

The Temptation of the Son

Text: Mark 1:12-13

Introduction:

1. Christ's temptation immediately followed His baptism and heavenly anointing for ministry. Great tests often follow spiritual high points!
2. Christ, as the second Adam and as perfect man, had to go through this period of testing in the will of the Father to demonstrate His power over Satan. The purpose of the Father was not to defile Christ (James 1:13) but rather to prove the Holy character of Christ.
3. Christ came out the other side of this vicious battle with Satan victorious and thus is our perfect example on how to conquer temptation.
4. We will note 5 truths about the temptation of Christ.

I. The Planning of the Temptation (Vs. 12a)

A. The Orchestrator of the Temptation – The Holy Spirit

1. 'driveth' = strong word meaning to "throw or cast out, to force out." Indicates the strong compulsion Christ sensed from the Spirit. Matthew & Luke use the word 'led'. Christ, as perfect man during His earthly ministry, was under the complete control of the Holy Spirit in all things.
2. This test was in the will of God. Christ was not the helpless victim who came under provocation from Satan against His will. Rather, Satan was summoned by Almighty God to this test. "Jesus Christ was the Aggressor. He forced Satan to put Him to the test so that His character might be revealed." (Pentecost)

B. The Opponent in the Temptation – Satan

1. Satan is a real personality; not just a force or principle of evil. He actually exists as a fallen angel along with the other demonic spirits who rebelled with him. *"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."* (Rev. 12:9)
2. Satan personally tempted Christ rather than giving the task to one of his demons. Similarly, Satan himself entered Judas to ensure Christ's betrayal.

II. The Place of the Temptation (Vs. 12b)

A. A Desolate Place

1. The wilderness was a harsh and hostile area with few inhabitants apart from "wild beasts". It was a solitary place. The battle with

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temptation is most keenly felt when we are alone and it is here when the battle is won or lost.

2. The first Adam was tempted in a perfect paradise and failed, ushering in Satan's reign over the world as prince of the power of the air. Christ, the second Adam, was tempted in a harsh wilderness bearing all the marks of the curse and prevailed!
3. The fact of Christ's victory in the wilderness and the defeat of Adam and Eve in the beautiful garden of Eden will "forever brand as false the teaching that all man needs for the development of the goodness within him is a suitable environment." (Scroggie)

B. A Demonic Place

1. The wilderness is associated in the N.T. with the abode of demons
 - a. Luke 8:29 "For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil **into the wilderness.**")
 - b. Luke 11:24 "*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through **dry places**, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.*"
2. Some geographical areas are strong holds of Satan – "*And he (the demon) besought him much that he would **not send them away out of the country.***" (Mark 5:10)
3. Christ challenged Satan right in his very strong hold.

III. The Period of the Temptation (Vs. 13a)

A. The Sum of the Days – forty days & nights

1. Christ was tempted throughout this entire period of forty days. 'tempted' is in the present tense.
2. The three temptations recorded in Matthew and Luke came at the end of this period when Christ was exhausted and at his weakest point. These were the climactic temptations (Butler)
 - a. "...and when they (the forty days) were **ended**..." (Luke 4:2)
 - b. "*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was **afterward an hungered.***" (Matt. 4:2)
 - c. Note: This seems to be a tactic of Satan to subject us to prolonged, sustained periods of temptation culminating in a fierce barrage of attacks to try and overwhelm and overcome us when we are worn and weary.

B. The Significance of the Days – number of testing

1. 40 is clearly the number of testing in the Scriptures.
2. Examples
 - a. It rained for forty days and forty nights during the flood (Gen. 7:4)

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- b. Moses was forty days and forty nights upon Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:11)
- c. Spies searched Canaan for forty days (Num. 13:25)
- d. Goliath challenged Israel for forty days (1 Sam. 17:16)

IV. The Points of the Temptation (Vs. 13b)

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 for further details of the specific points of temptation. Satan tried the same three super weapons against Christ that he uses against us: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Christ defeated every one of them!

A. Temptation # 1 – Physical (Luke 4:2-4)

1. Satan tried to lure Christ away from perfect obedience to the will of God. “Satan sought to get Christ to satisfy a material need without reference to the will of God.” (Morgan)
2. Christ was in the wilderness in the will of God and so all that He endured there, including hunger, was a part of God’s will for Him.
3. To turn stones into bread would appear to be a legitimate exercise of Christ’s power but Christ had willingly laid aside his right to exercise such powers and would live as perfect man in entire dependence upon the Father (Phil. 2:6-7).
4. In the same way, Satan tries to get us to fulfill God-given appetites outside of God’s will and leading. He targets our physical appetites, subtly mixing right and wrong.

B. Temptation # 2 – Temporal (Luke 4:5-8)

1. In some sort of vision, Satan causes Christ to see all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and then promises to give it all to Christ on one condition – he bow down and worship him.
2. Christ does not dispute Satan’s claim in Vs. 6 to the kingdoms of this world. Satan is called the “prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30); the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) and the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).
3. Satan craves worship, especially from God. It was his desire to be “*like the most high*” that had caused him to fall in the first place (Isaiah 14:14)
4. Satan tried to offer Christ a crown without a cross. In effect he said, “Why wait when you can have it now? Why go through all that suffering when there’s an easy way? You can have instant gratification!”
5. Satan does the same to us. He has a way of making sin look so glorious and attractive. He only gives a one-sided view of sin. He promises us fame and progress but it comes with a very costly price tag.

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6. Christ's response draws a link between worship and service. The one you worship is the one you will serve!

C. Temptation # 3 – Spiritual (Luke 4:9-12)

1. Alfred Edersheim describes the scene: "Jesus stands on the watch-post which the white-robed priest has just quitted. Fast the rosy morning light, deepening into crimson, and edged with gold, is spreading over the land. In the Priest's Court below Him the morning sacrifice has been offered. The massive Temple gates are slowly opening, and the blast of the priests' silver trumpets is summoning Israel to begin a new day by appearing before their Lord. Now then let Him descend, Heaven-borne, into the midst of priests and people. What shouts of acclamation would greet his appearance! What homage of worship would be His! The goal can at once be reached, and that at the head of believing Israel."
2. In the previous two temptations Christ had demonstrated total submission to the revealed will of God. Christ had quoted Scripture in defense against Satan's attack. Now Satan quotes Scripture and tries to tempt Christ to do something that on the surface appears spiritual.
3. When Satan quotes Scripture, he quotes it selectively, leaving out parts that do not suite his agenda. Satan quoted from Psalm 91:11-12 but omitted "in all thy ways" from the verse he quoted and also avoided making any mention of verse 12 – "*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*"
4. When Satan fails to defeat us in the realm of the carnal, he will try to tempt us in the realm of the spiritual. This is one of Satan's secret weapons that he uses with great success on the strongest of Christians.
5. To put God to the test reveals a lack of real faith and trust. "The moment a man begins to tempt God, to prove trust; he proves that he does not trust. Perfect trust is quiet, and waits." (Morgan)
6. "Spiritual pride, the belief that we may venture into dangers either to our natural or to our religious life, where no call of duty takes us, the thrusting of ourselves, unbidden, into circumstances where nothing but a miracle can save us-these are the snares which Satan lays for souls that have broken his coarser nets." (MacLaren)

V. The Prevailing over the Temptation (Vs. 13b)

There were at least three keys to Christ's victory over Satan.

A. Submission to God – Obedience

1. Christ was totally surrendered to the will of the Father. This put Him on victory ground! When we are committed with all our hearts to the will of God, we are in a position to resist the devil's attacks.
2. James 4:7 "**Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**" We are in no position to claim the second part of the verse if we haven't obeyed the first half!

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3. The central questions we are confronted with in temptation is: To whom will I yield? Whose word will I obey?

B. Supplication to God – Fasting

1. Fasting and prayer sometimes needed to overcome certain Satanic battles.
2. Matthew 17:21 *“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*

C. Sword of the Spirit – Bible

1. Christ struck down the three temptations with the words, “it is written”.
2. Ephesians 6:17 *“And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:**”*
3. The sword is both an offensive and a defensive weapon. There are times when we go on the offense and storm enemy territory with the truth of the Gospel. Then there are times when we use the sword to ward off the blows of temptation that come to us at the hand of the enemy.
4. As believers, we need to be trained and skilled in the use of our sword! If we are weak in Bible reading, study and memorization, we will be weak and ineffective in the battlefield of temptation.
5. If you are battling with a particular temptation, arm yourself with some relevant Scriptures that deal with that temptation and be ready to quote them when Satan comes.

Conclusion:

1. Are you battling temptation? Be encouraged! Because Christ defeated Satan, He can strengthen and help you to defeat Satan also – Hebrews 2:18 *“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour them that are tempted.**”*
2. Are you losing to temptation? Be challenged! Are you fighting the battle with spiritual weapons (I.E. The sword of the Spirit)? Are you fully submitted to God and His Word?
3. Are you saved? Christ is perfectly qualified to be your Saviour. He is sinless!