

Jesus' First Temptation

by David Servant

Jesus' first temptation in the wilderness shows his commitment to serving God and his dependency on God for all needs.

Duration: 24:22

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:3, Psalm 11:5, Proverbs 17:3, Matthew 4:1, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 1:13

Topics: "Temptation Of Christ", "Divine Obedience"

Description

This sermon delves into the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, highlighting the purpose behind Jesus being led by the Spirit to face temptation by the devil. It emphasizes the significance of Jesus being tested to prove His sinlessness and qualification as the Savior. The sermon explores the idea that Jesus, although divine, emptied Himself when becoming human, leading to limitations in His abilities, and the importance of relying on God's word and obedience in times of testing.

Transcript

Welcome to Heaven Word TV, I'm David Servett. Stay with me today as we learn how to resist temptation from Jesus himself. Welcome to our program today.

Thank you so much for joining me as we're continuing our chronological study through the New Testament. Currently, we're in Matthew chapter 4, looking at the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you've got your Bible, can you open it to Matthew chapter 4? We're going to begin today in verse number 1. We just finished chapter 3 in our last time together, looking at the baptism of Jesus.

That was so interesting. But immediately after Jesus was baptized by John, we read in Matthew chapter 4 and verse number 1, then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. There is so much information that's so interesting that's packed into that one sentence.

Notice that it was the Spirit who led Jesus to the wilderness for an express purpose to be tempted by the devil. So it's very clear it was God's will. Now listen closely.

It was God's will for Jesus to be tempted by the devil. Now you say, what in the world ever for? Why would God ever want his son to be tempted by the devil? Well, if you study all of scripture, you begin to realize that although scripture makes it very plain that God doesn't tempt anyone. Can I read to you from James chapter 1 and verse number 13? Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself does not tempt anyone. So that's very, very, very clear. God is not the tempter.

Satan is the one who tempts us to do evil. However, it's also very clear though from the scripture that God, although he doesn't tempt anyone, he tests everyone. And if I could just read a couple of verses that make that so obvious.

And there are literally scores of scriptures that we could use to prove the fact that God tests everyone. Here's one also from Psalm 11 and verse number 5. It says, the Lord tests the righteous and the wicked. And the one who loves violence, his soul hates.

And then here's one from Proverbs, Proverbs 17 and verse number 3. The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests hearts. All right. Now, there's so much packed in this subject.

I'd love to spend some time talking about it with you. Jesus had to be tempted for a number of reasons. One of those reasons, of course, is because Jesus was going to die for the sins of the world.

And in order to qualify to be the savior of humanity, Jesus had to be proven to be sinless. Well, the only way to be proven to be sinless is to be tested in time of temptation. Did you get all that? Sure.

If a person is never placed in a situation where they're tempted, there's no way of knowing whether or not they would have yielded or resisted the temptation. And so Jesus had to be tempted in order to be tested to see if he would resist temptation and thus qualify himself to be our savior because the savior had to be sinless. The only way that the savior could be sinless is to have faced every kind of temptation.

In fact, scripture makes it very plain that Jesus was tempted in all ways like we are. And so this initial temptation we're reading about here in Matthew, I can assure you it was not the first temptation Jesus ever faced. He faced every temptation that you could basically imagine he would experience throughout the first 30 years of his life.

He did not live in a sterile environment where Satan didn't ever tempt him. But now he's being specifically led by the spirit for some apparently further testing to see, will my son, this is what the father is saying, will my son resist temptation? And recognize, of course, this implies that Jesus was capable of sin. Some people want to debate that.

But if he was incapable of sinning, if he was incapable of yielding to temptation, then everything we're about to read here about this temptation of Christ was not a temptation. The only way temptation can be a temptation is if it's tempting. That was profound, wasn't it? Jesus had to be tempted.

And the fact that he was tempted indicates that there was a possibility that he could yield to temptation. Jesus could have sinned. And to say that he never sinned implies that he had opportunity to sin.

And had he chosen, he could have chosen to sin, but he resisted temptation. Okay, very good. And so God has a specific purpose here in what he's doing with Jesus.

The very first thing that he's got to do before he enters into really the beginning of his predestined ministry is he's got to go through a severe testing. And I often say that and remind people of that to encourage them. If they're going through severe trials and they're put in a place of severe testing, that's a time to pay attention.

Because it probably means God wants to use you. God has something for you to do. He'll test you in small things at first because if you're faithful in small things, Scripture says, Jesus said, then you'll be faithful in large things.

So God's looking at us all the time. God tests everybody. God's watching our reactions while we're being tempted by Satan.

And we can never say that God's tempting us. We can never say that the devil made me do it. We could never rightfully say that I had no choice.

I had to give in to sin because God is even controlling the degree of the temptation. And of course, that is brought out even in Jesus's temptation. Here's a scripture for you from 1 Corinthians 10 and verse number 13.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man. And God is faithful, listen to this promise, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also. And so God is controlling the degree of the temptation that we face.

He's already measured it. He knows that we can resist it. He knows there's a way out of it.

He's already provided a way for us to escape it. So when you're being tempted, it's a great time to call upon the Lord and say, Lord, I know you've provided an escape. I know I can overcome this.

I know I have the ability to resist this. Please help me now. Show me the way of escape and then run for it.

Okay, run for the door. Run for the way of escape. All right, be right back.

Believing that you're destined for heaven when you're not would be the most tragic self-deception. David Servant's book, *The Great Gospel Deception*, will help you be sure that heaven will be your eternal home. Order your copy at heavenword.tv. All right, we're looking at the temptation of Jesus.

And we've covered just Matthew chapter 4, verse 1. The Holy Spirit specifically led Jesus into the wilderness by himself, specifically to be tempted by the devil. And we can add in parenthesis, in order to be tested by God, to be proven sinless, to be qualified to be the one who would die for our sins. Sinners can't die for the sins of sinners.

Sinners have to die for their own sins. Jesus had to be sinless if he was going to be our Savior. So this is part of our redemption right here.

And we go then into the details of the time of temptation. It really didn't happen, apparently, until after over a month of Jesus' fasting. In verse number 2, after he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he then became hungry.

I have never fasted for 40 days myself. I fasted for as long as maybe seven days. But those who have fasted for long periods of time like this will tell you that your body consumes all the fat that it has on it.

And then when it runs out of fat, it enters into literally a starvation mode, feeding on itself, feeding on those organs and so forth, which are of least importance, and working its way down. And then you eventually die. You can go for a long, long time without food.

You can't go for more than three or four days without water. But food, it is amazing how the body preserves itself. And folks who have fasted for a long time say, you know that you've entered the starvation mode when all of a sudden you get that intense hunger.

Now people say, well, I fasted two days and I got intense hunger. No, no, you never hit the starvation mode at two days or three days or four days. You might have been hungry, but it wasn't starvation.

It was just psychological and your stomach shrinking and growling and so on and so forth. This is an intense hunger. But I want you to see that when the devil came, it was when Jesus was very, very vulnerable.

He's entering into a starvation mode here now. You know, not just a little bit of hunger. This is that intense craving that comes upon a person whose body is beginning to feed upon essential muscle and organs and so forth.

And so in verse number three, and the tempter came and said to him, if you are the son of God, command that these stones become bread. So there's a couple of levels of temptation here, and I'm not claiming to understand everything that's going on here. You know, we could break it apart piece by piece.

Again, Jesus is facing extreme hunger. It seems as if the tempter, Satan, has picked up on that, and he's saying to him, go ahead and use your power to make bread for yourself to meet your needs. I mean, who's going to find fault with that? You know, guy's starving.

He has the power to make bread. Go ahead. Just use your power and turn stones into bread.

Now, I don't know if Satan was doubting that Jesus was the son of God or, you know, if he was trying to get Jesus to doubt that he was the son of God. I've thought about that many times for a long time, and the scripture doesn't say, you know, so we really don't know. I can't believe that the devil didn't have some insight that Jesus was a unique person of history and that he was the son of God.

And if the devil was questioning it, I mean, why does Jesus have to prove anything to the devil? I mean, not that maybe he didn't, but if he did, I don't understand that. And so I guess I lean towards the viewpoint that Satan was trying to make Jesus doubt that he was the son of God, you know, to try to stop him in his ministry. I do know this, that Satan is the big-time liar.

He is the father of lies, and I know that he at times tries to discourage us regarding what God has said about us. You recall that just 40 days prior to this, you know, God's voice had spoken from heaven and said, This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. Jesus heard that, but now in a moment of extreme vulnerability and weakness and hunger and so forth, I'm just wondering if he was having any second guesses about that.

Or maybe Satan is trying to fill his mind with doubts as to what God has said about him. Again, I'm not claiming I'm certain of the answer. I do know this, Satan will try to talk you out of what God has said about you.

Because those of us who are in Christ, we are sons of God through faith in Christ, we're told in Galatians. And we are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us. And we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

And nothing is impossible to him who believes. Well, these are all very positive statements that we find in the word of God that are true, right? They're as true as the word of God is true. Has Satan ever tried to talk you out of what God has said about you? Well, if he has, and I suspect he probably has just like he has me, we need to remind ourselves of who we are in Christ and what God has said about us.

And say, greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world. And all these other good things that the Lord has declared about those who have believed in Jesus. I do possess eternal life.

The Holy Spirit does live inside me. Now, back to this specific temptation. There's questions I have.

I know that Jesus was and is and always has been the son of God. I do have a question, however. And this might open up a whole other discussion that we'll have to push to a later point in time as we work our way through the four gospels.

But Jesus did, Scripture says, empty himself when he became a man. Obviously, when Jesus became a man, he was no longer omnipresent, correct? I mean, he was no longer all over the place, having his presence everywhere. He was limited to being in one place at one time.

And so he wasn't omnipresent. He also, apparently from a number of scriptures that we will study, he wasn't omniscient. That is, all-knowing.

Yes, at times he did have supernatural knowledge. But these were things that we would call gifts of the Holy Spirit that operate as the spirit wills. Jesus asked questions, apparently, wanting answers.

And he wasn't all-powerful either. The Bible says in his hometown, he could do no mighty work there, except he healed a few sick people and so forth. So a lot of things going on here that raise a lot of questions and are worthy of further discussion.

And so we will discuss these further. I love studying the word with you. Be right back.

Here, eight Christians have escaped from North Korea and are temporarily staying. So we've been blessed to deliver some rice to them today to help sustain them. Now we go.

Okay, we are unpacking the very first temptation that Christ experienced, as recorded in Matthew chapter four and verse number three. Satan says to Jesus, if you are the son of God, command these stones to become bread. And we unpacked that in our last segment.

Now, it's very possible, and maybe I'm making a mistake even getting into this. It is possible, and I think it's very possible, because Jesus did empty himself. He was self-limited when he became a man.

It's possible that Jesus was not able to turn stones into bread anytime he wanted to. Now, that might sound heretical to you, and please give me a chance here. Jesus was 100% the son of God.

He didn't lose any of his deity or his divinity when he became a man. He was worthy of worship at this point in time. But again, it's very clear that, as Scripture says, that Jesus emptied himself, and he stripped himself, one version says, of certain things that he would have by virtue of being God.

It's very clear he wasn't omnipresent. It's also very clear that he wasn't omniscient or omnipotent any longer when he became a man. And Jesus, of course, did miracles, but he didn't do miracles just anytime he wanted to.

He said, I can do nothing of myself but only what I see my Father doing. Okay, so that reveals that there was a limitation on Christ. He couldn't just do anything he wanted, work a miracle anytime he wanted, heal somebody anytime he wanted to.

He was limited by the will of the Father and gifts of the Holy Spirit manifesting themselves through him. And again, as we study the four gospels, and it's going to take us months and months, of course, to get through all of them, you'll begin to see that. I'll point it out when we get to those places where it's quite obvious Jesus didn't know everything all the time.

Yes, sometimes he did know things supernaturally. That's called the gift of the word of knowledge or the gift of the word of wisdom listed in 1 Corinthians. Sometimes he did do miracles.

He walked on the water. But sometimes he gave a sermon, he had them push him out in a boat a little way from land. Well, you think, well, Jesus, great time to walk on the water there, give a sermon standing on the water.

He couldn't just walk on the water anytime he wanted to. He operated as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit. All that is simply to say that it's quite possible that Jesus couldn't right then turn the stones into bread.

And again, all these ifs and ands, and if Satan somehow knew that or had insight into that, again, this could be how he's trying to trip Jesus up into thinking that maybe you really aren't what you thought you were. Maybe that voice you heard 40 days ago from heaven, this is my beloved son whom I'm well pleased. Maybe you're just having delusions here, Jesus.

Look how weak you are. Goodness gracious, you're hungry. When is God ever hungry? Come on, if you're hungry, make some bread out of these stones here.

And if Satan had been observing him from his birth and realized this guy has never done any miracles and so forth, again, I don't understand all the dynamics that are going on here. But this was a temptation of sorts to Jesus. And the response he gives is absolutely classic.

In verse number four, he answered and said, it is written. And that's always the way to resist the devil. When the devil tells you a lie or tempts you, quote the word of God.

And Jesus quotes the word of God right out of Deuteronomy. It is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Wow, a lot of good truth packed in there.

Is it really the big deal that God doesn't want us subsisting on a diet of only bread? I don't think that's really the big deal. Because goodness, you could subsist on bread for a long time. It's got a lot of the whole grain stuff, at least has a lot of nutrients in it.

It's not going to kill you by eating whole grain bread for a long time. Is that really the big deal? Is God just saying, I forbid you in this? Now, if you go back to Deuteronomy chapter eight, where Moses is recounting to the next generation of Israelites their history. In Deuteronomy chapter eight, in verse number three, we get some context of what Jesus is quoting to the devil.

And he says to those Israelites, listen to this, this is so cool. Deuteronomy eight, verse three, he humbled you, that's God. God humbled you and let you be hungry.

Sound familiar? And he fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Okay, so what was the point back in those days when God first said this? I was trying to teach you, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. What he's saying is, he was trying to teach them dependency upon God, to look to God for everything, even their most basic needs of food.

And he let them go hungry so that they would see their need for food and realize there is no source for food here. We're in the middle of a desert. Cry out to God and God supernaturally provides the manna according to his promise.

So wake up, folks, is what he's saying. Life does not consist of everything in the material realm. And if all you are is a material person who's just taking care of the flesh and interacting with your physical environment, you're missing out on something that's much more important than all of those things.

You're just living on bread alone, as it were. You need something much more high, something much more nourishing, something much more valuable to you beyond even the most basic necessity of food. You need the word of God.

Oh, my goodness. And that is powerful. And so perhaps that's the implication of what Jesus is trying to say to the devil.

Hey, man, you're all focused on the bread thing here, but I'm focused on my father here. I want to hear from him. I want to obey him.

I want to do his will. And even in my extreme hunger, because I'm in the starvation mode here now, I'm looking to God because I'm here to serve him. And you'll see, as we study the rest of these temptations, that that is indeed the gist of all these temptations.

Satan's trying to get Jesus's allegiance away from his father. Okay. Thank you.

Great to be with you. We'll see you next time.

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