

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-10 The Temptation

As a follower of Jesus, are you surprised that temptations still come to you? Do you wonder if it is a sin to be tempted? Do you blame yourself, Satan, or even God for the temptation? The Bible speaks about temptation and tells us that everyone is tempted. In this lesson we will learn how Jesus was tempted by Satan and how he resisted and remained victorious over sin.

The apostle Matthew tells us that after his baptism, Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. And, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was very hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (Matt 4:3).

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" This first test of Satan was for Jesus to satisfy his physical need by changing a stone into bread. Jesus refused to do this and quoted from Moses, who had told the Israelites that their greatest need was not physical bread, but rather the word of God (Deut 8:3). The Israelites had been complaining that they had no food, so God sent the manna from heaven for them to eat. God knew Christ's needs and he knows ours too. He wants us to hide his Word in our hearts and trust him for provision of our needs.

Next, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the holy city. Satan had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone'" (Psa 91:11-12).

So we see that the cunning devil knows scripture too. Satan hoped he could appeal to Jesus' human pride and convince him to demonstrate his Father's power. Descending with angelic help into the temple court, in full sight of the religious leaders, would have been impressive and convincing. But Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Jesus was again quoting Moses' words recorded in Deuteronomy (6:16). Moses used these words to rebuke the Israelites during the Exodus when they had no water in the desert. They grumbled and quarreled with Moses, asking "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us die of thirst? Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex 17:7). Moses asked them why they were putting God to the test. Not even Jesus challenged God about his faithfulness to his promises.

Again, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Satan knew that humans often desire or lust after what they see that is beautiful, or something that will bring them power.

But Jesus said, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" This third temptation was to bow down and worship Satan in exchange for all the glory and power of the kingdoms of earth. Jesus responded by quoting what Moses had

said when he told Israel to worship and serve God only. The Israelites disobeyed when they worshipped the golden calf instead of God. Finally the devil left Jesus, and angels came and attended him.

Christ's temptations were significant because they happened at the very beginning of his public ministry. They showed what kind of Messiah he was to be. He would accomplish his mission as a man, calling upon God. He would not presume on God's power to meet his own needs, to win a large following, or to bargain with the devil. The Bible says Jesus was "tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb 4:15).

Jesus, in all his responses to temptation, shows us that God's Word is what gives us the authority to stand against Satan. The devil's challenge to Jesus was to perform some supernatural act to 'prove' his sonship. Jesus refused these temptations because he was grounded in what God had said in the Scriptures. He had also just heard God's voice from heaven at his baptism, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matt 4:17). He realized that obedience to his Father was far more important than his personal needs or wants or influence.

Satan used with Jesus the same type of temptations he had used centuries earlier against the Israelites in the desert. Their faith was tested during their 40 years in the wilderness, so God would know what was in their hearts, whether or not they would keep his commands. They failed their tests, but Jesus showed that he was an Israelite that did live "on every word that comes from the mouth of God" and was victorious over sin.

All three of the scriptural responses Jesus gives to Satan are found in Moses' writings, the book of Deuteronomy. The Israelites failed the first test when they complained that they had no food and then complained about the food sent from heaven. They failed a second time when they tried to manipulate God concerning having no water in the desert. They failed a third time when they worshiped the golden calf instead of worshiping God.

By using these examples, Jesus shows that God's Word gives us the authority to stand against the temptations of the evil one. It was important that Jesus be tempted as Israel was and as we are, so that he could become our "merciful and faithful high priest" and be "able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb 2:15-17).

Remember the three appeals of Satan can be seen first as trying to satisfy the physical needs of the body. Second, the appeal is to use or manipulate God to get what we want. And third, the temptation is to put something or someone ahead of God in our lives.

This story is **important** because it shows the response of Jesus to the testing of Satan. Those tests still come to us. Like Jesus, we can respond with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We can depend on what God has said.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus, empowered by the Spirit of God, was able to overcome Satan's temptations to sin by using the Word of God. As the one who remained faithful in temptation, he became the example for all believers when they are tempted.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What truth about Jesus' relationship with God did Satan tempt Jesus to prove by his actions?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "He tempted Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God," you are correct.

2. What group of people in the Bible did Jesus use to refute Satan's words?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Jesus used the experiences of the people of Israel in the wilderness to refute Satan's temptations," you are correct.

3. What did Jesus use to overcome the temptations of Satan?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Jesus used the Word of God to overcome the temptations of Satan," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize this story so you can tell it to someone else. After telling this story, discuss what the response of a Christian should be when they are tempted by Satan. Based on the actions and words of Jesus, how can we respond when we encounter the temptations of Satan? How important are fasting and the memorization of God's Word?