

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Section 7

# JESUS IS TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL

(Parallels: Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13)

TEXT: 4:1-11

1. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered.
3. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.
4. And he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
5. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple,
6. and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and, On their hands they shall bear thee up, Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.
7. Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.
8. Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
9. and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
11. Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why was Jesus *led by the Holy Spirit* to be tempted?
- b. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be tempted in this way?
- c. Why was it necessary for Him to be tempted at this time?
- d. What was wrong with each of the devil's proposals?

- e. Do you think Jesus' temptations were like ours?
- f. Is there any way in which Jesus' temptations do not represent *all* our temptations?
- g. Do you think that Jesus really could have sinned? Why?
- h. How much control does the devil really have over the world?
- i. Can some attraction be a temptation to sin if you do not see the wrong in it?
- j. What do you think is the real secret of Jesus' power amidst the attacks of Satan?
- k. What is Matthew's apparent aim in bringing up Jesus' temptations? Or, what do the temptations prove about Jesus?
- l. How do you think the tempter "came to Jesus"? In person? Did he have a physical, visible body? Or did he communicate with Jesus by putting these suggestions into His mind? (Cf. Ac. 5:3)
- m. Do you think that the temptations of Jesus helped to develop His character or was the character that He already possessed merely tested by them, or both? Do temptations, as they are conquered or allowed to conquer, develop strength of character for good or for evil? Or, do they put to trial the character one already possesses?

### PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was immediately driven by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be put to the test by the devil. He was in the wilderness forty days, eating nothing. Afterward, when they were ended, He was starving. Further, during this period, His only companions were the wild animals of that area.

The tempter approached and said, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Jesus answered, "It was once written and still stands: 'Man cannot live on bread alone: he must depend upon every word that God utters.'" (Dt. 8:3)

Next, the devil took Him to the holy city, Jerusalem, and causing Him to stand on the very highest ledge of the temple, said to Him, "If you are God's Son, throw yourself down from here, for you know what the Psalm (91:11, 12) says,

He will give His angels charge of you to guard you,  
On their hands they will bear you up,  
Lest you should strike your foot against a stone.'"

"Yes," retorted Jesus, "but the Scripture also says (Dt. 6:16), 'You are not to put the Lord your God on trial.'"

The third time, Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain, and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor in a moment of time, suggested, "I will give all this authority and glory to you, for it has been delivered unto me and I can give it to whom I choose. Now, if you will only fall down and worship me . . ."

But Jesus countered, "Get away from me, Satan! The Scripture still means what it said (Dt. 6:13), 'You shall worship the Lord your God and render service only to Him.'"

So when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Jesus, biding his time until another opportunity arose to tempt Him again. Then angels came and took care of Jesus.

## SUMMARY

The Spirit deliberately drove Jesus into the wilderness to be put to the test before the beginning of His ministry. Satan posed three deadly temptations: appetite, audacity and ambition. Jesus repulsed each with a perfect dependence upon God and His Word.

## NOTES

4:1 **Jesus was led up into the wilderness** from the scene of His baptism in the Jordan, which is below sea level, up to the rugged, desolate, barren highlands back of Jericho. The actual location of the temptations is unknown. During the forty days Jesus probably wandered a great deal. Inasmuch as the Jordan flows through a wilderness, the fact that Jesus was *led into* the wilderness must mean the deeper solitude of the rugged uninhabited region of the wilderness of Judea.

Only Jesus can be the original reporter of these trials which follow. It is not certain how He intends that we understand the account. Whether the temptations all took place in the wilderness, the three allurements being offered to the mind's eye of Jesus, or whether Jesus left the wilderness to appear first in Jerusalem and then on the summit of a high mountain, we cannot know. Were these temptations offered to Jesus through mental images suggested to Him by Satan while yet in the desert, or was He literally transported from place to place for temptation in the presence of the physical images of the situations offered by Satan? With their characteristic,

profound simplicity, the writers of the gospels narrate these inner conflicts of soul in story form, in order to render them accessible to all men. This is a real struggle, but how is it described?

1. Matthew and Luke both give the impression that they are narrating an event composed of actual facts just as they occurred.
2. However, they might be narrating a pictorial description through symbolic rather than literal facts. Foster (*Introduction*, 335) observes that the temptations might have been just as graphic and powerful if symbolic and presented from the depths of the wilderness.

While the first two temptations seem to be narrations of actual fact, the third temptation contains several elements that would require special interpretations if a literal view of the whole be taken. (See comments on 4:8)

**Into the wilderness.** Isolation from the "world" is no insulation against temptations. Jesus was placed in this ascetically perfect monastery of the badlands of Judea. His loneliness increased the power and pull of each desire. Beware of the temptation to desire escape from the desires of the world, since you will be taking them along into your isolated retreat. (See special study on *Desires*)

**Led by the Spirit.** The passive verb in no way expresses a human shrinking from the ordeal that lay ahead of Jesus. The popular translation of Mark 1:12 seem to suggest that Jesus was somehow "thrown out" into the desert against His own will, according to the most obvious etymological meaning of *ekballo* ("to throw out"). Yet, there is evidence that *ekballo* can also be used without the connotation of force (Cf. Mt. 9:38; Lk. 10:2; Jn. 10:4; Jas. 2:25; Ac. 16:37). Matthew and Luke use words (*ago* and *anago*) which signify simply "to lead, bring." Thus, rather than being reluctant to face the coming trials, Jesus willingly followed the Spirit's direction. The will of God is clearly seen in the fact that this mighty battle shall be waged at this time and not later in Jesus' ministry. Human wisdom might have postponed this encounter, because it was to be so decisive. But Jesus did not either shrink from the battle nor rashly seek to be tempted. Rather, He sought to be led by God's Spirit.

**To be tempted.** But why did the Spirit put Jesus in this position?

1. Jesus must be put to these extreme tests to develop that moral vigor and firmness that is only acquired through self-discipline under fire. (Cf. Heb. 2:9, 10; 5:8, 9) He must define for Himself and perfect those principles that would govern His ministry, those goals that He would always seek, those interests that would always control Him.
2. He must personally conquer Satan. It is impossible that Satan should not defend himself from the attacks of this One who is come to destroy everything that gave Satan control of this earth's peoples. He must become our Savior from sin by this great victory which reached its climax in His glorious resurrection.
3. He must learn personally the full power of human desires in order to sympathize perfectly with lost tempted men and save them. Only he who has felt all of a temptation's force and yet has stood firm can help those who have fallen. He must know fully what it is like to be a man, so as to qualify Himself to be our Priest and yet be our Sacrifice without blemish. (Cf. Heb. 2:9-18; Phil. 2:7, 8)
4. He must show His tempted followers how to overcome trials by His own impressive example. No apology need be made for Him! He has already faced our temptations and beaten them.

**By the devil.** Satan must have been fully aware of the impact of the outcome of this encounter: if he could vanquish Jesus, even by the smallest triumph conceivable, he could retain the world. But if he failed to subdue Him, then he must relinquish his sway over mankind and, trembling, await his final doom. Satan must have known also the demands of the perfect justice of God: Jesus must be an absolutely sinless sacrifice for sins. No marginal errors in the life of Jesus, once committed, could be corrected, offset or made good. The implication is inescapable that Satan knew that it would be possible for Jesus to sin. Thus, Satan was desperately determined to probe to the utmost this possibility for the moral corruption of God's Champion. The devil had laughed in God's face as, by one seduction or another, he had broken every man of God that had arisen since Adam. Before him now stood God's Best. "So this is God's Messiah? I broke the first Adam and his race; I'll break the Second at once!"

4:2 **He fasted forty days and forty nights.** Luke's terse comment, "He ate nothing," may emphasize an absolute abstinence from all food, or perhaps may be taken relatively to mean "He ate nothing but such as the desert provides, drinking water only." Compare similar expressions in Mt. 3:4 with Mt. 11:18; Lk. 7:33. An absolute and total abstinence from all food and all drink is not physically impossible (Ex. 34:28; I Kg. 19:8). Chronologically, these 40 days are wintry, cold and rainy. This is found by counting backward from the Passover in April, using the chronological notices in Jn. 1:29-43; 2:1-13. Fifty days to two months for the total calculation would push the time back to the beginning of February if not the end of January, depending upon whether the paschal moon occurred near the end of March or beginning of April. How these difficult weather conditions must have added to the Savior's suffering in the wilderness! It was a period perfectly adapted to try the durability of anyone's patient faith and physical endurance out in the wilds of that Judean wilderness. *He fasted.* There is no evidence that Jesus imposed upon Himself any unnecessary austerities. This fast is rather a necessity imposed by His situation in the wilderness, than a self-imposed observance of a law of fasting. (See notes on 6:16-18)

**Afterward he hungered.** He was so deeply engrossed in thought, prayer and planning of His short whirlwind ministry that lay ahead that He did not notice the effects of His fasting. Certainly, He felt normal hunger pains before; this is now starvation. The suggestion is made by some that the body of Jesus did not feel hunger of the forty-day fast until its conclusion, either because it was miraculously sustained during that period, or else because its power of endurance far exceeds ours since it was wholly unaffected by sin. Both views mistake both the nature of the body of Jesus and the will of God for His Son. God willed that Jesus should be made in every respect like mankind (Heb. 2:14, 17). To suppose special provisions and protections for Jesus is to create for Him that condition Satan desired: a compromise of His incarnation by using special means to sustain Himself. Further, moral freedom from sin does not give Jesus freedom from "the same nature" that man shares (Heb. 2:9, 10, 14, 17) or from "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Ro. 8:2).

What was Jesus doing during this forty-day period? Probably He was wrestling with the great problems He must soon resolve: How shall He, as God's Messiah, save a world that has fallen before Satan's enticements? Will He measure up to the great expectations

expressed by the Father at His baptism? How shall He perfect the plans of His heart? He knew the views and feelings of Israel, their expectations, their prejudices, their sins. If He submitted to the will of God by offering them a spiritual kingdom founded upon spiritual principles, He would have to stand practically alone against the whole nation. It would mean only helpless, hopeless suffering of all their misunderstandings, betrayals and their ultimate rejection. It would mean, finally, the lonely, bitter agonies of a cross. How could He hope to convince them? There are times when men must stop thinking and act; this is a time when Jesus must not act until He has thought through every move He must make. How often, after some great crisis in our experience, we regret that we made the move or said the words we did, or perhaps we see how the issue of that crisis could have been so much happier, had we reacted to it in some other fashion. So critical is every move, every speech, every attitude, that Jesus will have no room for misjudgment or error. Each day spent in that Judean desert only increased His sense of utter loneliness as He foresaw how difficult it would be to train those few disciples whose minds would be the most open. The seeming futility of such an endeavor as the proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom must have weighed down upon Jesus with oppressive force as He grew physically weaker. It was then that the tempter came.

## I. APPETITE

4:3 **The tempter came.** Since both Mark and Luke declare that during His fast, Jesus was being tempted (present participle: *peirazomenos*), it would seem that the three temptations narrated were either extended over that forty-day period, or else they are selected by Jesus as typical of the whole range of sinful suggestions offered Him. It could also indicate that, though He was being tempted over the entire period, the intensity of the allurements has just been stepped up. The devil came in person. The outcome of this struggle was to be so decisive, the stakes so high, he could entrust this attack to no lesser agent. He must permit no bungling, no excuses for failure.

**The Tempter:** we have just as much evidence for believing that he exists as an evil personality as we have evidence for a personal God, for our knowledge of their existence rests upon the same testimony, that of Jesus. If Jesus merely accommodated His words to the

popular error of "those unenlightened times," then what He reveals about God loses its value to declare otherwise unknowable truth, since this too might be mere accommodation to popular error. Jesus has left no way for His interpreters to know when He might have been accommodating and when He was revealing unadulterated truth. He claimed to be the very revelation of God Himself and, unless He be charged with dishonesty, ignorance or insanity, then His words are to be accepted as stating the actual case. Further, He did not merely "accommodate" for only one or two occasions (if, in fact, He ever did), for He had much to reveal about the spirit world over which Satan is chief. (See Mt. 12:22-29; 13:19, 38, 39; 25:41; Mk. 3:22; 4:15; Lk. 8:12; 10:18; 11:14-23; 13:16; 22:31; Jn. 8:44; 12:41; 13:2, 27; 14:30. Study also Ac. 5:3; 26:18; II Co. 2:11; 4:4; 11:14; 12:7; Eph. 2:2; 6:11; I Th. 2:9, 18; Jas. 4:7; I Pe. 5:8, 9; I Jn. 3:8, 10; Rev. 2:9; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 3, 8, 10.)

**If you are God's Son** could have two meanings, both of which serve the devil's purposes:

1. There was no doubt in Satan's mind but these words are intended to taunt Jesus, inciting Him to prostitute His divine powers to selfish purposes: "No doubt you ARE God's Son and thus equipped with miraculous powers that could at once feed your starving stomach. Admitted that you ARE His Beloved, are you not being unjustly deprived of something good? Should you, of all persons, suffer thus? And, YOU can do miracles! You could put an end to your present suffering and doubts about how to use your wonderful power. You will become the visible possessor of this power and the food will provide the strength to begin your life work." This is an invitation to doubt God's goodness and providential care.
2. There was no doubt in Satan's mind but these words are intended to incite doubt in Jesus: "Has God really said, 'You are my beloved Son, 'and then left you to starve? Were you REALLY God's Son, as God seemed to suggest at your baptism, could such a Father be trusted who leaves His 'well-beloved' out here in the wilderness to die? If you had such powers worthy of such a Son as God would claim, then you could furnish me proof and at the same time satisfy that gnawing hunger!" Jesus could be tempted in this case to rebuke Satan by giving miraculous proof of His identity, but



to have done so would have resulted in obedience to Satan's sinful suggestion. This is the provocation to doubt God's truthfulness.

3. The possibility that Satan doubted Jesus' Sonship is not too likely, else he would not have staked so much upon the conquest of Jesus. It is more likely that Satan tempted Jesus so thoroughly because he knew exactly who He was.

At the very heart of this suggestion lies the problem of the very existence of Jesus: He was alone in the wilderness and about to starve to death. Surely He had come from heaven for greater purposes than to perish unknown right there in the desert suffering such torture. A man must live, it is said. Did not Jesus have the right to live, even if it meant to create food miraculously for the sustenance of His life?

4:4 **It is written!** Jesus' citations of Deuteronomy (6:13, 16; 8:3) demonstrate two tremendous conclusions:

1. Jesus Himself is choosing to control His desires by bringing them into subjection to the will of God as revealed in His Word (Study the implications of the truth as applied to life, Ro. 8)
2. Because Jesus is also God's Anointed, sent to reveal God's mind, His citation of Deuteronomy stamps the Penteteuch collection of the first five books of the Old Testament as the Word of God. Let those who are confused by the multitudinous and contradictory critical theories on the origin of those books hear the voice of Jesus!

Whatever the devil's meaning in his equivocal phrase, "If you are the Son of God," Jesus did not reply to it by direct demonstration of His identity either by miraculous proof that Satan had demanded or by enlightening debate sustaining the proposition, "I am God's Son." Rather, He reveals a more basic question involved, a problem that touches every man: "What is the true ground of man's being? Is it matter or spirit? Is it bread or the word of God? What really sustains man?" (Cf. Psa. 19:7-11; 119; Jn. 1:1-3; I Jn. 2:17; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:1-3; cf. "word of God" in II Pet. 3:5, 7.) Jesus graphically declares the true foundation of man's being to be "anything God says."

If one is faced with the choice of a life compromised by sin, or a death for righteousness, he does not HAVE to live. A man may choose to starve to death, rather than steal food. On the anvil of this wilderness experience is hammered out Jesus' decision: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work." (Jn. 4:34) It is far better to starve for sake of a right principle than to eat food misappropriated.

Here Jesus was fighting like a dying man as our Champion who faced this very real battle at His very weakest. Yet, if He is to save others, Himself He cannot save. Self-denial is the rule of His kingdom. Yes, even the Son of God will live as every other man, without special provision. He will not make an exception for Himself, for doing so would have compromised the purpose of His incarnation. "He was made in all things like unto His brethren" for the specific purpose of "suffering being tempted" and to "help them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15). Therefore, He never utilized supernatural power to alleviate His hunger, thirst, weariness, pain or grief.

If Satan suggested that Jesus, as God's Son, has a right to help Himself to miraculously-created bread, Jesus ignores this advice by revealing an even wider trust in God than that which one would expect in a miracle worker: "Man, any man and not merely God's Son, should trust God and live according to God's Word, rather than according to their fleshly needs. God knows my hunger and He is completely trustworthy to provide in His own way. He will not give me stones when I need loaves!" (Cf. Mt. 6:32; 7:9)

Further, Jesus depended upon His Bible for guidance, not upon special supernatural wisdom. He used the weapon against Satan, that is available to every man. (Cf. Eph. 6:17) Jesus had learned these Scriptures. Only because He had stored His memory full with them, meditated their meaning and related them to the practical problems of life—only because He had so thoroughly saturated Himself, in the same way in which any other man could learn God's Word, only thus did these texts come to Him "naturally." Here is written our condemnation: have we such a command of our Scriptures that we are able to expose Satan's lies for what they are? Do we live in such daily contact with the truth that the false is immediately exposed because of the contrast?

If Jesus had miraculous power, whence came it? To whom did He owe it? Since He depended upon the Father even for this power (Jn. 5:19-36), could the Father not be trusted for bread? Of course

He can. So Jesus will show the trust of any true son of God. Though it is not immediately apparent from the circumstances how God will provide the food, yet Jesus will wait and trust Him. The context of the OT passage, on which Jesus' resolute refusal depends, makes His words ring the more truly. Read the whole eighth chapter of Deuteronomy to appreciate the full impact of Jesus' answer.

Note that Jesus did not seek to change His circumstances. He could have wished that He had not been caught hungry, unknown and uncrowned. Rather, He dealt with the temptation exactly as it came to Him in that circumstance. It is yet another temptation to think when tempted that, were the circumstances different, the response would have been better. But the very purpose of God for letting men be tempted or tried is to produce men who will do God's will under whatever circumstance.

Whether this temptation is messianically symbolic or not, certain results with messianic implications would have followed from Jesus' surrender to it. Had Jesus used His miraculous power to satisfy Himself in this one case, it would have been much easier to use it thus to relieve some of the stresses, strains and painful moments of His ministry.

How do we face this same temptation under other forms? Are we ever tempted to use what is in our power for our own selfish ends? What about the money we have earned? Our talents? Exists there a church that has never said to itself, "I must build my cathedral before considering the needs for more evangelism, more Christian education and care for the old folks and orphans"? Or, lives there a Christian anywhere who, during some crisis, has never wondered, "Does God really know I exist, that I suffer thus? Does He really care?"

## II. AUDACITY

4:5 **Then the devil taketh him.** The verb "took" is probably to be understood in the same sense in which the Spirit "led" Jesus up from the Jordan, since the Greek verbs are the same in both cases.

Mt. 4:1 uses *anago*; Lk. 4:1, 5, 9 uses *ago* and *anago*, whereas in the parallel of Mt. 4:5, 8 *paralambano* is substituted without apparent change in meaning.

**Pinnacle of the temple in the holy city.** In Jerusalem the most imposing height offering the longest fall would be the southeast

corner of the temple court, a point which towered above the Kedron valley some 300-400 feet, depending upon where measurement was taken. Arndt-Gingrich define the word *pterugion* ("pinnacle") as the "tip, end, edge, extremity or summit of something." Edersheir, *Life*, I, 244) describes a tower that was supposed to have been located on that corner, raising the height to 450 feet. Any point in the temple area so high that a fall from it would be fatal is probably all that is meant.

**4:6 Cast thyself down.** One feature of this temptation might not be so apparent to us upon first reading of the text, for the temptation to presumption lies most directly upon the surface and easy to see without reflection. This is so because of Jesus' reply to Satan. Yet, any precipice in the desert would have sufficed for the mere physical of leaping from the heights to be safely, gently landed upon the ground borne upon the hands of the angels. But why, then, *the temple's pinnacle?* Is the devil suggesting that the crowded courts or streets below would provide a fitting theatre onto which the Lord could leap to begin His marvelous ministry with a "sign from heaven" which would command the instant belief and loyal obedience of the Jews? Is he opening before Him the easy successes possible to a Superman, obscuring the lasting results that God sought through preaching, teaching and daily fellowship, however slow and difficult that latter way might be? If so, in succumbing to this suggestion, Jesus would be committing God to a course of action, forcing the Father to justify ever greater sensations, a course foredoomed to failure. Faith that would depend upon such signs is not the confident trust that God seeks.

If Satan is not placing before Jesus the allurements to descend, borne of angels into the midst of priests and people, but rather is trying to trap Jesus in His personal response to God, then this is a temptation to fanatic presumption. Satan could well know how prone human nature is to go to opposite extremes. Jesus had just demonstrated so beautiful a trust in the heavenly Father in answer to the first temptation, that the tempter now takes advantage of this human proneness to extremes by suggesting, "All right, if you are going to trust God so much, show your faith by something more spectacular, more decisive than mere patient hunger! Put some specific promise of God to some clear-cut test. Psalm 91:11, 12 promises you God's protection for just such a case as this. So throw yourself down from

this dizzy height to the solid rock below! By so doing, you can demonstrate your unquestioning faith in God, and show yourself to be the Messiah to those who see this thrilling sign from heaven!"

What would be more justifiable than such a leap? Yet, Jesus' answer reveals the fallacy. The urge to hazard His life merely to prove His trust in God and demonstrate His Sonship, would really have meant to doubt God's express declaration and presumptuously to put God on trial. Such a trial is the more presumptuous because God had already proved often enough that He keeps His Word. The devil's suggestion deliberately obscures the weightier question whether God must yield to every unreasonable whim of those fanatics who, while protesting faith in God, demonstrate practical disbelief of His declarations by putting Him to a test.

**He shall give His angels charge concerning thee.** The Psalm (91:11, 12) that Satan quotes, when read in its entirety, fits the situation quite exactly. The whole Psalm depicts the security against various dangers, that is enjoyed by the man who trusts God. Hence, it applies to any son of God. Satan has merely invented a particular test to which God's general promise may be put to see if He will keep His Word. The deception does not rest in a supposed misquotation of the verses by Satan (he left out "to keep thee in all thy ways"), because Jesus accepted the quotation as being substantially correct. The Psalm, however, does not teach that man may choose the path nor may he command God to act by rescuing him from the extremes of man's follies. Rather, it means that in faith man must follow God, letting God be God. In this latter frame of reference, man will enjoy the blessed security of God's providence. The trap is hidden in the phrase "to see if He will keep His word . . ."

**4:7 Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.**

Again Jesus shows that He will not run before God, but chooses rather to be led by Him. He clearly will not, of His own choice, create unnecessary dangers, but will avoid them unless they fall in the path of obedience to the Father's will. He shows Himself to be a man of common sense, true sanity and genuine wisdom. Neither will He seek to place God under obligation to back His plans for His ministry. Though Satan had made it appear otherwise, it took more trust in God NOT to leap than to do so. Jesus answers simply, "Testing is not trusting."

Study the disappointing but enlightening history of Israel for its examples of those who made trial of God: Ex. 14:10-12; 16:3; 17:1-7; Num. 14:1-11; 21:4, 5. Compare the divine commentary on these examples, offered in I Cor. 10:6-11 and Heb. 3:1—4:11. Testing God not only involves disbelief of His promises but also may involve disobedience to His specific commands not to make trial of Him. The end result may be open rebellion. Falsifying in money matters is one way to try God (Ac. 5:3, 4, 9). Changing the basis of salvation is called by Peter "putting God on trial" (Ac. 15:10).

This question of forcing God to back up His Servant Jesus will come up again in Jesus' ministry, suggested by the impudent challenges of the Jews, demanding that He "show a sign from heaven." (Mt. 12:38f; Lk. 11:16; Mt. 16:1-4) In their presence He could have called upon God to perform stupendous feats in nature. Hanging on the cross, He would have occasion to remember this moment, for other voices would jeer, "He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Mt. 27:43)

Again, Jesus demonstrated that He knew His Bible. He corrected a common misuse of God's promises by showing that the interpretation of those promises, which was offered by Satan, contradicted the clear command of God. (Dt. 6:16)

### III. AMBITION

4:8 **exceeding high mountain.** If a literal view of these temptations be taken, this verse contains several elements that would require special interpretation:

1. **An exceeding high mountain.** Supernatural vision must be assumed, since no known mountain peak however high could provide such a literal panorama as the Evangelists describe.
2. **He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world.** If all the world's kingdoms be taken in its absolute sense, some special vision is required. However, if it be taken in a relative sense to include only those visible to the naked eye as representative of all, then it is possible to take a literal view of the text, since vast panoramic views are afforded by a number of Palestinean peaks.

3. **And the glory of them.** This is a quality of those kingdoms not visible to any normal, naked eye; hence, the phrase must imply a miraculous, if not a mental, vision.
4. Luke adds "**in a moment of time**" (4:5), apparently compressing the extent of such a vision into a few minutes.

There is no difficulty in assuming that Jesus had supernatural vision to see all that Satan offered or in assuming that Satan drew word pictures of all the world's kingdoms and their glories, because, as a matter of fact, the Evangelists do not tell how "he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world."

4:9 **All these things will I give thee.** Since Satan offered Jesus "kingdoms," he must have known what question was keenly before His mind: how He would establish the kingdom of God. This fact made Jesus a particularly clear target for this attack. Note that the phrase, "If you are God's Son," is missing. Even to have mentioned Jesus' Sonship at this time would not have served the devil's purposes to make Him relax His grip on the Father in order to worship the tempter.

Satan is desperately laying his trap, "If Jesus is really a man of faith and common sense, surely He will take the shortest, most direct route to that universal control He is seeking. If I can just maneuver His natural desire for power and the normal wish to avoid difficulty and suffering, perhaps I can make him an offer He cannot refuse." Turning to Jesus, the tempter spoke, "Look, Jesus, look! What do you see? You see the grandeur of a thousand kingdoms passing before your eyes. Look at that uncounted wealth and stunning beauty! It could be yours. Do you hear those sounds? They are the tramping feet of soldiers marching at your command. It is the busy hum of commerce and industry creating new wealth to pour at your feet in tribute, It is the shout of lusty voices proclaiming you universal ruler of the earth. As the prince of this world, I am in a position to offer you all this!"

How much control does the devil really hold over the world? If Jesus knew that Satan were lying, then this would have been no great temptation. It is worthy of note that He did not call Satan a liar for saying that these kingdoms were his to give. However, if he is telling the truth, then the ambitions of Jesus could be realized in an instant and the "inevitable" cross could be avoided.

As stated, this was an apparently rational offer and a very desirable proposal. The kingdom of Satan is no figure of speech, because the Gospels contain constant reference to the power of Satan in the world as a reign opposed to God. (Cf. Mt. 12:25-28; Lk. 11:17; see also Mt. 6:13; 13:19, 25, 39; 25:41; Lk. 10:18; 22:3, 28, 31; Jn. 8:44; 12:31; 13:27; 14:30; 16:11.) Satan speaks as if he were the *rightful* ruler in *complete* control of the whole world (Lk. 4:6). This is certainly false, because the fact that he so persistently seeks to tempt and master men proves that he does not yet completely possess them. Further, whatever authority he may possess is by usurpation.

Humanly speaking, Jesus needed everything that the devil was offering. He had no reputation, no formal religious education or degrees from accredited universities, no powerful friends who could exert their influence in His favor in a world where men advance their causes by treading upon each other. Yet, He is contemplating the advancing of His Father's rule by spiritual methods and by the conversion of single individuals to His message of ideals. He well understood that this latter approach would be the slowest, most difficult, most discouraging and finally the most disappointing of the two choices.

Assuming that Satan is telling the truth, how could he really give all the human kingdoms to Jesus? Simply by fulfilling all of the most common Jewish conceptions of the messianic kingdom! Satan could rally the entire Jewish nation around Jesus, restore to Him the throne and glory of David, force the nations to bring all their wealth to Jerusalem and put every Jew on state payrolls. How often the echo of Satan's whisper was heard! (Mt. 16:22; Lk. 22:49(?); Jn. 6:14, 15; 7:3, 4; 12:32-34; 18:36; Ac. 1:6) Jesus could forget the hardships, the confusion, the rejection, the cross, and He could so much more simply establish His world dominion.

**If you will fall down and worship me.** These are Satan's terms. He chooses his words carefully, because upon them depends his ultimate success. Satan is neither ignorant nor stupid. He knows that worship basically involves the acknowledgement of him as true lord and rightful disposer of kingdoms. If he can entice Jesus into admitting His dependence upon him rather than God, then he will have tricked Jesus into transgressing the most basic commandment known (Dt. 5:7-9; 6:4, 13) To the western ear, the word "worship" would immediately have warned of the idolatry involved. But Satan uses a general word (*proskuneo*, see note on 2:2) that may suggest



no more than the obeisance rendered by an inferior to a superior among men. If only "worship as if offered only to God" were meant, Jesus would have immediately drawn back in holy horror with the result that, for Jesus, all of the enticement would be stricken from the temptation merely by stating it. Admittedly, Satan's choice of words is admirable, because of the ambiguity.

By putting in the condition which demanded at least oriental obeisance, Satan subtly presses Jesus for a compromise. Perhaps he intends the compromising of Jesus' ideal of "a kingdom not of this world" in favor of a worldly kingdom. Jesus could still rule the world by using Satan's methods: war, political intrigues, brute force. Satan presents this attractive offer as a real, immediate victory for Jesus, when in reality it would have been His real surrender. The transfer would be only an illusion. It is that old perennial lie: "You may be your own king, do as you please, as long as you are my servant!"

But has there ever existed a church or a Christian which has not surrendered to Satan Jesus' ideal, "the kingdom of God," for a greater share of the control of the world's kingdoms? Who has not, at one time or another, mistaken might for right and regimentation for regeneration? How often has ambition to rule conquered those who have conquered all else!

4:10 High above this moving scene of glory and beauty which Satan paints before the eyes of Jesus, the Son of God can see another vision: the Kingdom of God in which men of every tribe, people, nation and tongue come streaming from afar, bringing all their wealth, glory, praise and service to lay them down in humble worship at His feet. He can see the day of His coronation at His Father's right hand, enthroned to reign until all His enemies should be made the footstool of His feet, until every tongue confess to the glory of God that Jesus Christ is Lord! God had already promised His Son universal world control (Psa. 2:7-12). The offer of Satan is exposed for what it really is: a tarnishing glitter, a crumbling pile of stones, dying men, ashes and dust.

**Get thee hence, Satan.** This practical expression of idolatry that Satan has offered Jesus is too much. Satan has lost. He has no more to offer the Master. Jesus' shout clarifies the issues: "Satan, the end never justifies the means. The kingdom that I desire has at its very heart the bringing of worship only to the Lord God, not the

crowning of your original rebellion. I cannot divide my allegiance nor compromise God's will even as a means to a holy end, for to do so would contaminate the result. Therefore, the means of establishing my kingdom must also be holy: teaching men to worship and serve only God!" From this moment, the victory cry will continue to ring down through time, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!" (Jn. 16:33)

4:11 **Then the devil leaveth him**, baffled and disappointed. Satan is not invincible. This smashing victory of Jesus and all the battles won by those who dare use Jesus' methods prove it. (I Co. 10:13; Eph. 6:10-18; I Pet. 5:8, 9) The conquest of Satan in these three temptations does not mean that Jesus was tempted by all possible temptations, for temptations come in infinite variations. But He was tempted at all points at which temptation can touch a soul. This is one of the world's greatest moments. It has just been proved that one human being, reduced to his weakest physical extremity and seduced by Satan's deadliest suggestions, by sheer trust in God, by unhesitating refusals and by unrelenting reliance upon God's revelation, could resist temptation and refuse to sin. Jesus has just shown that it was possible for all men not to sin.

Luke notes (4:13) that the devil departed until other opportunities should present themselves for further attack. Further temptations came later (Mk. 1:32-39; Jn. 6:14, 15; Mt. 16:23; Lk. 22:28; Mt. 27:40-43).

**Angels came and ministered unto him.** He who would not have Satan's satellites as His servants, is now served by God's servants. (Mt. 26:53; Jn. 1:51; Heb. 1:6-14; cf. I Kg. 19:5ff) If they brought Him food, then His faith, which trusted God to the limit, is further justified in this significant way. (Cf. 4:3, 4)

## FACT QUESTIONS

1. List the temptations of Jesus, noting the differences in the various Gospel reports.
2. Tell why Jesus was tempted at each point, noting to what human characteristics Satan made his appeal each time.
3. How did Jesus meet each temptation? Be specific about each one.
4. What do Jesus' temptations mean to us?
5. Is there any connection between the temptations of Jesus and what was said about Him at the time of His baptism?

6. Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness?
7. What wilderness was it?
8. What was the Holy Spirit's purpose in taking Jesus there?
9. Why was not Jesus hungry until after the fast? (Cf. 4:2)
10. How could Satan have shown Jesus all of the world's kingdoms?
11. Explain what is meant by "tempting God."
12. Did the world's kingdoms really belong to Satan?
13. Did the temptations have any relation to Jesus' world mission? If so, what relationship?
14. What is the relationship between knowing the Word and will of God and resisting temptations?
15. What does Jesus' use of the OT as the final authority for His actions reveal about:
  - a. The OT as the progressive revelation given by God to a particular people?
  - b. the application of the Bible in general to particular problems faced by the believer?
16. What are temptations? Wherein does their real power lie? Can they always be recognized? If so, under what circumstances? If not, why not? Why should we pray to avoid temptations (Mt. 6:13)? Why does God allow His Son and His children to be tempted? Is something a temptation if one cannot see the wrong in it?

### SPECIAL STUDY: TEMPTATION

#### I. THE LORD'S LIABILITY TO ALLUREMENT.

A. *Could Jesus be tempted so as to sin?* Yes must be the unequivocal response, because His incarnation necessitates it. If we are to believe that Jesus was to be tempted in *all* respects in which a human being is tempted (Heb. 4:15), then we are led to the realization that His subjection to every sort of human seduction must have begun long before the period forty days after His baptism. His birth was unique and miraculous, but His youth was normal in the human environment of Nazareth. His adult life indeed was marvelous, one-of-a-kind, yet fully human. It must be ever remembered that the Word was God before He became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1-14), but that fact must never be made to cast doubt upon the reality of the flesh in which He dwelt (Heb. 2:14). With the Father He shares these characteristics:

1. He lived without sin (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:21; 3:18; Jn. 8:46; I Jn. 3:5; II Cor. 5:21).
2. He faultlessly expressed God's character and nature (II Cor. 4:4-6; Jn. 8:29; 10:30; 12:45; Col. 1:15-19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3).
3. He fulfilled all of God's purposes (Jn. 10:17, 18, 36-38; 12:27; 15:10; Eph. 1:3-11; II Cor. 5:19).
4. He maintained that unique contact with God in a union unknown to all human experience and unshared by any other (Jn. 1:1-14; 10:30; 5:19, 20; 12:49, 50; 14:10, 11).

However, there are significant differences between the Father and the Son:

1. God cannot be tempted with evil, while Jesus was subject to all human temptations (Jas. 1:13; Heb. 2:14-18; Heb. 4:15) although He did not surrender Himself to any.
2. God is not subject to spiritual growth (I Pet. 1:16; Mt. 5:48), while Jesus advanced toward spiritual maturity (Lk. 2:40, 52; Heb. 2:10-18; 5:7-9), qualifying Himself to be man's Savior.
3. The Father was the object of Jesus' faith and the Hearer of His prayers (Heb. 5:7; Mt. 11:25, 26; Jn. 11:41, 42). Although Jesus was the Revealer of the mind of God, yet He received the Word of God as already revealed in the OT, putting His trust in it and obeying its precepts impeccably.
4. Jesus was born subject to law (Gal. 4:4); God was not. "Born under law" to Jesus meant responsibility for keeping or breaking it. If Jesus could not sin by breaking law, the law would be meaningless to Him.
5. The point of Jesus' assumption of human nature is that He might die for man's sins (Heb. 2:9, 14, 15); God could not die. (Cf. I Ti. 1:17; 6:16)
6. Jesus was fully man (Ro. 5:17-21; I Co. 15:21; Ac. 17:31), a body for the dwelling of all the fulness of Deity (Col. 1:19; 2:9)

The incarnation is the unique <sup>ex</sup>perience of Jesus only. He was thoroughly *man* and thoroughly *deity*. Human ignorance and per-

sonal "lack of" experience of this verity does not militate against its historicity. It is to be received on the strength of Jesus' truthfulness and His authority to reveal it.

There are several consequences that follow from believing that He could not actually be tempted to sin. Rejection of all that the Scriptures say regarding His human nature is serious enough, for that blames God for condemning man without knowing what being a man is really like. Further, if Jesus did not genuinely share all our human desires, His victory over Satan is a hollow, meaningless conquest as far as it concerns our facing of temptations. In that case, He could not provide us a true example that would help us to overcome, since there would always remain in us the suspicion that Jesus was some sort of angelic machine which "could not be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses."

But the Scripture evidences the fact that Jesus could sin by surrender to the devil's enticements. Out of this truth flow exciting conclusions.

1. Jesus has felt the fullest intensity of every temptation to sin, because He did not yield. It is not the man who is allured before feeling the last full measure of temptation who fully understands that seduction before which he has fallen, nor can he be perfectly sympathetic with other sinners in their trials, for he sinned before knowing the full power of the enticement. Only the sinless Jesus, who has resisted the pull of the desire clear to its end, can effectively come to the aid of those who have fallen.
2. Jesus conquered Satan, not as God but as man, any man, could have repelled the tempter. By using no special defenses available only to the "Son of God," He wrestled sin's mightiest champion as would any "son of God"—and won! But by doing this, He strikes from our mouths all of the lame excuses we offer for our sins. By *risking* all of Jesus' purity, and consequently, the world's salvation, on the outcome of such temptations as those in the wilderness, God shows for all eternity the inexcusability of human sin. Were there any question before, now no doubt is left as to why God is justified in sending the whole human race to hell. (Ro. 3:9, 19, 20, 23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22)

B. *Wherein was Jesus tempted?* The hesitation to admit the liability of our Lord to temptation is probably traceable to defective

views of His nature. These arise out of a natural tendency to over-emphasize either His deity or His manhood. Also the feebleness of human language to express such majestic truth as the incarnation of God "in 25 words or less," often cripples the truth rather than strengthens or clarifies it. May we generalize just to this extent: if the baptismal event of Jesus says to the world that this Man was God, then the temptation experience proclaims to all ages that this God also became Man. It is from this latter point of view that we study His temptations.

Jesus was perfectly sinless before and after the temptations, but He was a perfectly sinless *human* with all the desires that characterize life in the human body. Incarnation brings with it the characteristics of the *carnis*, flesh, one of which is temptability. But what is temptation?

A temptation is anything that throws the character into the crisis of choice. This is done by an incitement of *natural desires* to go beyond the limits set. Temptation is also a conflict of loyalties, a putting other good things above one's first loyalties. (Cf. Mt. 10:36 with Mk. 3:21; Jn. 12:27) The power of temptation lies in *human desires*. These are created by God in the make-up of the human personality, but may all be stimulated by Satan to thwart God's purpose for those desires. The Greeks had one word for these God-given desires (*epithumia*), a word which they used to describe right desires or longings as well as desires for something forbidden. The complex of desires in the human personality, as God designed it, is like a powerful rocket which can hurl an astronaut into space to explore the universe and advance man's knowledge, or it can hurl a nuclear warhead at other men to destroy lives. The rocket has the capacity for both operations. What it actually does depends upon who determines its use and controls it. The desires in our personality serve as fuel and power for the rocket, while our conscience is the guidance system. Thus, what we do depends upon the orientation data fed into our conscience, which, in turn, controls our desires. But, unlike the electronic brain in the rocket, our conscience can be affected by our desires, and it is exactly at these desires that temptations make their attack. If so, then Jesus, "who was tempted in all points like as we are (*kata panta kath' homoiotêta*)," felt the stress and strain of His basic human desires. But what are these desires? We shall see them more clearly as we are led to understand . . .

## II. OUR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SINFUL SUGGESTION.

A, *A Matter of Desire*. The Christian view of personal desires is expressed by James: "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires." (Jas. 1:14 RSV) The following passages clarify this view. The Greek words, which are used to express the desire, are included in parenthesis for further comparison. Note that the passages are arranged into two groups: those expressions of right and proper desires, and those expressions that degenerate human desire into passion and lust. The more significant passages are printed in *italic* type.

## GOOD, PROPER EXPRESSIONS OF DESIRE      DESIRE AS LUST, PASSION

*(epithumia, epithumēō)*

Mt. 13:17; Lk. 15:16; 16:21; 17:22; 22:15; *Gal. 5:17*; Phil. 1:23; I Th. 2:17; I Tim. 3:1; Heb. 6:11; I Pet. 1:12; I Jn. 2:15-17 (?)

*(epipothēō)*

Ro. 1:11; Phil. 1:8; 2:26; II Co. 5:2; 7:7, 11; 9:14; I Th. 3:6; II Tim. 1:4; *I Pet. 2:2*

*(zēloō)*

I Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39; II Cor. 11:2; *Gal. 4:18 (?)*

*(thelō)*

*Mt. 16:24*; 19:21; 26:39; *Mk. 10:43, 44*; 14:36; *Jn. 7:17*; 15:7; 12:21; *Ro. 7:15, 18, 19*

*(zēteō)*

*Mt. 6:21, 33*; *Lk. 12:31, 34*; *Jn. 5:30, 44*; 7:18; 8:50; *Ro. 2:7*; *Col. 3:1ff*; II Cor. 12:14

*(epizēteō)*: *Heb. 13:14**(oregomai)*: *Heb. 11:16**(eudokia)*: *Ro. 10:1*; *II Th. 1:11**(epithumia, epithumēō)*

Mt. 5:28; *Mk. 4:19*; Jn. 8:44; Ac. 20:33, 34; Ro. 1:24; 6:12; 7:7f; 13:9, 14; I Co. 10:6; *Gal. 5:16, 17, 24*; *Eph. 2:3*; 4:22; *Col. 3:5*; I Th. 4:5; *I Tim. 6:9*; II Tim. 2:22; 3:6; 4:3; Tit. 2:12; 3:3; Jas. 1:14; 4:2; I Pet. 1:14; 2:11; 4:2, 3; II Pet. 1:4; 2:10; 3:3; *I Jn. 2:15-17*; Jd. 16, 18; Rev. 9:6

*(zēloō)*

I Cor. 13:4

*(thelō)*

*Mt. 16:25*; Jn. 5:40; 6:67; 8:44; I Th. 3:10

Some OT examples of good desires are the following: Ps. 21:2; 27:4; 37:4; 145:19; Prov. 10:24; 11:23; II Chron. 15:15; Isa. 26:8)

The following is a list of desires common to every man. As you respond to their force in your life, who or what governs what you will do about their demands?

1. The desire to PRESERVE SELF: satisfying body needs for food, clothing, shelter; self-defense by flight or fighting; repulsion.
2. MATING desires: sex; care for family; the appeal of one's young.
3. SOCIAL desires; gregariousness; companionship; approval; self-assertion; pride; ambition; competition.
4. Desires to SUBMIT: tendency to imitate heroes; conform to law; to regard higher powers with respect.
5. ACQUISITIVE desires: joy of ownership.
6. CREATIVE desires: pleasure of being a power or a cause capable of creating or destroying.
7. AESTHETIC desires: enjoyment of the beautiful.

Though God has integrated these desires into our personality, yet they are the very targets of Satan's keenest temptations. Let it never be thought that Jesus, as Man, did not experience every one of these desires. Certainly, the incitements to sin came to Jesus from without; nevertheless, appeal was made to what truly existed within Him. It seems that the tempter can pit one or two of these desires against each other and against other desires in such an unshakeable combination that we become confused about which way is right! (See Ro. 7:13-25)

How often perfectly good attitudes and desires are so close to sinful desires and a godless mentality! Here is another reason why we have such difficulty steering a straight course through life. Compare the following short list of good traits that Satan can twist into vices:

Caution and prudence is so often close to cowardice and indecision.

Belief taken without sufficient evidence becomes credulity.

Agreeableness and tact are often mistaken for compromise and falsehood.



Concentration of one's devotion may become just bigotry or fanaticism.

Confidence may swell into cocksureness and presumption.

Contentment oversleeps into self-satisfaction and appeasement.

Frugality and farsightedness struggles with miserliness and greed.

Humility could devolve into blind submissiveness.

Righteousness when praised nurtures hypocrisy.

Tolerance of too much becomes indiscrimination.

Curiosity about the affairs of others becomes meddling and nosiness.

An inquiring mind, when it refuses to know, becomes agnostic.

Broad-mindedness is close to spinelessness, too often without strong convictions.

But resolution is near to stubbornness.

And bravery or fearlessness is nigh unto folly and foolishness.

By taking advantage of the natural needs expressed by human desires, Satan makes his allurements appear harmless. What often makes a temptation so attractive is the list of apparently excellent reasons for going along with it. The only true safeguard against this confusion is to seek to know and obey God as our deepest desire and highest joy. Perhaps the most enlightening spiritual exercise to discover our vulnerability to temptation is simply to ask ourselves what we desire. Here are some problems for reflection that will help one see himself as temptation's target:

1. What is the **ONE** compelling loyalty, interest or desire of my life?
2. What one goal am I seeking to accomplish with my life?
3. What or where is the true treasure of my heart? For what do I spend the most of my money? my leisure time? my conversation among friends?
4. How do all my other basic desires align themselves with the one basic motivation for my life? Or, how may these be subordinated to it when conflicts arise?
5. In my social relationships, whose praise do I seek?

Other questions might be helpful. But, in the light of these suggested, it is seen that the problems in resisting temptations and solving conflicts of interest involve all that makes us men. This is why sin is not a single act unrelated to what we are. This is also the reason why conversion to Jesus cannot be reduced to a mechanical five-point ritual, but must mean the commitment of every thought and desire to obedience to Him:

B. *Some Lessons to be Learned:*

1. There are two viewpoints to every trial or temptation.
  - a. Temptation by allurements for evil purpose to ensnare in evil;
  - b. Putting character to the test for the purpose of proving its mettle.

(Study the following passages to see how both viewpoints can be very closely interwoven into the fabric of the same temptation, even if one or the other viewpoint will be more clearly in evidence: Mt. 6:13; Lk. 8:13; Jn. 6:6; Ac. 20:19; I Cor. 10:9-13; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:1; I Th. 3:5; I Tim. 6:9; Heb. 11:17, 37; Jas. 1:2, 12-14; I Pet. 1:6; II Pet. 2:9.)

2. *How temptations are offered or presented.* Just as the temptations of Jesus were many-pronged, appealing to the fleshly appetites, to His moral character and to His spiritual perception, even so our daily allurements will be many-sided, attacking at once the body and soul by driving one to the limit of endurance, while keeping the other off balance by uneven stresses and strains. Satan is not so stupid as to put people on their guard by coming to them boldly and telling them that what he is about to suggest will be sin. Rather, he begins subtly and reasonably to prepare the mind for seduction. He must first corrupt the principles before his real purpose can be made clear. Once the confidence of the victim is gained and his desires excited, the enticement is presented in its most appealing form to that particular person. Satan repeats his approach, varying his emphasis, until the victim falls.

3. *Why man must be tried or tempted.* If there were no choice, no power nor pressures to do evil, we could not have any moral victory over evil, nor would we have that proof of character that is obtained only by self-control under fire. We must win the victory over Satan, not by never having fought him during temptations, but by overcoming him in actual combat. Precious promises are offered to those who overcome (Rev. 2:7, 10, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 11, 12, 21) and victories the order of the day for the people of God (I Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5; II Cor. 2:4).
4. *The dangerous deceitfulness of temptations.* The inability to see the sinful implications hidden under pages of good reasons for our indulgence of any desire does not remove that sinfulness. It is the devil's most practiced art to present wrong as right, pleasant, popular. He can also raise so many doubts about right actions as to make them appear to be wrong and worthy of all condemnation. The most frequent problem to solve as one faces temptation is to recognize it as a temptation. If he does not see what could be wrong about a particular action, he may justify that act for himself and be satisfied with his justifications. However, failure to sense wrong in a thing does not change God's condemnation of the sin involved. Since temptations, in their very essence, are wrong courses of action deceitfully disguised as right actions, we must learn to recognize them for what they are. How? We must avail ourselves of God's means.
5. *The way of victory over temptation:*
  - a. Jesus conquered by COMPLETE RELIANCE UPON GOD'S WORD. God has given revelation of great principles which govern ALL of our basic decisions, although He has not revealed specific prohibitions of every minute misdeed we might dream up. Our responsibility is to know these principles (II Tim. 2:15, 25, 26; 3:14, 15), practice them by daily meditation and actual experience, in order that, when specific temptations call us to violate these great, far-reaching prin-

cles, our first and almost automatic reaction would be, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? (I cannot!)" (Gen. 39:9b)

- b. By UNHESITATING REFUSALS. If we wish to be done with temptations, we must get rid of the tempter! Jesus fought him honorably and victoriously, then commanded him to leave. Likewise, we must put up a stiff fight, but in the same way as did Jesus. Satan is no match for the firepower available to one man who trusts God! (See Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:8, 9; Eph. 6:10-18) We must reject without hesitation any evil suggestion. Sometimes flight is just as honorable as fight (I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 2:22, 23; I Cor. 6:18; 10:13, 14), as in the case of Joseph (Gen. 39:12), if flight means resistance to temptation by refusing any longer to listen to the tempter's appeals to our desires. It may also mean choosing, by means of a strategic retreat, the ground upon which the battle shall be fought. Some men need to stop facing a particular temptation until they have fled to the Father's side for instruction, encouragement, warning and strength, before continuing the battle.

Contrast the reasons given for the failure of those who are overcome by temptations. They turned away from listening to the truth, choosing teachers that suit their desires (II Tim. 4:3, 4). Ever listening to anybody, they can never arrive at a secure knowledge of truth (II Tim. 3:7). All along they have been following their own desires which they let deceive them into thinking they possessed the true, happy life (II Pet. 3:3; Jude 16, 18).

6. *We are not the only ones tempted.* Just as Jesus did not wrestle with Satan to gain the mastery only for Himself, but also for us, even so we must keep our mind on others in our striving against sin in ourselves. This will help us to be wary of our own susceptibility to sin, when we reach out to help those who are sorely tempted (Gal. 6:1, 2). Further, our God-given freedom to do many things that some would consider wrong or forbidden might tempt them to join us in the enjoyment of those freedoms which their conscience does not permit them. In this case, their

conscience is violated, since they had doubts. Thus, they are condemned for sinning against their conscience and it is our fault! (Cf. Mt. 18:1-14; Ro. 14:1—15:7; I Co. 8; 10:23-33) We are, with every one of our fellow men, waging this warfare against Satan, so let us not be their devil to tempt them by what we do (cf. Mt. 16:23) but, rather, let us provoke them to love, faith and good works! (Heb. 10:23-25)

## Section 8

## JESUS PREACHES IN GALILEE

(Parallels: Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:14—5:1; John 4:1-45)

TEXT: 4:12-17

12. Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee;
13. and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali:
14. that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying,
15. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, Toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,
16. The people that sat in darkness saw a great light,  
And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death,  
To them did light spring up.
17. From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What influence does human activity or human weakness have upon the plan of God, as realized in the ministry of Jesus? (Cf. Mt. 4:12; 8:34; 13:58; Mk. 1:45)
- b. Why do you suppose Jesus left Nazareth and dwelt in Capernaum at this time? Why should He choose to leave His own hometown?
- c. In what sense is the ministry of Jesus to this area the bringing of "light" to them? How were they "sitting in darkness"?
- d. What is the essence of the kingdom of God?
- e. What does Jesus mean by "repent"?