

Temptation of Jesus

Have you ever noticed that the greatest time of testing occurs when we are discouraged or disappointed? Or, as in the case of one three year old, the temptation came quickly because it was there. What was there? It was a jar of cookies. The three year old explained when she was caught eating the cookies, “I just climbed up to smell them, and my tooth got caught.” For most adults the temptation is more involved. A difficult situation comes into our life; we get our eyes off of Jesus, and then trouble is really on the way. We can often handle one discouragement okay; but when two or three come, then trouble really comes. Or, if the negative situation lasts for a lengthy time, it discourages us, and often sin follows. Men and women often turn to food, money, or sex in an attempt to overcome their discouragement and disappointment. Negative situations can set us up for temptation.

THE PREPARATION. Jesus found Himself in a similar situation after His baptism. The gospel of Mark tells us that immediately after Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit moved Jesus into the Judean wilderness - a lonely place.

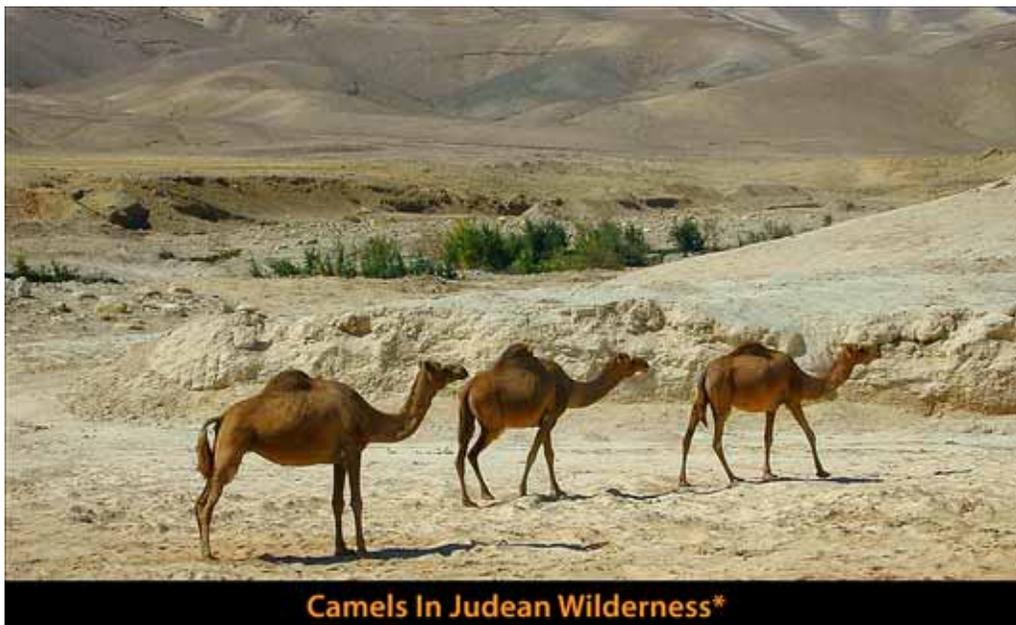
Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. (NASB) Mark 1:12

Matthew and Luke reveal that the Holy Spirit did this to prepare Jesus for testing by the Devil.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (NASB) Matt. 4:1

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness . . . (NASB) Luke 4:1

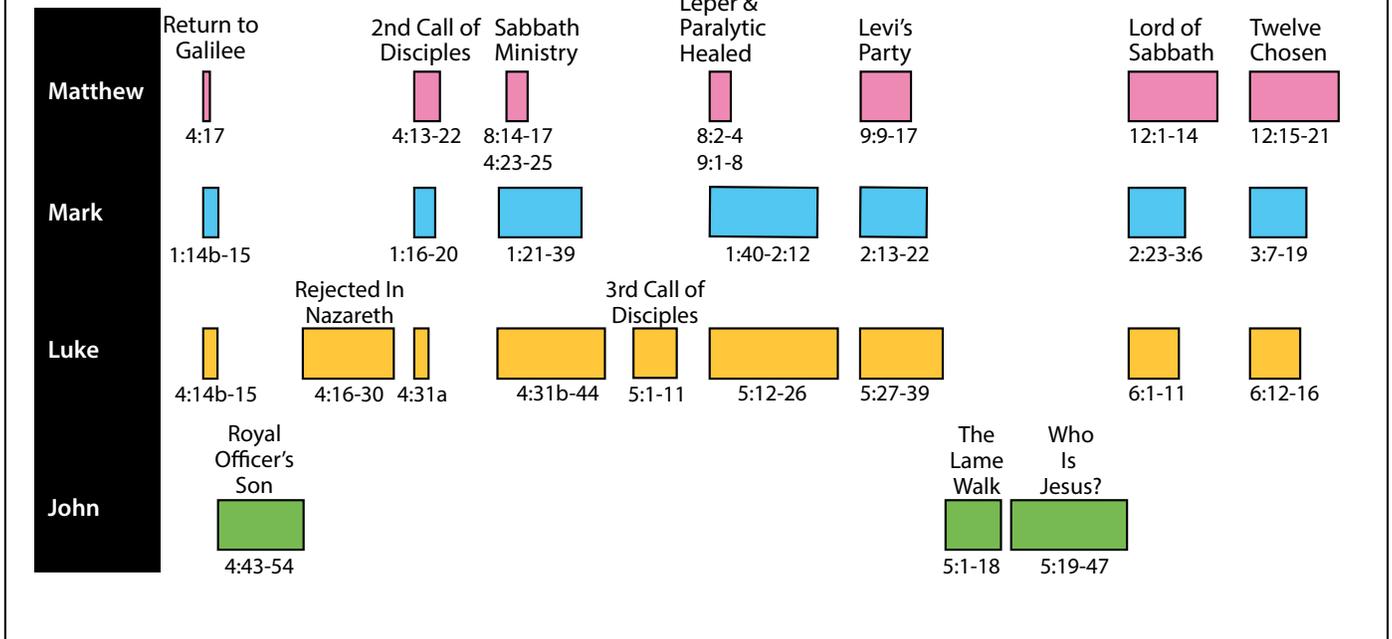
So Jesus found Himself in the wilderness being led around by the Holy Spirit. We do not know why He was moving around, but it is clear that He was expending energy. The gospels of Matthew and Luke add that Jesus was in the wil-



Camels In Judean Wilderness*

Life and Heart of Jesus

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (Mid A.D. 31)



derness for forty days.

And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came . . . (NASB) Matt. 4:2-3a

. . . for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. (NASB) Luke 4:2

It appears from Luke that Jesus was being enticed to sin throughout the forty days that He was in the wilderness since Luke says “being tempted.” The Greek word translated as “being tempted” has the idea of repeated testings. But the real tests appear to come at the end of the forty days of fasting - when He was really hungry!

Matthew says that Jesus was tested for forty days and nights but Luke says forty days. Matthew uses an idiom

which refers to a period of time that lasted for forty days. Luke does not use the idiom. Those who think there is an error must not be aware of the Hebrew idiom.

THE TEMPTER. When the forty days were over, Matthew says that the “tempter” came. The Greek word for “tempter” is actually a verb and could have been translated as the “tempting one.” That is, Satan, or the Devil, is the tempting one.

Satan’s mission or purpose in life is to cause us to sin. He wants to test us, and he hopes that we will sin. Satan is not our friend. He does not wear red clothes, carry a pitched fork, or have pointy ears and a black beard. He is a supernatural spirit, and his goal is to cause us to sin. His goal was to cause Jesus to sin!

How does Satan test us? 1 John 2:16 tells us that there are three major areas in our life where we are susceptible to sin: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (NASB) 1 John 2:16

Satan tests in all of these areas. He appeals to our desire to eat excessively - gluttony. He appeals to our desire to have nice possessions. He appeals to our desire to have status, position, respect, and honor. From what we see in the lives of people in the church, he has been very successful.

Satan also appeals to us as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He wants us to believe that we do not need to study the Bible; or if we do study that we do not need to know it very well. Some Christians are satisfied with “warm, soft, applica-

bread. He waited until Jesus’ need would be the greatest. Jesus responded by quoting Deut. 8:3.

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’” (NASB) Matt. 4:4

Jesus did not give Satan a psychological reason. Jesus did not talk with a counselor. Jesus quoted scripture. How did Jesus know which scripture to use? He knew the Bible! He identified a scripture passage that would guide Him through the test. Now that is incredible.

Jesus told him that He trusted and depended on God

Temptations of Jesus

Satan’s Test	The Appeal	Potential Sin	Jesus’ Response
Turn Stones into Bread	Lust of Flesh	Trust in Yourself	Deut 8:3
Throw Yourself Down	Pride of Life	Challenging God	Deut 6:16
Worship Satan	Lust of Eyes	Trust in Satan	Deut 6:13

tion” from scripture. They are not interested in deep things of scripture. So false teachers appear with followers and pastors repeat the same tireless themes Sunday after Sunday. Satan has been very successful.

FIRST TEST. Matthew and Luke apparently do not record all of the temptations, but only the final three important ones.

And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” (NASB) Matt. 4:3

Maybe the early tests were minor and less exhausting. We do not know. But after forty days, Satan appealed to Jesus’ need for food and encouraged Him to turn some stones into

the Father. Satan tried to encourage Jesus to trust Himself and not God the Father. We often respond to a situation by trusting ourselves and not God. God has given us wisdom in scripture. He has given us patterns to follow. When difficult situations come, we end up trusting ourselves and not Him. That is sin. Hebrews 10:38 says that God wants Christians to live by faith - to trust Him. Satan’s first test was an appeal to Jesus’ flesh with the hope that Jesus would trust Himself and not God the Father.

SECOND TEST. Then Satan tries another test. This time he hopes once again that Jesus will not trust God. This time Satan twists the concept of faith and hopes that Jesus will actually show some doubt.

Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand

on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; and ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’” (NASB) Matt. 4:5-6

The test is deceitful. Satan suggests a stunt - just throw yourself down and watch the angels catch you. But Jesus was not interested in a thrill. The Greek word translated as “pinnacle” actually means “wing.” Historical records tell us that there was an extension of Herod’s royal palace which hung out over the Kidron Valley. According to Josephus the extension was a portico which hung 450 foot above the valley. History also tells us that Jesus’ brother, James, was martyred by being thrown off the portico. Many believe that the word “wing” refers to this portico.

Jesus could have thrown Himself off the portico and the angels would have caught Him. Jesus would also have sinned by testing God’s faithfulness. God does not need to be tested. Have you ever sinned while telling yourself that God has promised to forgive you? That is a test of God. Yes, He will forgive but why test Him? It presumes on His faithfulness. We are not to test God.

Or, why recklessly spend money and then remind God that He promised to meet your needs? Why make someone angry and then remind God that He promised, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay?”

So Jesus responded with,

“On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’” (NASB) Matt. 4:7

Jesus quoted Deut. 6:16. Jesus passed the second test of faith. If we were confused about Satan’s test, Jesus makes it clear. Satan wanted Jesus to test God the Father’s faithfulness.

THIRD TEST. The final test is in the area of lust of the eyes. Satan shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world.

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said

to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” (NASB) Matt. 4:8-9

Luke 4:5 adds that Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world in a “moment of time.” That is, Satan must have given Jesus a vision of the kingdoms of the world. It occurred in a flash of time - in an instant. Jesus was not physically taken to a mountain top. It appears that Satan did this through some type of vision.

Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” (NASB) Matt. 4:10

Again, Jesus quotes scripture to Satan. Jesus sure knew the scriptures. He responded to each temptation with scripture. He used scriptures that most of us would not know if we did not read the temptation of Jesus. Jesus knew the Old Testament.

Satan attempted to motivate Jesus to trust him - Satan. What do you think would have happened if Jesus had worshipped Satan? Do you think that Satan would have kept his promise? I seriously doubt it since Satan is a deceiver. Just imagine Jesus worshipping Satan only to hear him laughing. No, this test was about faith again. Satan wanted Jesus to trust him - Satan.

Before we go further, someone might notice that the gospel of Luke reverses the order of the second and third tests. So which account is correct? The answer is found in this last test recorded in Matthew (Matt. 4:10). Notice Jesus’ command, “Go, Satan!” This was the last test and Jesus commanded that he leave. Matthew is also the only gospel which uses the “then” between each test. That is, Matthew gives us the true order in which the tests occurred.

ANGELS MINISTER. The devil was finished with all of his temptations when Jesus told him to go. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each add something different.

Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. (NASB) Matt. 4:11

Armor of God

Piece of Armor	Meaning
Girdle of truth	Be truthful Prov. 12:19; John 14:6; 2 Cor. 6:7
Breastplate of righteousness	Be righteous Isaiah 11:4-5; Isaiah 59:
Feet Shod with gospel of peace	You are saved - Peace with God Rom. 5:1
Shield of faith	Have faith in God Psalms 91:4; Rom. 1:17; 1 Cor. 16:13
Helmet of salvation	Assurance that you are saved 1 Thess. 5:8
Sword of the Spirit	The Word of God Eph. 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Rev. 1:16
Prayer	Attitude of prayer 1 Thess. 5:17

... and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. (NASB) Mark 1:13

When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. (NASB) Luke 4:13

After the devil left, the angels started ministering to Jesus. Jesus was left with the wild beasts. But the devil left only to come back at a later time - an opportune time.

CONCLUSION. Satan, or the devil, never leaves any of us alone forever. He keeps coming back. Ephesians 6 says this to us,

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (NASB) Eph. 6:12

Satan is after us. Satan is after you! There is only one way to fight him. We can win the fight only with the armor of God. Jesus used all of the armor. He was truthful and righteous in His conduct. He exercised faith and trusted the scripture.

Through each temptation Jesus trusted God and He used scripture - the Word of God. The only way we can do this is to know the Bible, and to ask Him to help our unbelief or our lack of trust.

I find that the tests are difficult when I lack faith or trust in God. Since Satan is coming again, let us pray and ask God to help our unbelief and to give the correct scriptures when we are tempted. Thank you Lord.