

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH  
WEEK 9 – JESUS’ TEMPTATION – PROOF THAT HE IS THE SON OF GOD

- Jesus as Messiah has been proven through His genealogies in Matthew and in Luke.
- Jesus’ Messiahship has been proven by the testimony of angels – Gabriel’s appearance to Zacharias and Mary; and the host of heaven proclaiming the good news of the Messiah to the shepherds; an angel of the Lord who spoke to Joseph.
- Jesus’ Messiahship has been proclaimed by Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, John the Baptizer
- God the Father declares that Jesus is His Son at Jesus’ baptism – “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.
- The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus – anointing Him as the Messiah (Isa. 60:1).

One other issue remains in order to validate His Messiahship -- and that is His ability to conquer the devil and sin. The ultimate question is...can He save sinners from sin – from the destroyer – from death and hell? Can He overturn the curse? Can He conquer Satan? The compelling question that is answered in the fourth chapter of Matthew and in the fourth chapter of Luke is the question, can Jesus conquer the devil and sin? YES!!!

Following Jesus’ immersion – His baptism – He engages in conflict with the devil. His conflict with Satan is prompted by the Holy Spirit. It is not as if Satan came after Him, it is rather as if He came after Satan. The Spirit of God led Him (Mark tells us that the Spirit of God DROVE Him) into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Here we have the battle of the ages displayed for us!

Gen. 3:15 – God promised that He would put hatred between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Satan would bruise the Redeemer’s heel; the Redeemer – the Messiah would CRUSH Satan’s head.

“Tempter” – one who entices another to sin. “Devil/Satan” – the Accuser, the Adversary, the father of all lies. “Lucifer” – shining one!

C.S. Lewis/Screwtape Letters – “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devil. One is to disbelieve in his existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in him.”

At the baptism, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God. At His temptation, Jesus proved that He was the Son of God.

“Interesting” observations from the Bible – the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea into the wilderness. Jesus was immersed into the Jordan River and was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness – this was their time of testing – for 40 years. Jesus spent 40 days of testing in the wilderness.

Three of the Gospels include the account of Jesus' temptation: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

All three Gospels clearly point out that the temptation of Jesus was part of the divine plan.

Matthew 4:1 – *“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”*

Mark 1:12 – *“Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness”*

Luke 4:1 – *“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into<sup>[a]</sup> the wilderness,<sup>2</sup> being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.”*

Had Jesus been tempted previously – during the 30 years of His life thus far? The writer of Hebrews says, "He was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Matt. 16:23 – to Peter He said, *“Get you behind Me, Satan.”* But here Jesus' temptation in the wilderness following His baptism, we don't see the “normal” temptation of the world – but temptation by Satan – intending to destroy Him as the Messiah.

Is this account important for us to read – important for the Bible to include?

ABSOLUTELY! We need to REJOICE in this account. We need to KNOW about our MESSIAH! He has crushed sin and death and has given us ETERNAL HOPE! If He is defeated by Satan, then we all lose, there is no salvation, and we are damned. BUT we have a Messiah Who is the answer for the curse placed upon man and upon the earth. Jesus came to overturn the curse – to restore the earth and to reconcile man to God!

NOW was the time! He came - He appeared at the Jordan River – to be baptized – and then to be DRIVEN into the wilderness – led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into a 35 by 15 square mile area of precipitous cliffs and ravines, a place of scorpions and snakes and wild animals – a place uninhabited – a place where nothing grows. And there Jesus remained for 40 days in intense battle with the devil. Then he became hungry. Then – after 40 days? It appears that He wasn't conscious of being hungry. Jesus is totally focused on the conflict/battle and He is focused on the will of the Father. He is so focused on submission to the Father. He is fully aware of His divine mission. His humanity is under the full power of the Holy Spirit. And now He is engaged in an intense conflict with the devil to demonstrate His deity!

Because Jesus is God He is not capable of sinning.

Isaiah 59:2 – God cannot look upon sin. Our sin has separated us from God.

I John 1:5 – “. . . God is light and in Him is no darkness.”

II Cor. 5:21 – *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”*

John the Baptizer confirmed that by stating that he, John, should be baptized by Jesus – not the other way around.

John 14:30 teaches us that “Satan has nothing in Me” – there is nothing in Jesus – in His nature as the God/Man – into which the devil could get to with any temptation.

I Peter. 2:21b-22 – “. . . because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”

All temptation that came at Jesus came from the outside – none of it came from within Jesus.

And what's with *temptation*? Matthew 4:1 – Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." In the Greek, the word for tempt is periazō – it's a temptation or a testing. It could be either. It could be a testing for good; it could be a tempting for bad. The English word carries the bad connotation. When we see the word tempt we think of a negative happening, i.e. to entice someone to sin. The Greek word can carry either the idea of enticing to evil. However, it can mean a test of a positive nature. Regarding Jesus' temptation, from God's viewpoint, it is a test. From the devil's viewpoint, it is a temptation. From God's viewpoint it is a way to prove that the Son is worthy. From the devil's viewpoint it is a way to tempt the Son to be unworthy.

What about when temptations occur in our lives. Whatever comes our way from Satan to entice us are negatives - to cause us to sin. BUT GOD may allow them as ways to prove us.

Scripture tells us that God also tests us.

James 1:2 - "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various peirasmos.*" Into various trials - certainly not temptations. We don't have the negative sense within the context of this passage.

*"Knowing this, that the testing of your faith works patience. And let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."*

We are seeing God's viewpoint. God allows testing. God allows things in our lives that give us opportunity to exercise spiritual muscle – which will increase our faith.

James 1:13 – "*Let no man say when he is peiraso, I am tempted of God for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*"

From God's viewpoint, these trials/temptations (peirasmos) are positive – to strengthen our faith – to prove righteousness.

However, James 1:12 - "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*"

But we read that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. If God tempts no man, how then can the Holy Spirit drive the Son of God into a conflict with the devil? From God's viewpoint it was a test to prove His righteousness. AND Jesus is God. There is NO QUESTION re: His righteousness. It was only a temptation from Satan's viewpoint. You can't tell the difference until you see the outcome.

Gen. 50:20 – *“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”* There's the difference. Satan meant it for evil but God meant it for good. The same struggles from God's viewpoint are for your good to strengthen you; from Satan's point are, the struggles are for evil, to cause you to fall.

There is more of a connection between Jesus' baptism and His temptation:

- At the baptism of Jesus, He said that He came to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). At the temptation of Jesus, this righteousness was tested.
- At the baptism of Jesus, He was declared to be the Son of God by God the Father (Matt. 3:17). At the temptation, He was told to prove it (Matt. 4:3).
- At the baptism of Jesus, He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for His mission and he was immediately sent/driven into the wilderness by the Spirit of God for the express purpose of being tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:1-3 – *“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. <sup>3</sup> Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”*

Mark 1:12-13 – *“Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.”*

Luke 4:1-2 – *“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into<sup>[a]</sup> the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.”*

The accounts in Luke and Mark specifically tell us that Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days. The time of trial consisted of forty days of fasting during which there undoubtedly was constant provocation by Satan. In both Matthew and Luke, the three temptations recorded comprise Satan's final all-out assault against Jesus. The pattern of this battle between the Messiah and the adversary needs to be noted. The temptations directed at Jesus Christ are unique to Him.

In preparation for discussing these temptations, I want to underscore that Jesus, Who is ETERNALLY GOD, gave up His glory to come to this earth and die for man! He emptied Himself of His glory (Phil. 2:5ff) – but NEVER of His deity! He gave up the independent use of His attributes – so we don't see Jesus while on this earth at His first coming – omnipresent – He could not be in two places at one time. He hungered. He grew weary. Jesus came in submission to the Father. He constantly prayed to the Father, “Not My will but Yours be done.” He used His power for the benefit of others. Jesus came to serve others – never to serve Himself.

Every temptation hurled at Jesus represented a less costly way to do God's work than the way called for in God's plan – which would have been WRONG!!!! Sinful!!! The devil was attempting to not only destroy Jesus, but destroy the Trinity by creating rebellion within the Trinity and create a breach in the Godhead.

Matthew 4:3-4 – *“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.’”*

The word “if” is better rendered “since” due to the context. We need to remember that Satan never questions the deity of Jesus, the demons don't even question the deity of Jesus, only the liberals question the deity of Jesus. Satan and the fallen angels knew Jesus before they fell. They were at one time holy angels – they knew Jesus to be God – they still know He is God. There is never a denial of that at any time by the demons. Matthew 8:28-29 – *“... in the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’”*

The first temptation is a temptation to distrust God's love...to distrust God's plan for the Son of God. Jesus had just been commissioned to begin His public ministry – according to God's plan. Regarding changing the stones into bread. . . Jesus had the power to do so. He would turn water into wine – FOR OTHERS! He would feed 5,000 and then 4,000. Satan was attempting to get Jesus to divert the gifts of God from the “others-focus” that His Messiahship required. At no time did Jesus use His miraculous powers to gratify Himself. The work of God cannot be accomplished through self-indulgence.

The gifts that God gives to believers are to EQUIP OTHERS for the work of the ministry. These spiritual gifts are not to benefit ourselves. We are not to use the God-given gifts to gain power over others. The gifts that God gives to believers when we come to know Him are intended to meet the needs of others!

John 4:34 - Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 – *“Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.”*

Matthew 4:5-7 – *“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.’”*

Regarding this second temptation, the devil, since he is a spiritual being, somehow physically transported Jesus to the temple pinnacle (platform where a trumpeter sounded the call to the morning sacrifice high atop the temple walls. It was a 450 foot drop to the Kidron Valley below) and told Jesus to jump from the platform as worshippers gathered,

land on His feet 450 feet below, and walk away unharmed. Satan's enticement – the Jews would be convinced by this phenomenal feat and instantly accept Jesus as Messiah. Jesus could forego the agony of the cross. What a breathtaking way to inaugurate His public ministry! The jump would certainly be a crowd pleaser. The Jews anticipated that the Messiah would come suddenly to His Temple (Mal. 3:1)

This isn't God's plan. Jesus didn't come to be swept up by the crowd – to be popular – to be accepted. He came to be hated – to be rejected.

Jesus responds by quoting Deut. 6:16 – *“It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”*

James 1:13 – God is tempted by no one. His character is without evil. God does not respond to temptation. (Jesus' temptation was only “plausible” since He was 100% man/100% God)

For Jesus, was the temptation then real? YES!

Heb. 4:15 – *“He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* Jesus' temptation was REAL. Because Jesus could not sin – He could never succumb to the temptation – so He was tempted to the absolute limit of the capability of Satan to tempt. Jesus never gave in. Every temptation ran to its limit. Jesus took every temptation to its full limit.

Matthew 4:8-9 – *“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 was offering this to Jesus NOW! A bit of a detour in God's plan – wouldn't you say? Was this a legitimate offer?

Luke 4:6 – *“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.’”*

John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11 – he is called “the ruler of this world.”

I John 5:19 – “The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”

II Corinthians 4:4 – he's called “the god of this age.”

All these passages do not proclaim that Satan literally possesses all the nations of the world. What it means is that he rules the system of evil that dominates the nations of the world. Acts 17 – it is God Who sets the boundaries of the nations. It's God in Whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). It's God Who designs and turns the boundaries and times and seasons (Acts 17:26 [see also Dan. 2:20-22]).

Satan doesn't possess the kingdoms of the world. He simply rules the system of evil. He does not determine the nations and who rules the nations. But Satan is a liar. Not only did he not have the power to give it, it wasn't his to begin with. He can't move one inch in any direction outside God's permission and purpose. But he says to Jesus, "I can make

life easier for You, You deserve it, You're the Son of God, You've just heard, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,' and You're supposed to have the kingdoms of the world for Your own. You can forget the cross, I'm willing to give You the whole thing, it's mine, I can give it to whomever I wish and I would like to give it to You. However, there's one condition... Luke 4:7 – *“Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”*

This is why he was kicked out of heaven and why a lake of fire has been prepared for him and the third of the angels who rebelled with him. Satan hasn't changed. He still desires to be worshipped. But that's not enough. Now he wants to be worshiped by the Son of God.

But Jesus knew that before He would wear His crown of glory, He would first wear His crown of thorns. Jesus told John the Baptizer – these things must be done to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus had to submit to the Father – there was no other way. Jesus had to go to the cross to bear our sin – there was no other way. And so Jesus proclaimed. . . .

Matthew 4:10-11 – *“‘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.”*

Jesus knew that He must - through death destroy Satan who had the power of death - and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage – us (Heb. 2:14-15). Jesus had to conquer Satan in the wilderness. He had to conquer him at the cross. He had to conquer him at the tomb. And He is still conquering him by ever living to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). Jesus will conquer Satan when He returns and casts the devil and all of his demons along with all the ungodly into the Lake of Fire, and then destroys the present universe and recreates the new one. Jesus will conquer Satan at every turn. We see here in Jesus' temptation in the wilderness – at the outset of His public ministry, where He puts that conquering power on display for the first time.

### Homework

What was your V8 moment?

Why is the temptation account in Scripture?

How does this temptation account speak to you in your walk with the Lord?

In what ways has God gifted you?

What are some of the temptations prompted by these gifts?

To think about before week 10: why did Jesus call the disciples?