

Christ

Christ and The Temptations - Part 4

The Spirit Led The Lord To Be Tempted

The temptation experiences of the Lord manifest the wonder of divine grace. Profound are the words, “Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matt. 4:1). This was an experience He had to have to qualify as a Sanctifier, High Priest and Advocate. He knew the brilliance of the enemy intellectually, but in the temptations He experienced it personally. Therefore, having this experience, He taught the disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13), and later on He would pray, “That Thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (Jn. 17:15). He knew the fierceness of the battle and our inability to overcome the evil one and not being a match for his subtlety while depending on our own strength and understanding. To the Thessalonians saints Paul writes, “The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2 Thess. 3:3).

In the gospel narratives there is a change in the wording. Matthew states, He was “Led up of the spirit” (Matt. 4:1), or brought up by the Spirit. Luke records, He was “Led by the Spirit” (Lk. 4:1), leaving out the word “up”. Mark writes, “the Spirit¹ driveth him” (Mk. 1:12). In the first two we are made to observe the yielding of Christ to the Holy Spirit. In Mark it is the holy reluctance of the Lord, this was not a reluctance due to personal weakness, but due to His obnoxiousness for all that is evil, either in person or principle.

- a) In the gospel accounts there are three different words used relative to the Lord going into the wilderness:
 - i) “He was led” (anago), to lead away for good or destruction (Matt. 4:1).
 - ii) “He was driven” (ekballei), to be cast out, forced out by the spirit (Mk. 1:12).
 - iii) “He was led” (ago), to bear, carry or lead by the spirit (Lk. 4:1).
- b) Whatever word is used regarding His going into the wilderness, one thing is clear, He was led by the Spirit of God. Isaiah informs us of the attitude of the Lord when he wrote, “Morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear” (Isa. 50:4). The man who began His days in fellowship with God will in loveliness follow the Holy Spirit as He leads. This was no act of bravado in going to meet the enemy, but He will wait until led by the Spirit.
- c) The Lord was “driven” into the wilderness (Mk. 1:12). The only other time we find anyone driven into the wilderness was the man who had the legion of demons, but he was driven by demons (Lk. 8:29). Furthermore, the word translated “driven” is not the same Greek word, but the concept is the same.

Where Did The Temptations Of The Lord Take Place?

Many saints have been mistaken in where the temptations took place. It is partly because they are commonly spoken of as, “the temptations in the wilderness”. That is not correct. Indeed, it is possible that only two took place there, the temptation to make stones bread and to bow in worship to Satan. The others took place in the holy city and the pinnacle of the temple.

In that barren wilderness, void of the resources of sustaining life, the Lord lived for forty day and nights. It was so typical of the religious, political, economical, social world in which He lived, lifeless and empty of the blessings of life. In this earthly wilderness, the spirituality of the Lord and His devotion to God shone in moral excellency. The Lord was an oasis of spiritual refreshment, as a root out of a dry ground (Isa. 53:2); a tree planted by the rivers of water (Psa. 1:3); bringing forth fruit for the glory of God as symbolized by the apple tree (Song of Sol. 2:3). Not only fruit but such a fragrance of delight as the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys (Song of Sol. 2:1); the Altogether Lovely (Song of Sol. 5:16); the Branch of righteousness (Jer. 33:15); the fountain of life

¹ E. Cycle taught that Zoroastrian priests seized the Lord and abandoned Him in the wilderness, intending Him to be devoured by the wild beasts. Of course this man was a tool of Satan who also taught that Jesus knew He would be the Saviour of the world when he fell in Eden!

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(Psa. 36:9); and the one of whom it is said that He is, "Fairer than the children of men" (Psa. 45:2). How wicked to even think for a moment that this man, so lovely to God, would have sinned and acted in rebellion against God.

From these two references there is the indication the wilderness is the region of the demonic world. This being so, the Lord was brought into the offensive role in the satanic realm. It was in the wilderness that John went to preach, and taking the offensive, went into the very arena of satanic powers and defeated them by people repenting and being baptized. The demonic world was also in the place of death, for the tombs were the place the demonic were, and into their very realm the Son of God came. "He went forth to land", that is the Lord was taking the initiative (Lk. 8:27). This leads to the important observation that the life of the Lord was marked by being on the offensive and defensive, and the same with Satan. When the Lord goes into Satan's territory, then Satan, who will never back down from a confrontation, will go to meet Him. When Satan goes into the Lord's realm, then the Lord will not evade a confrontation with him on his activities. Since the Lord was in this world He was in the Satanic arena, so Satan treated the Lord not just as an intruder, but as one who was intent on destroying him. To his Satanic Majesty this could not be tolerated, Christ must be nullified, and if necessary, killed.

The Duration Of The Temptations

The Lord was tempted for forty days and the three recorded ones were at the end of the forty days (Matt. 4:2). Those forty days and nights were going to be a hard physical and spiritual warfare, but before it God speaks, giving His public acknowledgement of the perfection of His Son. A faint likeness to this is found when Melchisedec came to meet Abraham before the King of Sodom. There was strengthening before the battle. God spoke: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

- a) How glorious this is. It does not say, "through" whom I am well pleased, or "by" whom I am well pleased, but "in" whom I am well pleased. This was more than God looking at His outward behaviour, listening to His talk and observing His attitudes and reactions. It is God's commentary after looking into the depths of His very being. This was a man in whom every response was right, every word was right, never had an action to be apologized for, wrong attitude confessed to, and never the slightest iota of pride or indifference to God. Praying with Him was never a mere formality. Thirty years had passed and not the slightest shadow of sin or defilement because He would not sin, and that because He could not sin.
- b) God said, "I am well pleased". Robertson, in his "New Testament Word Pictures" writes, "The good pleasure of the Father is expressed by a tense that indicates timeless".² This was not just a momentary pleasure but was that which God found constantly in Him. Could this have been so had He always been susceptible to sinning? Continually, every moment of every day, God was perpetually delighted in Christ. He was the fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1, "In whom my soul delighteth". With those eyes of fire which could tolerate no evil, Christ was looked upon and there was nothing in His life that was objectionable to God and needed burning up.

We must not lose sight that for 40 days and nights Satan had tempted the Lord. It was an all out assault, unrelenting in its severity. For those many hours the Lord was exposed to every possible subtlety of Satan. After forty days and nights Satan saw himself defeated, down but not out. The Lord was hungry, and knowing weakness from lack of food, Satan seeks to take advantage of the situation. It is an all out war emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. What shame must have been his, as undoubtedly watched by his hordes, he was defeated in this conflict. However, this was not the end for he only left the Lord "until an opportune time" (Lk 4:13). Satan returned throughout Christ's ministry. Every individual possessed by a demon and every agitation by the religious leaders was an act of aggression instigated by Satan. The unbelief and despising by His brethren, even that of his own disciples, and surely in the garden and the first three hours on the cross when they

² The Aorist tense is used for an undefined action which can indicate an action which occurred at a certain point to time. (The complete Word Study New Testament, S. Zodhiates). (Also, "Syntax of the moods and tenses in New Testament Greek, E.De Witt Burton). Timeless aorist indicates an action which began and continues.

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were taunting Him to come down were acts of aggression (Mk. 1:21-24; 2:6-7; 3:31-35; 8:31-32; Jn. 7:5; 14:30-31).

The Purpose Of The Temptations

1. Before His fall, Satan wanted the position of supreme rulership. Now he offers that to the Lord knowing that if he can get the Lord to yield, he will have accomplished his goal of absolute kingship. As Lucifer, he was dissatisfied with the place God had given to him and in his heart desired to go higher saying, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation. . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:13-14). In this he miserably failed, but in the temptations he sought to get the Lord dissatisfied with the non-provision of God, and with that, rebel against God by casting himself down. In his quest to have men worship him, he sought the Lord to do the same.
2. Opportunity to make the decision to do right or wrong is a manifestation of ones allegiance to someone or something. For instance, Hezekiah had visitors, the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon. On the lower level, it seemed to be a courteous curiosity as to his earthly accumulations. Still, on the higher level, it was a test from God. "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron. 32:31).
3. The same was true of Israel. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deut. 8:2). "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut. 13:3).
4. The characteristics of both are clearly seen. Christ in unreserved devotion to God His Father, and Satan not now in subtlety but in blatant insolence, seeking to pervert the purpose of God through the tempting of the Lord.

Why Was The Lord Tempted?

Why was the Lord led into the wilderness? As an example to us, for life is not always easy and temptations are more vicious when environments are hard and lonely. Thankfully we can normally have human companionship to encourage while the temptation goes on and on, seeming never to have an end. Not only human companionship but a High priest to strengthen us in it, assisting us to see the end result and the cost to the Lord on Calvary. If Peter had of had John, Matthew or any of the disciples beside him when questioned by the young woman, does anyone think he would have fallen so quickly? He was not with the disciples, he was alone, and that made it easier to deny the Lord. In contrast, Christ stood alone before Caiaphas, Annas, Herod and Pilate, and it was before Pilate that God particularly notes that he witnessed a good confession (1 Tim. 3:16).

It has been said that virtue is only such when there is opportunity to do wrong and it is not done. The virtue of the Lord was infinite especially when we consider that the weakness to yield to a temptation is a lot harder when one is in a harsh environment and alone than when with a group of saints.

Great is the wonder that God permitted Satan, without any restrains, to tempt the Lord. When the Lord permitted Job to be given into the hands of Satan there were boundaries he could not pass, but with the Lord, it was an open door. Thus the Lord showed (and He had no worries of the Lord's failure), the fidelity of His heart.

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Why Did Satan Tempt The Lord Knowing That It Would End In Failure?

To Satan³ this was necessary, for despite knowing he could not defeat the Lord, he was determined to do his utmost. There could be no doubt he knew the truth of the parable the Lord spoke concerning going to war and counting the cost (Lk. 14:31), but he will give it his best try.

While we are not specifically told why, the Old Testament clearly reveals the activities of Satan on persons and the nation of Israel. We can be sure he was doing his utmost to nullify the purposes of God. Humanly speaking, God did a very foolish thing in the garden by telling the enemy how He would be defeated. Every military strategist knows that success can depend so much on surprise. Knowing that which God revealed for his defeat, "It (the Seed) shall bruise thy head" (Gen. 3:15), Satan stopped at nothing to prevent his ruination.

- a) He had enmity between Cain and Abel and Abel was slain.
- b) He had the males killed in Egypt.
- c) He had the line of Judah cursed by God.
- d) He attempted to have the Baby killed when approximately two years of age.

The difficulty for Satan was that the promised victor was a man and now here He was! The human being who was about to open the pathway for his ultimate devastation and exposing was in the wilderness and about to publicly start His defeating activity. As far as Satan was concerned, He must be stopped, and despite knowing he could not win, that would not stop him from trying. Satan had too much to lose so if He could nullify the workings of God through (in providing redemption and liberation) and for Christ (in glorifying Christ as the ultimate fulfiller of all God's purposes) (Eph. 1:5, 9-10) at the beginning of His ministry, he could relax, it would all be over.

- a) He sought to nullify God's purposes for Christ, for God had said, "I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psa. 2:6), and all things were to be put under Him (Christ) (Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8). Satan was totally opposed to that, he wanted to put his man in that place. Throughout the years he has tried, but with God not only nullifying him but progressing with His own purposes, each ended in failure.⁴ Napoleon, Hitler and many others tried, unwittingly being the tool of Satan in his rebellion against God. There is coming a day when God will not immediately prevent him, and his man will reign on this earth, the man of sin (Rev. 13).
- b) He sought to eternally put a slight on God. When Satan came to Eve there was the insinuation that God did not fully love, and indeed He was holding something back, a special something He did not want them to have. His first recorded words were, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree" (Gen. 3:1). This was not the questioning of that which God had said, it was a question of confirmation. "Yes, it is true God said that you could not eat of every tree". With Satan's apparent agreement with God the woman's defences were down, the results being, the next words of Satan were contrary to God. Satan presented God not as a God of love who gave, but as a God who was stingy. If he could get Christ to sin, there would never be a manifestation of the fulness of God's attribute of love and man would forever have a distorted view of God.
- c) He sought to prevent the universal worship of God. It has ever been the longing of Satan for humanities universal worship. This he will get by the Beast (Rev. 13:4).

³ It is interesting that while I write this today, 2010 09 01, the Satanists in Oklahoma are wanting to use the Civic Center for a parody on a Roman Catholic exorcism. At the same time, on "The View", a television program in the United States, part of the debate is whether there is such a person as Satan. At least one said they do not believe there is such a person and they spoke of him having a pitchfork and being red with horns. Apparently, from what I understood to be said, only one percent of young adults in the United States accept the Bible as the truth regarding God and Satan, etc. He has done a stupendous job of deception. Satan is still alive and working very well on this earth, for it still lies in the arms of the wicked one.

⁴ In God's time, He will let Satan have his man to rule the world, he will be in contrast to the Lord, and his duration is by God measured out. (John 5:23; Rev.13:2, 5, 8)

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The temptations demonstrated that Satan had nothing on Him and could get nothing on Him. Magnificent Person!
It is important to note that the things Satan tempted the Lord with were all to be done instantly, right away.

**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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