

Christ

Christ and The Temptations - Part 3

Various Sorts Of Temptations

Such was the integrity of the Lord that irrespective of where the temptation came from, He was completely unresponsive to its proffering. This warfare was too important for even the highest of the satanic government's demons. Satan personally must do all he can to attempt to get the Lord to act contrary to the will of God. Ultimately the defeat was a dreadful humiliation for his satanic majesty, for not only was he rebuked, but he left more defeated than ever, shamed before his very demonic powers. Despite the best Satan could do, Christ stood not only without sin, but completely untainted by sin or defiled by the temptation. To his dismay, Satan found nothing in Him that would respond to the temptation.

Being man, Christ was tempted, but He never fell, and being holy, there was nothing in Him that would find a response to temptation. There was nothing in Him that:

- a) Found it appealing in any way (Lk. 4:5-8).
- b) When He saw the results of sin as with the woman of the city, a prostitute (Lk. 7:37), there was never a re-thinking of it later as when a man looks on a woman and lusts after her (Matt. 5:28).
- c) There was never a sinful response to that which is amoral because of his own inward corruption. Bathsheba was a beautiful woman taking a bath, but neither attractiveness or taking a bath in itself is sinful, but it is amoral. It was David's own lust that created the response (2 Sam. 11:1-2). Furthermore, there was undoubtedly a time span between when he saw her and enquired. Christ knew none of these things. It has been said by some that she was being a temptress and should not have been outside bathing herself. Strange that it is never said about Pharaoh's daughter who went to the river to wash (Ex. 2:5). The reality is that in the blazing heat, this would not have been uncommon, for even in this day (2020) I have been to at least one country where a person showers outside on the roof.
- d) However, in the Lord there was a response to what He saw. The results of sin in death and sorrow, He wept, as when at the grave of Lazarus, and for the rejection of the people of Jerusalem (Jn. 11:35; Lk. 19:41).

The Activity Of The Holy Spirit In The Temptations

Matthew wrote, "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit" (Matt. 4:1); Mark wrote, "And immediately the Spirit driveth Him" (Mk. 1:12). I see two truths here:

- a) One idea is that the Lord was reluctant to go into the wilderness to be tempted and so the Holy Spirit driveth "forced" Him, made Him go. In other words, the Lord was in conflict with the Spirit in that the Holy Spirit wanted Him to go into the wilderness to be tempted, and the Lord did not want to do that or face that. I cannot see that as being the right interpretation.
- b) To my mind, the Lord was moving in full fellowship with the Holy Spirit. I see this as it was the will of the Spirit of God for Him to go into the wilderness to face and defeat the devil. Like a warrior going out to battle, driven by the assuredness of success, the Lord went to meet the Devil. It is similar to when in the garden John wrote, the Lord "went forth" to meet them (Jn. 18:4). When going to Calvary John again records, "He bearing His cross went forth" (Jn. 19:17). This is the case in the temptation. Being so filled with the Holy Spirit in His own spirit, it drove Him into the wilderness.

Where The Temptations Took Place

We often speak of the "Temptations in the wilderness", but that is not what the scriptures teach. The reading of the scriptures will indicate that possibly only one took place in the wilderness, another was at the pinnacle of the temple, and another on the high mountain. There can be no doubt that there were temptations throughout the forty days the Lord was in the wilderness, but the temptation to make stones into bread came at the end of the forty days (Matt. 4:2; Lk. 4:2).

Christ

Christ and The Temptations - Part 3

Why The Temptation Before Christ Went Into His Public Ministry

In the wilderness the Lord was facing Satan's onslaught straight on. This was not one of Satan's minions or even a collective gathering of them. It was his Satanic Majesty himself. By defeating the Commander of the Satanic forces at the beginning of His ministry, all other demonic assaults were easily disposed of.

Why Was He Tempted?

It must never be thought the Lord was tempted to see if He would sin. Let it be stated emphatically, the Lord could not sin for being God He could not sin and go contrary to His own truth and character. Furthermore, if He could have sinned then, He could sin now, but that cannot be for the Lord is holy (Heb. 7:26). So fully was Jesus human that He was tempted. God never sleeps yet the Lord slept, that is because sleeping is an amoral necessity. On the other hand God cannot lie, and neither could our Lord, for that is a moral attribute. In the temptation we observe a real man who in fellowship with God and walking in the power of the Spirit, temptation is totally rejected by Him and sin has no appeal to Him.

Furthermore, the Lord was driven into the wilderness to compel the enemy to come to the conflict. It was a challenge to Satan that he could not turn down. He was backed into a corner and no matter how much he may not have wanted it, he was forced to attend. Satan is never upfront about his activities, he will work under cover. For instance, he will promote abortions under the covering of a woman's health, he will cause riots and ruination in the streets under the covering of peaceful protests. The Lord would not allow him a covering. It was an uncovered exposé of Satan against Christ, and Satan does not like to be exposed, much less being exposed as a loser.

When The Temptations Occurred

- 1) They were not in swift sequence.
 - a) It is irrelevant at this point whether we take Matthew's account or Luke's account regarding chronological order. What is evident is the temptations took place over a period of time. It may have been short or reasonably short. I am not aware of which of the temptations came second, the one on the pinnacle of the temple or on the top of the mountain. Since the order in which the gospels recount the temptations, the Lord had to go either from the wilderness to Jerusalem and to the pinnacle of the temple or vice versa. The point is that the temptations did not all take place in the wilderness.
 - b) and even if the mountain was in the wilderness it had to be climbed.
- 2) After the commendation.
 - a) Each of the gospels makes a very deliberate connection of the temptation with that which has gone before. Matthew emphasizes the connection with the word "Then" (Matt. 4:1); Mark, by the word "immediately" (Mk. 1:12); and Luke by the word "And" (Lk. 4:1).

Background To The Temptations

To understand the truths of the scriptures, there must be the acceptance nothing can be isolated from context. Therefore, when considering the Lord and the temptations, there must be a consideration of the background.

- 1) The Lord had spent about 30 years away from public life. Apart from the fragments of His life as a baby, then as a child of approximately two years of age, then twelve years of age, all the happenings of the intervening years were solely for God's delight. A few precious things are known in those intervening years. We do know He was a carpenter; He stood while John preached; and that while his immediate family did not believe in Him; John did see there was something about Him that was distinctly different. This is evident by that which John said when the Lord came for baptism, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14).

Christ Christ and The Temptations - Part 3

- 2) When the Lord was coming out of the Jordan after His baptism, the heavens were opened (Matt. 3:16), and all the attention of Heaven was on earth. It is a reality that one always looks from the lesser to the greater, yet here, Heaven is occupied with a man on earth. It is wonderful to observe that we never read of the heavens ever being closed upon Him. When He was transfigured, it does not say the heavens were opened, nor when He ascended. He lived in the consciousness of an open heaven and a life lived in unbroken fellowship with God. The next time we read of Heaven opened and the Lord is when He comes in judgment, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11).
- 3) Not only were the heavens opened to reveal the thoughts of God, but the Holy Spirit came upon Him. Christ was about to begin priestly ministry but not a priest officially. What glorious experiences, and now He is led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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