

Temptation of Christ

Lesson 2.09

The temptation of Christ, although instituted by God, was an attempt by Satan to destroy Jesus' mission of redemption, and ultimately the Kingdom of God. Jesus soundly defeated these temptations, and displayed the steps we take in defeating temptation, as well.

Please read [Matthew 4:1-11](#) before starting GraspingGod.com's free Bible study lessons, #2.09

Preliminary Bible Study Questions:

- 1) Why did God allow the temptation of Christ?
- 2) What was the last temptation of Christ in the desert?
- 3) Does Satan also tempt Christians?

Satan is after what Christ already enjoys: The sovereign rule over all creation. Satan wants the power, glory and honor that goes with the lofty, eternal position. He started this current mission at the temptation of Jesus. Let's study more about this struggle in the desert.

Who Is Satan?

Satan is an angry, blood-thirsty beast who is second only to God in power. No human operating under his own physical strength is a match for him - not even close. Nations fail to withstand Satan, and eventually fall into treacherous plans. Satan is incredibly intelligent, because of his nature, and the fact he has been alive for thousands of years. He is experienced in watching humans think and act. He knows the Bible better than any Christian who has ever lived, and will manipulate the Scriptures and fool even the wisest of men.

We all have these pictures of Satan in our minds, but there is no way our thoughts can begin to imagine how hideous and terrifyingly powerful this evil creature is in real life. If this picture of Satan in our mind came to life, it wouldn't be nearly as ugly and sinister as the real thing. You do not, I repeat DO NOT want to wind up in his grip for eternity. Flee from him to the arms of Christ - the One who defeats the temptations of the devil.

Satan Is a Murderer

Satan wants your soul so badly that he hates God's plan of salvation. He has been attempting to destroy humans since Adam was created. There are two main reasons he tries to destroy us: First, he tried to stop the "seed of the woman" that would lead to the Savior ([Genesis 3:15](#)). He tried keeping the Israelites from becoming a nation. He led people to hate and kill God's prophets. And, he even tried to have baby Jesus killed by King Herod. Second, Satan desires to kill

humans, too, and that includes you and me. He wants people dead. The unsaved he wants dead so that God can't save them - Satan wants them locked in hell. The saved people he wants dead so they don't share the love of God with other people.

Satan already stole dominion over the earth from Adam when he tempted him to sin. Hard to believe, yes, but God gave Satan dominion of the earth. This was a punishment to Adam and Eve, the original ones given dominion. That stinks for us because we are still dealing with the consequences of the fall of man. Satan became our ruler when Adam and Eve listened to him in the Garden of Eden. He owns people, and he rules the earth, which brings us to the event in the wilderness: the temptation of Christ.

Reason For the Temptation Of Christ

God wanted Jesus Christ properly qualified to be the sacrificial Lamb for the human race. The temptation of Christ was an event God would use to prepare his Son. Let me explain. [Hebrews 2:17-18](#) says, "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

You see, Jesus in his humanity had to be treated like us, and suffer like us. Jesus had to be attacked like we're attacked, in order that he could sympathize with us, and fully experience what we do. Jesus must identify with us - God requires it.

Jesus is like us in every way, with these two exceptions: He was born without a sin nature because of the virgin conception, and, he never sinned. These were important requirements instituted by God, so that Jesus could qualify to be our sacrifice. The temptation of Christ, like Jesus' baptism, was one of the steps involved in this process of the qualification of Christ. These were no small matters.

Opportunity Of Satan

The prideful Satan, under the sovereignty of God, was given an opportunity to test the faithfulness of Jesus in the desert. Satan thought he would entice Jesus Christ to forego the suffering and cross that was in his future. Satan wanted Jesus to accept an earthly kingdom, without all the pain and death that a heavenly kingdom would cost him.

Satan thought Jesus would accept his bribes, and destroy the Father's ultimate plan. He was correct in his thinking, because had Jesus fallen to the temptations, it would have destroyed God's method of salvation for mankind. But, Satan was wrong in his presumptions, because Jesus would never be allured from his Father's will. This was a serious battle that had to be fought, in the war matching God vs Satan.

List Of the Temptations of Christ

So, what happens when Satan tempts Jesus? How did Jesus handle Satan's temptations? What can we learn from this story?

First of all, let's look at Satan's three temptations of Christ:

1) The first temptation of Christ in the desert focused on the lust of the flesh. [1 John 2:16](#) makes us aware of our bodily cravings, you know, those things we love that fill our bodily needs for pleasure. It can be anything that fills our eyes with beauty, our stomachs with food and drink, our ears with beautiful sounds, and our other bodily needs (i.e. smells, sex, humor, etc).

Jesus had been fasting from everything for 40 days in the wilderness. His body had serious cravings that it wanted met. Satan tempts Jesus by suggesting that he turn the nearby stones into bread to meet his hunger pains. After all, feeding yourself is natural, is it not? But, remember when Eve fell for nearly the same ploy of Satan's?

The problems with Satan's temptation were this: God the Father demanded that Christ rely solely on Him to sustain his life. Had Jesus stepped outside of God's will in this matter, he would have been treasonous to the Father's authority. Satan wanted Jesus to become independent of the Father, which would have been a rebellious act. Unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus did not fall for Satan's treachery. Jesus vs Satan, round 1 in the Temptation of Christ: Jesus wins!

2) The second temptation of Christ focused on the pride of life. [First John 2:16](#) also makes us aware that we have an internal desire to demonstrate how wonderful we are. It is personal pride in who we are, in what we do, and in our great accomplishments. Satan brought Jesus up to a very high point on the Temple in Jerusalem. Satan tempted Jesus to jump off into the the canyon below, based on [Psalm 91:11-12](#), so that the Father's angels would protect him.

This act would dazzle the many onlookers who would then praise God for the miracle. Jesus would have become famous had he done this. Multitudes of people would have become his instant followers. He could have been so revered by all the people! Jesus declined the invitation.

The problems with Satan's second temptation of Christ were these: It simply wasn't in God's plan to turn the world's Messiah into a spectacular showman. Had Jesus succumbed to this temptation he would have gained a following of people who wanted miracles and other superficial entertainment. Satan also tempted Jesus to test the Father's claim of [Psalm 91:11-12](#), to make sure the Father would really send his angels to save Jesus. Jesus would not presume upon the Father's will to test him. Jesus versus Satan, round 2 in the Temptation of Christ: Jesus wins again!

3) The last temptation of Christ Jesus in the desert focused on the lust of the eyes. Satan brought Christ to a mountaintop and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth, with all the glory that goes with them. Satan offered them all to Jesus. Christ would have been the world ruler! All

that Satan requested of Jesus was to bow to him. Jesus would have been the earthly ruler, but under the authority of Satan, the god of the world.

The problems with Satan's third temptation of Christ were these: First, God didn't want an earthly kingdom. God wanted a heavenly kingdom, over which Jesus Christ would rule. The future would ultimately bring the earthly kingdom directly under Christ, but not yet. Had Jesus fallen for this temptation he would have traded God's plan of an eternal heavenly kingdom for a temporal earthly kingdom. Jesus knew that God's plan called for him to live perfectly, die by crucifixion, and that this would all come in the Father's timing. Jesus obeyed his Father. Jesus and Satan, round 3 in the Temptation of Christ: Jesus wins yet again!

Jesus Defeated Temptation

Had Jesus called upon his powers as the Son of God, in any of these temptations, he would have done something that natural humans couldn't have done. That action would have disqualified him as a sacrifice for our sins. Remember [Hebrews 4:15](#), "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin." Jesus' obedience to the Father, by fighting off Satan's temptations, passed the test.

How To Beat Temptation

How did Jesus defeat Satan's temptations? What was his secret? It's pretty simple really. The three temptations of Christ proved that Jesus knew the Scriptures. He studied them since he was a little boy. He followed them as an adult. He believed the Scriptures, and he taught others the Scriptures. The Scriptures formed him as a man.

He knew the Father's will, because of his knowledge of the Scriptures. Sin is enticing, but God's word is more powerful than sin. Righteousness won over selfishness. Good conquered evil. Jesus, the man, defeated Satan, by trusting in God's word. Jesus proved he knew God's word, by three times stating, "It is written."

All three temptations brought a response from God's word, and specifically, the book of Deuteronomy (e.g. [Deuteronomy 8:3](#); [6:13](#); [6:16](#)) to refute Satan's twisted temptations. Jesus used the Sword of the Spirit (aka the Bible) to thwart Satan's flaming arrows. The result of the temptation of Christ was victory, and Jesus qualifying to be our sacrificial Lamb. The result when we're victorious over Satan's temptations is that we prove to the world we belong to God.

Schemes Of Satan

Satan essentially offered Jesus earthly glory without having to suffer pain and crucifixion. Jesus could have succumbed to Satan's temptations, but he chose to trust in his Father's will for him. The allure and grandeur of the earthly pleasures would have been enticing to Jesus' human nature. Satan tempts Jesus to become another earthly king. God always has greater things planned for us who believe him. Satan seeks to tempt us to accept something less than what God wants for us. God always wants the best for those who love him. The temptation of Christ proves to us that we need to focus on the heavenly realm, and not on earthly security and glory.

The devil doesn't want people to know who Christ really is. He doesn't want people to know Jesus is the heavenly King of kings, and Lord of lords. Satan simply wanted Jesus to accomplish what other human kings accomplish: temporary dominion on earth. He tempts Christ to become an earthly king instead of the eternal Lord of All. He was hoping Jesus would accept the temporal over the eternal. Satan was sorely mistaken.

Satan plays on a human's fleshly desires, but God pulls on a human's heavenly desires. Satan wants you to become less than what God seeks for you. Satan wants your earthly needs met, God wants your valuable soul secure with him for an eternity. Don't be foolish, grasp the difference, so you can win the ultimate war.

Grasp This!

Satan's primary motive in the entire sequence within the three temptations of Christ was **idolatry**. He wants Jesus, and all creatures, to worship him instead of God. He wants it all. He hates God. He hates people. He hates the gospel. He hates Christians who spread the gospel. He hates everything, but himself.

What happens when we don't make Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior? We are guilty of idolatry. We worship ourselves on the surface, but we will ultimately worship our master, Satan. Seriously, you may consider yourself to be in command of your ship, but you are NOT the captain. Satan is your captain. He's hiding from you right now; however, the moment you take your final breath, watch out.

God demands that his disciples be true to Him by placing Him #1 on their list of loves. God must be our greatest love. We must solely worship Him. We must solely follow Him, and obey him because of our love for him. We must forsake everything, and live and die for Him. The temptations of Christ reveal how a true believer must respond. Jesus gave us an amazing example.

Temptations will come to us, and we will win some, and lose some. The times we lose, we have to repent of our sin. God will be waiting for us, however, we have to agree we were wrong, confess our sin(s), and accept the punishment of God. Read Hebrews chapter 12 for hope in recovering from sinful defeat. God loves you and wants you to come home.

Bible Study Questions:

1) [Matthew 22:29](#) finds Jesus rebuking the Pharisees because, "Your mistake is that you don't

know the Scriptures, and you don't know the power of God." Based on this text, and on the way Jesus used Scriptures to defeat Satan, what will you do differently in your spiritual warfare?

2) One would think that Jesus Christ in the wilderness would not have been tempted by Satan. After all, the monks removed themselves from worldly pleasures to escape temptation and sin. What does this say about us removing ourselves from the worldly scene?

3) Satan knows your weaknesses, and knows how to fulfill your fleshly desires. Name God's weapons for use in battling Satan's flaming arrows ([Ephesians 6:10-18](#)).

Inspirational Bible Verses:

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](#)

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [James 4:7](#)

Faith Quotes!

Martin Luther Quotes

The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn.

For where God built a church, there the devil would also build a chapel.

Our bodies are always exposed to Satan. The maladies I suffer are not natural, but devil's spells.

The devil seduces us at first by all the allurements of sin in order thereafter to plunge us into despair. He pampers up the flesh that he may by and by prostrate the spirit.

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

Temptation of Christ Prayer:

Dear Lord God,

I worship YOU, one and only

Help me to worship YOU more

You are deserving of my every praise

You are worthy of my total devotion

Thank you for showing us how to defeat evil

To show your mastery over the devil

Satan is nothing compared to you, O Lord

and his end will be eternal doom

Help us recognize his despicable schemes

so we can thwart his plans of destruction

God, give us strength to fight the battles

Show us your word, so we injure the beast

Thank you for revealing Satan's future

A future where he will be burning in chains

May we keep our eyes and hearts on YOU, Lord

So this worthless monster has no power.

In Christ's holy Name,
Amen.