

Transcript

The Jesus Story - The Temptation

In everything that Jesus ever did, He was subject to the will of his heavenly Father. After his baptism, the next step in the perfect plan and purpose of God for Jesus, was to be the temptation in the wilderness. We see can this by the way that the temptation is introduced.

Matthew 4v1, tells us:

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil.

Mark, when writing his gospel puts it much stronger. 1v12:

12 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.

The experience of the baptism led inevitably to conflict.

What I would like to do here is to try to stand beside Jesus as the things unfolded in His life, to see if we can feel and understand just what He was going through.

Something that we really need to understand is that Jesus is more than just a story. When most people think of the Temptation in the Wilderness They have this picture of Jesus, walking out into a desert place facing up to Satan, who puts three challenges before Him.

Now, there is nothing wrong with that picture because basically, that is just what happened. But, if we are prepared to spend a little time, look a little closer, there is so much more that we can find out about Jesus here.

This is what Luke tells us in chapter four and verse one:

1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

From this we see that, The three Temptations, that we all talk about, did not begin until after forty days of being tempted by the devil, forty days of going without food. Jesus, tired and hungry.

The Three Temptations that we talk about did not begin when Jesus arrived in the wilderness, fresh from his baptism, filled with the Holy Spirit, with the commendation of his Father ringing in his ears. These began after forty days of being tempted without food.

So if we are to get the correct picture here we need to put things in their proper context.

Another thing that we find from this account of Luke. Luke chapter four tells us in verse 1, for the want of a better expression, of the preparedness of Jesus:

1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and

was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

After being filled with the Spirit, And, being led by the Spirit, Jesus was fully prepared for this conflict. That is why at the end of this confrontation, this is what we read in verse 13.

13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

I feel that it would be good just to take a step back for one moment and see if we can just try to put ourselves into the position of Jesus.

This is what we read in verse three:

3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

If we are going to get a full picture of who Jesus really was, then we need to walk with Him. We need to be at His side when things were happening to Him.

There is a big difference between knowing about someone, and really knowing them. We can read the story, and we can see the picture, and still not really know someone.

What we need to do is to try to put ourselves in the picture. If we really want to know Jesus, then we need to get closer to Him.

It may help us if we could understand just how Jesus came to be in the position that He was in at this time.

Jesus, after thirty years of normal growth and development; thirty years when he went through everything that a child would go through as he developed from a child to a man.

From a baby dependent on his parents for all his needs. Through all those boyhood trials, facing all the temptations of his teenage years.

Then there would be the welfare of his family - Joseph must have died early in the life of Jesus, he was never mentioned again after the temple visit.

Jesus as the eldest son would be responsible for caring for Mary and his brothers and sisters.

After having experienced every trial and temptation that everyone has to experience, now at about thirty years, the family able to care for themselves, Jesus is now free to begin his public ministry.

And, what a terrific start! The very public Baptism by John in the river Jordan. The confirmation by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And, the commendation from His Father in heaven.

This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

This was a high point in the life of Jesus, but it did not last for long. Now Jesus had to face the Temptation in the Wilderness.

There is a question that has been a problem for some people that we really need to look at. 'Just how real was the temptation?'

Was it a real struggle? Was it a real test? Was the test strong enough or effective enough to cause Jesus to fall?

There are some who would tell you that because of the Lord's deity, as God the Son it would be impossible for Him to sin.

But that argument fails when using that argument we realise He could not have died either. In taking a human body that was capable of dying, Jesus was also taking a body that was capable of sinning.

The bible is very clear about this.

He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Like all others, Jesus had been surrounded by evil from His earliest years, and might at any time have sinned had he chosen to, but He had remained pure and unspoiled.

Step by step Luke unfolds the story of Jesus. He begins by showing us how Jesus was born into this world. He goes on to show us, at least by implication, that Jesus had to perform faithfully his duties to his home before he began on his duty to the world.

He had to show himself faithful in the smaller tasks before God gave to him the greatest task in all the world, being tempted for forty days. Jesus was tempted for the entire forty days.

What follows are highlights of that season of temptation. He ate nothing, He was hungry. To tempt a man who has fasted for forty days with no food seems almost unfair, and yet the Father allowed it.

The fact that Luke, the physician, noted afterwards that 'He was hungry' is very important.

After such a long fast, renewed hunger often points to a critical need for food. Jesus was beginning to starve to death. Jesus was hungry, but full of the Spirit.

We are sometimes just the opposite. We can have full stomachs and empty spirits.

There are three questions that we need to ask ourselves concerning the temptation of Jesus.

Was the timing of the temptation important? What was Satan's objective in the Temptation? And was the temptation a real test?

The timing of the temptation was perfect. It was an appointed time, it was part of the Divine plan. 'He was led of the Spirit.'

What was Satan's objective in the Temptation? Simply to cause Jesus to fall, to make Him assert His own will, instead of the will of His Father.

The test was to see if Jesus would obey the will of His Father, or could He be deceived? Could Satan cause Jesus to submit to his dominion?

Which brings us to the third question. Was the temptation a real test? Was it a real

struggle? Was the test strong enough or effective enough to cause Jesus to fall? Well, Hebrews Heb 4:15:

He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

At the time of his baptism, the Father declared that Jesus was his beloved son, in whom he was well pleased. He was pleased with Jesus because Jesus did not follow his own desires, but sought only to obey perfectly the will of God.

After the holy spirit 'descends' on Jesus at His baptism, He is immediately led into the wilderness to fast and be tempted.

Spiritual highs were followed by seeming spiritual lows in the life of Jesus. And as followers of Jesus we can expect the same. Jesus' apparent spiritual low was not a result of sin, it was a part of God's plan.

Every season of our spiritual journey is ultimately directed by God for our good and for the accomplishment of His purposes on the earth.

It was no mistake that Jesus ended up in the wilderness to be left alone for Satan's temptation. It was by the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God takes effort to show Jesus as being 'full of the Holy Spirit.' Jesus was dependent on the Word and the Spirit to answer Satan's temptations.

It's not just that He had memorized bible verses, He applied the Word of God. Jesus fully understood the true meaning of God's Word.

Satan knew the Scripture, too. The temptation was based upon the holy experience that Jesus had just received. The voice from heaven had designated Jesus as Son of God.

"If that is true," said Satan, "if you really are the Son of God, use your power to obtain the food that you really need. Now, is the time to test out your power."

As a man, Jesus was dependent on the loving care of His Heavenly Father, and to provide for hunger by a miracle, would be to show distrust of that Father's gracious providence.

God had brought Him to where He was, And God would meet His needs. God's wisdom and goodness would provide for Him.

The way to demonstrate that He was God's Son would be seen in His doing God's will!

Here we have a good example of the guile that Satan uses, he adapts the temptation to fit the circumstance.

In this first attack he tempts a hungry man with bread. This temptation was not to gluttony, it was just bread, after forty days without food. It was not even a temptation to demonstrate his supernatural powers. This was an attempt to make Jesus act independently of His Father.

The Devil appealed to his senses, to his appetite; why should he be hungry? Didn't the Son of God have a hand in the creation of all things?

It only seems reasonable, that after forty days without food, He should supply his own

need. And when the tempter came to Him, he said:

If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

The subtlety of this attack is seen in just how reasonable Satan appears to be. Jesus had just gone through forty days without food, and now he is hungry, and Satan focuses the attention of Jesus on his hunger. You need not be hungry.

If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.

And if Jesus had done this, He would have been stepping out of the will of God. The weakness and hunger that Jesus was now experiencing was in the perfect will and purpose of God.

When someone is full of the Holy Ghost, and when they are led by the Holy Spirit, they don't have to seek the will of God, they are already in it.

The circumstance of hunger was not only with Divine knowledge, it was also a part of the Divine plan. We can see this by the very fact that 'Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness'.

If there had been no need for hunger, the temptation could have taken place in different surroundings. The very fact that Jesus was led to, and through forty days in the wilderness without food shows the need for hunger, and through this, God demonstrates the wonderful fact that man at his weakest, wholly leaning upon Him, is more than a match for any force that comes against him.

The will of God, was the only motivation that Jesus ever needed.

It was the will of God that brought him from heaven.

It was the will of God that caused him to be made in the likeness of man.

It was the will of God that led him into the wilderness.

It was the will of God that he should be weakened through hunger.

It was the will of God that he should be tempted.

When Jesus came to this crisis in His life, and make no mistake, this was a crisis, to stand before the enemy of the souls of men, to be subjected to temptation by one who had never known defeat in his attacks on mankind before.

For four thousand years, Satan had caused havoc through his deceit and lies. He had proved himself to be the God of this World.

And now Jesus, who had laid aside his glory stands before Satan as a man, and by refusing to use anything to defend himself, other than that which is available to all men, Jesus demonstrates to all how Satan can be defeated by anyone. Jesus steadfastly refused to do anything that would take Him outside of the will of God.

And in the three recorded temptations we can see just how real the test was:

3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word of God.’’

5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

7 “Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”

8 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

9 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.

10 “For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’

11 “and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

12 And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’”

13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

It was not easy to refuse the opportunity to have bread, after forty days without food.

It would have been easier to demonstrate to those in Jerusalem that He was the Messiah, by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, He would have been acclaimed by all - instant fame!

It would have been much easier to accept the world back from Satan, as a gift, for one simple act of worship, than to go through three years of being misunderstood and ridiculed, being made to suffer all that vile men could do to Him; and then ending His earthly life on a cross.

It would have been easier; but it would not have been the will of God.

What Satan had to offer may seem to be good to human reasoning, and Jesus stood before him as a man.

The Word of God describes Satan as a thief and a liar. It was his plan to rob and destroy Jesus, the way that he has destroyed men down through the ages, and still does today.

Just look at the scheming of Satan, in the offers that he makes. Step out of the Will of God, and you can have bread, when it was God’s will that Angels should come and minister to him.

Step out of the Will of God, and be worshiped by the whole of Jerusalem, and because Jesus stayed in the will of God, this is what we read in Philippians’ (2 v 9-11.):

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which

is above every name,

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, And of those under the earth,

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Satan says ‘Step out of the Will of God, and you can have the kingdoms of the world, and their glory’, and because Jesus stayed within the will of God, the highest place that heaven affords is His by sovereign right.

He is the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, throughout eternity he will be the focal point of all worship in heaven.

Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness exposed Satan as the deceiver, and shows him as the thief and the liar that he is. Jesus reveals just how worthless the things that he has to offer really are. Jesus won the victory because he refused to step out of the will of God for anything.

I don't know if you have ever wondered how we came to receive the accounts of what happened during the time that Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted. From whom did the account come?

The only source that it could have come from would be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is a part of the Lord's spiritual biography, and He is telling of the things that He went through.

And by explaining the things that He went through, He shows that He can help others when they are tempted. He lifts the veil on His struggles to help us in our struggles.

Now, here is a great and uplifting truth. What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal.

Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man. It is the test which comes to a man who God wishes to use.

So, then, we must think of this whole incident, not so much the tempting, as the testing of Jesus.

Evil may be wrong, but it is not stupid, at least not at its most powerful. It does not deal in honest, straightforward, and fair competition. It fights dirty and deceptively, using every clever trick to trap us.

From the beginning in the garden where Adam was tempted, to the Temptation of Jesus, right through to the temptations that we face today, the devil entices us with things that appear to be good, not with things that appear to be evil.

Jesus successfully defeated the devil's attempts to lead him away from absolute trust in the Father and absolute submission to His will.

Now, Satan left Jesus until some more opportune time - we never defeat temptations once and for all, Satan only leaves us until he has another opportunity.

Jesus' experiences with these temptations and struggles enabled Him to identify more fully with us. It is so wonderful to know that we can approach someone who understands exactly what we are feeling.

The three temptations revolve around three of the strongest drives of human existence; physical appetite, the desire for power and possessions, and the desire for public recognition.

There is only one question left to answer before we finish. How did Jesus know what the Will of God was? How could He answer Satan, and be sure that every step He took, was in accordance with God's perfect will. Bearing in mind that Jesus came as a man, and he was tempted as a man. He defeated Satan as a man, and the only guidelines that he could use were those that are given to all men - the Word of God.

Every temptation was answered by it is written, and if there is one lesson that we can learn from the temptation it is this - if we want to overcome Satan when he attacks, we must keep ourselves submissive to the will of God.

Jesus didn't just come to be our Saviour, he also came to be our example.

The only way that we can know just what the will of God is, we need to search the Scriptures to find it. We have to learn to make our decisions according to the Word of God.

The Father, satisfied with Jesus' obedience, sent his angels to minister to the needs of Jesus.

We read in verse 13:

13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Verse 14 tells us:

14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

Between verses 13 and 14 there is a gap of about one year. During this time Jesus ministered in Judea. The only record of this ministry is in John 2–5.

Next time, God willing, we shall be looking at the early ministry of Jesus in Judea, the things that are only recorded in the Gospel of John.