

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-16 The Christian Life: Overcoming Temptation

It was a moment of open combat, hand to hand, mind to mind. Two formidable enemies were in close conflict. It was a battle for the ages. The prizes were the souls of men and women, boys and girls. One combatant knew how this battle would end and who would be the eternal winner.

It all started just after Jesus came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Jesus insisted that John baptize him in the river. John was baptizing those who had repented of their sins and wanted to follow God. Jesus, instead of identifying with the religious leaders in Jerusalem, wanted to identify himself with those who had repented of sin. He was baptized, even though he had never sinned. He did this to declare to all that he was like us in every way, except for sin. He also wanted to serve as an example for the believers, so they would be baptized in water.

What happened next was an amazing confirmation and surprise. After being baptized, as Jesus was praying, heaven opened. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. God the Father spoke from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Christ was about 30 years old when he began his ministry (Luke 3:21-23). This event had been prophesied by Isaiah centuries before when he said,

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.
He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice" (Isaiah 42:1-3).

The Holy Spirit then led Jesus, into the desert wilderness. This is where the battle with Satan would take place. Should not there be a time of grace in ministry? Should not the minister be shielded from the attacks of Satan? Wouldn't God's own Son be exempt from this time of temptation? No. This should not be a surprise, for God's servants are sent to destroy Satan's power. So he fights against them.

Jesus obeyed the Holy Spirit and went into the wilderness. There he went without food for 40 days and 40 nights. At the end of that fasting time, he was naturally hungry. The body craves what it can't have. It becomes our enemy. The flesh began to make demands of Jesus. He was tempted to do evil, to do his own will and not his Father's will. Satan would do whatever he could to make Jesus fall, just as he had made others fall before. It was a battle of the mind and body for Jesus. He knew that defeat was not an option. He had to prove his power through the Spirit as the sinless sacrifice for mankind.

Satan came to Jesus when he was at his weakest point. He said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." What Satan suggested to Jesus seemed harmless, even compassionate. But Jesus saw through Satan's temptation. He knew that if he created food to feed himself, he would be compromising with the enemy. He would be telling God that he was following his own way instead of God's way. He *was* the Son of God and he knew he could

not go around God's will. Instead of fleeing, he fought the temptation to give in to both his flesh and Satan's solution.

Jesus overcame Satan's temptation when he remembered God's Word. He told the enemy, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matt 4:1-4). The old lies and tricks that had worked for Satan many times before, did not work with Jesus. Satan thought that he knew a way to make Jesus sin. He would keep trying to bring this man down. In Satan's evil world he thought he would succeed. Jesus knew he had to stand and take the devil's worst temptations. The battle continued.

Satan, the arrogant one, thought no one could resist his power. "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours'" (Luke 4:5-7). Satan was tempting Jesus to avoid the suffering of the cross, which he came specifically to endure. The temptation offered an easy shortcut to world dominion.

What an awful temptation! Most men would jump at the opportunity to rule the world. Wars between empires have been fought because strong men gave into this temptation. Countless lives have been lost. But Jesus knew what the devil was up to. Jesus, even at his weakest human moment, was stronger than this ancient enemy, Satan. To worship the devil would have meant that mankind would have been lost forever. There would have been no Savior to bring those who believe back to God. Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'" (Luke 4:8).

Can you hear Satan sputtering and scheming, wondering how he was going to make this man fall? "Wait a minute," he may have thought, "how about quoting Scripture? Jesus can't resist that. I'll quote Psalm 91 to him."

So he took Jesus to stand on the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Again Satan casts doubt on Jesus' real identity. Jesus knows he is God's Son, but he is tempted to see if God really would be faithful to protect him. Such a miracle, landing him in the temple courts, would have been an easy dramatic shortcut to convincing the religious leaders that he was the Messiah. Satan was fighting hard. Jesus, still sensitive to the Holy Spirit, reminded Satan what scripture directed saying, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Luke 4:9-12).

After being defeated, Satan retreated to fight another day. He saw that his temptations had no strength against God's Son and God's Word. Angels then came and ministered to Jesus. And he returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14).

This lesson is **important** because when you are tempted to fall away from God, the Bible is your defense against the devil. Satan often comes when you are sick or discouraged. He knows your weaknesses. The Holy Spirit will bring to mind the portions of God's Word you have memorized and strengthen you, just as he did Jesus. You can triumph over Satan!

The **main point** of this lesson is that Jesus at his weakest point as a man was victorious over temptations by relying on the Holy Spirit and on God's written Word, the Bible.

Your **review** questions are:

1. Why did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, just like we are tempted," you have answered correctly.
2. What three temptations did the devil bring against Jesus? [Pause]
A. If you answered that Satan tempted Jesus to satisfy his fleshly desires, to obtain power by relying on evil, and to test God's faithfulness," you are correct.
3. How did Jesus win these three battles in the wilderness? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "Jesus won the battles with Satan by knowing and quoting Scripture," you have answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson as many times as needed until you understand how to overcome temptation by using God's Word. You can overcome temptation by God's Spirit in you and by memorizing his Word. Now let the Holy Spirit lead you to someone and share this story with them.

Memorize this verse from Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Now find a friend and quote this wonderful scripture to them. Have a wonderful day in the Lord.