

In the Wilderness

October 22nd 2006

Introduction

How do you define temptation?

- When our desires entice us to do something that isn't pleasing to God.

Following Jesus' baptism and inauguration of his ministry he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

The First Test

Matthew 4:1-4

Satan knows us well and knows our vulnerability. After forty days of fasting Satan picks his time to come and tempt Jesus. The temptation? He tempts Jesus to use his God-given power to fill his own stomach. Notice the appeal Satan makes to trap him, "If you are the Son of God, then...." He is basically saying if you cannot turn these stones into bread, you must not be who you say you are.

What is so tempting about the first temptation?

- Jesus is hungry and vulnerable – bread sounds really good.
- Satan appeals to Jesus' power and authority as the Son of God.
- Satan questions Jesus identity as Son of God.

Philippians 2:6 says "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage."
Matthew 20:28 says "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

How do these two passages shed light on why it would be wrong for Jesus to turn the stones into bread?

- Jesus did not come to use his power to his own advantage.
- He came for self-sacrifice and not self-service.

How can we do people wrong by using our position and authority at others' expense?

Jesus' Answer

What two things does Jesus rely on to give Satan an answer?

- Scripture and God

How does Jesus' appeal to scripture give us a model that we can use when we are tempted?

- If we know God's word, we can use it to face trials and temptations.

How can we rely more on God and less on temporary things like food?

The Second Test

- By spending more time in his word and through fasting

Matthew 4:5-7

Satan takes Jesus to a very public place and asks him to perform a very public act with an appeal that God will rescue him in front of all of the people in the temple. Additionally, Satan also appeals to scripture to trap Jesus into sinning. Satan knows just what we need to hear in order to get us to fall into his trap.

How does Satan use pride to tempt Jesus to jump from the temple?

- If Jesus let his pride get in the way, he would have put God to the test by jumping down.

How does Satan use similar tactics to use our pride to get us to sin?

If Satan can even use scripture to fool us, what other innocent looking things might Satan use to trick us into thinking sinning is alright?

- whatever he knows we are vulnerable to, Scripture, peer pressure, culture

Jesus' Answer

In verse 7, how does Jesus respond to the second temptation?

- He appeals to scripture again.
- Jesus knows his time to die is at the cross. By jumping from the temple he would have put God to the test and forced God into a decision that was not in the plan.
- Jesus submits himself to God and does not put God at the mercy of his own decisions.

When are times we put God to the test?

- When we sin. When we procrastinate in turning to him.

The Third Test

Matthew 4:8-11

What does Satan offer Jesus in exchange for his loyalty and worship?

- All the kingdoms of the world.

What makes that an attractive offer?

- He wouldn't have to worry about a cross.
- He wouldn't have to worry about food
- He wouldn't have to worry about anything here on earth.

What was the cost to Jesus?

- To worship the devil meant to turn his back on God and put an end to their plan to save humanity.

What about this temptation would you find most attractive?

Application

What makes you most glad that Jesus' refused Satan's offer?

- He was loyal to God and was then able to rescue us from our sin.

In what areas of your life is temptation the strongest these days?

What can we learn from Jesus to help us deal with temptation in our lives?

How can spending more time in scripture give you a reply to Satan's temptation in your life?

What steps can you take this week to resist the temptations you are facing?

One final point. We often use this passage as a model of how to handle temptation but there is more to it than that. Jesus was blazing a trail for us. In Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2 Jesus is referred to as the author or pioneer of our faith. Through his battle with Satan he is blazing a trail for us to follow and brings defeat to the powers of darkness. No other person has been able to firmly resist all that the devil had just thrown at Jesus and that is where we find our hope. We follow the One who has already won the victory. Because of that, we know that too will be victorious.

Put it into Practice

Set aside 20 minutes each day this week to read the Bible. As you read, look for ways you can use what you read to battle Satan's temptations in your life.