

THE DEVIL – THE UNHOLY GOD - Part 7

II Corinthians 4:3-4

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

In our previous studies we covered the following: The Devil’s Origin, Original State, Downfall, Nature, Names, Domain, Demons, Dangers, Strategies and Devices. Now we come to:

THE DEVIL’S TEMPTATION OF JESUS – Part 1

Matthew 4:1-11

“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. 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.’” Then the devil took Him 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.’” 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.’” Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

Why Was Jesus In The Wilderness?

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”

We must be clear about this before we move on to the temptation itself. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. Jesus knew that the time of testing was within the circumference of God’s ordained the purpose and that the temptation itself came from the Devil.

Let’s go over that again. If, in following the will of God for our lives, we find ourselves in the place of temptation, we must never think that somehow it’s all right to yield to the temptation. Such circumstances represent instead a test - a test that the devil wants to take advantage of and turn into a trap.

Some people think like this: I asked God to lead me and I have been following Him. Now I am in this place of temptation so it must be ok to sin. Some circumstances permitted by God might make it easy to sin. But God never leads us into sin. Yet some people use that situation to excuse sin.

Illust. Here’s an example from a TV documentary covering a New York power blackout:

A network reporter was shown interviewing a looter in a room cluttered with merchandise he had stolen while the lights were out. The question of the reporter to the thief was: "Doesn't it bother your conscience to have ripped off all this property?" The man's reply was, "I had such an incredible opportunity to get things I never would have been able to get that God must have been in it! I'm just sorry I didn't have a chance to get a color television."

We can never say that God made an opportunity for us to sin, therefore it must be all right to do so. No informed Christian ever has sinned unless he wanted to and willed to do so. To say that God creates the temptation scenarios so that I can sin without consequences is the result of gross ignorance of Who God is and of God's standards in His written Word.

Who tempts us?

Notice carefully how Matthew's record begins: "*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*" (v.1)

James 1:13 informs us: "*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*"

Why temptation?

God allows temptation. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into a desolate area geographically, knowing that the devil would take advantage and tempt Him. God likewise allows us to be in situations where we too will be exposed to, as Romans 5:3-4 says, "*tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*" (Romans 5:3-4)

So, temptations have their good outcomes as well as their bad outcomes, depending upon how we handle the temptation. Bottom line is that God permits us to be tempted for at least 3 reasons:

- in order to test us,
- to teach us and
- to temper of us, but never to trip us!

Is temptation sin?

Temptation is not sin. It is yielding to it that is sin. Temptation is the arena that tests what Christians are made of. If the devil never tempts you, you will not develop a resistance to sin.

In discussing Jesus' temptation, let us consider The Tempter and the Tempter One.

THE TEMPTER

"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. Now when the tempter came to Him....."

1 Thess. 3:5 – "*For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.*"

The devil is the arch enemy of Jesus Christ and has fought Him ever since he was cast out of heaven. He will fight Him right down to the very end when the Lord will cast him into the Lake of Fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

When Jesus was born the Devil moved Herod to slaughter all the babies born in Bethlehem around that time, trying to kill Jesus. The devil, the evil one, deceiver, destroyer, tempter, the most wicked, sinister being in the universe approached the holy, innocent, harmless Son of God to try to entice Him, the sinless One, to sin.

The boldness and tactics of the Devil should warn us that, since he was not shy about attacking Jesus, he will certainly not be hesitant to attack those who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

THE TEMPTED ONE

Some very important doctrinal questions are centered around the account of Christ's temptation. Because of His uniqueness, some problems have developed in people's thinking relative to His temptation.

There are two questions regarding Jesus temptation that usually come up: *First*, was Jesus really tempted? *Second*, why was He tempted?

A. Was Jesus Really Tempted?

Two main positions have been taken regarding the temptation of Jesus. Some believe that, even though Jesus was God, yet it was possible for Him to sin. Others believe that even though Jesus was tempted, it was impossible for Him to sin.

As we work our way through these two positions, consider what the Bible has to say about each:

- The Bible states that God cannot be tempted – *“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”* (James 1:13)
- Yet Jesus was tempted: *“He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* (Hebrews 4:15)
- God cannot sin and Jesus was God. How is it then, that Jesus could experience temptation?
- Answer: Had Jesus been only God, there could have been no possibility for Him to be tempted for, as James writes, *“God cannot be tempted.”* However, Jesus Christ is the God-man, and so there was such a possibility. The presence of His human nature made it possible for Him to be tempted, not as God, but as a man. (God is Spirit; a spirit does not need bread, etc.)

B. Why Was Jesus Tempted?

1. Jesus was tempted in order to prove that he could regain all that Adam lost.

The first Adam met Satan in a garden; the last Adam met Satan in the wilderness.

The first Adam lost the battle; the last Adam won the battle.

The first Adam's failure in temptation brought devastation to the human race;
The last Adam's success over temptation brought deliverance to the human race.

2. Jesus was tempted so that everyone in heaven and earth and hell might know that He is the mighty conqueror over the Devil. Here at the beginning of his ministry, He is put to the supreme test and wins and throughout His ministry he could say to Satan, "you are a defeated foe."

3. Jesus was tempted so that He might be our sympathetic High Priest. Hebrews 2:18 states: *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."*

Furthermore, Hebrews 4:15-16 encourages us with these words: *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

4. Jesus was tempted so that He could show us how to gain the victory over temptation. It is as though Jesus were saying, "Hereafter, let no one say, "The devil made me do it." Or, "I couldn't help myself." Or, "I can't get the victory over sin." We do not have to sin! Temptation is not sin - we do not have to yield to temptation just because we can!

Romans Chapter 13 contains a verse, which if obeyed, will always deliver us from temptation. The verse says, *"Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts...."* (v.14)

Illustration: A mother told her son Bob, repeatedly, not to go swimming in a nearby pond. One day Bob was going out the door with a ball glove in one hand and his swimming trunks in the other. His Mom stopped him and asked, "Where are you going?" Bob replied, "To the ball field to play ball." Mom said, "Then why are you taking your swimming trunks?" Bob answered, "Well, I have to go right past the swimming hole to get to the ball field and I might fall into the water."

Romans 13:14 *"... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."*

Instead of entertaining thoughts of yielding to temptation when we find ourselves in a tempting situation, we should all be like the fellow who said, "When I find myself walking near my neighbors watermelon patch, I can't keep my mouth from watering, but I sure can run!"

By the way, when you do flee from temptation, make sure that you do not leave a forwarding address!

5. Jesus was tempted and did not sin to prove that He is qualified to be the sinless sacrifice for sin. If Satan can cause Jesus to yield to one temptation, the path to the cross for the Lamb of God would be forever barricaded. Here in the temptation, Satan is attempting to disqualify the Son of God. What a test this is! And, He passed the test!

I Peter 1:19 tells us that we were redeemed *“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

Hebrews 7:26 verifies that He did not yield to the Devil’s temptations: *“For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”*

We can see then, the reality and the reasons for the temptation of our Savior. Next week we will look at the Temptation proper and Jesus’ Triumph.

In the meantime, we will be confronted with many temptations. But remember this:

“There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

(I Corinthians 10:13)

JdonJ