

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

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Chris Katulka, The Temptations of Jesus, Part 2

Matthew 4

Today we're going to continue our series on The Temptations of Jesus from Matthew 4:1-11. I want to stress the significance of this story in the Gospels... it's important because first - it tells the story of who Jesus is, it unpacks His character and mission, and second - it shows how Jesus overcame Satan's temptation. This is an invaluable lesson for us, the disciples of Christ who are tempted daily by the Evil One.

The Temptations of Jesus serve as a prelude or an introduction to His ministry. Each of the synoptic gospels (that's Matt, Mark, and Luke) write about Satan tempting Jesus, and all three place the story in the beginning of their gospel right after the baptism of Jesus. Remember, they do this for a reason. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wanted you to see that Jesus was qualified to be the Son of God the King of Israel by remaining obedient to the Father, even in agony. This is really Jesus' Adam moment from the beginning of Genesis. You remember the story, of how Adam and Eve disobeyed God and acted in their own self-interest, which led to the Fall.

In Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus has a choice, just as Adam and Eve had a choice, to remain obedient to the Father's mission or to take His own course of action.

The Temptations of Jesus will cast a vision for the rest of Jesus' ministry on earth. Once you see how Jesus responds to Satan's deceptive lure it will open your eyes to the depth of who Christ is, and the way He ministered to those who were hungry for the truth of God.

We're entering into the second of Temptation of Jesus, which can be found in Matt 4:5-7. Interestingly, Luke and Matthew switch the second and third temptation. Matthews second temptation, which we are looking at today, is Luke's third temptation. And Matthews third temptation is Luke's second.

Listen to 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.’ ”

Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”

Jesus, now moves from the wilderness where Satan first tempted him to the pinnacle of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem... the holy city.

The pinnacle of the Temple is an interesting place to bring the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. The pinnacle of the Temple is probably the southeast corner of the Temple Mount because it has the longest drop to the ground. The southeast corner looks out over the Kidron Valley, so from the pinnacle of the Temple to the ground was about 450 ft. In fact, the historian Josephus wrote almost 2000 years ago that the height from that location of the Temple Mount made people who looked over feel dizzy (Antiquities 15.11.5). Additionally, tradition says James the brother of Jesus was martyred by being thrown over the same pinnacle.

The point of the pinnacle to show that anyone who jumps from that height will surely meet their death.

And so Satan probably takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple in a vision. There Satan tempts Jesus... 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.

Notice what Satan does, in this second temptation Satan uses God's Word from Ps. 91:11-12 to push Jesus to test God. Think of it like this, in the first temptation Jesus was able to overcome it by saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' " So Satan tempted Jesus by using the Word of God against Him.

Even Satan knows the Scriptures and can use them against us to tempt us. One commentator put it this way, "the mere use of biblical words and promise may not convey God's will." (Liefeld 1984: 864). Especially when it's coming from the mouth of Satan.

Satan again is saying to Jesus, If you are the Son of God, and the Father promised to protect you. Then jump, prove God's promise to be true.

So Jesus uses Scripture from Deuteronomy 6:16 to ward off the lure of Satan to prove God's promise.

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt or test the LORD your God.' "

The passage Jesus uses from Deuteronomy 6:16 is connected to the event where the Israelites were complaining about not having any water to drink after the wandering in the wilderness in Exodus 17:1-7. The Israelites, in their thirst, berated Moses and grumbled for him to provide water. Moses said to the Israelites they were testing God! The Lord commanded Moses to strike the rock, and water came gushing forth. Moses called that place Massah and Meribah, which means “testing” and “quarreling”.

God provided the Israelites with freedom from the bondage of Egypt and manna to eat on the way, and yet they still tested God to prove His promise of provision on their time. They tested God by saying in Exodus 17:7, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Satan is very smart and deceptive. He chose the Temple for this temptation because that’s the Lord’s House. It’s where the Lord dwelled. So I’m sure as Jesus is staring at that massive drop, Satan is asking the question... Here you are in the Lord’s house, Is the Lord among us or not?

So what does it mean to “Test God?” today. I believe “testing God” is to push Him to fulfill His promise on our time, which isn’t an act of faith. It’s demanding God to act on our behalf like a genie. Look at how Satan was tempting Jesus to test God.

Jump now!

He promised in His Word to protect you.

Jump!

Go on and test the Father's faithfulness to fulfill His promise, because maybe He won't protect you.

God is not a genie, fulfilling our wishes when we see fit. In a moment of temptation or doubt we should not test God to prove Himself, because this is contrary to faith. Instead, we should stay focused on His will and His plan because it's there we see His promises fulfilled.

Jesus was able to withstand Satan's temptation of testing God's protection over Him, because Christ was trusting in His Father's will and plan for Himself and all mankind. For by the end of the gospels, there is a moment when the Father will refuse to protect His Son from death, when on the cross the innocent Son of God became sin, providing life for all who believe.

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 5:19, that because of Christ's obedience to the Father's will, even to death many will be made righteous. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made

righteous.” Jesus’ faith in the Father’s promises went beyond His death, because He could see all of God’s plan.