

The Kingdom-Driven Life #7

The Book of Matthew

Duel in the Desert

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying,
"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You';
and
'On their hands they will bear You up,
lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.
Matt 3:13-4:11 NASB

I. The Timing of the Lord

A. The "Silent Years" of Jesus

1. Besides a recording of the events surrounding His birth, almost nothing is said of Jesus' life until these events, which occurred when He was about 30.
2. These "silent years" are a message in themselves:
 - a. How to handle obscurity with patience and faith
 - b. How to wait on God for our commissioning in life
 - c. Self-restraint and humility...awaiting the "fullness of time"
(Galatians 4:4)
3. For approximately 4,000 years the "sons" of Adam have been defeated by Satan and the kingdom of darkness, captives of sin and suffering.

4. Now, the one Paul the Apostle calls “the last Adam” and the “second man” comes to His moment of release. (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47)
5. The “1st Adam” was tempted by Satan in a garden and fell...the “last Adam”, Jesus Christ, will be tempted by Satan and be victorious.

B. The Tipping Points

1. The ministry of John sets up the ministry of Jesus.
2. The supernatural proclamation of His sonship sends Him into His ministry.
3. In Matthew 3:16, 17 we see the clearest picture in scripture of the Triune God:
 - a. The **Son** stands in the river.
 - b. The **Holy Spirit** descends like a dove.
 - c. The **Father** publicly proclaims Christ’s sonship.
4. Immediately after this “mountain top” event, Jesus is “led by the Spirit” into the wilderness for a “duel in the desert”.

C. New Levels, New Devils

1. Spiritual advancement is usually accompanied by spiritual warfare.

**My son, if you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation.
from *Wisdom of Sirach*, Ecclesiasticus 2:1**

2. Great privileges and special tokens of divine favor will not secure us from being tempted. (Quote from Matthew Henry)

**After we have been admitted into the communion of God, we must expect to be set upon by Satan. The enriched soul must double its guard.
Matthew Henry’s Commentary**

3. Temptation, when not yielded to, is not sin.

**Submit yourselves...to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
James 4:7 KJV**

II. The Duel in the Wilderness

A. Overview

1. The human race was lost when our first parents were defeated by the “serpent” in a three-fold temptation regarding the “forbidden fruit”.

**And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.
Genesis 3:6 KJV**

- a. It was “good for food”, an appeal to the BODY.
- b. It was “pleasant to the eyes”, an appeal to the SOUL.
- c. It was a “tree to be desired to make one wise”, an appeal to the SPIRIT.

2. We see this confirmed by the warning of the Apostle John:

**Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world, *the lust of the flesh*, and the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
1 John 2:15-16 KJV**

- a. Notice that the “lust of the flesh” is an appeal to the body.
- b. The “lust of the eyes” is an appeal to the soul.
- c. The “pride of life” is an appeal to the spirit.

3. All the temptations in the world could be summed up as illegal pursuit of: *pleasure, possessions, and position.*

4. We can see how the “fall” of humanity was TOTAL...corrupting us in every dimension of being.

5. The “sons of Adam” suffer 4,000 years of general defeat by the “prince of this world”, who “conquered” us in the Garden.

6. But the Good News is that Jesus Christ is another “Adam”!!!

**The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven.
1 Corinthians 15:45-48 NLT**

7. Adam lost his “kingdom” by *yielding* to the devil in all three areas of temptation. Christ comes to establish His Kingdom by *defeating* the devil in all three areas of temptation!

B. Lessons for Warfare

1. Contrast the temptations of the two Adam’s:

- a. The first was in a *garden* where food was bountiful, and the temptation to eat the one thing forbidden ought to have been of minimal interest; Christ was in a *wilderness* and had not eaten anything for forty days!
- b. The first Adam had a “helper” with him, one who might have stood with him against the wiles of the enemy; the “last Adam” was alone.
- c. Yet, the three-fold pattern of temptation is unchanged!

1) “Command these stones be made bread”...an appeal to the BODY.

- 2) "Worship me and I will give you all these kingdoms I am showing you"...an appeal to the SOUL.
- 3) "Cast yourself down and the angels will catch you..." an appeal to SPIRITUAL "pride."

2. At the core of the first temptation was an accusation against God!

"If you are the Son of God, command these stones be made bread"
Matthew 4:3

a. This eerily matches the serpent's strategy where God's goodness was called into question for withholding power from His creatures.

"Has God really said...?"
Genesis 3:3-5

The great thing Satan aims at, in tempting good people, is to overthrow their relation to God as a Father, and so cut off their dependence on Him, their duty to Him, and their communion with Him...Out ward afflictions, wants and burdens are the great arguments Satan uses to make the people of God question their sonship..."
Matthew Henry's Commentary

b. Satan's first line of attack is to make us doubt our placement as God's true children, to show Him as unkind, unfaithful to us, or forgetful toward us.

3. Notice in the second temptation, the devil quotes scripture!

- a. Satan knows the scriptures, so he takes Jesus to a high place, even the pinnacle of the temple, and tempts Him to jump off, quoting Psalm 91.
- b. It is a common temptation to *unlawfully verify what God has already confirmed!*
- c. In the first temptation, Jesus was tempted to *despair* of God, while in the second He is tempted to *presume* upon God!

"It is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God...'"
Matthew 4:7

4. In the third temptation Jesus is transported to the top of a great mountain, an even higher place than the pinnacle of the Temple...

Two of the three temptations occur in "high" places, an indication that the higher we go, the slipper the slope!

5. The third temptation was the most dangerous of all, an offer of worldly glory in exchange for devil worship!

The devil is offering the nations (and their glory) to Christ; but the nations of the earth had long ago been promised to Him! (Psalm 2:8; 22:7)

**We must take heed of receiving *even that which God has promised*, out of the devil's hand...
Matthew Henry's Commentary**

6. The offer then, as now, is a "kingdom" without a "cross"!

All that is "in the world" will be offered to you and me, as it was to Christ.

C. The Sword of the Kingdom

1. In all three cases Jesus responds to temptation by quoting the Word of God!
2. The Word is the only offensive weapon in the Christian's spiritual armor. (See Ephesians 6:17)
3. The only way to attack the enemy is through the Word of God, *properly applied*.
4. Jesus was God in the flesh, but His earthly ministry was as a man equipped by the Holy Spirit and armed with the Word of God!

- a. When under duress, God is our Father
- b. When tempted to tempt God, or misuse His word, we rest in what God has said.
- c. When tempted to worship another, we rebuke the devil and maintain our allegiance to the King!

**The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.
1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT**

5. On the other side of every temptation, faithfully resisted, is the ministry of angels!

**Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.
Matthew 4:11 NLT**

6. Jesus qualifies as King because He has successfully defeated the enemy and can understand our weaknesses!

**Jesus the Son of God...understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.
Excerpt from Hebrews 4:14-16 NLT**