

## Jesus is Tempted

**Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and 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 will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. (English Standard Version – ESV)

\* The second temptation in Matthew 4:5-7 appears as the third temptation in Luke 4:9-12.

### **Background:**

- Three texts from Deuteronomy 6:13, 16; 8:3 cited here in Matthew 4:4, 7, 10 were commands God gave to Israel when he tested Israel for forty years in the wilderness. Unlike Israel of old, Jesus as Israel’s representative (Matthew 1:1; 2:15) passes the tests. Some scholars compare the battle of wits between Jesus and the devil to the way rabbinic debates were conducted.
- One of the most common recitations of God’s acts in the Old Testament was that he “led” his people in the wilderness (Isaiah 63:14), where they were tested. Although the Old Testament only rarely mentions the devil, his activity as tempter (Job 1-2) had come into focus much more by this time. The surprising feature here for most Jewish readers would not have been that the devil was providing temptation, but that he was doing so in person.
- The devil’s first test of Jesus is the sort attributed to magicians, who claimed to be able to transform themselves into animals and other substances, like stones into bread. Many Jews hoped for a new exodus led by a new Moses, complete with new manna, or bread from heaven.
- The devil challenges or seeks to define Jesus’ son-ship against God’s Word, but Jesus would have known the context of Deuteronomy 8:3, which he cites. He can depend on God’s provision of manna in the wilderness because God is his Father as God was Israel’s (Deuteronomy 8:5).
- “The holy city” was a standard title for Jerusalem. The devil takes Jesus to a part of the temple that overlooked a deep valley; a fall from which would have meant certain death.
- Later rabbis acknowledged that the devil and demons could handle Scripture expertly. Here the devil cites Psalm 91:11-12 out of context, for 91:10 makes clear that God’s angelic protection is for events that befall his servants, not an excuse to seek out such dangers.

- “All the kingdoms of the world” did not technically belong to the devil (see Daniel 4:32), who owned human hearts only as a usurper. The best the devil could do would be to make Jesus the political, military sort of Messiah that most Jewish people expected.

### **Questions:**

- + The text says that Jesus “was led by the Spirit in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” If “God doesn’t tempt anyone” (James 1:13), how could the Spirit lead Jesus to be tempted?
- + What is significant about the place (wilderness) and duration (40 days and nights) of fasting? What can you learn about the devil, based on the physical need of Jesus and first temptation? Describe a time when you were tempted. How were you tempted, and how did you respond?
- + What are some possible reasons why the devil chose to employ the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> temptations? What can you learn about Jesus, based on his responses to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> temptations? Given similar circumstances, how might you have responded to those temptations?
- + Scripture played a key role in each response of Jesus to each temptation of the devil. What role (if any) does Scripture play in your response to temptation? How can Scripture play a greater role in your response to temptation?