

Wil Owens

12 Lessons from the Temptation of Jesus; Matt 4:1-11

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Introduction – Before Jesus would begin calling His disciples, preaching, teaching, and healing, His first task after going public at His baptism was to privately endure and succeed against a series of temptations by the devil himself. The word devil means adversary. The one who is against Christ and also against us. The devil is also known as the accuser. So basically the devil's plan is twofold. He sets out to disrupt our walk with God, to cause us to turn from the Lord. He is against us, our Adversary, while in Christ, God is for us. Psalm 56:9 says, "This I know, that God is for me. Well this we also know, the devil is against us. The second part of the devil's scheme is to accuse us. Once he has trapped us in his devices, he turns on us and accuses us before the Lord. Even when our sins have been forgiven, he continues to accuse us in order to discourage us and cause us to doubt.

This is precisely his plan of attack against Christ. He is baiting Jesus. Setting trap after trap. He is against Christ and against Christ's mission to save God's people. If he can just get Jesus to make one slight compromise, he will then be able to accuse Christ forever before the Lord.

This is a strategic moment. Jesus has not began His public ministry. If he can get Jesus to sin now, he can stop His mission before it even starts. If Jesus in the slightest way turns from the Father's will and pleasure, He will be disqualified as the Savior. If Jesus is disqualified as our Savior, there is then no salvation possible for us. We would have no suitable, sinless, sufficient substitute and sacrifice for our sins.

Everything hangs in the balance in vv1-11. And the devil knows it. He is crafty and cunning. The temptation of Jesus is therefore a crucial decisive moment in salvation history. It is also a massive teaching moment for us. As we observe Jesus face and overcome temptation after temptation, we are given lesson after lesson on how we too, through the strength of the Spirit and the example of Christ, can overcome the deceptions and enticements of the evil one. And there's even more here for us. In addition to the importance of the moment and the many lessons to learn, there are theological lessons that will bolster our faith in and affections for Christ.

- I. The First Temptation (vv1-4)
 - a. Lesson One: The craftiness of the devil is demonstrated in that his temptation is most suited to the most vulnerable area.
 - i. Jesus has been fasting for 40 days and the Bible says He was hungry. He was starving and famished. And what does the devil tempt Him with? Bread. In fact, to be able to be nourished with food is a basic need and one in which Jesus would have genuinely been in need of here. So temptations might not always be to give in to something bad. The devil can also tempt us with good things or even basic necessities.
 - ii. The point here is not so much the item Jesus was tempted with but to what He was tempted to by the basic necessity of bread. Bread is not evil in and of itself. It's what the devil was tempting Jesus to give up in order to get the bread.
 - iii. The devil was using bread to cause Jesus to doubt the provision of God. "You're hungry and God hasn't given you bread. Make some for yourself. Do it yourself. Don't wait on God to do what you can do yourself. Eat!" Jesus had been led here by the Spirit. Could He trust the Father to provide where He was led?
 - iv. How intense must this temptation have been for Christ. The intensity and pressure must have been enormous and overwhelming.
 - v. Where are we most vulnerable? Where is our weakness? What is it that we need or think we need? Sin is very easy to rationalize and justify when the trade-off is a basic or true need. We can be sure wherever we are the most vulnerable, that is where the enemy will attack. Will we succumb to his temptation and serve ourselves, or will we wait on God, trust His provision, and follow His will?
 - b. Lesson Two: This lesson is contained in Jesus' reply "It is written." For all 3 temptations Jesus responds by going to the Word of God. The lesson is the Word of God is our main weapon against temptation.
 - i. The infallible, inerrant, inspired, eternal Word of God is our sword against the allurements of the enemy, our flesh, and this world. Eph 6:17

- ii. The Word of God, filled with the truths of our faith, the promises of God for His people, the character of God, the will of God, all the treasures we find in the Bible provide us with a solid foundation to resist temptation. The Bible always provides a better option. V4
- iii. Even though bread is a basic necessity, there is an even more basic necessity – God! We live for a few days on a meal, we live forever by God! We need God more than we need bread.
- iv. Jesus turns to the Word to trust in God’s provision. His Word is sufficient to meet our daily needs. He is faithful to supply our daily bread according to His goodness. Phil 4:19
- v. Don’t take the quick fix. Don’t skirt around trusting in the Father. Go to His Word and rest in His promises over and against anything and everything we are tempted to satisfy ourselves. Go God’s way, not our way.
- vi. All of this means of course if the Bible is our main weapon against the temptations of this life, we really need to know the Bible.
- vii. Read it, study it, treasure it, embrace it, believe it, memorize it, hear it proclaimed in preaching and teaching, hold fast to it, pray with it, sing of it. The Word of God is truly the words of life!
- viii. We must fill our hearts and minds and souls with the Word of God that in the day of temptation, at the moment of trial, right where we are most vulnerable, we might turn to the Word rather than to appeasing our flesh.
- ix. Fight friends. Fight with the Word, the Sword of the Spirit. Fight the fight of faith. Stand firm in the Word.
- x. A lot is at stake if Jesus takes the shortcut and just eats a little morsel of bread, just enough to get Him by, just a little nourishment, and He has distrusted the sufficiency of His Father. He would have been guilty of Jeremiah 2 – He would have turned from the Fountain of Living Water to make his own empty cistern.
- xi. And let me remind us all here today, a lot is at stake every time we give in and take the shortcut and skirt God’s will and provision and promises. One small compromise, one little

taste, one little click, one little look, just one time, and our adversary becomes our accuser. The fallout of our sin is always greater than the pleasure of our sin.

- II. The Second Temptation (vv5-7)
 - a. Lesson Three: The cunning nature of the devil is demonstrated in that he deceptively twists the use and meaning of Scripture.
 - i. The devil says, “Oh you’re going to quote Scripture. Well I can do that too.” And he quotes Psalm 91:11-12. Even the devil knows songs are powerful. He uses what God has given to sustain our faith in order to cause us to deny our faith.
 - ii. The devil often uses God’s own Word against God’s people. This is called false teaching and false teaching and false teachers have always abounded and will always abound until the coming of Christ!
 - iii. But Satan had twisted the meaning of Psalm 91 and Jesus knew it. Psalm 91 was written to assure the righteous that God will be his provider and protector. It was not written as a permission slip to live any way we choose and do anything we choose and God will always rescue us from our foolish presumptive ways.
 - iv. So Jesus again goes back to Scripture. Jesus uses Scripture to rightly interpret Scripture and to show the error of the devil’s application.
 - v. The lesson is this: We need discernment and wisdom to rightly understand the Word of God so that the very thing we are to cling to isn’t twisted and used for our undoing.
 - 1. Study Scripture so that we will be able to rightly interpret Scripture. 2 Tim 2:15 (ESV and Gospel Transformation Study Bibles)
 - 2. Don’t study in isolation; study in community – iron sharpens iron. It’s dangerous territory when we are our own standard of Bible interpretation. This is why coming to worship is so important because we study the Bible together. This is why SS and Bible studies and one on one meetings are so important.

3. Don't study in what C.S. Lewis calls chronological snubbery. God has been revealing His Word to His People for over 2,000 years. Church history is a rich source of orthodox treasure. There is a thread of orthodox interpretation down through the ages. Someone said if you don't know history you are doomed to repeat its mistakes. I say if we don't know church history we are doomed to make the same exegetical errors with Scripture.
 4. Scripture interprets Scripture. If the way we interpret one passage is counter to the clear understanding of another passage, the Scripture is not in error, we are.
 5. Approach the Bible with great humility. We may just be wrong. Let the Spirit and the church and the saints of the ages help us rightly understand the Word of God.
- b. Lesson Four: Satan's number one tactic is to create in us a speck of doubt concerning God's Word. That's always been his number one tactic. Remember in the Garden, Satan told Eve, "Did God actually say" – Gen 3:1
- i. Look back with me to v17. The Father has just spoken from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." That's the Word of God.
 - ii. Now look at how the devil is tempting Jesus in the first two temptations. V3 "If you are the Son of God" v6 "If you are the Son of God" In the first temptation the devil is saying "prove that you are the Son" Prove "This is my beloved Son" In the second temptation the devil is using Psalm 91 to say "prove that God is your Father". Prove that He is pleased with you.
 - iii. In other words, don't take God's Word for it. Prove it. You need more than just a word from heaven.
 - iv. And that my friends is the very opposite of faith in God's Word. You see Jesus did not need to prove that He was the Son and that God was His Father. God had already spoken and settled the issue. We don't need more than a word from heaven. We only need a word from heaven, and we've got it! 2 Peter 1

- c. Lesson Five: Trust the Word of God. Don't allow the enemy or our flesh or this world cause us to question, tweak, or doubt what God has already spoken and settled.
 - i. Cling to every promise no matter how difficult and different and denying the circumstances may seem.
 - ii. Stand firm and anchored in the truth of God's Word no matter how contrary or critical or condemning the voices around us may shout.
 - iii. The word of God is sufficient and enduring. It will never fail because He will never fail.

Conclusion – Trust and Obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.