

Christ

Christ and The Temptations - Part 5

Did Satan Misquote The Scriptures?

It is often said that Satan misquoted scripture when he said, “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matt. 4:6), for the words, “to keep thee in all thy ways” are omitted (Psa. 91:11-12). How are we then to understand the Lord “misquoting the scriptures?” Several observations must be made:

- 1) God is the Author of His word and therefore has the right to interpret the scriptures as He sees best. If I write an article, I have the right to say what I mean in different words. No one else can unless they have spoken to me or seen inside my brain to know what and how I was thinking. For one to say such and such is what I mean, without consultation with me, is presumptuousness. Yet, this is exactly what Satan did when he quoted Psalm 91. Furthermore, he misused scripture to deceive!
- 2) When the Lord gave the “quotations”, He never left out any part with the intent to deceive. How then are we to understand the statements which are non quotations and yet used as the Word of God? Does this not indicate imperfection?

Principles For Interpreting Biblical Quotations

The father for the principles of interpreting Biblical quotations was Solomon Glassius (1593-1665). This man was a theologian and among his writings the principle one is “Philologia Sacra” (1623-1635), translatable as, “The sacred Word”. In it he gives principles of interpretation, some of which are:

- 1) There are places where the sense originally intended by the Holy Spirit is preserved though the words may vary.
 - a) Matt. 2:6 and Mic. 5:2; Jn. 19:37 and Zech. 12:10; Eph. 4:8 and Psa. 68:18.
- 2) There are places where the original sense is modified and used with a new and different application.
 - a) Jn. 3:14-15 and Num. 21:8-9; Eph. 5:31-32 and Gen. 2:23-24.
- 3) There are places where words are varied by omission, addition or transposition.
 - a) Matt. 4:10 and Deut. 6:13-14.

Did The Lord Also Misquote?

It has been observed that the answers of the Lord were from the book of Deuteronomy, but none were exact quotations.

- 1) In answer to the temptation to “make the stones bread”, the Lord responded by quoting Deut. 8:3, “And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live”.
- 2) In the temptation to “cast Himself down,” the answering quotation was from Deut. 6:16, “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah”.
- 3) When Satan tempted the Lord by giving to Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, the Lord then quoted Deut. 6:13, “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by His name”.

It is by these principles that the Lord gives His answers. He is not misquoting but giving the fuller meaning of the passages by emphasizing a specific point by omission or addition. In them we see His perfection. Being the author, He can add to the scriptures giving a deeper meaning, which is something we cannot do. Eve added to that which God had said and thus began the steps of failure. God had said, “Thou shalt not eat of it” (Gen. 2:17). Eve added, “neither shall ye touch it” (Gen. 3:3). She modified the words of God for He had said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:17). Eve changed that to, “lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3).

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A Table On The Temptations

Temptation No. 1	Temptation No. 2	Temptation No. 3
Make the stones bread	Cast thyself down	Fall down and worship me
Independence manifested by self ability acting Rebellion against the provision of God	Independence manifested by self presumption Rebellion against the providence of God	Independence manifested by self usurpation Rebellion against the purposes of God
If possible, help yourself and get immediate satisfaction		Get immediate gratification, egotistic boost
Disapprove of God's providential dealings Israel murmured, but could do nothing Defy God and take matters into ones own hands	Dare God, put Him on the spot where He comes under your control, He loses His sovereignty	Displace God in loyalty

The Temptations Were Confrontations

The Confrontation in The Temptation to Make the Stones Bread (Matt. 4:2-4)

Temptation is also harder to resist when one is in need. For instance, the Lord was hungry but Adam had an unlimited supply of food. It is a lot easier to covet and fall when one has been deprived than when one has lots. The opportunity to steal is a greater affliction when the individual is hungry than when they are full. Thus, the Lord being hungry was an ideal opportunity for Satan to tempt Him to ease His hunger.

On the surface, the suggestion to make the stones bread seemed a very intelligent thing to do. The Lord saw a deeper motive for this "suggestion".

- 1) This was an attempt to cast a shadow on the character of God.
 - a) The devil was seeking to question the love of God, whereas he did and would not deprive the Lord of something to eat. The heavens had been opened some six weeks before and God had declared that Christ was His Beloved Son, but words are cheap. If Christ really was the Beloved Son did this seem right? He had been born in a manger, as a baby and little child. He was pursued relentlessly with the intent of killing Him, and now forty days without bread! Where was the love? Was God not doing the same as in Eden, not giving all they could have had, for they were not allowed to eat of the tree of knowledge!
 - b) Again, He had the ability to do this and is it reasonable of God to give the ability to do something if it was not to be used for self preservation?
 - c) The Lord saw this as an attempt to split the Godhead, and having broken the fellowship, nullified the purposes of God forever. If Christ did make the stones bread, He would have been like Eve, listening to the tempter's voice of rationale, act on it, and all hope of redemption and His glorification be eternally gone. This was in all the temptations.

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- d) How did the Lord then respond in this temptation and confrontation?
- i) He did not debate with Satan concerning His deity or mock him for being so foolish as to try to make Him question that fact.
 - ii) He did not debate about the character of God or the question of His love.
 - iii) He did emphasize to Satan that life did not depend on the natural foods for sustaining. It depended on God. How easily the Lord could have reminded Satan that Moses went for forty days and nights without food or water (Ex. 34:28). Elijah went on the sustenance of a single meal for forty days and nights (1 Kgs. 19:8). Neither of them died because as long as God had a work for them to do, He would sustain them. God had a work for the Lord to do.
 - iv) In the Lord's response there is seen His devotion to God. He would not be turned aside by hunger. That which stopped this temptation was Satan knowing that when the Lord said "No", that was the end of all arguing. We often simply mean, "Not yet".
 - v) He used the truths of the scriptures as a sword against Satan.

The Confrontation In The Temptation For The Lord To Cast Himself Down (Matt. 4:5-7)

Satan now takes the Lord to the holy city and to the pinnacle of the temple. This was ideally a city and in the purposes of God, the Holy City. Just as fashion and romance is a characteristic of Paris and beautiful mountains and ocean characterize Vancouver B.C., so holiness was ideally the characteristic of Jerusalem. The Lord was then accompanied to the pinnacle which apparently was referred to as Herod's royal portico, a lookout having a sheer drop of 450 feet.

It is also interesting that Satan took Him to this. Why? (Matt. 4:5). Herein is a truth beyond comprehension. God allowed the Lord to be at the disposal of the evil one for these temptations.

This was a brilliant rouse on at least three avenues:

- 1) Do a great exploit which men shall marvel at.
- 2) A subtle attempt to cause the death of the Lord before His work was done.
- 3) "Put pressure on God" to act because of a presumptuous activity.

Humanity has the yearning to be recognized for that which they do. Some are known for great exploits and without them, their names would never have been known. Without great victories, who would ever have heard of Lord Nelson, Alexander the Great, Columbus or Magellan? This was not the only time Satan tried this tactic, for later he will have the brethren say, "Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world" (Jn. 7:3-4). Again, "Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country" (Lk. 4:23).

The Lord had responded to the first temptation with, "It is written" (Matt. 4:4). Satan took that expression and used it saying, "For it is written," (Lk. 4:10) so using the scriptures to support his suggestion.

How does the Lord respond?

- 1) He does not point out to Satan that he is misusing the scriptures by taking them out of context. Neither does He remind Satan that in a short time He will fulfill the greatest exploit eternity will ever know. He will do it to the delight of the Father. That exploit will be to "destroy him that had the power of death" (Heb. 2:14); "destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8); to judge the prince of this world (Jn. 16:11); "to take away our sins" (1 Jn. 3:5); and He will do this by his mighty resurrection.
- 2) Of course the evil one would want to intimate that this was an activity of faith, depending on God for life. The Lord will go deeper, for He will enter the very portals of Satan, and putting His faith in God to bring Him back from the dead He will say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46) and then

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give up His spirit. To this temptation the reply is, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7; Lk. 4:12).

- 3) Regarding the repetition of, "If Thou be the Son of God", the Lord does not even reply to that for Satan knows that He is.

The Confrontation in the Temptation to Receive the Kingdoms of the World if He Worshipped Satan (Matt 4:8-10)

There is a difference between Matthew and Luke regarding this temptation. In Matthew the devil says, "Fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9), but in Luke it is, "Worship me" (Lk. 4:7). The wording is interesting for in the Gospel where Christ is presented as King, Satan wants Him to renounce His kingship and fall down and worship him, and in Luke he wants the perfect man under God to worship him.

Rather, he goes to the core of the issue, not mentioning when in God's time and way that he will get possession of the world. There is no quoting, "The LORD hath said unto me Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. 2:7-8). Nor does He remind Satan of the words of Daniel, "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14). The Lord does not answer, does not debate Satan on how he got control or his rights over them. Such things are irrelevant at this time.

Man yearns for authority and the prestige that goes with it. The Lord will later, in His ministry, put things and a purposeful human life in perspective when He says, "If he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Matt. 16:26, Mk. 8:36). In that context the soul is the life, fulfilling the purpose for which God made man.

The Timing Of The Temptations

In Gen. 3:1 it is recorded, "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field", and Gen. 49:17 confirms this characteristic, "an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward". When the rider thought he was safe, that is when the danger struck. Another characteristic of Satan is he will come to tempt after great activities for God, or after commendation from God. Abraham had won a great victory over the kings, and the King of Sodom came to meet him and offered Abraham all the goods (Gen. 14:17-23). Why offer these? It is because up to this point Abraham had been interested in goods, herds of cattle, etc., but God was teaching him that people were more important than goods. Having learned this truth Abraham was able to reject the overtures of the King of Sodom and did not fall. It was after the great overcoming that the King of Sodom came.

When did the temptations come? It was after our Lord, after two major happenings:

- 1) The Lord took the steps of identification with the dupes of Satan to give them aid. He was indicating in type that which He would yet do, His baptism at the cross and He was seeking to fulfill all righteousness.
- 2) God had publicly borne witness as to His delight in Him and acknowledgment that He was His Son. Satan came and said, "If thou be the Son of God" (Matt. 4:6; Matt. 27:40), the first when He was in the wilderness and the latter when He was on the cross. It was a brilliant tactic, trying to make the Lord question who He was and the truthfulness of God's words. Christ did not fail.

Since our meditation is on the moral perfections of the Lord in the temptations, we must consider His perfections in the offensive and defensive. He must be perfect in each area for if He failed in one iota, then He could never have offered Himself a sacrifice, bearing sin's penalty.

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We often hear that when we are being tempted all one has to do is quote scripture, Satan will be rebuked, and the temptation goes away! It is lovely idealism but not realism, neither is it biblically correct. Satan did not go away after the first, second or even third temptation. It was only when the Lord dismissed him, and then it was only for a while. The honest heart knows that temptations do not stop or go away with a quotation from the scriptures. We shall discover that more is needed.

In this temptation it would appear that it was not a “once for all” temptation, but a pressuring repeated one. In Luke Satan says, “Command this stone,” and in Matthew, “Command that these stones”. Satan does not give up after one attempt. He will keep pressuring until we gain the victory or fall.

There are several incidents in the Old Testament that recount parallel situations to that which are recorded in the temptations, one of which is David had made Solomon King, much to the dismay of Adonijah. In that which seemed a simple request, Adonijah asked his mother to ask Solomon if he could have Abishag as his wife (1 Kgs. 2:17). However, Solomon was no fool and he saw deeper than a request to have a certain woman for his wife. Abishag had been the wife of David, and to have a man’s wife meant having his position. This is what Solomon saw. It was a veiled attempt to get the throne (1 Kgs. 2:22) and Solomon, the king of God’s appointment, cast out.

There are several similarities between this incident and the temptations. God had appointed Christ to be King and Satan is opposed to that. Therefore, he comes to the Lord with veiled “suggestions”, which in themselves may seem rational and with possibilities, but the Lord saw deeper. He saw the wicked attempts of Satan to overthrow the purposes of God, split the fellowship of the Godhead, and have ultimate rulership of all that was God’s.

**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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