

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

TEXT: MARK 1:12, 13

Introduction:

1. A few weeks ago when I started this new series in the Gospel of Mark, I mentioned that Mark is very fast-paced. Many details found in Matthew and Luke are not found in Mark.
2. For example, Mark spends only two verses dealing with the temptation of Christ, whereas Matthew has eleven (Matt. 4:1-11), and Luke thirteen (Luke 4:1-13).
3. On the other hand, Mark adds a detail not found in Matthew and Luke. Mark 1:13 tells us our Lord “was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.”
4. Matthew 4:11 refers to the angels who came and ministered unto Him. But only Mark mentions the “wild beasts.”
5. The identity of the “wild beasts” is not given. Jackals? Wild boars? Wolves, foxes, leopards, hyenas, etc. – the Bible does not say.
6. The presence of these wild beasts, along with Satan’s relentless temptations, presents a picture of terrible desolation.
7. A few years ago, Hollywood came out with a wicked, blasphemous movie called “The Last Temptation of Christ.”
8. The Bible teaches us that our Lord was tempted but it also teaches us that He never yielded to temptation (cf. Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5).
9. Furthermore, not only does the Bible teach that Christ was tempted and did not sin, but it also teaches that He could not have sinned. For if it were possible for Christ to sin then He could not have been God, for God cannot sin.
10. In I Timothy 3:16, the apostle Paul states that Christ is “God manifest in the flesh.” Christ was never less than God during His incarnation, and therefore He could not have sinned.
11. The doctrine that Christ could not have sinned is referred to as “the impeccability of Christ.” These temptations went on for the entire forty days (Mark 1:13), and proved that Jesus is the sinless Son of God.
12. The devil tempted our Lord three times and each time our Lord responded by quoting the book of Deuteronomy. These details are not recorded in the Gospel of Mark, so we will consult Matthew and Luke.
13. Matthew 4:1 and Luke 4:1 say our Lord “was led by the Spirit.” Mark says, “And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12).

I. THE FIRST TEMPTATION (MATTHEW 4:1-4).

1. It is amazing to me how so many people (even many so-called “religious people”) can deny the existence of Satan (Mark 1:13).

2. To them the devil is simply a fairy tale, or a myth, or perhaps a symbolic personification of evil. But we see here in these accounts that Satan certainly is real. If Satan is not real, then who in the world was Jesus talking to? (Matt. 4:10).
3. Harry Ironside wrote this, “They tell us there is no personal devil. Have you ever thought what that implies? First of all, it implies this: all the wickedness, all the vile iniquity, all the abominable filth and all the dreadful corruption that have characterized the most vicious men and women during the millenniums of history have come from their own hearts without any tempting spirit to incite to these excesses.”
4. In addition to his name “Satan” (which means “adversary”), we see the word “devil” mentioned four times in Matthew’s account (4:1, 5, 8, 11) and five times in Luke’s account (4:2, 3, 5, 6, 13).
5. Satan is also referred to as “the tempter” (Matthew 4:3). “And when the tempter came to Him...” Satan is also referred to as “the tempter” in I Thessalonians 3:5.
6. Satan knows how to tempt us. He has a lot of experience. He understands man’s natural desire is to gratify the flesh. It has been that way ever since the serpent tempted Adam and Eve. The first Adam proved his unfitness for dominion when he met the serpent in the Garden of Eden.
7. Adam sinned, and when he sinned we sinned. When Adam fell, we fell (Genesis 3).
8. One cannot properly understand the Bible without understanding this important doctrine of the fall of man (cf. Romans 5:12).
9. Adam sinned, and when he sinned we sinned. When Adam fell, we fell (Genesis 3). But when Jesus (called “the last Adam” in I Corinthians 15:45) met the devil in a confrontation in the wilderness, He emerged victorious.
10. Some people have raised this question: if our Lord could not have sinned, was His temptation real? Yes, it was. It was possible for our Lord to be faced with enticements to sin, but it was morally impossible for Him to yield to those enticements.
11. The purpose of the temptation was to test our Lord. Not that there was ever any question that He would fail the test, but the test proved to the world that Jesus is the sinless Son of God.
12. Mark 1:13 says our Lord “was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.” Matthew 4:2 and Luke 4:2 tell us our Lord fasted those 40 days and 40 nights.
13. In the Bible, the number ‘40’ represents testing.
 - “And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:12).
 - “And the children of Israel did eat manna 40 years” (Ex. 16:35).

- Moses was up on Mount Sinai 40 days and 40 nights (Ex. 24:18).
 - Numbers 13:25 says the spies, “returned from searching of the land after forty days.”
 - Therefore, the LORD made the Israelites wander in the wilderness for 40 years (Num. 32:13).
 - There are four different references to periods of “forty years” in the book of Judges.
 - Eli judged Israel forty years. Then he fell from off his seat backward and broke his neck and died (I Sam. 4:18).
 - Goliath taunted Israel for forty days before David killed him with his slingshot (I Sam. 17:16).
 - Jonah preached, “Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4).
 - Acts 1:3 says there were 40 days between our Lord’s resurrection and His ascension.
14. The devil has deceived people into thinking that bread is the most important thing in this world (Matt. 4:3). How often do we hear people (even professed Christians) make excuses for questionable behaviour by saying, “I have to eat” or “I have to feed my family!”
 15. Bread is a slang word for money. Some people will do almost anything for “bread.”
 16. But God says there is something far more important than bread, and that is doing the will of God (cf. John 4:31-38).
 17. Our Lord responded to Satan’s temptation by quoting Deut. 8:3 (Matt. 4:4). When the devil tempts us we should have enough Bible in us to be able to resist him. “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11).
 18. Some Christians have very little Bible in them, and so they are easy pickings for the devil.
 19. We should note how Jesus answered Satan – “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

II. THE SECOND TEMPTATION (MATT. 4:5-7).

1. The second temptation took place in Jerusalem (“the holy city”), where Satan “setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple” (Matt. 4:5).
2. The devil challenged our Lord to cast Himself down as some sort of demonstration that He was the Son of God (Matt. 4:6).
3. Satan’s second temptation is an appeal to human weakness through spectacular “signs and wonders.” Many gullible people are being deceived by this sort of thing. We must have spiritual discernment in order to avoid

Satan's tricks and snares (cf. Rev. 13:11-14; Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 23, 24; II Thess. 2:7-12).

4. People talk about being healed and being delivered and seeing signs and miracles but they haven't even been born again! This can only mean that they are being deceived by Satan and his demons.
5. In the Bible, they are called "familiar spirits" and "lying spirits" and "seducing spirits" and "unclean spirits" and "evil spirits."
6. I have witnessed to unsaved Roman Catholics, who would not listen to a word I said because they went to Medjugorje and saw "Mary" or were supposedly healed, etc.
7. Regarding this temptation (Matt. 4:6), it is never right to do anything just in order to see whether or not God will keep His Word. It is not necessary to do that; we should just simply believe the Bible. Examples: snake-handling churches down south (cf. Mark 16:18; Acts 28:1-6).
8. Let us also remember that Satan is very good at quoting Scripture (Matt. 4:6). In Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio says, "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose."

III. THE THIRD TEMPTATION (MATT. 4:8-11).

1. The third temptation was the attempted appeal to the lust of the eye (Matt. 4:8, 9). First John 2:16 says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes..." Satan offered "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8) in exchange for His worship (Matt. 4:9).
2. This seems rather incredible, but in a sense the kingdoms of this world do belong to Satan at this present time (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; II Cor. 4:4; I John 5:19).
3. It should be stressed that "all this power" (Luke 4:6) were Satan's to give only by God's permissive will (cf. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6).
4. This third temptation is perhaps the most outrageous of them – suggesting to our Lord that He should worship the devil – the Creator worshipping the creature! Worshipping the devil would be tantamount to acknowledging Satan as god.
5. The devil wanted our Lord to enjoy the glories of this present world and bypass the cross.
6. But as we look closer, we see here another lesson. The idea behind this temptation was compromise, and while true Christians would never dream of worshipping the devil, many are more than willing to compromise with him.
7. FOR EXAMPLE: Churches use worldly rock and roll music to draw a crowd, even though this music is the devil's music.

9. Some churches compromise with Satan by joining the ecumenical movement. We must stay away from the ecumenical movement because it is unscriptural. According to Revelation 17 it is under the control of Satan and will soon be under the control of the antichrist.

CONCLUSION:

1. The temptation of Christ proved Him qualified for His work on the cross. Only the sinless, spotless Lamb of God could take upon Himself the sin of the world. Our Lord's perfect sinlessness stood out when tempted by Satan, the master deceiver.
2. The temptation of our Lord prepared Him to be our merciful High Priest. "For we have not an 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" (Hebrews 4:15).
3. There are many applications here for Christians. Let us consider three important words in Luke 4:13 – "for a season."
4. This suggests the devil came back again later on.
5. We should expect temptation. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).
6. Many Christians fell into sin because they were careless.
7. But no matter how strong the temptation, God will provide a way to escape. "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" (I Cor. 10:13).
8. Temptation often comes after moments of great triumph. Remember what happened after Elijah the prophet's great victory on Mount Carmel. Elijah heard that Jezebel was after him, so he arose, and ran for his life.
9. Perhaps there are some here tonight struggling with temptation. Bring it to the Lord tonight and He will surely help get you through it.