

019: Tantalizing Offers

(based on Sermon #012 in the Life of Christ Series)

Forty days is about the maximum a person in good health can go without any food.

- Though there have been cases reported where people lasted longer than forty days without food, they also did not survive.
- Mahatma Gandhi fasted on several occasions, the longest being twenty-one days, to make a political point.
- Jesus fasted for forty days, which is remarkable, and after that period of time, the Bible says He was hungry.
- I think the word *starving* would be fair to use.
- From the flow of the text in Matthew's Gospel, it appears the devil comes to tempt Jesus after the forty days have expired, when Jesus is most vulnerable.

I am going to read the account from Matthew's Gospel

- ch. 4:1-11
- 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, after-ward He was hungry.
- 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
- 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "
- 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,
- 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:
 - 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and,

- 'In their hands they shall bear you up,
- Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "
- 7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"
- 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.
- 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."
- 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"
- 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

What is the devil's objective?

- Undoubtedly, it is to tempt the second Adam to sin and thereby forfeit everything, as Satan had successfully tempted the first Adam in the Garden of Eden.
- Once again, the devil twists the truth, misapplies Scripture, and makes some tantalizing offers.
- All in a day's work for the devil, I suppose.
- But Jesus demonstrates the ultimate self-control and resists every temptation.
- Jesus was fully God and fully man.
- However, He laid aside His divine prerogatives and chose to live *as a man* on Earth.

Could He, therefore, have sinned?

- Theologians have debated that question for centuries.
- Many say He could not have sinned, because He was the Son of God, and God cannot sin.
- Others say the temptation would have been meaningless if He were unable to sin.

- While we cannot resolve the theological dilemma, one thing remains true:
- Heb. 4:15 says that Jesus “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” What an example!
- Maybe you have wondered, why does the Bible record the temptation of Jesus? What purpose does it serve?
- The temptation of Jesus demonstrates several key truths.

1. His dependence on the Holy Spirit

- You cannot resist the devil on your own. He is far too powerful for you. But you can resist him when you are submitting to God.
- James 4:7 Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- Because God is all powerful, Satan must bow before Him.
- To the extent you are submitting to the member of the Godhead who lives within you — the Holy Spirit — then you will be able to resist the devil in His power.
- That is how Jesus resists the devil in the wilderness and, thereby, provides an example for us.
- To summarize what the biblical narrative says up to this point in the life of Christ, Jesus was born of a virgin, not conceived by a human Father, but rather by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, He was born without sin and without a sin nature.

- As we’ve already noted, He was fully God, and never ceased to be God in coming to Earth, but He chose to function fully *as a man* on Earth, and not as God.
- At His baptism, He was anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was through the Spirit’s power that He carried out His public ministry — preaching, teaching, healing, performing miracles, casting out demons.

- *Now* the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- If that seems disturbing, then remember, the Holy Spirit *accompanies* Jesus to no-man’s land.
- He is not alone.
- The apparent purpose of this early event in Christ’s ministry is twofold.
- First, to demonstrate that the second Adam — even under the most severe circumstances — is able to withstand temptation, unlike the first Adam.
- Second, to provide an example to all of His disciples, that we can endure temptation in the power of the Holy Spirit.

James 1:13-15

- 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.
- 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.
- 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
- God tempts no one to sin.
- The devil tempts, but you can never say the devil made you sin.
- You are tempted when you are drawn away by your own desires and enticed. Only you are to blame, nobody else!
- The Greek word translated *tempted* here in our text (and sometimes translated *tested* elsewhere in the NT) can have a positive meaning or a negative one, depending on context.
- It’s like the word *provoke* — you can provoke in an evil sense, stirring people to anger, or you can provoke in a

very positive sense, stirring people to love and good works.

- So it is with temptation.
- On the positive side, this Greek word can mean *testing*, with a view to choosing what is right.
- On the negative side, it can mean *tempting*, with a view to choosing what is wrong.
- God never tempts people to do that which is wrong or evil, but the devil often does, and he tempts Jesus here in our text.
- But as Jesus demonstrates in the power of the Holy Spirit, we don't have to sin when we are tempted.
- Rather, we can be made stronger.

Commentator William Barclay says:

- "What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal."
- So often, instead of submitting to God, Christians choose what is evil.
- Why is that? After all, we have the same provision living with us that Jesus had within Him, the Holy Spirit of God.
- When you are tempted to sin, God makes you a promise:
- 1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.
- Have you developed the habit of taking the way of escape, by the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit, and thereby avoiding temptation?

- The temptation of Jesus demonstrates His dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- It also demonstrates a second key truth.

2. His triumph as firstborn son

- In Exod. 4:22 God referred to Israel as "My firstborn."
- In biblical times, firstborn sons were given a double inheritance, as long as they did not disqualify themselves through disobedience and thereby forfeit their inheritance.
- Israel failed Jehovah miserably by sinning and did not remain faithful to Him.
- What will happen to Israel's double inheritance?
- Thankfully, all is not lost.
- Jesus entered this world through the virgin birth as God's substitute firstborn son, to redeem Israel and, for that matter, all mankind.

Rom. 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- Col. 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
- Col. 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.
- Where did Israel, God's firstborn son, fail? In the wilderness. Where does Jesus, God's other firstborn son, triumph? In the wilderness. That is not merely coincidental.

The wilderness. What is this place?

- The wilderness of Israel is the beautiful, but barren, rocky wasteland east of Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea.

- Passing through the wilderness, Jesus traverses high cliffs and deep ravines and wadis.
- Like any desert, it is quite hot in the daytime, and there's not much shade to be found.
- At night time, it can be quite cool — cold, in fact.
- He is alone, accompanied only by the Holy Spirit.
- Water is scarce, except where an occasional oasis can be found.
- Understanding these circumstances adds a dimension to the passage. His circumstances are far from comfortable.

Why does the Bible specify that His period of testing lasts for forty days?

- Forty is a significant Bible number.
- God sent a deluge of rain for forty days and nights in the great flood of Noah's day.
- Moses fasted while on Mt. Sinai for forty days and nights (and he did that on three separate occasions).
- Elijah fasted for forty days and nights.
- Jonah cried out that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days.
- Not to mention Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years.
- The number forty is the number of testing, trial and ultimately, triumph.
- Think of the symbolism.
- Resisting Satan's temptation in the wilderness, after forty days of intense testing, demonstrates that Jesus is qualified to be rewarded with the inheritance of the firstborn.
- In contrast to Israel, Jesus does not fail; He triumphs over sin!
- Against that backdrop, look at the first temptation in v. 3:

- Matt. 4:3 "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

Temptation #1: Turn stones into bread.

- The first word of Satan's temptation, *if*, could be translated, *since* — *Since You are the Son of God*.
- Two commentators have pertinent thoughts on this.
- "The form of Satan's question in the Greek text indicates that Satan was assuming that Jesus was "the Son of God." It is a first-class conditional clause." (Constable)
- "The temptation, to have force, must be assumed as true. The devil knew it to be true. He accepts that fact as a working hypothesis in the temptation." (Robertson)
- Satan undoubtedly knows Jesus is the Son of God.
- Even the demons know that.
- Thus, Satan is essentially saying, "Since you are the Son of God, why don't you issue a command for these rocks to turn into bread? After all, you are hungry."

Why would this be wrong for Jesus to do?

- First, because Jesus chose to live as a *man* on Earth, not as God.
- As we shall see in future studies, miracles were not to be used for self-gratification, but for convincing Israel that Messiah had arrived.
- Turning stones into bread would not serve that purpose and would have been outside of God's will.
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary says:
- "Satan's aim was to entice Jesus to use powers that were rightly his but which he had voluntarily abandoned to carry out the Father's mission. Reclaiming them for himself would deny the self-abasement implicit in his mission and in the Father's will. Israel demanded its bread but died in the wilderness; Jesus denied himself

bread, retained his righteousness, and lived by faithful submission to God's word."

The second reason it would be wrong for Jesus to turn stones into bread is because he would not be demonstrating complete dependence on the Lord.

- "Whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).
- Just as *we* are to call on the Lord for provision, depending on God to meet our needs, so *Jesus* is to do the same, thereby setting the right example.
- Turning the stones into bread would circumvent God's provision rather than depending on the heavenly Father for needs to be met.
- Taking it one step further, turning the stones into bread would essentially bemoan God's provision, the very thing Israel was guilty of — complaining about the lack of food in the wilderness.
- For forty years in the wilderness God continually provided manna and quail and water for Israel.
- The nation was always sustained and did not starve.
- The Israelites *never* went without food for any period of time, and yet they complained incessantly.

Here, Jesus goes without food for forty days and never once complains.

- He does not sin, and is victorious as God's firstborn, in contrast to Israel.
- In fact, in responding to Satan — all three times — Jesus quotes Scripture and, in particular, He quotes from the book of Deuteronomy.
- In the minds of the Jews of Jesus' day this would have tied His temptation incident all the more closely to Israel in the Pentateuch.

- Christ's response is found in v. 4, which is a quote from Deut. 8:3.
- Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"
- Deut. 8:2-3 And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

God specifically let Israel get a little hungry from time to time so they would learn to call upon Him and listen to His voice.

- Instead, they complained incessantly.
- But not Jesus, He wouldn't even turn rocks into bread, though He had the power to do so, if He wanted.
- What about you? Do you bring your needs and burdens to the Lord, asking Him to provide?
- Or do you complain and seek to meet needs in your own way?
- Israel, God's firstborn son, failed repeatedly.
- Jesus, God's other firstborn son, triumphed gloriously.
- As the second Adam, he ultimately triumphed on the cross and thereby redeemed Israel and all mankind.
- One day national Israel will inherit a place of prominence and rulership over all the nations on Earth during the millennial kingdom of Messiah.

- But that will only happen after the nation repents and embraces Messiah, the One they had crucified at His first coming.

The Old Testament prophets spoke of the national repentance that is forthcoming.

- Zech. 12:10 And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.
- Not only will Israel be restored as Jehovah's firstborn son, and inherit a place of ruling on Earth in the coming kingdom, Jesus is also in this present age calling out a bride from His body, the church.
- Heb. 2:10 refers to them as "sons to glory."

Those believers who are faithful in discipleship will inherit a double portion at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

- They will become Christ's bride and co-rulers and will dwell in His city of reward, the New Jerusalem.
- This concept will be developed further as we go along in the life of Christ.
- The point to be grasped at this juncture is that firstborn sonship is required for inheritance in the kingdom, and that comes only through dependence on the Holy Spirit for obedience and faithfulness.
- Firstborn sons of the church age are overcomers who follow the example of Jesus, experiencing victory amidst temptation.
- James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the

crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

- The temptation of Jesus demonstrates His triumph as firstborn son. It also demonstrates a third key truth.

3. His submission to the Father's will

- The devil takes Jesus up to a very high pinnacle of the temple and then extends another tantalizing offer.
- Matt. 4:6 If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"
- The devil actually quotes Scripture! — Psalm 91:11-12.
- But his usage of this Old Testament text is a gross misapplication of Scripture.

Temptation #2: Jump off the temple and let the angels rescue you.

- Here's the idea: "Since you are the Son of God, why don't you jump off the precipice of the temple into the Kidron Valley and razzle-dazzle the people into believing you are Messiah? After all, God promises that His angels will protect you so you don't crash to the ground. It will be spectacular!"
- Smith's Bible Dictionary says:
- "The only part of the temple which answered to the modern sense of pinnacle was the golden spikes erected on the roof to prevent birds from settling there. (According to Alford it was the roof of Herod's royal portico of the temple, "which overhung the ravine of Kedron from a dizzy height" — 600 or 700 feet)."
- By way of comparison, the Statue of Liberty's height, including its foundations is only 305 ft.

- From the top of Herod's portico to the floor of the Kedron Valley may have been at least twice that amount.

What a temptation!

- Satan is essentially saying, "Why go through all the pain and agony of preaching and trying to get the people to see their need for repentance? Why don't you simply *Wow!* them? They'll be sure to listen then."
- Why would it be wrong for Jesus to succumb to this temptation?
- If the first temptation presumes upon God's *provision*, this temptation presumes upon God's *protection*.
- God doesn't make promises like Psalm 91:11-12 so we can jump in front of cars or jump off the Empire State Building —not even for Jesus!
- To do so would be to take a shortcut of sorts to ministry — attempting to razzle-dazzle the people into believing.
- It's nothing more than showmanship.
- Ironically, I have known of churches that do all sorts of crazy and spectacular things to try to get people to come to church.
- The type of people who respond to such gimmicks make shallow congregations.

How does Jesus respond?

- Once again, He quotes Scripture, and again from the Pentateuch.
- Deut. 6:16, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God."
- According to 1 Cor. 10, Israel tested God ten times, but it's not right to tempt (test) God.
- For Jesus to do so would be to step out of conformity to the Father's will.
- But Jesus would never do that! For He was completely committed to the Father's will.

- John 4:34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."
- John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."
- Are you completely submitted to the Father's will?
- Or do you take shortcuts that will get you what you want?
- Notice now a fourth key truth that the temptation of Jesus demonstrates.

4. His authority as Messiah

- Matt. 4:8-9 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."
- The parallel text in Luke 4:5 says the devil "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time," that is, instantaneously, split-second.
- It was like a flash of a vision, as if to say: "Look at all the kingdoms of this world. You are the Messiah."
- "You should be ruling all of this, but it's presently under my control."
- "If you bow down and worship me, just acknowledge my authority and power, I will give you all these kingdoms!"
- Interestingly, Jesus never questions Satan's claim to these kingdoms.
- The devil, as the god of this world, indeed does control these kingdoms in the present era.
- He took control of Earth from Adam when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, and Satan has had control ever since.
- Here he offers it all to Jesus!
- What a tantalizing offer!

- This, of course is the third temptation.

Temptation #3: Worship me, and I will turn the kingdoms of Earth over to you.

- There are three major problems if Jesus bows:
- First, it's idolatrous to worship anyone but God!
- Second, If Jesus bows to Satan, the Son of God will always be beholding to the devil — Jesus will always be under Satan's control.
- Third, Jesus will lose His authority as Messiah.
- He will never become king of kings and Lord of lords.
- He will never rule over Earth.
- If Jesus bows to Satan, He will short-cut God's will, for God has already promised all of this to His Son in good time.
- Granted, there will first be the path of suffering, but afterwards comes the glory.

Sadly, many Christians take Satan up on this offer.

- They bow to the things of this world and, in so doing, end up unwittingly bowing to Satan.
- They take shortcuts spiritually so they can have wealth and possessions and happiness, here and now.
- But, in the long run, they forfeit eternal riches and inheritance.
- What a tragedy!
- Christ responds once again by quoting from the Pentateuch.
- Deut. 6:13, You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him.
- In this response, Jesus demonstrates Messianic authority.
- He will not bow to Satan; one day Satan will bow to Him.
- By the way, both Jesus and Satan quote from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew text. I find that interesting.

There's one other interesting little phrase in the parallel text in Mark 1:13 that contributes to Jesus demonstrating His authority as Messiah.

- Mark says that while in the wilderness Jesus was *with the wild animals*.
- Why would Mark say that?
- In the wilderness in the days of Jesus Christ, it was very likely that He would have encountered lions, bears, leopards, wolves, cobras, vipers, scorpions, hyenas, jackals, foxes, wild boars, wild asses, and antelopes, to name a few.
- Why does Mark bother to give this fact?
- Some commentators say it adds to the terror of the wilderness.
- I don't think so, for if that were the case, it would hardly need mentioning, for it would be an insignificant detail.

But consider this. When Messiah returns to launch His kingdom, we know the lion will lay down with the lamb.

- Wild animals will apparently cease to be carnivorous and will become vegetarian.
- They will no longer be hostile to humans.
- Children will be able to play with snakes.
- All of this is well-documented in the book of Isaiah
- When Mark mentions that Jesus is with the wild animals, the Jews must surely be thinking, "Messiah is here! He is at peace with the wild creatures in the wilderness."
- Very likely, the people are envisioning the coming Messianic kingdom. One scholar says:
- "By means of this motif Mark represents Jesus as the eschatological Adam who, having resisted Satan, instead of succumbing to temptation as Adam did, then restores paradise; he is at peace with the animals and the angels

serve Him.” (*Living With Other Creatures* by Richard Bauckham, page 114)

- How fascinating! Mark inserts this, some scholars believe, so the Jews will see the connection with Jesus the Messiah as the second Adam.
- That leads to a fifth truth that the temptation of Jesus demonstrates.

5. His worthiness as the second Adam

- 1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.
- Do you remember how the devil convinced Eve to eat the fruit on the forbidden tree?
- Gen. 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.
- First, Eve concluded that the tree was good for food.
- That is lust of the flesh.
- In the temptation narrative that equates to turning stones into bread.

Second, Eve concluded that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes.

- That is lust of the eyes.
- In the temptation account that equates to seeing all the kingdoms of the world and desiring them.
- Third, Eve concluded that the fruit of the tree was desirable to make one wise.
- That is the pride of life.

- In the Matt. 4 text that equates to jumping off the pinnacle of the temple, and instantly becoming popular and prestigious in the eyes of the people.
- Are you seeing the pattern?
- It seems the devil uses the same tactic with Jesus that he had previously used with Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- But Jesus, the second Adam, does not partake; he doesn't succumb to the temptation, as Adam and Eve had.
- Jesus the Messiah, therefore, demonstrates His worthiness as the second Adam to set all things right, to restore the kingdom lost to Satan in Adam.

Warren Wiersbe says:

- “Adam met Satan in a beautiful garden, but Jesus met him in a terrible wilderness. Adam had everything he needed, but Jesus was hungry after forty days of fasting. Adam lost the battle and plunged humanity into sin and death. But Jesus won the battle and went on to defeat Satan in more battles, culminating in His final victory on the cross (John 12:31; Col. 2:15).”
- By the way, child of God, you struggle with the same types of sins, and Satan's strategy remains the same.
- He tempts you with lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes and the pride of life.
- Have you bought his lie?
- If so, you will find comfort in the sixth truth that the temptation of Jesus demonstrates:

6. His ability to help us in temptation

- Some have foolishly asked, “Wouldn't Jesus be more understanding of and helpful to those who are tempted if He had succumbed to temptation Himself?”
- Not at all!

- By resisting temptation, Jesus experienced the *full force* of it, far greater than those who have capitulated at some point.
- Those who have given in to temptation have failed. Jesus, having never yielded, is the powerful, victorious, conqueror of sin.
- He is, therefore, of far greater understanding and help to those who are being tempted.
- Heb. 4:15-16 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- You can go to Jesus any time, asking for His help, knowing that He understands and cares and desires to help you win the victory over temptation.
- He won the victory and He wants you to win as well.
- So go boldly to the throne of grace.
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS!