We must fight the devil with the Word of God and in the name of Jesus the Christ.

Verses 5-7:

The second temptation took place in the “holy city” (Jerusalem) on the “pinnacle of the temple,” which towered above the Kidron Valley.

Evidently, Jesus was transported there by Satan’s power, and this time the Devil quoted Scripture (which was out of context), in order to get Him to sin and then ultimately to shake His faith in the Word.

Satan used Psalm 91:11-12 urging Jesus to “cast thyself down.”

Again, Jesus replied with Scripture (Deut. 6:16), that He was not to “tempt ... God” by such a presumptuous action.

The very passage of Scripture quoted by Satan actually goes on to promise God’s ultimate victory over him!

Matthew 4:5 "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,"

“Pinnacle of the temple”:

This was probably a roof with a portico at the southeast corner of the temple complex, where a massive retaining wall reached from a level well above the temple mount, which was deep into the Kidron Valley.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, this was a drop of nearly 450 feet.

Matthew 4:6 "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."

This had started off with "then" in 4:5.

Which it simply means the devil gave up on the first temptation, so he tried another tactic.

Probably, "the holy city" mentioned here was Jerusalem.

Take note that the temptation was outside the temple.

In fact, it was on the top of the temple.

In verse 6, the devil again asked whether Jesus is the Son of God.

He even went so far as to quote a Scripture to get Jesus to tempt God the Father.

So many times today the enemy will come to us, using passages from the Scripture to make us believe that we are not of God.

The devil never changes.

It is the same devil, and the same tactics.

In verse 7, we see the correct way to talk to the devil.

Matthew 4:7 "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Note that Satan also quoted Scripture (Psalm 91:11-12) – but utterly twisted its meaning, employing a passage about trusting God to justify testing Him.

“It is written”:

Christ replied with another verse from Israel’s wilderness experience (Deut. 6:16), recalling the experience at Massah, where the grumbling Israelites put the Lord to the test, angrily demanding that Moses produce water where there was none (Exodus 17:2-7).

Jesus could have thrown Himself headlong from the temple to show a sign or wonder of who He really was.

God calls people who have to have signs and wonders, before they will believe, a wicked and perverse generation.

You see, God is not interested in convincing us through our mental capacity.

He wants us to believe from our hearts.

Not every sign and wonder is from God.

The devil is a counterfeiter.

Matthew 24:24 is printed in red, because it is the words of Jesus Himself.

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

You see, we must know the Word so well that we will be able to discern the truth from a lie.

Matthew 4:8 "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;"

The third temptation takes place on an "exceeding high mountain."

The mountain is clearly real in the text, though its exact location is unidentified.

Despite the grandeur of this temptation, nothing in the passage itself indicates that these temptations were only in the mind of Christ.

Clearly, they are depicted as being real experiences that actually occurred in the human life of the Messiah.

That Satan, the usurper, would attempt to give the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, the Messiah, the rightful King, is the height of absurdity!

Verses 9-11:

For Christ to fall down and worship Satan would have been to acknowledge the Devil's lordship over Him.

In His direct rebuke "Get thee hence, Satan," Jesus clearly asserts His lordship over the old serpent whose head He will soon crush.

Matthew's statement that Satan "leaveth him" shows that his order of the temptations is the chronological one (Luke 4:1-13).

Matthew 4:9 "And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

"Will I give thee":

Satan is the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19).

This is illustrated in Dan. 10:13, where demonic power controlled the kingdom of Persia, so that a demon is called the prince of the kingdom of Persia.

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."

"For it is written":

Here Christ was citing and paraphrasing (Deut. 6:13-14).

Again, these relate to the Israelites' wilderness experiences.

Christ, like them, was led into the wilderness to be tested (Deut. 8:2), unlike them, He withstood every aspect of the test.

We can see, from these Scriptures above that Satan increased what he offered each time.

He thought that if he offered Jesus the whole world as His kingdom that Jesus would jump at the chance of this.

Along with the greater offering came an even more blatant sin.

Jesus had to fall down and worship Satan to receive the world and all that was in it (this was Satan's belief).

What Satan did not realize was that Jesus would take the earth back for mankind.

He did not take it back by compromising with the devil.

He took it back through the victory of the cross.

Sometimes, it is difficult to recognize the enemy.

Jesus had no trouble recognizing him, standing against him, and removing him. "Get thee hence Satan".

We should take a lesson from this.

Anything, or anyone, who compromises with the devil in sin, has sold out to sin.

We must not fellowship with those who continually practice sin.

As Jesus did not stay in this place with the tempter, neither should we.

Anything that is not pleasing to God is sin.

In the statement made by Jesus, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve"; we see we must not serve Satan or sin.

We must walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Of course, we are not perfect; we will stumble and fall, but we must not be a servant to sin.

The desire of our hearts must be to please God.

Matthew 4:11 tells it all. "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

The devil is subject to the command of Jesus, and he had to leave.

The Bible says, In James 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you".

The angels (ministering spirits) came and saw to Jesus' needs.

The angels, encamped around Christians, will help them, also.

"Angels came and ministered unto him" Psalm 91:11-12.

The verse Satan tried to twist, was thus fulfilled in God's way, and in God's perfect timing.

Matthew Chapter 4 Questions

1. Why was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness?
2. The minute you give your life to Jesus, what comes?
3. Satan had tempted Adam, Eve, and Job. If he could make the temptation great enough, who else did he believe would fall to his temptation?
4. What 2 things did Jesus come to conquer?
5. When does temptation become sin?
6. How many days did Jesus fast?
7. What kind of doubt did the devil introduce?
8. What did he tell Jesus to turn to bread?
9. How did Jesus answer?
10. Man is not to live by bread alone, but by what?
11. What did the devil not realize about fasting?

12. What similarity was there between Jesus' and Eve's temptation?
13. How should we reply to temptations of the devil?
14. Why are we to eat (consume), the Word of God?
15. If we are to win over the devil, what 2 things must we learn to do?

16. If our weapons are not physical, what are they?
17. We have no power of our own. What 2 things must we use against the devil?
18. What did the devil add to his argument at the "holy city" to try to convince Jesus?
19. What city was, probably, the "holy city" mentioned?
20. People, who have to have a sign or wonder, before they will believe, are called what kind of generation?
21. Not every sign and wonder is from God. In Matthew 24:24, what are we warned to watch out for?
22. What was Jesus offered in the third temptation?
23. How did Jesus get the world back from Satan?
24. Anything that is not pleasing to God, is what?
25. Who alone must we worship and serve?