

An Attempt To Listen To God On

The Tempted Christ

By

Rowan Jennings

Meditations On The Tempted Christ

Introduction

The Question Raised

A question which has been debated for centuries is: “Could Christ have sinned but did not, or was it impossible for Him to sin?” Many saints who seek only the glorification of the Lord are deeply divided on this issue. Sadly, some have thought the opposing saints are less spiritual. This is not the intent here, neither is it the ignoring of the difficulties each viewpoint raises. Many of the difficulties are due to our deficiency in understanding and comprehension.

Each of these is a belief, and a belief is based on that which one has been taught and understood as the truth, the qualifications of the instructor and the personal understanding of data presented. Therefore, when spiritual individuals honestly believe the Lord could have sinned and did not, or He could not sin, is a matter for careful consideration. When we consider the Lord, there can be no room for error, nor for personal thoughts or rationale. Our coming to an understanding and believing must be based on the scriptures. “Could Christ have sinned but did not, or was it impossible for Him to sin?”

Qualifications For To Be Tempted

Before there can be a temptation there must be a consciousness of a moral God which only man and angels have. No animal has a God consciousness as is evidenced by the fact that no animal builds an altar, prays to a deity or has a special ceremony upon death. Man has a God consciousness, but the more suppressed it becomes the more like an animal man becomes. This is the experience Nebuchadnezzar had when he “ate grass like oxen” and was with the “wild asses” (Dan. 5:21). Therefore, temptation demands a God consciousness.

Furthermore, for the Lord to be a qualified High Priest He had to be truly man, truly tempted, and never use His deity to assist in any trial or temptation. We know temptation is not always a momentary thing, but can be a prolonged experience under which we all have succumbed. There are many times, when despite the sin being obnoxious to an individual or diametrically opposed to that which they believe and know to be right, they have fallen. Many have known the temptation to recant in the face of extreme torture and fallen. Could this ever have happened to the Lord? This we shall consider?

More Questions Raised

There are some questions in which the answer can be misconstrued to mean something other than the truth. I could be asked: “Have you stopped stealing?” If I say “Yes”, does that mean that at one time I did steal but no longer do? If I answer “No”, does it indicate I am going to continue stealing?” When we ask: “Could the Lord have sinned?”, if we say “yes”, do we impugn His deity and if we say “no”, do we deny His “humanity”? The same is true with the question of the impeccability of our Lord.

If we say, “No, it was an absolute impossibility for Him to sin”, this opens a series of questions such as:

- 1) What was the value in the temptations?
- 2) Were they real or just a charade?
- 3) Was it that the Lord, being a real man, could have sinned and would not?

To answer “No” would accommodate the argument that the temptations were real and the man Jesus was tempted but refused to sin. It is vital to note the words “the man”, for it is ever a work of Satan to separate the deity of our Lord from His humanity. There are those who teach that being God, the Lord could not sin, but as man He could. This is error for the Lord cannot be divided. He is deity and humanity in one person. In a very faint way we are the same in that we have been made “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4), and yet we are truly human.

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A Possible Viewpoint

In my opinion, there seems to be another possibility. Simply put, the Lord did not have in Him the propensity to sin, or the indwelling inherent sin nature,¹ consequently would not sin because He could not due to His own essential holiness and the value He put on His fellowship with the Father.

The Unshakeable Christ

Adam had no indwelling law of sin nor propensity to do evil, yet when the opportunity came, he chose to sin. The major difference between Adam and the Lord is that the Lord's will and holiness made Him unshakable against it. A very faint illustration of His resolute immovability is a place called the "Mussendem Temple" in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland. This domed, circular building of about 15 meters in diameter was built on the edge of a 120 foot cliff. It faces the North Atlantic Ocean, completely exposed to the winter storms and howling winds. It was built in 1785 and for these 200 plus years, it has stood unshaken. The storms were fierce and the winds were strong, but it stood unmovable. It is not that it would not shake and move, but because it could not. That is the way the Lord was with sin. Irrespective of the intensity, multiplicity, fierceness and continued pressure of the temptations, He by choice would not sin because He could not. He could not be swayed and would not move for His devotion, zeal and love for the Father was infinite and His delight was to do His will. He was tempted, yet without sin, that is no matter how painful the results or prolonged the temptation, or the extremity of pressure put upon Him, sin was never committed nor contemplated by Him.

What Is Sin?

A Definition

A definition of sin would be, any variation from the moral characteristics of God, or the failing to give Him the glory He is worthy of. Sometimes when our Lord healed, He would speak of the individual being made whole, signifying a correlation between physical and spiritual sickness. As one needs physical health they also need spiritual health.

In the scriptures the Holy Spirit uses twenty-seven words to describe sin. We can sin unwittingly but it is never described as an accident, nor something that happens us from time to time. An accident is something which could have been avoided had there been foresight, i.e.; as when one has a car accident. Sin is an offence (Rom 5:15) against God.² Not only could the Lord not sin but He was totally different from every other human being in His essential holiness, being born uncontaminated with sin.

When considering the question: "Could the Lord sin?", there must be the consideration of what sin is. Knowing this, the questions become:

- 1) Would the Lord ever, by free choice, choose to defy God by acting contrary to Him?
- 2) Could He ever have a heart that had lusts spring from it as ours does? (Matt. 15:19)

¹ While it is generally understood by the term "Sin nature", nowhere is what we have inherited from Adam so called. It is called: "The law of sin" (Rom. 7:23); "The law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). It indicates a principle of domination which sin has over us until salvation and then we are told, "Let not sin have dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14). This law was never in Christ, and being holy, He never had to have this injunction spoken to him.

² Sin is also a failure to use an opportunity (Jam. 4:17); disobedience (Rom. 5:19); a transgression (1 Jn. 3:4); unbelieving (Rom. 14:23); foolish thoughts (Prov. 24:9); vain talk (Prov. 10:19); lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4); unrighteousness (1 Jn. 5:17). It is from the devil (1 Jn. 3:8); an unregenerate heart (Matt. 15:19) and sin is a principle of corruption in man that rules as a king (Rom. 6:12).

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Concerning the Holy One, the answer is an absolute “no”. The Lord would never have sinned by free choice for His will was to do the will of God, to glorify Him and to finish the work He had given Him to do (Heb 10:9; Jn. 17:4). Furthermore, He could never have sinned unwittingly by being deceived by Satan or from inward corruption.

The Universal Ramifications Of Adam’s Sin

The law of sin permeates every human being and every part of the human body. Rom. 3:9-12 gives God’s judgment on all humanity as follows:

- 1) Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin.
- 2) There is none righteous, no not one.
- 3) There is none that understandeth.
- 4) There is none that seeketh after God.
- 5) They are all gone out of the way.
- 6) They are altogether become unprofitable.
- 7) There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Sin Permeates Every Part Of The Human Body:

Bodily part	Reference	Quotation
Eyes	2 Pet. 2:14 Ezek. 20:24	Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin. Their eyes were after their fathers' idols.
Mouth	Rom. 3:14	Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Tongue	Rom. 3:13 Psa. 10:7 Jas. 3:5 Jas. 3:6 Jas. 3:8	With their tongues they have used deceit. His tongue is mischief and vanity. The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. An unruly evil, full of deadly poison.
Ears	Matt. 13:15	Ears are dull of hearing.
Feet	Prov. 6:18	Feet that be swift in running to mischief.
Mind	Rom. 1:28 2 Cor. 4:4 1 Tim. 6:5	Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness.
Heart	2 Pet. 2:14 Prov. 6:18	A heart they have exercised with covetous practices. A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations.
Throat	Rom. 3:13	An open sepulchre.
Lips	Rom. 3:13	The poison of asps is under their lips.
Understanding	Eph. 4:18	Having the understanding darkened.

The reality is that every individual in the entire world is deformed by the law of sin and thus responds to temptation as a nail to a magnet. Could this ever have happened to Christ? If not why not? Was Christ a man just like Adam or us?

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Christ Was A Real Man

Christ The Man

The finishing question in the last paragraph was: "Was He not a man just like Adam or us?". The answer is a distinct "No"! Christ was not just like Adam or us.

The scriptures inform us of four sorts of manhood:

- 1) Unfallen and holy manhood as was Adam³
- 2) Fallen and sinful manhood from Adam to every other human being except the Lord
- 3) Redeemed humanity
- 4) And essentially holy humanity which refers exclusively to the Lord.

Adam was created and he was holy in the same way angels are holy, separated for the service of God. "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psa. 145:17). He was created to be dependent on his creator, a man distinct from God, but being in the image of God he was like God, being free to make decisions.

He was a real man, for man is a tripart being having spirit, soul and body. Christ had a spirit (Lk. 23:46), a soul (Jn. 12:27) and a body (Heb. 10:5). Being a human being He was God conscious, speaking of His coming from God and going to God, and this apart from His references to God as His Father.

Man has a human ancestry for we all came from Adam and Eve. Christ also had a human ancestry, indeed He is the only Jew who can, in detail, trace His ancestry back to David, to Abraham and to Adam. If He were not a real man then He would never have been the King of Israel, our High Priest (Jn. 1: 49; Heb 2:17), nor our Kinsman Redeemer (Ruth 3:12 & 4:10). Being a human being the Lord grew from infancy to childhood, to a young man, to an adult of about 30 years of age and then for three years lived in the Jewish communities. He had the normal features of a human. He was born hungered, thirsted, wept, slept, was weary, wrote, had compassion, was angry, forgave, passed judgment, suffered and died. One of the distinct manifestations of humanity is sorrow, for the scriptures record: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7), and Christ truly was a man who knew the sorrows of life.

It ought to be a constant source of wonder and worship how close the Lord came to us. So completely did Christ become a man that He shared the trials of life for me. This makes necessary His being tempted, sometimes sorely by Satan.

Can it be true, the things they say of You?
You walked this earth, sharing with friends You knew
All that they had the work, the joy, the pain,
That we might find the way to heaven again.⁴

Bishop Beverage (1637-1708) wrote: "If Jesus were God only, and not man, He could not suffer anything whereby to satisfy Divine Justice. If man only, and not God, He could not satisfy Divine Justice, even though He suffered. If man only, His satisfaction could not be sufficient for God. If God only, it would not be suitable for man. Therefore, to be capable of suffering for men and able to satisfy God, He Himself must be both God and man."

³ Some might argue that Adam was never holy, and on one hand they are right, yet since "The Lord. . . Is holy in all His works" (Psa. 145:17), and man was part of God's works (Gen. 2:2), then when man was created he was holy. The holy Spirit caused Peter to write: "Holy men of God spake" (2 Pet. 1:21); "holy children" (1 Cor. 7:14); "holy brethren" (Heb. 3:1)

⁴ This is a chorus from "Youth Praise" 1966.

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Christ Contrasted and Compared

There are several areas in which there are contrasts and similarities with the Lord:

- 1) Some similarities between Christ and Israel
- 2) Some similarities between Christ and the Priest in his inauguration
- 3) Some similarities between Christ and Adam
- 4) Some contrasts between Christ and Adam
- 5) Some contrasts between the Lord and all humanity

Some Similarities Between Christ and Israel

Before The Temptations

Israel	Lord
Baptized in Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2)	Baptized in Jordan (Matt. 3:13)
Israel called, "My Son" (Ex. 4:22)	Christ called, "My Son" (Matt. 3:17)
Israel led into the wilderness (Ex. 16:1; 17:1)	Christ led into the wilderness (Matt. 4:1)
Israel in it for 40 years (Num. 14:33)	Christ in it for 40 days (Mk. 1:13)

Some Similarities Between Christ's Baptism and the Inauguration of the Priest

Priest	Christ
Washed in water (Lev. 8:6)	Baptized in the River (Matt. 3:13)
Anointed with oil (Lev. 8:12)	The Holy Spirit coming on Him (Matt. 3:16)

Some Similarities Between Christ and Adam

Those who teach the Lord could have sinned because He was the same as Adam or any other man is true, BUT only to a certain degree, and this needs clarification.

- 1) Both were completely human. (Gen. 2:23; 1 Cor. 15:45; 1 Tim. 2:5)
- 2) Both were called son of God. (Lk. 3:38, note the words "the son" are in italics, and Lk. 4:3)
- 3) Both were called Adam. (1 Cor. 15:45)
- 4) Both were the Heads of orders of humanity. (Rom. 5:12-21)
- 5) Both could be tempted. (Gen. 3:6; Mk. 1:13)

While our Lord was a real man, He was not just a man. Matthew and Dr. Luke will be caused, by the Holy Spirit, to make it clear that the Lord was a real human being, but He was more than that. He was God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16), the Word that became flesh (Jn. 1:14), yet we shall see there are similarities and contrasts to Adam and us.

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At the time of the proposal by Eve, Adam became aware of the seeming opportunity of making self the centre of life rather than God. Like a rebellious child moving out of the fathers home to do his own thing, Adam morally moved out of fellowship with God to do his own thing. This single act was the result of dissatisfaction with that which God had given. It was an act of lawlessness and a refusal to bow to the rights of God. Such an act of transgression could not be overlooked and had to be dealt with. In this, Adam and the Lord are in sharp contrast (Rom 5:12-19).

The Lord Is Contrasted With Adam and His Temptation as the Following Table and References Show

Adam	Christ
In the garden (Gen. 2:8; 3:2; 3:6)	In the wilderness (Matt. 4:1)
He failed	He passed
A place of plentiful food (Gen. 2:9, 16)	A place of no food (Matt. 4:2)
No wild beasts	He was with the wild beasts (Mk. 1:13)
Adam by his transgression brought all mankind into a darkened world of slavery and corruption. (Gen. 6:11-12)	Christ by His obedience brought salvation and justification to the many. (Rom. 5:19)
With Adam there was no record of any urgings from the ultimate source, namely Satan. His temptation came from a secondary channel. (Gen. 3:6)	The Lord's came from Satan himself. (Matt. 4:3)
Adam was never urged to eat the fruit to show who he was. (Gen. 3:6)	Christ was: "If thou be the Son of God". Therefore to say that Christ could have been able to sin because He was just like any other, man is in error. (Matt. 4:3)
The First Adam's defeat brought guilt and condemnation to all his family. (Rom. 5:12)	The Last Adam's victory brought the gift by grace and justification. (Rom. 5:15-16)
The First Adam was given an "helpmeet" to strengthen and encourage him. (Gen. 2:18)	The Last Adam stood alone. (Matt. 4:1)

Christ Was Distinctly Different From Adam By Biblical References^{5, 6}

- 1) Adam was not made a baby and grow, becoming a man, but was created a man. (Gen. 2:7)
- 2) Adam was tempted and fell, Christ was tempted and never fell. (Gen. 3:6, Matt. 4:1-11)
- 3) Adam was subject to the proffering of a channel, Christ was subject to the pressuring of Satan himself. (Gen. 3:6, Matt. 4:1-11)
- 4) Adam was not spoken to by the evil one, Christ was. (Gen. 3:6, Matt. 4:3, 6, 9)

⁵ Adam never grew as a child but he did grow old and eventually die (Gen. 5:5). The Lord grew from babyhood (Lk. 2:12), to childhood (Matt. 2:8), ever increasing in normal growth and wisdom (Lk. 2:40, 52), to manhood (Lk. 3:23).

⁶ There are times when a specific verse cannot be given, yet the concept presented is the truth, i.e we never read the word "trinity" in the scriptures but the truth is clearly taught. Likewise, with these references and conclusions.

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- 5) Adam was never given a distorted perspective of the scriptures to prompt him to sin (Matt. 4:6), for while Satan quoted Psa. 91:11-12, he left out verse 10 which states the condition for this: "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most high thy habitation".
- 6) Adam fell under the temptation of possibility thinking, the Lord never did. (Gen. 3:5)
- 7) Adam disobeyed God and plunged humanity into sin (Rom. 5:12, 19), Christ obeyed God and laid the basis for humanity's blessing (Rom. 5:19).
- 8) Adam was in a garden (Gen. 2:8, Matt. 4:1-11), Christ was in a wilderness, city and Temple.

Christ Was Distinctly Different From Adam By Inference:

- 1) Adam was ignorant of sin, its consequences and the subtlety of Satan. There is no scripture indicating the Lord told Adam about Satan, there was no reason to, all he had to do was accept and obey that which God had said.
- 2) Adam did not have the Holy Spirit indwelling him. The indwelling Spirit only began to indwell humans continually after the ascension of the Lord. (Jn. 14:17)
- 3) Adam chose fellowship with a sin marred creation and Satan over God. Christ was the acceptance of the will of God over personal apparent needs. (Matt. 4:2-4)

Contrasts Between Christ and All Humanity Since The Fall

The scriptures are very clear that the Lord was a true but unique human being:

- 1) His holiness marked Him as unique. (Lk. 1:35)
- 2) His entrance into this world was unique. (Heb. 2:14)
- 3) It was God who took Him from the womb, that was unique. (Psa. 22:9; 71:6)
- 4) He did not take on a human nature.⁷
- 5) His conception was by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20), thus He was "conceived" of the virgin (Isa. 7:14). His was a body "prepared" of God (Heb. 10:5); "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).
- 6) He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, but did not have sinful flesh.⁸
- 7) He lived in complete dependence on God as seen by His praying. (Isa. 50:4)
- 8) He exhibited a thankfulness that was constant. Man's first major sin is unthankfulness. (Lk. 22:17-19; Rom. 1: 21)
- 9) He manifested a determination to do the will of God completely. (Jn. 5:30; 8:29; 10:36-38; 17:4)
- 10) Man was created from dust, not virgin born. (Gen. 2:7; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23)
- 11) Man was the created, not the Creator. (Gen. 1:27; Col. 1:27)
- 12) Man did not come into this world, he was part of it because he was made of the dust of the ground, whereas the Lord came into this world. (Gen. 2:7; 1 Tim. 1:15).

Temptations In General

Who Can Be Tempted?

Normally we think of Satan as the tempter and we the tempted, therefore it comes as a shock to some that each member of the Godhead can be tempted.

- 1) God the Father can be tempted by man.

⁷ Never once is the word nature ever used relating to Christ. "He took not on Him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. 2:16)

⁸ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). It is not that He was made in sinful flesh, He never was!! It is not that He was made like a man of flesh, He was not!! He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

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- a) “And Moses said unto them, “Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?” (Ex. 17:2)
 - b) “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah”. (Deut. 6:16)
- 2) The Holy Spirit can be tempted.
 - a) “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” (Acts 5:9)
 - 3) Christ was tempted.
 - a) “Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” (Matt. 4:1)

Since these references clearly teach that each member of the Godhead being tempted, it is evident that being tempted is not a sin. If it were a sin, then there is not a member of the Godhead who has not sinned. Such a thought is blasphemy!

Where Do Temptations Originate?

There are several avenues from which temptation originate.

- 1) Temptation can come from the law of sin within the human heart or mind.
 - a) “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed”⁹ (Jas. 1:14). Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death.
- 2) Temptation can come directly from Satan.
 - a) Eve: Satan said: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree”?; “Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3.1-6)
 - b) David: “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel” (1 Chron. 21:1).
- 3) Temptation can come from Satan by using an individual.
 - a) “Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me” (Matt. 16:22-23).
 - b) Like any enemy, Satan is an opportunist and at times God permits us to be put in the place of testing, to be tempted by Satan, just as He did with Christ and Job (Matt. 4:1-11 and Job chs. 1-2). There are also times when Satan, being an opportunist, takes a seemingly innocent happening and uses it as a platform for temptation. What could be more enjoyable than standing by an open fire on a cold night, but Satan used this to tempt Peter (Lk. 22:31). Then there was David out for an evening stroll, and Satan working behind the scenes, unwittingly had Bathsheba take a bath and by it tempted David (2 Sam. 11:2). I am confident that Satan puts things into our minds and hearts and unwittingly we respond. How wonderful then is the Lord that in His omniscience He could never be unwittingly moved by Satan. With David it was not a base thing that caught him off guard but a beautiful thing. In reviewing life, it is more often the beautiful things that Satan uses to destroy a saint or enslave an unbeliever
- 4) Temptation can come wittingly or unwittingly from another individual.
 - a) “A certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him” (Lk. 22:56). This temptation came from her unwittingly.
 - b) “One of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him” (Matt. 22:35). This one was done with full comprehension of what he was doing.

⁹ The word translated “enticed” is the word used for the bait to catch a fish. It is translated “Beguiling” (2 Pet. 2:14), and “allure” (2 Pet. 2:18).

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- 5) Temptation can come from religious authorities.
 - a) “The Pharisees, also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that He would shew them a sign from Heaven.” (Matt. 16:1)
 - b) “The Pharisees came to Him, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him.” (Mk. 10:2)
- 6) Temptation can come from distraction.
 - a) It would have been so expected had the Lord on the night of His betrayal to be distracted by anger at Judas for betraying Him, or by the disciples determining which was the greatest, and lashing out at them. He never did. How beautiful this demonstrates His patience and love.

Temptations From Various Voices

It was immediately after the voice of God endorsing of the Lord (Matt. 3:17), came the voice of Satan taunting Him (Matt 4:3). When God speaks honouring Him there is no pride filled smirk waiting for man's congratulations or waiting for man's approval, but immediately went into the wilderness. When Satan speaks there is nothing but rebuff. Furthermore, Satan knew that when He said “No”, He meant no! This is where his glory shone out. The evil one knew there was no value in pressing the matter, it was a dead issue. In His public ministry, He heard the voice of Satan through others.

- 1) To those desiring Him to be king,¹⁰ He sent them away, and with them the disciples. (Mk. 6:45)
- 2) To those who were pressing Him to go to Jerusalem to be seen, He told them they could go up and He went up in secret. He did not come to be a standard bearer. (Jn. 7:4)
- 3) To Peter who did not want him to go to the cross, there was a strong rebuke, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” (Matt. 16:23)
- 4) When taunted to come down from the cross, his response was silence, for they would never understand His reasoning and love. (Matt. 27:40)

There was the voice of acceptable behaviour when it is the normal thing to go to visit a loved one when sick, and if they die, go to the funeral. Yet the Lord does neither. This is where His moral glory shines. He will, as in the temptation to bow down and receive from Satan all the kingdoms of the world, wait God's time. Human evaluations and being judged by others and concern about “What would others say” meant nothing to him, all He desires is the approval of God.

He Was Never Tempted By One Particular Voice That He Heard

The voice of God was never to tempt Christ but always to convey His delight in Him. God had spoken to the Lord prior to His being led into the wilderness, it is never heard in the wilderness. The Lord heard the voice of God on several occasions and each one displayed His glory in its own way.

During the life of Christ there are at least three times when God speaks from Heaven concerning Him.

- 1) At His baptism. (Matt. 3:16)
- 2) The transfiguration. (Matt. 17:5)
- 3) When He was praying, “Father glorify thy Name”. (Jn. 12:28)

In all three instances He was praying. (Lk. 3:21; 9:29; Jn. 12:28)

¹⁰ The Lord will give no grounds for their future accusation of making Himself a king. This is because He lived His life in the awareness that Satan was ever watching Him for any iota of apparent wrong that He would do. That was never possible.

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Various Sorts Of Temptations

Such was the integrity of the Lord irrespective of where the temptation came from. This warfare was too important for even the highest of the satanic government. Satan personally attempted to get the Lord to sin. The defeat was a dreadful humiliation for his satanic majesty. Not only was he rebuked, but he left more defeated than ever. 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. When temptation and sin were held before the Lord, there was nothing in Him that :

- 1) Found it appealing in any way. (Lk. 4:5-8)
- 2) 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 lusting after her. (Matt. 5:28)
- 3) 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.¹¹ Christ knew none of these things.
- 4) However, there was a response in that when 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)

Christ And The Three "Wilderness" Temptations

John's Omission Of The Temptations

Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention the temptations but John never does. Why would that be? Is it because John presents the Lord as God and God cannot be tempted with evil. While the temptations are not in John, there is the corresponding contrasts in John. In the first temptation it is to "make these stones bread" (Matt. 4:3), in John 6 the Lord provides bread for 5000 and presents Himself as the Bread of God (Jn. 6:33). Another temptation was "Cast thyself down" (Matt. 4:6). This is answered in John 6 when the Lord shows His trust in God over the natural instability of water and walks on it when it is the will of God (Jn. 6:19). The other temptation, Satan offered the Lord all the kingdoms of the world but in John the Lord says: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (Jn. 3:35).

Background To The Three Temptations

Nothing in life can be isolated therefore when considering the Lord and the temptations, there must be a consideration of the background.

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 rest is solely for God's delight. 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

¹¹ 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 (2010), I have been to at least one country where a person showers outside on the roof.

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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)

When the Lord was coming out of the Jordan at His baptism, the heavens were opened 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.

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.

The Spirit Led The Lord To Be Tempted

In this experience there is manifested the wonder of divine grace. Profound are the words: "The Lord was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1). This was an experience He had to undergo to qualify Him as a High priest. He knew the brilliance of the enemy intellectually but now 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 by 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 He was "driven by the Spirit"¹² (Mk. 1:12). If 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 to even come in the same environment as the evil one. This was not a reluctance due to personal weakness, but due to His obnoxiousness for all that is evil, either in person or principle.

In the gospel accounts there are three different words used relative to the Lord going into the wilderness:

- 1) "He was led", "anago", to lead away for good or destruction. (Matt. 4:1)
- 2) "He was driven", "ekballei", to be cast out, forced out, by the spirit. (Mk. 1:12)
- 3) "He was led", "ago", to bear, carry or lead, by the spirit. (Lk. 4:1).

Whatever word is used regarding His going into the wilderness, one thing is clear, He was led by the Spirit of God (Matt. 4:1; Mk. 1:12; Lk. 4:1). Isaiah informs us of the attitude of the Lord when he wrote: "Morning by morning he wakeneth mine ear" (Isa. 50:4), and 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.

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.

¹² 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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Where Did The Temptations Of The Lord Take Place?

Many saints have the mistaken understanding that all the temptations took place in the wilderness. That is not so. 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, He 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, both naturally and spiritually, was a beautiful man. His body and personality blossomed as:

- 1) An oasis of spiritual refreshment, as a root out of a dry ground. (Isa. 53:1)
- 2) A tree planted by the rivers of water. (Psa. 1:3)
- 3) Bringing forth fruit for the glory of God as symbolized by the Apple Tree. (Song of Sol. 2:3)
- 4) Not only fruit but such a fragrance of delight as the Rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys. (Song of Sol. 2:1)
- 5) The Altogether Lovely. (Song of Sol. 5:16)
- 6) The Branch of Righteousness. (Jer. 33:15)
- 7) The fountain of life. (Psa. 36:9)
- 8) The one of whom it is said that He is “Fairer than the children of men”. (Psa. 45:2)

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 offensive¹³ 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 temptations are soon to begin, for 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 is whom I am well pleased.”

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.

¹³ Some might object to the terms offensive and confrontational but this was war.

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

The Purpose Of The Temptations

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.

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).

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).

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.

¹⁴ 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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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 the heart of the Lord.

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

To Satan¹⁵ 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.

- 1) He had enmity between Cain and Abel and Abel was slain.
- 2) He had the males killed in Egypt.
- 3) He had the line of Judah cursed by God.
- 4) 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 and for Christ at the beginning of His ministry, he could relax, it would all be over.

- 1) He sought to nullify God's purposes for Christ, for God had said: "I will set my King upon my holy hill" (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

¹⁵ 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.

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God not only nullifying him but progressing with His own purposes, each ended in failure.¹⁶ 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)

- 2) 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.
- 3) 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).

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.

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 Psa. 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 & Mic. 5:2; Jn. 19:37 & Zech. 12:10; Eph. 4:8 & Psa. 68:18.
- 2) There are places where the original sense is modified and used with a new and different application.
 - a) Jn. 3:14-14 & Num. 21:8-9; Eph. 5:31-32 & Gen. 2: 23-24.

¹⁶ 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. (Jn. 5:23; Rev. 13:2, 5, 8)

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- 3) There are places where words are varied by omission, addition or transposition.
 - a) Matt. 4:10 & Deut. 6:13.

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 at 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 thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:17). Eve changed that to: “lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3).

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	Independence manifested by self presumption	Independence manifested by self usurpation
Rebellion against the provision of God	Rebellion against the providence of God	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

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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.
 - 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 surf 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.

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It is also interesting that Satan took Him to this place (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 anything 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". Satan took that expression and used it saying: "For it is written", 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 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", but in Luke it is: "Worship before 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 before 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 world 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.

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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 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.

Other Confrontations Between Christ and Satanic Activities

A List Of Some Of The Confrontational Temptations

While there are many attempts by Satan to have the Lord fall, listed below are some of them. We shall only deal with two of them. With each confrontation there was the temptation to respond differently and with each temptation there was a confrontation.

- 1) The confrontation with the demon possessed men in Gergesenes. (Matt. 8:28)
- 2) The confrontation by using the daughter who was possessed. (Mk. 7:25)
- 3) The confrontation by using the son who was possessed. (Lk. 9:42)
- 4) The confrontation with Lazarus who had died. (Jn. 11:14)
- 5) The confrontation by using Peter. (Matt. 16:22-23)
- 6) The confrontation by the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue. (Lk. 4:33)
- 7) The confrontation with Judas in the upper room. (Jn. 13:21-27)
- 8) The confrontation in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matt. 26:37-46)
- 9) The confrontation when Satan used Annas and Caiaphas. (Jn. 18:19-24)
- 10) The confrontation when Satan used Herod and his men of war. (Lk. 23:7-11)
- 11) The confrontation when the Lord was before Pilate. (Jn. 18:28; 19:15)

The Confrontation in Seeking to Humiliate The Disciples in Their Inability To Cast Out The Demon (Matt 17:16)

The Lord had just gone through a stupendous experience.

- 1) He had been praying.
- 2) He was transfigured.
- 3) The blaze of His perfection radiated through His clothing.

The conversation between Moses and Elijah was concerning His decease at Jerusalem (Lk. 9:31). It was a magnificent time, but like life, there had to be a coming down from the mountain. The next day was a sharp contrast with a man beseeching the Lord to look upon his demonic son. (Lk. 9:37-38)

A multitude had gathered around, undoubtedly a confused group of men. They had cast out demons before but this one had stood against them. They were defeated and the father was in utter grief. By all appearances Satan had the victory, as is seen by the words of the father and disciples. The father said: "I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure Him" (Matt. 17:16). The disciples said: "Why could not we cast him out?" (Matt. 17:19)

Seeing the Lord he comes to Him. With what evil anticipation the demonic world must have watched, and yet with a certain fear of defeat.

What a lesson for the saints of God, and in particular, for those who profess to be the servants of God, either in full time service or pastoral ministry. The Lord, being the perfect Servant, was there to serve the people in fulness of fellowship with Heaven yet so accessible to the needy on earth. The saints of God are not there to serve the pastor or full time persons, they have been placed there to serve the saints. Yet, there have been times one hears of those who have made demands of the saints for food and even financial payment for taking a funeral, etc. This is contrary, not only to the whole life of the Lord, but also this passage.

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This demonic power sent the individual into times of overwhelming personal weakness so that body and mind were beyond his control. This was a contest of powers. Has the man Jesus the power to deliver such a one? Of course He had, but had He done that which the others were not able to do, would there be the danger of pride, "Look what I can do"? In Christ there was no pride from the experience He just had, nor in the ability to cast out the demons.

The Offices And Works Of The Lord That Were Dependent On His Sinlessness

There are several "offices" and "works" of the Lord that are directly related to the temptations. Among which are, His declaring God's Name, revealing the Father, Giving to the disciples God's word, His work as Redeemer, Kingship, High Priesthood and Advocacy. Had the Lord sinned, none of these could have been performed by Him. In each of these we must be aware of our need before we can appreciate the Lord and these works. For example, being that before we were saved, the Lord as the Saviour meant little until there was a realisation of personal need.

Of these we will only consider His qualifications for Kingship

To Qualify The Lord To Be King.

David had been king over Israel for forty years and his days were fast ending. Reading the last recorded words of this man, who was so wonderfully used of God, as he looks over his long life what words does he say? Possibly Psa. 23, as he taught of the days of delight when he knew the Lord as His Shepherd. However, God tells us plainly: "Now these be the last words of David. . . he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:1-3). Psa. 72:1-2 is debatable, whether it is a prayer for Solomon or a prayer of Solomon, either way is irrelevant. What is said is key to this study of righteous kingship. "Give the King they judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment". Adding the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1). Finally, "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins" (Isa. 11:5). If the Lord is going to rule in righteousness and in the fear of God, then he must live that life, and that is shown in the temptations. He, the man Jesus, will be shown to be "King of Righteousness" (Heb. 7:2). Like Abraham, he passed this major test with flying colours and Satan could find no unrighteousness in His judgements.

To Display His Personal Perfections

While it is easy to be taken up with the temptations, we can miss the fact that all the miracles of the Lord are backdrops for the display of His excellencies and glories. Each questioning of the Lord and each activity is the background on which His glories shine. God never tempts any man, but if left like this, it would raise a question which Satan would utilise. "What if He, incapable of using His deity, (for neither Adam or we can use deity), had been tempted in the most dire circumstances by the greatest military strategist the world knows. How would he have fared?

The scriptures give us the record of conflicts between spirit beings:

- 1) When the angel was coming to Daniel with an answer from God, the Prince of Persia withstood Him but Michael came to help. (Dan. 10:13)
- 2) When Michael disputed with Satan about the body of Moses, it was a conflict of words. (Jude 1:9)
- 3) We can read of war in heaven between the Dragon and his angels with Michael and His angels. (Rev. 12:7)

We are also given a sight into heaven when God permits Job to be tempted by Satan (Job chs. 1-2) and the character of Job was seen. The temptations of our Lord were an intensification of that conflict, for the Lord was the Promised Bruiser of Satan's head and this was a conflict in which Satan had to do all he could to win! Furthermore, both the Lord and Job were on the enemies ground, but despite the temptations, displayed their

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virtues. One other major observation is made. While Job ended by acknowledging his sinfulness, the Lord was so perfect Satan could not find a flaw in Him (Job 40:4; Jn. 14:30). This was a spiritual conflict of a spirit filled man against the powers of darkness, and in particular, the arch enemy of God.

In this conflict the Lord shows His glorious resoluteness and holy perfections for He did not have an archangel to help Him, neither did He have legions of angels assisting. He had the Holy Spirit whom every believer has. He fought this fight as a man and was the mighty Victor and Overcomer.¹⁷ For the Lord to have yielded to the suggestions of Satan and sinned, would have been the greatest insult to the Holy Spirit, indicating His inability to strengthen. Had He even contemplated fulfilling the promptings, he would have grieved the Holy Spirit. Had He sinned, He would have quenched the Holy Spirit. Such activities would have resulted in the work God gave Him of declaring His name would never, and could never have been fulfilled. The power of God through Him would have been curtailed. In the temptations, He begins the process of entering the strong man's house, destroying his weapon and breaking the enemy in pieces. (Mk. 3:27; Psa. 2:9)

All this time God was silent, no commendation after this. What an encouragement it would have been if only God had opened the heavens, commending Him after the temptation, but God was silent.

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 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 His 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.

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 biblical 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.

¹⁷ This aspect of the Lord will be dealt with later in the study.

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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.

Could Christ Have Sinned?

Some Questions

- 1) Could the Lord have deliberately set himself up and displaced God as the centre of life? Adam did!
- 2) Could He have yielded to the temptations of the evil one and shown dissatisfaction with God? Adam did!
- 3) Could He have committed an offence against God that nothing could rectify?¹⁸ Adam did!
- 4) Could the Lord, who hates the workers of iniquity (Psa. 5:5), have any fellowship with the King of iniquity? Adam did!

The following lists show that it was utterly impossible for the Lord to have ever sinned, or even contemplated it in any way

Christ Could Not Sin Because:

- a) Christ was a man:
 - i) who loved the Father (Jn. 14:31)
 - ii) who lived in the bosom of the Father (Jn. 1:18)
 - iii) who was filled by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 4:1)
 - iv) who lived according to the will of God (Heb. 10:7)Because of these, He had no interest in sin.
- b) Christ could not sin because of His:
 - i) Immutability (Heb. 13:8)
 - ii) Omniscience (Jn. 2:24; 16:30; 21:17)
 - iii) Omnipotence (Matt. 28:18)
 - iv) Faithfulness to God (Rev. 3:14)
 - v) Fellowship with God was too precious to be cast aside.
 - vi) It was against His will (Jn. 4:34)

¹⁸ For if the Lord had sinned there was no other sacrifice for sin.

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- c) Christ could not sin because:
 - i) His manhood was unique in that it was holy humanity (Lk. 1:35), therefore sin was contrary to His essential nature. He was made in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7), He was not in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3).
 - ii) His entrance into this world was unique. (Heb. 2:14)

- d) Christ could not sin because:
 - i) It was contrary to the purpose for which God had sent Him, which was to destroy the works of the Devil, and man cannot serve two masters. (1 Jn. 3:8; Matt. 6:24)
 - ii) He sought to glorify God and could not entertain the profferings of Satan. (Jn. 17:4; Matt. 4:1-11)

The reason for separating the above reasons, why “Christ could not sin”, is because they focus on different things. The first on His perfections, the second on His attributes, the third on His uniqueness and the fourth on His purposes.

Christ Could Not Sin Because He Is God

Jesus of Nazareth was not God humanized, nor was He humanity deified. He was the one in whom all fulness dwelt (Col. 2:9), the eternal Word (Jn. 1:1), equal and eternal with the Father (Jn. 1:1-2). He had a body prepared but He was the uncreated God. He condescended but was never degraded.

Phil. 2:7 records that the Lord, “Made Himself of no reputation”, “emptied Himself”, RSV, DBY, ASV. The question is: “What did the Lord then divest Himself of when he became a man?” The wording in Phil. 2 makes it clear that He could not divest Himself of His deity. To be our sacrifice, High Priest and Advocate, the Lord had to live with self imposed limitations. He was uninterruptedly and unchangeably God, but limited Himself to the limitations of a human being and His own sovereignty. He must never use not His divine attributes to diminish the power of a temptation, nor desensitize himself from the sufferings and feelings of humanity.

The Lord is the Son of man, that is, He is the ideal man, a man morally perfect before God, with God being all in all, this living life as God intended man to live. God was the source of all He did, the sustainer of all He did, the goal for which He did all, and He did it all in love.

Such is the wonder of the God man that:

- 1) Jesus was God, who neither slumbers or sleeps, yet Jesus slept. (Psa. 121:4; Mk. 4:38)
- 2) Jesus was God and God is never weary (Isa. 40:28), yet Jesus was weary. (Jn. 4:6)
- 3) Jesus was God and God cannot die, yet Jesus died. (Psa. 90:2; Psa. 102:24; Jn. 19:33)
- 4) Jesus was God and God cannot be tempted, yet Jesus was tempted. (Jas. 1:13; Heb. 4:15)
- 5) Jesus was God and God cannot be localized, yet Jesus was localized. (Psa. 139:7-11; Matt 2:23)

Note, these were all non moral issues, but when it comes to moral matters, for instance lying, Jesus could not lie.

Being Sinless Meant:

- 1) He never had a fault to acknowledge.
- 2) He never had to ask forgiveness of anyone, anywhere at anytime.
- 3) No capability was distorted, defective or dwarfed.
- 4) Never once did any behavior detract from the value of his teachings, nor belittle His person, or His position as a servant of Jehovah.
- 5) Never once did He need a mediating sacrifice by which to come to God. Ever speaking to God as Father.

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- 6) He was the true manifestation of the Father and God. (Jn. 1 & 14)
- 7) He never had a sin to confess.
- 8) His death was a substitute one, He alone was able being sinless, for no man can redeem his brother.
- 9) He was able to give Himself as a sacrifice for sin.
- 10) He was raised from the dead.
- 11) He never had a conviction or conscience burdened because of sin, because there was nothing in Him which desired sin, and committed it.
- 12) There was nothing of deceit in him when He condemned it in others.
- 13) His every word had the greatest authority.
- 14) He was never curtailed from speaking on any subject because of sin in His past and consequently no hypocrisy.
- 15) His death was a substitute one.
- 16) He was able to give Himself as a sacrifice for sin.
- 17) He was raised from the dead.
- 18) He gave the challenge: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46). That is tell a fault, rebuke me for anything I have said or did?
- 19) To people who watched him critically.
- 20) He was able to point out:
 - a) Distortion of motives.
 - b) Distortion of living for time and not eternity.
 - c) Distortion of making the law more important than life.
 - d) Distortion of the thinking of those who honored God with lips and not lives.
 - e) Distortion of those who distorted the word of God.

Because of these glories, Christ could never insult or defy God by disobedience. His beauties and perfections were the result of doing nothing of Himself (Jn. 5:19). Love to the Father caused Him to say:

- 1) "The Son can do nothing of himself." (Jn. 5:19)
- 2) "What He seeth the Father do: . . .these also doeth the Son likewise." (Jn. 5:19)
- 3) "I can of my own self do nothing, . . .and my judgment is just; because I seek no my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (Jn. 5:30)

These are major statements for they teach for the Lord to have sinned, would have meant that God sinned and submitted to the devil, and the Lord was doing what He saw the Father do. Such is blasphemy!

Furthermore, if the Lord had sinned by not following the Father, then He would have been disobedient and how could a disobedient Christ be different from a disobedient Adam? (Rom. 5:12-21)

- 1) His reverential fear of God put sin out of the question.
- 2) His holiness could not be aroused by sin for the awakening of the flesh and the law of sin was not in Him.
- 3) Since sin is a yielding to the lower appetites, a losing sight of truth and beauty, the Lord of glory could have no part in it.
- 4) All that Satan could offer held no interest for Him, nor any desire for it.
- 5) He could not sin because it is the result of temptation and temptation is the inducement to foolishness.

How could the one who is the wisdom of God be induced to foolishness? Being perfect He saw sin for what it was, and His Holy soul and mind utterly recoiled from it, for He loved righteousness. For Christ to have sinned would have meant He had to find sin attractive, dissatisfaction with that which God had given, and have a fleshly perception of being curtailed by God and not being free to do what He wanted to do irrespective of God's will.

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Christ The Overcomer

It is perhaps hard for us to grasp this statement by the Lord: "I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). A world that apparently would soon defeat him, but he was going to defeat the prince of this world who had the power of death rising triumphantly from the grave,¹⁹ to live forever in the power of an endless life (Heb. 2:14; Heb. 7:16).

There have been many glorious battles that cross the pages of biblical history but none compares with that of the Lord. He defeated Satan, being able to say: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me". (Jn. 14:30)

In the parable the Lord told of a strong man keeping his goods but a stronger came and binding him, took that which he had (Matt 12:29). Satan was the strong man but Christ the stronger, and He bound Satan, not by curtailing his freedom of access to humanity for temptation, nor by his present power over death, nor his program of aspiring world rulership. These will all come later. By His mighty resurrection He took:

- 1) His satanic majesty's armor, death. (Heb 2:14)
- 2) Away the fear of death, and gives peace and quietness. (Heb 2:15)

He has:

- 1) Given liberty, gifts unto men. (Eph.4:8)
- 2) Brought light and life and immortality through the gospel. (2 Tim.1:10)

The Major Passages Used To Teach That The Lord Could Have Sinned

Hebrews 2

There are two main passages that are relevant to the question: "Could the Lord have sinned"?

- 1) He took on Him the seed of Abraham, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto His brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:16-18)
- 2) "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16)

Several Observations

Apart from Hebrews, there are several other passages in the scriptures which are written concerning saints and temptations or trials during this age. One can think of such passages as:

- 1) "How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded unto many." (2 Cor. 8:2)
- 2) "My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." (Jas. 1:2)
- 3) "Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." (1 Pet. 4:12)

The reality is that temptations and trials bring opportunities for spiritual development or ruin.

- 1) "The trial of your faith worketh patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing." (Jas. 1:3-4).

¹⁹ If Christ is not risen from the dead, He has provided no salvation so there is no justification; Theologically there will be no fulfillment of the purposes of God; Christologically, there is no glorification of Christ and for us, living for God has no eternal blessing.

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- 2) "The trial of your faith being much more precious than gold which perisheth, thought it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet.1:7)

The word translated "trials" or "temptations", while in both cases is the same Greek word, it is the context and origin of the trial or temptation that makes the difference.

In the two passages in Hebrews, "tempted" is mentioned three times:

- 1) "For in that he Himself hath suffered being tempted." (Heb. 2:18)
- 2) "He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:18)
- 3) "Was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:16)

Other expressions that demand attention are:

- 1) "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto His brethren." (Heb. 2:17)
 - a) When it says, "he as made like unto His brethren", what is entailed in that? Does this relate to His humanity or His experiences?
- 2) "He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:18)
- 3) "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Heb. 4:15)
 - a) What sort of infirmities are spoken of?
- 4) "Was on all points tempted as we are." (Heb. 4:15)
 - a) What does, "On all points tempted as we are" indicate?
- 5) "Yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15)
 - a) What does it mean, "Yet without sin"?

Comments On Hebrews 2

There are several expressions in this passage which can cause concern. In verse ten it says: "To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings". The concern is this, since the Lord was always perfect, then how could He be made perfect? This has nothing to do with what He was morally but what He was in His qualifications for priestly ministry. A priest had to be a man (Heb. 5:1), and Christ was that, but more, was needed. Being God in Heaven He never knew what it was to be despised, spat upon, hated, tortured, enter death, hungry or tired, to work at the bench, be one of a family of unbelieving peers, be the breadwinner of a family, attend a funeral, weep and to be tempted. These were all experiences of daily life which He learned and so made perfect for coming to our aid.

Also, there are two mentions of suffering, v. 9, and v.18 but the context is not the same. The suffering in v. 9 is the vicarious sufferings for sin which the Lord experienced in the three hours of darkness, whereas those of v. 18 were the non sacrificial sufferings for sins, the sufferings of daily life. An instance of the latter is Mk. 9:19, "How long shall I suffer you"?

In verses 14 to 17 the word "took" is used three times.

- 1) v. 14: "Took part of the same"
- 2) v. 16: "Took not on Him" and again "took on Him"

These are not translations of the same Greek word but of two different words:

- 1) V. 14: "took part", "metecho"
- 2) V. 16: "Took", "epilambanomai"

Note also the words, "him the nature of" and "him" (ch. 2:16), is italicized thus indicating it was inserted by the translators without any Greek text. So the passage ought to read: "For verily He took not on angels, but took on the seed of Abraham". But, who are they?

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The seed of Abraham are those who are the children of faith (Gal. 3:29). It is a spiritual relationship not a physical one as the Pharisees surmised (Jn. 8:33, 37).

To those who are believers, the Lord takes hold of them, taking them by the hand. To an Israelite this would remind him of by gone days when God in taking Israel out of Egypt, He “took them by the hand” (Jer. 31:32). In that great foreshadow of deliverance from the bondage of fear (Heb 2:15), He brought them into the wilderness and there bare them on “eagles wings” (Ex. 19:4); “The Lord thy God bare thee” (Deut. 1:31); “He carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9). In this dispensation of grace He seeks us to grow, so while strengthening us He “takes us by the hand”.

There were many pitfalls and murmurings in the desert. Twenty-four thousand were slain (Num. 25:9) because they joined themselves unto “Baal-Peor” who was the god “Chemosh! Then there were those who died in the wilderness because they refused to go into the promised land (Num. 14:29). The question naturally would come, what if we fall as they did or do not enter our inheritance? (Eph. 1:11) Or, what if God ever got so angry at us that the experience of Israel would be repeated upon us when He told Jeremiah: “Pray not thou for this people. . . neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee” (Jer. 7:16), or “Pray not thou for this people. . . For I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me” (Jer. 11:14); and similar words in ch. 14:11, until in ch. 15:1 God said: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me. . . Cast them out of my sight”.

How weak they were and failing; if only they had one to walk with them in the pathway of obedience to God, someone to succour (help) (Matt. 15:25), (to run at a call or cry for help²⁰) them. Thank God we have, and He has walked the path of obedience before us, experienced every trial we go through in that pathway to our heavenly inheritance, experiencing it more deeply than we ever can (Heb. 2:10, the captain, pioneer of our salvation) and He will “save to the uttermost” (to save in perpetuity, “to the very end”, Young’s Lit. Trs.). He will never lose patience with us for he is such a High Priest who can have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. (Heb. 5:2)

What Are His Qualifications?

With God being perfect, the sacrifice and priest had to “become Him”, that is, it had to harmonize and correspond with His own character. Nothing inferior would have been befitting to God, therefore Christ must be perfectly qualified to be “becoming to Him” (Heb. 2:10). What does it mean “becoming to Him”? It means God is the God of perfection and any office being fulfilled, any work given to do, must be suitable to Him according to His character, not dishonoring His name”. Christ to be that as High Priest must walk the path of devotion to God without a stain or falter.

As he lived in this world, it was not an easy life, sorrows abundant were upon Him, the pathway was strewn with harassment, each day saw new burdens brought to Him and ultimately it led to Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha. He walked the storm tossed sea, faced the elements they faced but without a cover. He has faced what we face and had no High Priest to succour Him, and glory of glories, He never failed or fell. How beautiful are the words:

I have a Friend, whose faithful love
Is more than all the world to me:
'Tis higher than the heights above,
And deeper than the soundless sea;
So old, so new,
So strong, so true;
Before the earth received its frame,
He loved me—Blessed be His name!

²⁰ Robertson’s Word Pictures.

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He held the highest place above,
Adored by all the sons of flame,
Yet such His self-denying love,
He laid aside His crown and came
 To seek the lost,
 And at the cost
Of heavenly rank and earthly fame
He sought me—Blessed be His name!

It was a lonely path He trod,
From every human soul apart;
Known only to Himself and God
Was all the grief that filled His heart,
 Yet from the track
 He turned not back,
Till where I lay in want and shame,
He found me—Blessed be His name!

Then dawned at last that day of dread,
When desolate, yet undismayed,
With wearied frame and thorn-crowned head,
He, God-forsaken, man-betrayed,
 Was then made sin
 On Calvary,
And, dying there in grief and shame,
He saved me—Blessed be His name!
C A Tendon.

Did He know what it was to be tempted? Yea and more, He knew what it was to suffer being tempted. He did not suffer in the flesh as we do, due to sin (1 Pet. 4:1), but the pressure to let go just a little bit was affliction beyond understanding. Undoubtedly, the torments of the mind as Satan and his infernal hordes sought to turn Him aside, the taunting of who He was, Christ was tempted beyond our comprehension but never faltered or failed.

Hebrews 4

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:14-16)

The major statement in v. 15 is: “Yet without sin”. This is the “yet” of astonishment and pronouncement. It is the same as Isa. 53:9 & 10: “Because (although) He had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in His mouth, YET it pleased (was the will of God) to bruise Him”.

Despite everything that Satan tried to tempt the Lord with, it was evident that there was no latent sin in Christ, as a lion lying in wait to destroy. He had human bodily functions, thirst, hunger, weariness and sleeping, but in none

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of these did He sin. His hunger never degraded into greed; His weariness never degraded into apathy; His sleepiness never degraded into sloth. Had this been, then these natural blessings would have resulted in sin.

Satan can take a trial from God and use it as a temptation as he did with Job when Job got angry. Moses went through a trial for some 40 years and eventually lost his temper with the people of God. He broke under the trial and sinned. The Lord never did. He knew what it was to hunger and Satan took advantage of it but Christ never faltered. We can be working for the Lord and it can be very severe, then Satan cause us to glory in the work we do.

Because He was without sin, He never had the conscious awareness of sin. In Isa. 5, when He pronounces on Israel He will say:

- 1) "Woe unto them that join house to house." (v. 8)
- 2) "Woe unto them that rise up early." (v. 11)
- 3) "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity." (v. 18)
- 4) "Woe unto them that call evil good." (v. 20)
- 5) "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes." (v. 21)
- 6) "Woe unto them that are mighty." (v. 22)

But, when he is given his vision of God, he says: "Woe is me. . . I am a man of unclean lips. . . for mine eyes have seen the King" (Isa. 6:5). Job was righteous and God acknowledged that yet when he begins to see the glory of God, his words are: "Behold I am vile" (Job 40:4). No one lived in close fellowship with God as Christ did, and yet there was never the slightest conscience of sin or distortion due to sin.

The marvel of it is that He had no high priest to turn to for aid, for it was a path uncheered by earthly smiles, misunderstood in every way and yet He never retaliated or responded in a way that was contrary to the character of God.

The temptation spoken of in Hebrews is that of leaving the pathway of faith through suffering, deprivation and humiliation, the stupendous pressure to turn aside, and this could not be done, not even for a split second. There must be no mild interest in pondering the excitement of sin, in seeing any situation distortedly.

What If Christ Had Sinned?

- 1) If Christ had sinned:
 - a) There would be no Saviour for mankind.
 - b) God's last message to humanity would have failed.
 - c) All God's lovely purposes would have been reduced to empty dreams.
 - d) The Godhead would have been split.
 - e) His body would have been left to go to corruption in the earth.
 - f) His soul today would be in the torments of hell.
 - g) The sacrifices would all have been useless and meaningless ceremonies.
 - h) Satan would have remained in a place of power, totally opposed to God, and God incapable of doing anything about it.
 - i) If Christ could have sinned being a man, since He is still a man, what is to stop Him sinning now?
- 2) If we have a Christ who could have chosen to sin, then we have a Saviour who could have chosen to:
 - a) Disobey God's will.
 - b) Misapply God's word.
 - c) Refuse to take God's way.

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- d) Act independently of God.
- e) Tempted God.
- f) Fallen down and worshipped Satan.

The Agitation To Get The Lord To Respond When He Hung On The Cross (Mk. 15:29-32)

That which must never be lost sight of is the fact that in these agitations, Satan was seeking to humiliate the Lord to the uttermost. His was the hope that there would come a point when the Lord would lose His temper, get so agitated to prove what He said was right, that He would come down from the cross. There is nothing worse than being mocked by those who distort words, or are dependent on one even if unconscious of that fact.

This affliction came from two avenues:

1) The Agitating To Get Him To Respond By Their Attitudes

This was seen in the “wagging of their heads” (Matt. 27:39), and in “beholding Him” (Lk. 23:35). The first indicated an attitude of contempt and the second a spectacle of ghoulish curiosity.

The wagging of the heads was prophetically written about:

- a) “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.” (Psa. 22:7)
Again, it signified the attitude of derision.
- b) “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” (Isa. 53:3)
Utter contempt, as indicted by shaking the head.
- c) “I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.” (Job 16:4)
- d) “I became a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads.” (Psa. 109:25)

Their attitude was depicted in the words: “In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me” (Psa. 35:15). They were “beholding” Him. The Greek word is “theōreō”, which means to be a spectator, to gaze upon with a prolonged gaze.

Humanly speaking, this necessitated a man of supreme spirituality resulting in not reviling, and more wonderfully, not have a rejoicing venom anticipating their judgement. Indeed, we can join with the disciples who said: “What manner of man is this!” (Matt. 8:27). What devilish venting this was, cruelty immeasurable, seeking to turn Him back.

2) The Attitude To Have To Respond By Their Words

Their words were as bitter barbs, spoken in scorn and hatred for: “They hated me without a cause” (Jn. 15:25), to which can be added the words of the Psalmist: “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head” (Psa. 69:4). The hurtful disparaging sarcasm was spoken by all avenues of society as they “reviled” Him (Matt. 27:39). To revile means to vilify, to defame, speak evil about, and this they did with malice.

Two sneering cries came from the passers by:

- a) “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself.” (Matt. 27:40)
- b) “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matt. 27:40)

The chief priests, scribes and elders had a fourfold prong:

- a) “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” (Matt. 27:42)
- b) “If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” (Matt. 27:42)
- c) “If he be Christ, the chosen of God.” (Lk. 23:35)

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- d) "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God ." (Matt. 27:43)

The soldiers, a single cry:

- a) "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself." (Lk. 23:37)

The thieves:

- a) "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God the thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." (Matt. 27:43-44)

The sneer of the single thief:

- a) "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." (Lk. 23:39)

There was, in these cries, the constant use of the word "if". The devil and his associates knew who the Lord was, (Matt. 4:3; Mk. 1:24²¹). By doing this, the evil one kept the people assuring themselves that Christ was not the son of God, as they judged by that which they saw. Also, it was to try to have the Lord have doubts, making Him question that which He had said He was. It is a fact that persons can be shaken in beliefs if constantly brainwashed by questions that make them doubt. These people, under satanic empowerment, were seeking to brainwash the Lord, therefore they would say:

- 1) "If thou be the Son of God"
- 2) "If he be the king of Israel"
- 3) "If he be the Christ the chosen of God"
- 4) "If thou be the king of the Jews"
- 5) "If thou be Christ "

One can feel the sarcasm in the expression: "If he will have him for he said I am the Son of God".

The Agitating To Get Him To Respond By Their Viciousness

Those who either He meant nothing to or utterly despised Him, were prophetically seen as dogs, bulls and lions. Bulls gore, dogs bite and lions devour. In these creatures there is no pity for the one they are afflicting, no repentance for that which has been done and no plaintive weeping for their cruelty to the weak. Let us never forget that the Lord was "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4). The picture in Psalm 22 is very graphic, for it indicates a little hind or doe, with all its timidity, in the dawn of the morning. A bright day lies ahead and suddenly it is surrounded by savage animals, all intent on its destruction.

- 1) They surrounded the Lord, using the words of the Psalmist, "compassed", "beset" and "inclosed". (Psa. 22:12, 16)
- 2) The words which describe these people are graphic, "ravening and roaring". (Psa. 22:13)
- 3) They are callous, they "look and stare". (Psa. 22:17)
- 4) They are "many bulls". (Psa. 22:12)

These words all indicate maliciousness, for "ravening" means "to rend in pieces" (Gen. 37:33); to "tear" (Psa 7:2). The word is used of wolves (Ezek. 22:27) and a lion tearing (Na. 2:12). When a lion roars it is declaring territory and seeking to intimidate. When this is lifted to the Lord, it is recognised that the Lord was an intrusion from the day of His birth. Herod wanted to find the baby to destroy him (Matt. 2:13). The religious leaders were the same, seeking a way to put him to death (Jn. 11:53; Matt. 26:59). Now their hour had come and they were ready for it.

²¹ In the demonic world there is a united front. In Mk. 1:24 and Lk. 4:34, the collective and individual pronouns are used. The demons say: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art". Twice over they say "us", once they say "we", all collective pronouns. Then they change to "I", indicating unity.

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They “compassed” Him, that is, they surrounded Him. This is the word used when the men of Sodom surrounded the house of Lot where the angels were staying (Gen. 19:4), and when the children of Israel encircled²² the city of Jericho (Josh. 6:4). Thus, at the cross, the Lord was in a constant state of being encircled by those who hated him.

He was “beset” and with this context, it is used in three places:

- 1) The children of Israel, “Inclosed the Benjamites so that there was no escape”. (Jud. 20:43)
- 2) In Habakkuk, there is nowhere for the righteous to turn for the wicked compass the righteous. (Hab. 1:4)
- 3) When our Lord was on the Cross.

He was enclosed, and the Hebrew word is translated “kill” in the clause, “Woe to Ariel. . .the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices” (Isa. 29:1). When Job says: “After my skin worms destroy this body” (Job 19:26), the word destroy is the same Hebrew word. It also means to surround with intent to conquer, as Israel with Jericho (Josh. 6:3), or the King of Syria when he came against Dothan to capture Elisha (2 Kgs. 6:14). Within the context of Psalm 22 and kindred verses, the thought seems to be to surround with intent to kill and destroy and so enclosing so that none can escape and none can help. How graphic the portrayal is, wild animals intent on slaughter, surrounding, encircling, enclosing so that the Lord could not escape, even if He came down and of those who loved Him, none could help. One can understand the deep significance of the expression: “There is none to help” (Psa. 22:11), and in that dire situation His cry rises: “be not far from me” (Psa. 22:11).

This was not the hardness of being used to the sight, sounds and situation; but this was that hardness of intense callousness intensified by Satan.

The Lord stands in contrast to them. They reviled, but He sympathized with the women en route to Calvary and now He prays for them. They spoke words of disdain, but He spoke words of compassion. They stood united as a satanically blasphemous crowd, but He stood alone in silence and composed.

The Temptations Can Be Times Of Deepest Communion

Yet for us, though not with Christ, it is in times like these when the deepest communications from God are granted. Some may have heard of Geoffrey T. Bull, a saint who was taken captive by the Chinese communists in Tibet. This man of God was held in captivity for three years where there was constant attempts to brain wash him. It was in those times the seeds of His book, “God hold the key”, were unveiled.

We cannot know the depth of communion there was between our Lord and His Father for these are matters too sacred to be unveiled. Neither can we know the infinite pleasure the Father had as He watched the perfect unveiling of His own character being shown so beautifully in Christ. Haughty men stood blaspheming in cold indifference to the grief they were venting on the Son of His love (Col. 1:13 DBY).

The passers by that fateful day
Unmoved by Christ’s affliction,
All shook their heads and turned away
While mocking His prediction.

From every angle mocking scorn
Fell like a torrent o’r Him,
The priests and elders all forsworn
Poured out their venom on Him.

²² In Josh. 6:3-4, the word “compass” is not the same in both verses. In v. 3 it is “naqaph” and in v. 4 it is “Sabab”. From these two verses it seems that sabab means to surround, but “naqaph” indicates to circumnavigate.

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If it is true, God's Son Thou art
That bond shall never sever,
Come down now from the rugged cross
We will be thine forever.

The Beauty Of His Reactions

To such mockery, what was His reaction and how beautiful did he display perfection? His reaction was manifested by at least five attitudes / happenings / knowledge:

- 1) "When he was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." (1 Pet. 2:23)
- 2) Silent before His shearers.
- 3) He knew they were blinded by Satan and sin, totally unaware of their need for deliverance and to be greatly pitied.
- 4) He prayed.

He Reviled Not Again

Despite the repeated jeers from the callous crew of soldiers, the mocking of the religious authorities, the heckling of the passers by and the deriding of the thieves, He reviled not again.

The ancient prophet Jeremiah, who was a mighty man of God, prayed: "O Lord of Hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance upon them" (Jer. 11:20). In contrast, The Lord desired God to manifest all that He claimed to be for His justification (1 Tim. 3:16). He had declared Himself to be the Son of God, and that is why He was being crucified. The core of their jesting was when He was on the cross. He wanted God to show that He was not a deceiver but was the Son of God. In the case of Jeremiah, there was no thought of forgiveness, but unflinching righteous judgment on the evil doers!

Furthermore, when the Lord asked for their forgiveness, He knew the only way that could be accomplished was if the judgment for sins was executed on Him. We need to recognize that God never just forgives sins, there must be the execution of judgment for the wrongs done and only then can forgiveness be offered.

Despite their persistent denouncing, He reviled (imperfect active for repeated incidents²³). He threatened, again no matter how loud, how many or how long they cried, there were no responses to them.

Being slandered had been His experience for years, having been accused of:

- 1) Doing miracles by the power of Beelzebub. (Matt. 9:34)
- 2) Spoken of as an illegitimate child. (Jn. 8:41)
- 3) His prophethood derided. (Jn. 7:52)²⁴
- 4) His place of living despised. (Jn. 1:46)

Yet, He was always perfect, but this temptation was more severe. Using the words of our text: "He was tempted in all things, yet without sin", the undefiled Christ.

²³ Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures

²⁴ In this they were willfully ignorant, for they knew Jonah had come from Galilee". "Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher" (2 Kgs. 14:25). Gathehepher is approximately 3 miles form Nazareth in Galilee, and belonged to the tribe of Zebulun.

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He Was Silent Before His Shearers

In the New Testament we are informed of groups or segments of society who were around the cross.

These were:

- 1) The chief priests, elders and scribes. (Matt. 27:41)
- 2) At least four women, “His mother, His mother’s sister,²⁵ Mary the wife of Cleophas²⁶ and Mary Magdalene”. (Jn. 19:25)
- 3) Many women, which followed Jesus from Galilee. (Matt. 27:55)
- 4) All His acquaintance. (Lk. 23:49)
- 5) John, the disciple whom He loved. (Jn. 19:26)
- 6) The thieves. (Mk. 15:27)
- 7) The passers by. (Mk. 15:29)
- 8) The soldiers. (Jn. 19:23)

These groups were in two contrasting camps:

- 1) Those who were in sympathy with the Lord.
- 2) Those who He meant nothing to ²⁷.

He Knew They Were Blinded By Satan And Sin, Totally Unaware Of Their Need For Deliverance And To Be Greatly Pitied

The Lord is a realist and so in praying for their forgiveness, does not deny their deservingness of judgment. Neither does He pray: “Father be merciful or gracious, but forgive”. The word means “to hold back”, because “They know not what they do”.

The Lord knew that they understood they were crucifying the man Jesus, but they did not understand the seriousness of this. They were “treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5), they failed to see they were crucifying the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8), the “Prince of Life” (Acts 3:15) and their Messiah (Dan. 9:26). The Lord saw them as those who were totally blinded by Satan, and loving them, He prayed for their forgiveness. His whole attitude was one of beauty and the ultimate manifestation of the love of God.

Interestingly, in the midst of their blasphemy and hatred, they unwittingly gave the Lord the greatest compliment: “He trusted in God”. They, His enemies who hated Him, knew whom He trusted in and now acknowledge it.

While it is not a title of the Lord, the term can most certainly be applied to Him. He is the Victorious Lord. The glory of this truth is the theme of the heavenly courts. With heartfelt praise and adoration the song will rise: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10). Our Victorious Lord, He has defeated the enemy and his armies, has secured an eternal salvation and glorified the Most High God. He is the glorious One who has bruised the serpents head and quenched forever any further uprisings against God. In contrast to the Prince who shall come, being the man of sin under Satan’s empowerment, the “Mighty One of Jacob”, the “Prince of Life” (Acts 3:15), shall arise as the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), the Prince of Princes (Dan. 8:25) and ultimately the “Prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5).

²⁵ This is an unnamed lady, for if it is suggested that she is Mary, the wife of Cleophas, then in the one family there were two sisters with the same name. It is more logical to see this lady as Salome (Mk. 15:40).

²⁶ She was the mother of James and Josse. (Matt. 27:56)

²⁷ Later one of the thieves repented. (Lk. 23:40-43)

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There are few things more beautiful than the rays of the sun as it begins its upward journey through the heavens. That beauty is intensified as it is set in contrast to the blackness of the night which at times feels like a thick gloominess permeating the air. So also with Christ, the rays of the glory of His devotion to God in deprivation of food, the urging to misuse the Scriptures and refuse to await God's time shine in their brightness against the arrogance and self manifestation of Satan, and the barren death fraught wilderness the Lord was in.

He Prayed For Them

In the midst of the jeering, spite and hatred against Him, He prayed for their forgiveness. However, His prayer for their forgiveness was different from Stephen, for He could pray but never suffer the price to be paid for their forgiveness. The Lord knew that for His prayer to be answered, he was going to have to pay the price for that forgiveness. Colossians catches the glory of this. "You, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. 1:21), and in that reconciliation, sinful man can have "forgiveness of sins through His Blood" (Col. 1:14), "In the body of His flesh through death" (Col. 1:22). This forgiveness was based on justice being executed and He personally bearing the penalty for their sins. Isaiah spoke of this when he said: "He made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). This was the measurement of His love, and that love was what caused Him to repeatedly pray: "Father forgive them". How beautifully did He exemplify His teachings: "Love your enemies. . .do good to those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). He does not ask them to forgive them but to pray for them.

When the Holy Spirit emphasizes a certain point in time, then there is always a reason for it. A specific time was designated when this prayer is offered for it says: "Then said Jesus" (Lk. 23:34). Why did He pray this at this point? What is the background of it? The entire life of the Lord was the background, and particularly the last hours He had known constant sorrow and grief.

- 1) He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Isa. 53:3)
- 2) He came unto His own and His own received Him not. (Jn. 1:11) He was wanted when they needed something done, but in their hearts He was not wanted.
- 3) At birth there was no room for Him, the foreshadowing of that which was to be His life. (Lk. 2:7)
- 4) He was to live constantly with hostility, as a child by Herod (Matt. 2:13), and in adulthood by men who sought to cast Him over the brow of the hill. (Lk. 4:29)
- 5) The open persecution of the Lord began when He healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day. It is recorded, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus" (Jn. 5:16). The tense indicates a persecution which would continue, "and sought the more", kept on seeking the more to kill Him.
- 6) In the judgment Hall man cried: "Crucify". (Mk. 15:13) In the hall of judgment the priests, etc., had mocked and abused Him. (Matt. 27:31)
- 7) Then publicly, with two malefactors, He had been led through Jerusalem's streets. (Lk. 23:32)
- 8) Then they had come to Calvary. (Lk. 23:33)
- 9) Then He was crucified between the thieves, "Jesus in the midst". (Jn. 19:18)
- 10) Then He prayed, "Father forgive them". (Lk. 23:34)

The Temptations Of Satan, God And Us

The Temptation Of Satan

Being audacious, insubordination was nothing new to Satan. He had been confrontational with God as seen in the illustrative picture in Isa. 14, and He had not changed. We often read the miracles as the works the Lord did, and so they are, but they were more. They were the activities and results of satanic behavior confronting Christ in seeking to humiliate Him before men, demonic hosts and celestial beings. Evidences of this challenging attitude and behavior is seen when:

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- 1) He sought to humiliate the disciples with one they could not heal (Matt. 17:16), and this after the Lord had given them power to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1).
- 2) When the Lord came to the country of the Gergesenes, the demonic men did not run from Him but came to meet Him. (Matt. 8:28; Mk. 5:2)
- 3) At times individuals with unclean spirits were brought to Him, for instance, the woman who came beseeching the Lord for her daughter (Mk. 7:25), or the father who came on behalf of his son (Lk. 9:42).
- 4) While the Lord was away Lazarus was taken into his fortress (Jn. 11:14). What could the Lord do now for He had not risen from the dead?
- 5) When the Lord told the disciples of His approaching death, Peter said: "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22-23). This was confrontational.

Not only is Satan challenging, he is also brazen. For instance:

- 1) A man was in the synagogue with an unclean spirit, with this being the only recorded instance of a demonic person in a synagogue, its recording is not incidental. This was without a doubt a confrontation. What a place to have a demonic in, the very place where the Word of God was read and prayers were chanted. Satan had really intruded into God's arena, even if it was only God fearing superficially (Lk. 4:33).
- 2) This is similar to when the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper. It was a most sacred gathering, and yet there sits Judas who has the audacity to question the Lord concerning who will betray Him.

The temptations were the epitome of the brazen character of Satan, but they also make manifest the perfect beauties of the Lord. The Lord said: "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34), and He wielded it against all satanic opposition. When the Lord took the offensive, Satan took the defensive, but He was always the defeated one. When Satan took the offensive the Lord took the defensive, but He was always victorious.

The Temptations And God

- 1) God made man for: "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). This is a major reason why the Lord could not sin, for being the creator and then to sin would be to sabotage his own person and this is beyond comprehension. This creating was done in full fellowship with the Father and Spirit, so for the Lord to sin would be spiritual suicide and also split the Godhead. That fellowship from eternity past would be forever gone and one of the Godhead would be forever under Satan's dominion. This would never be fulfilling the reason he became man.

The Temptations And Us

- 1) To give an example in temptations. The Lord is presented as our encourager and example in various parts of the New Testament. As such, He is presented as the "Author and Finisher of our Faith", to whom we look (Heb. 12:1-2); the example of how to respond under afflictions (1 Pet. 2:21) and how to respond to temptations.
- 2) It also teaches us the lesson of submission. The Lord was God, yet He, being submissive to God, was taunted and tempted by His inferior. How easily He could have eradicated Satan. It must be understood God never created Satan, He created Lucifer and gave to him a place of pre-eminence and glory²⁸. This high ranking archangel only became Satan when he became the adversary of God. (Isa. 14:12-15, where the king of Babylon is used as a type of the fall of Lucifer. Possibly this foretells the fall of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4) . Lucifer sought to usurp the place of God but in contrast Christ being God, humbled Himself and being a man (Yet ever being God) allowed Himself to be tempted by Satan.

²⁸ The Lord created all things and that includes not only things material but also governmental positions. (Col. 1:16)

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- 3) Mark tells us that for the forty days and nights He was with the wild beasts?²⁹
- 4) Why do I need an Advocate and High Priest? (1 Jn. 2: 2; Heb. 2:17-18)
 - a) One of the results of sin is the inherent ignorance of divine holiness and of the approaching God. Because of its possible casualness with many of us, we come before God, “In the name of the Lord Jesus”, and it becomes like the “please” word to a little child. Mum can I have a cookie, please?”. God, in the Old testament, showed constantly the need for a priest to take my offering and present it in a way acceptable to God. This is one aspect in which we need Christ functioning as our Priest. Within the context of this paper there is another reason, we need a high priest to intercede for us for our preservation and who can succour us in the warfare of spiritual development. I need a man to be my High priest because of the pressures from the flesh, the world and Satan by which I can be deceived, conforming to less than the ideal. I need a priest pouring His strength and perspective into me. I recall many years ago I watched 3 little girls in the back row of a meeting. The two outside ones wanted to pass notes to each other through the centre one but there was no way she would do it. I was concerned in case she would break down and thought if only I could sit by her, encouraging her not to fall under the pressure. That is what the Lord does for us when we are under pressure to fall. However, He must be a perfect man who, no matter how severe the pressure He experienced, He never fell.
 - b) Sad to say, so often I fall, not just a couple of slippages a day but constantly, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. What then? How, when I fall through presumed helplessness or presumptuous arrogant thinking as Paul shows in Romans 7, can I beat it? This is God’s remedy for the sinning saint. He must be a perfect man who can supplicate for me, and one who never needed an advocate with God. No wonder it says: “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:1).

²⁹ Here, at the beginning of the Lord’s ministry, He is “driven”, “cast out” by God and at Calvary. He was to be cast out by men. The word is “ekballei” and the Hebrew equivalent is used in Gen. 3:24 of man being “cast out” of the garden. In this place He was with the wild beasts, in this case they are animals, but in Psa. 22, men are presented as “bulls. . . Strong bulls” v.12; like a “lion” v.13; “dogs” compassed me about v.16; and unicorns v. 21.

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Endnotes

The Words Translated “Prove”, “Test”, “Try”, “Examine”, “Tempt”, “Temptation”

The words, prove, test, try, examine, tempt and temptation are the translations of three Greek words. They are:

- 1) Peirasmos.
 - a) This word is always translated “temptation/s” except in 1 Pet. 4:12 where it is translated “try”
- 2) Peirazō
 - a) The idea originally behind the Greek root of peirazō is to make the object seen as it really is. It means “to make an experience of”, “to pierce or search into” or “attempt”. Later it signified testing to see the true and real character of a person or thing.
- 3) Dokimazō
 - a) The simplest idea is that” dokimazō” is usually the result of positive testing with the expectation of the outcome.

When used referring to the Lord, but only “perismos” (Lk. 4:13) “peirazō” (Matt. 4:1) are, it was giving Him the experience of what it would be like for us to be faithful to God with severe opposition in the spirit, with Satan attempting to make Him sin and God searching into His innermost being and ultimately not finding a flaw within.

If Christ, Being God Could Have Sinned, Does This Mean God Could Sin?

One of the greatest acts of deliberate sinning recorded in the scriptures is that of Belshazzar. This evil man took the sacred cups, and in a drunken display of bravado and blasphemy, used them to praise the gods of gold and silver. Judgment came on Him exceedingly quickly (Dan. 5). This blasphemous attitude pales into the mists when one dares to ask: “Could God sin?” Using the words of Paul: “God forbid”. The intensity of divine holiness is marked on the pages of Holy writ. It is an indisputable fact, God could not sin.

God is holy in:

- 1) All His works are holy. (Psa. 145:17)
- 2) His name is holy. (1 Chron. 16:10)
- 3) His essential being is holy. (Lev. 11:44)
- 4) In His presence is holy. (Josh. 5:15)
- 5) His holiness is without equal. (1 Sam. 2:2)
- 6) He is without iniquity. (Deut. 32:4)
- 7) God cannot do evil. (Job 34:10)
- 8) In Him is no darkness at all. (1 Jn. 1:5)
- 9) God is spoken as, “Holy, Holy, Holy”. (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8)

Surely, to say that this God could sin is blasphemy beyond degree. If³⁰ Jesus is God manifest in flesh then it is blasphemy to say that He could have sinned.

The Argument That Christ Had A Fallen Nature

Edward Irving taught that when our Lord added humanity to His deity, He took a fallen nature with all its distortions. By a gradual process of practising righteousness, He perfected the fallen nature. He also said: “I shall

³⁰ This is not an “if” of questioning its truth but of argument, could be translated “since” but “if” suits the question better.

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maintain until death that the flesh of Christ was as rebellious as ours, as fallen as ours. Human nature was corrupt to the core and black as hell and this is the human nature Christ clothed himself with. I say: "This is blasphemy".

The Overshadowing Of Mary

While the Lord was made of a woman and from her received a human frame of spirit, soul and body; YET the spirit of the Lord was never dead in trespasses and sins, he was never under condemnation and the sentence of death was never upon Him as it is on all others (Rom. 5:12); He never needed justification as we do (Rom. 5:16); He was never born a sinner as we were (Rom. 5:19) but was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

The scriptures make it plain that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, but why?

- 1) Was it prevent her from sinning? No!
- 2) Was it to prevent the law of sin and death inherent in her from infiltrating his body? Yes!

It must be clear that the Lord was not born holy because He was born of a virgin, for the effects of the original sin had contaminated Mary. Had the Lord been born of Mary as a virgin but without the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, He would have been a child of Adam, (as she was) born under the headship of Adam, under condemnation, having a relationship to the old man.

What did the overshadowing do? It prevented the law of sin being passed on to that Holy body so that He was born holy and death having no claims upon Him.

The Meaning Of "Immaculate Conception"

While there are many teachings of the Roman Catholic church, Protestants misunderstand one of the most prevalent. It is the "Immaculate conception". Protestants think it refers to the Lord, but in Roman Catholic theology, it refers to Mary herself being born immaculate.

This is not the case. How then did it come about?

- 1) First, there must be some scripture for this and the Roman Catholic church distorts the argument that a good tree brings forth good fruit (Matt. 7:17), and that Christ was the fruit of Mary. The argument was that the only way He could be pure and sinless was if Mary was this. The emptiness of this argument is that if Mary was born sinless, then what of her mother and father? If they were contaminated by sin then how could she be born sinless?
- 2) Second, the immaculate conception refers to Mary and that she was born sinless and void of the taint of Adam's transgression. Eadmer was first to present this. It was endorsed by the Council of Basel, (1431-1445) and by the sixteenth century it was fully accepted. Pope iPus IX presented the Ineffabilis Deus, teaching the immaculate conception of Mary, having the endorsement of papal infallibility. That papal bull states: "We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful." Furthermore, the Roman Catholic religion teaches that because she was born sinless, having an immaculate conception, her body was the Temple of God and she was the spouse of the Holy Spirit! It also teaches that in her humility she accepted physical death. To this is added such fanciful imaginations that Thomas, not believing she had died, entered her tomb and found it filled with beautiful flowers. She experienced dormition, falling asleep and after three days she arose from the dead and ultimately ascended to heaven (the assumption of Mary) Ex Cathedra by Pope Pious 12th 1950.

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The Apparent Contradictions Of God Tempting Man

There are places in the scriptures which seem contradictory. One example is in Gen. 22:1 and Jas 1:13.

- 1) “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham” (Gen. 22:1). Yet James writes: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.” (Jas. 1:13)
How can these be reconciled, for both are true.
- 2) Again, “When He (God) has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10), and “Thou (God) hast tried me” (Psa. 17:3).

As in our normal life, a word can be used and its meaning depends on the context. For instance, “Johnny broke the school record for the high jump” and “Susan Boyle will soon record a Christmas CD”. The word “record” is the same, both with two different meanings. Thus, the word translated “tried” and “tempt”, is the same word but the context and the tenure of scripture determines the meaning.

God will try man but never tempt man to do evil. Did He not tell the disciples to pray: “Lead us not into temptation”? At first glance this seems to indicate that God does lead us into temptation but the better paraphrase is: “Do not allow us to be led into temptation”³¹. When God tries us it is for spiritual development, but when Satan and his associates tempt, it is always to do evil. God tries us to see what is in our hearts (Deut. 8:2). God is forever refining us for praise, honor and glory at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:7).

Satan tempts us to do evil and shows what we are in ourselves. Satan is totally opposed to God therefore temptation is any activity which causes an individual, angelic or human, to respond in a way, by defaming God’s Person, or acting contrary to His purposes and decrees.³²

The Teaching That The Lord Complained

There is a teaching going among some assemblies that when the Lord used the words of Psalm 22, He was actually complaining. In particular vv. 2-5.

“O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.”

This teaching is that Christ said: (paraphrase) “Our fathers trusted in thee and you never let them down, but I thy perfect son, who always did all that you desired, you have not come to my need but instead have forsaken me”. This raises the questions:

- 1) Is this the truth or a blasphemous statement?
- 2) Is this a matter that one would expect to be taught in assembly meetings conferences, etc., or from a cult?

³¹ Robertsons N T Word Pictures

³² Sin does not always have to be proffered, it can be the natural response of a fallen nature, even if the object itself is ignorant of their being a channel for Satan or the flesh. For instance, I have a very sweet tooth, and I see a Black Forest cake, all chocolatey with cream and cherries, it looks so delicious. The problem is that I have just had a very sufficient and satisfying meal. My flesh, in its greed and gluttony, wants a big piece of that cake. Is greed and gluttony a sin? Did the cake of itself do any proffering?

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The tragedy is that this was taught in a gathering in the North of Ireland and there was not a voice raised in opposition. Since this paper is dealing with the question: "Could the Lord have sinned?", it is in defense of the truth that the Lord never ever, under any circumstances, murmured, complained, protested, criticized, grumbled, whined, carped about any experience the Lord brought Him into. The basis for that is as follows:

- 1) Complaining, etc., is a heart attitude.
 - a) That was a way of Israel, and it was a sin:
 - i) "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." (Num. 14:29)
 - ii) "And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us." (Deut. 1:27)
- 2) Complaining, etc., was the way of Judas, and it was a sin.
 - a) "For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her." (Mk. 14:5)
- 3) Complaining was the way of the Pharisees and scribes and it was a sin.
 - a) "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." (Lk. 15:2)

To even for a moment teach that the Holy Son of God complained is to lay the accusation of sin against Him, and that being so it means that:

- 1) Christ sinned.
- 2) His sacrifice was absolutely worthless.
- 3) The resurrection is a myth.
- 4) There is no ascension, etc.
- 5) Salvation is non-existent.

If Christ complained and therefore sinned, then God Himself is found to be a false witness for He said:

- 1) Prophetically: Behold My servant in whom is all my delight.
- 2) Personally: Thou art my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

How could God find fullness of pleasure in a man who in heart was rebelling against Him? Everything the Lord did and said found its origin in God the Father.

The Lord said:

- 1) "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me." (Jn. 5:36)
- 2) "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father." (Jn. 10:32)
- 3) "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." (Jn. 14:10)
- 4) "I know that Thou hearest me always." (Jn. 11:42)

This is now a real conundrum. God is giving the Lord a work to do and then give Him the words to complain! This would mean that the Father and Holy Spirit led Him to complain, to verbalize a natural fleshly attitude to and against God.

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A most important point is that the Lord never said the above quoted verses, that which He did say was the first clause, and only the first clause of verse one! Brethren in their prayers, preaching, etc., will often times indicate the Lord saying the rest of the verses, but that is an unbiblical unwarranted assumption. It is, in fact, putting words in the mouth of the Lord, words that we have no scripture for.

It nullifies the truth of His sinless life and thus makes all the expressions in the Old Testament, concerning His being without blemish and without spot, empty statements.

Since we are told to follow in his steps, it then gives us the right to complain when we find God treating us differently from others.

**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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