

Jesus Overcomes Temptation¹

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Purpose: Jesus underwent three temptations in the wilderness by Satan. He was tempted to become a Provisional Messiah, a Popular Messiah, and a Political Messiah. He rejected all to be the kind of Messiah intended by God – one that would lay down His life for us. He is now our advocate before our heavenly Father. We need to ever look to Jesus, because He will carry us through.

It was the day after Christmas at a church. The pastor was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

Immediately, the pastor turned toward the church to call the police. But as he was about to do so, he saw little Jimmy with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.



The pastor walked up to Jimmy and said, "Well, Jimmy, where did you get the little infant?"

Jimmy replied, "I got him from the church."

"And why did you take him?"

With a sheepish smile, Jimmy said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to little Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it."²

Temptation: All of us have faced it in one way or another. Some have been tempted to steal; others have been tempted by the excessive use of alcohol. Some have been tempted into promiscuous relationships; others have been tempted to compromise their honesty. All of us have had that small voice tell us to take the easy way out, no one will know you have done this small unimportant thing, "you deserve it," or "it won't matter to anyone."



If we had time, and opened our time for individuals to share how they have been tempted, we would be here for hours. It could be you handle money and it would be so easy to keep some for yourself. It could be you are in a broken relationship and you are searching for "happiness" instead of staying committed to your marriage covenant. It could be you didn't study like you should have the night before and your neighbors' answer sheet is so easy to see and copying their answers is a better way of getting the right grade. Maybe someone put you on the spot and lying is easier than being honest and transparent – admitting wrong and seeking to make things right can be a difficult thing to do.

Most of us in this room, as we think back over our lives, have compromised and yielded to that temptation instead of doing what is right.

A little girl was asked what she did when she was tempted. She replied, "Well, when I hear Satan come knocking at the door of my heart, I just say to the Lord Jesus, who lives within my heart, "Lord, Jesus, will You please go to the door?" And then when the Lord opens the door, Satan draws away and says, "Oh! Excuse me, I have made a mistake."



God has given us Himself to dwell within our hearts. The Living Word is there with a full command of the Written Word. When we let Him meet the temptation on our behalf, we will know the joy of positive victory.³

There is a hymn called "My Soul, Be on Guard" that was written years ago by George Heath. It says:

My soul, be on thy guard; Ten thousand foes arise;
The hosts of sin are pressing hard, To draw thee from the skies.

O watch, and fight, and pray; The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day, And help divine implore.

Never think the victory won, Nor lay thine armor down;
The work of faith will not be done, Till thou obtain the crown.

Fight on, my soul, till death, Shall bring thee to thy God;
He'll take thee, at thy parting breath, To His divine abode.

This hymn reminds us of the constant threat of temptation we have as children of God. One day, Jesus warned Simon Peter when He said, "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has*

asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” (Luke 22:31-32)

When we face temptation, we can draw strength from God’s word as we see how Jesus faced His time of temptation and overcame it. We can be helped by the strength Jesus offers to us to overcome temptation. We can be helped by knowing that we have resources to overcome temptation. We can be helped in knowing that Jesus is praying for us to overcome temptation. As we consider how Jesus overcame temptation, we can draw out three points related to Jesus’ temptation.



I. A PRELUDE TO TEMPTATION

First, there was a prelude to the temptation of Jesus. In Matthew 4:1-2 we read, *“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.”* Jesus was physically weak and hungry. He was susceptible to the tempting offers of Satan.



Some people may find it difficult to believe that Jesus was tempted by some of the things which tempt us. When we accept the premise that Jesus lived without sin, we may fall into the trap of believing that somehow temptation is sinful. But it is not a sin to be tempted. It only becomes sin when we dwell on it, let it take hold of our life, and then we act on that temptation.

In Hebrews 4:15 it is saying this about Jesus, *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* In Hebrews 2:18 we are told, *“For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”* To be tempted is not a sin in itself. Dwelling on it and yielding to it is a sin. Satan tempts us to prevent God’s will from being accomplished in our lives.



I am reminded of a little boy that was warned by his mother to not eat any of the candy in bowl that was sitting on the kitchen counter. The mother came into the kitchen and there was the boy smelling the candy – not touching or tasting, only smelling. The mother asked, “What was he doing?” He replied, “I am resisting temptation!”



How many of us stick our noses in that bowl of temptation thinking we are strong enough to resist? The Bible over and over tells us to flee temptation. The disciples of Jesus, both in Jesus day as well as today, are under constant attack by Satan to strip from their lives any worthwhile contribution to the cause of Christ. Jesus said to Peter, *“...that he may sift you as wheat.”* Satan wants our lives to lose their power and influence and trap us with sin.

The temptation of Jesus came immediately after His baptism. Jesus publicly stepped forward to claim His mission appointed by God. His baptism was affirmed by God Himself. This public affirmation sets the stage for Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.

Satan tried to eliminate Jesus at His birth there in Bethlehem. But Mary and Joseph divinely warned in a dream, left for Egypt for a period of time. Now that Jesus had come of age for the priesthood (30), He came forward to accomplish the remainder of God's plan. Satan wanted to turn Jesus from any significant contribution to God's kingdom by offering him shortcuts to carnal and temporal fame and power.

In the isolation of those barren lands and lonely surroundings, Satan found the opportunity to attempt to turn Jesus from the course God had for him. We all should be cautious about the times we are weak, hungry, and alone – Satan steps forward to tempt us as well.

II. AN ASSORTMENT OF TEMPTATIONS

Secondly, Satan utilized an assortment of temptations to derail Jesus from His called work. In Matthew 4: 3-4 we read, “Now when the tempter came to

Him, he said, *‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’* But He answered and said, *‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”*



A. THE TEMPTATION OF BEING A PROVISIONS MESSIAH

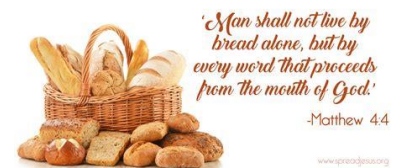
Satan was trying to help Jesus redefine His role as Messiah. When Jesus came to this earth, it was for one purpose: to redeem mankind through His sacrificial death on the cross.

Jesus knew He would die a substitutionary death as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Even John the Baptist called Jesus the “*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29)

Fundamental to the three areas of temptation was Satan's statement, “...*If You are the Son of God.*” Satan knew that Jesus was the Messiah. But there had been many so-called messiahs through the years. Satan's temptation was an attempt to redefine *what kind* of Messiah Jesus would be. Would He be the kind God sent Him to be, the kind God intended Him to be, the kind the world needed most for Him to be? Would He be the eternal Messiah, ruling over mankind in a spiritual and lasting sense?

Or would He be another earthly ruler over a few people for a single generation? Satan said, “... *If You are the Son of God, do...*” these things. Satan wanted Jesus to exchange God's eternal plan for a temporary one. Satan wanted Jesus to become a Provisional Messiah.

Notice how Jesus defeated this temptation; He quoted scripture from Deuteronomy 8:13. Jesus didn't argue with Satan. He didn't get into an argument about what was right and wrong. He simply refused to yield and used the sword of the Word of God to do the fighting. “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” (Matt. 4:4)



Satan tempted Jesus to prostitute His heavenly powers to meet earthly needs, to abuse His eternal powers to accomplish temporal gains. He tempted Jesus to attract a

popular following by turning stones into bread. Mankind desperately needs bread. There are hungry people everywhere, in every generation. But Jesus came to fill a much greater hunger, one which can only be satisfied by the Word of God and through His redeeming death.

This does not mean we should ignore the hungry and only give them the word of God. We should be involved in feeding the hungry. But when we do, we need to introduce them to our Lord and Savior who is the true Bread of eternal life.

B. THE TEMPTATION TO BE A POPULAR MESSIAH.

Since Satan did not succeed in turning Jesus aside, he tried again.

Matthew 4:5-7 says, *“Then the devil took Him (Jesus) up into the holy city, set Him 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 shall give His angels charge over you,’ and ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’”*



The first temptation was to make Jesus as a **Provisional Messiah**. This temptation was an attempt to make Jesus into a **Popular Messiah**. Satan wanted to place Jesus into such a position that all the people would look up to Him.

Years ago, there was a man called “Evil Knievel.” This man was doing all kinds of dare devil stunts in order to attract attention to himself. He would take his motorcycle

and would jump over as many as 18 busses. Through the years he had many crashes and broke many bones. He was even in a coma for almost a month after a failed event. One time he even tried to jump across the Snake River with a rocket. During the 1970’s everyone knew Evil Knievel. He died in 2007.



Satan was attempting to make Jesus into a circus act which would be certain to attract attention and draw followers. Satan urged Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and let the angels rescue Him. What I find most interesting in Satan’s offer was his use of scripture. Satan knows God’s word and he will twist it to fit his own purpose. We need to know God’s word and use it properly against Satan.

Jesus refused the cheap tricks designed to win superficial followers. Jesus was going to build His kingdom on spiritual power coming from submission to God’s will, not through gimmicks, promotions, or worldly strategies.

Sometimes individual Christians and churches can get caught up in this temptation that Jesus rejected. If Satan cannot keep you from becoming a Christian, he will seek to divert you away from your purpose and power. Satan doesn’t mind our being called “Christians” or our having Christian churches. His cause is helped however, when the kind of Christians or churches are stripped of that which is distinctly Christian – especially when we attempt to do the work for God in non-Christian ways.

The Kingdom of God is concerned with hunger. We can and should help the hungry. But our main goal is to

alleviate spiritual hunger. If every person in the world were well-fed physically their greatest hunger would still be unsatisfied.

The Kingdom of God is concerned with politics and forms of government. But civil power at its best cannot give real freedom to a lost and enslaved world. If every person in the world enjoyed political freedom, they still would not be free. True freedom rests with Jesus. Jesus said in John 8:36, *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”*

The Kingdom of God is concerned with reaching large numbers of people. But we as Christians must guard against wholesale signing up of people, thinking that numbers and warm bodies, nickels and noses, will consummate the kingdom.



Let me repeat again, don't be misled to think it is of the Lord because the Bible is quoted. Satan demonstrated he was a master of quoting scripture when he tempted Jesus. Jesus countered with scripture as well, using it with its intended meaning.

Again, Satan was sent away with a word of scripture. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16 when He said, *“You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”* Even though Satan had rejected God, God was still God. Even if an atheist or agnostic says there is no God, God is still God!

C. THE TEMPTATION TO BE A POLITICAL MESSIAH

After two temptations, Jesus still had not yielded. In Matthew 4:8-11, we see Satan's third attempt. *“Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly 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 will fall down and worship me.’”*



Satan's last appeal was for Jesus to become a **Political Messiah**. Jesus had rejected the offer to become the **Provisional Messiah** and the **Popular Messiah**. Satan was offering Jesus a way to be “King of the World” without having to go to the cross. Jesus didn't deny that Satan had the right to offer the kingdoms of the world.

Satan appealed to Jesus by asserting that if you want to really control the lives of people, then you must gain political control. Jesus was tempted by Satan to rule from a temporal throne, much like David's rule had been, in political and military power. This would have been very easy for Jesus to do, and an expectant nation would have been quick to accept Jesus as such a leader. Jesus would have been acclaimed by the people who wanted immediate release from their enemies, domestic and foreign.

But if Jesus had accepted this type of messianic role, He would have been Satan's worshiper and slave instead of God's Son and servant. He would have only been king for one generation. He would have been ruler of only one ethnic group instead of ruler of all mankind. The true Messiah's reign is for all people of all time.

Jesus responded from scripture one last time. From Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus said, *“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve.’”*

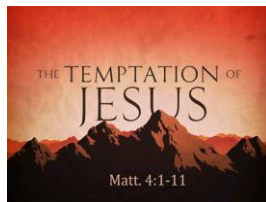


III. JESUS' VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

What we see at the end of the temptations was victory. Jesus was victorious over Satan's attacks. In Matthew 4:11 we read, *“Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”*

Jesus was hungry and tired. He had been tried and tested. He came out victorious over Satan's attack. In Luke 4:13, we see an interesting phrase not used in Matthew. Luke says, *“Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”* Satan may not have won that round, but that did not mean he would not come and try again. As we read through the life of Jesus, over and over, Satan continued to try and derail Jesus from His intended purpose and mission.

The temptation of Jesus revealed exactly who Jesus was. He was the Son of God. If you and I ever faced that kind of situation, we probably would have yielded after the first round. Jesus' temptation was real. But through it all, He did not sin. Jesus was completely obedient to the Father's will and through use of the scriptures He was victorious. Jesus was victorious and overcame temptation by ...



1. REMEMBERING WHO HE WAS.
2. REMEMBERING HIS MISSION.
3. THROUGH THE USE OF SCRIPTURE.
4. AND THROUGH PRAYER.

These temptations were not the last for Jesus. Every day Jesus resisted the easy and popular ways opened to Him. He struggled with those temptations in the feeding of the five thousand, at the leading of His disciples, in the garden praying the night before his betrayal in Gethsemane and even on Calvary. Jesus was so single minded in His resolve of His mission that Satan could not deter Him. His victory was accomplished inwardly – not outwardly. His victory did not receive outward affirmation from the masses – it came from an inner peace from God and an assurance of doing God's will.

We too can overcome temptation. The Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:13 invites us to join with God. *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

An old hymn reminds us we can have victory.

Yield Not to Temptation
by Horatio R. Palmer

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each vict'ry will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.



Refrain: Ask the Savior to help you,
Comfort, strengthen, and keep you;
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through.

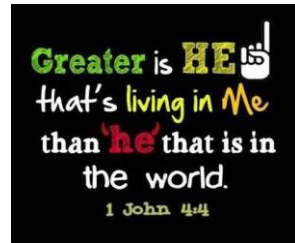
Shun evil companions, bad language disdain,
God's name hold in rev'rence, nor take it in vain;
Be thoughtful and earnest, kindhearted and true;
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.

Refrain

To him that o'ercometh, God giveth a crown,
Through faith we will conquer, though often cast down;
He who is our Savior, our strength will renew;
Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.

Refrain

- We need to remember who we are – we are a child of the King! We need to live like, act like, and talk like a child of the King.
- We need to remember our mission – to honor Jesus Christ with our life. When we yield to temptation, we are simply honoring Satan.
- We need to hide God's word in our hearts so we will not sin against God. Satan is walking around as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. If we have the sword of God's word, he will move on to others.
- We need to learn to depend on the power of prayer. Through prayer we stay connected to our Heavenly Father and He will give us the strength to face our time of temptation. *"Greater is He that is in us, then he that is in the world."* Depend on the power of God to help you.



We need to remember it is Satan, not God, which tempts us. Satan does not "make us do it." God gives us a way of escape. We can say "no" or we can say "yes" when the tempter comes. Look ever to Jesus and He will carry you through.

One last word before we close: As you look over your life and all the temptations you have faced, maybe there is someone here that is plagued by one event that they yielded to. Let me remind you, that when you take your burden to the Lord, He will forgive you.

Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God and is ever interceding on your behalf. We have an advocate with the Father who paid the price for our sin. We do not need to live estranged from God – we can live free!



Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Outline from Ray K. Hodge, Topic Temptation based on Luke 4:1-13

² Mickey's Funnies, A Wagon Funny, Dec. 8, 2023

³ Let Me Illustrate, Donald Gray Barnhouse, p. 317