

Jesus Tried and Tested: A Study of Matthew 4:1-11

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the Judean wilderness to be tempted by Satan v 1. The temptation was God's idea. Jesus was led not by the devil but by the Spirit of God to be tempted by the devil. **God tests people. God tests good people. He tests His own people, His saints. God even tested the Son.** God doesn't tempt people, but the only difference is the motive, the purpose, not the specifics. The difference between tempting and testing is the motive or the purpose. For example, James 1:3 says to consider it all joy when you are tested. But in verses 12-14, it says God doesn't tempt us, and it is the same word (peirosmos).



The only reason we say “tempted” instead of “tested” is because it comes from Satan. **Satan's motive is to disprove the value of being part of the kingdom of God. God's motive is to prove the value of being part of the kingdom of God.** For example, in Job, God and Satan agreed about the physical nature of the testing but they disagreed about the outcome, i.e., they had the opposite motive. So the purpose of the leading of the Spirit was to prove who Jesus was. Jesus fasted 40 days and nights in preparation for the temptation v 2.

COMMENTARY

The first temptation began, *since You are the Son of God* v 3. Satan acknowledged that Christ had the power to turn a stone into bread. The purpose is to get Christ to use His deity to destroy the plan of God. Jesus answered with Scripture. Jesus is not talking about general ideas from Scripture but about *every word*. **God's Word is inspired in every word.**

The second temptation is at the pinnacle of the temple, near the Kidron Valley (about 600 feet above the valley). Satan said, *since You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down* v 6. Satan was not doubting Christ is the Son of God. He assumed Christ could do the miracles in the temptations. He misquoted Psalm 91:11-12 to make it sound like the purpose of the Psalm was the angels catching someone who is thrown down. The Psalm actually reads, *angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways*. Jesus said, *you shall not put the Lord your God to the test* [Deuteronomy 6:16] v 7.

Satan then took Jesus to a very high mountain which is not named v 8. Satan would give Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down to him. Jesus commanded Satan to leave, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20 v 10. Jesus added the word *only*. Then the devil left and the angels ministered to Jesus v 11.

OBSERVATIONS

First, there are some similarities to the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3 and the temptations mentioned in 1 John 2:16 (lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life). But it seems the Genesis and John passages are more similar than this one in Matthew. For example, pride is not a problem for God. The temptations for people and for the Son of God are different.

Second, Christ answered every temptation with Scripture, and all the Scripture came from the

book of Deuteronomy. **All of His statements were consistent with the author's intended meaning.**

Third, Satan's use of Scripture left out a portion which did not fit his purpose.

Fourth, I know of nothing that prohibits turning stones into bread. We do that when we earn a living. But there is something wrong with doing it as Satan's request. There is nothing wrong with healing the sick, but there is when it is done via an occultic practice, such as voodoo, **because when you do it Satan's way, you acknowledge his values and turn your attention to values away from the Word of God.**

Fifth, the second temptation is testing God, which is trying to get God to do something not in His plan, for your own independent-from-God purpose.

Sixth, the last temptation was to focus on political power rather than the Gospel. The kingdoms of the world were indeed Satan's to give (see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; where Satan is called the ruler of this world). Satan's goal seemed to be to get Christ to go directly to the kingdom age, bypassing the cross. It would also have eliminated God as the suffering servant and the righteous character of the kingdom of God that Christ revealed. It seemed that Satan wanted Christ to do what John and the apostles thought Christ was going to do—set up the kingdom.

APPLICATIONS

- ❖ Satan is an unwilling servant of God. God tests His own people, even His Son. Satan tempts people. The only difference is the motive. The specific suffering may be the same. God's motive is to prove your faith. Satan's motive is to destroy your faith.
- ❖ Don't do even seemingly good things in a worldly or Satanic context because it acknowledges Satan's system as of value apart from God (such as secular counseling, wisdom from the world, used as Christian counseling, taking your attention away from the Word of God).
- ❖ Face temptations and tests with the Word of God, understood as the author of Scripture intended it to be understood. **All temptations and tests are to see if you will follow the Word of God.**
- ❖ Understand that God never does anything contrary to His plan. So have confidence in that plan.

The
Word
of God

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