



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for January 10, 2010**  
**Released on Wednesday, January 6, 2010**

**“Strengthened in Temptation”**

**Lesson Text:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Background Scripture:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Devotional Reading:** Hebrews 2:10-18

**Matthew 4:1-11**

- 1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
- 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward ahungered.
- 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.
- 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
- 5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
- 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, 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.
- 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
- 8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
- 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
- 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
- 11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

**LESSON AIMS**

**Facts:** to analyze the temptation of Jesus by Satan and note that Jesus used Scripture to defeat the three temptations directed at Him.

**Principle:** to be aware that like Jesus, believers are tempted in physical, mental, and spiritual ways by Satan and can resist him.

**Application:** to challenge believers to fortify themselves against temptations with the help of Christ (Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-16), and the memorization of Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15).

**INTRODUCTION**

**Tempted Like As We Are ...**

Temptation to sin has been around since the beginning of the human race. The serpent approached Eve in the Garden of Eden and tempted her with the promise of a certain kind of wisdom. All she had to do was take a bite of some nice-looking fruit. Eve succumbed to the temptation. She then became the tempter in Adam’s subsequent fall.

And so it has continued throughout history. Abraham, trying to save his own skin, gave in to the temptation to lie about Sarah’s not being his wife. David was tempted by the

beauty of a nearby woman who was taking a bath. He neither resisted that temptation nor the temptation to commit murder to cover that sin.

Temptations still mark the day-to-day, hour-to-hour, even minute-to-minute lives of all people. Different things tempt different people. One person can drive past a bar or liquor store daily and never be tempted to purchase anything. Another person drives past the same bar or store and fights the steering wheel to keep from turning in. Yet another person driving past the same places stops often, giving in to temptation easily and regularly.

As we fall, we may think, "God, You just don't understand what it means to be tempted. You don't know how hard it is." But God's response to that is that He *does* understand. Scripture states: "For we have not a 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" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus' temptations in today's text are informative in this regard.

"From Jesus' temptation we can learn that following our Lord can bring dangerous and intense spiritual battles. We won't always feel good; we will experience times of deprivation, loneliness, and hostility. Jesus' temptation also shows that our spiritual victories may not always be visible to the watching world. Above all, it shows that we must use the power of God to face temptation and not try to withstand it in our own strength" (Osborne and Comfort, eds., Life Application Bible Commentary, Tyndale).

**Time:** A.D. 26

**Place:** Wilderness of Judea

### **SATISFY YOURSELF (Matthew 4:1-4)**

#### **1. How did it happen that after His baptism, Jesus ended up in the wilderness to be tempted by Satan? (Matthew 4:1)**

Following the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit purposely led Him into the wilderness for a period of satanic testing (Matt. 4:1). Satan wanted to bring Him down (trying to thwart the work of Christ before it has a chance to begin), but God wanted to build Him up.

God often uses Satan's temptations to strengthen His servants. Spiritual strength is developed as a person resists temptation. It is like being behind a door that someone is pushing to open. To keep the door closed, a person must resist the pressure. In so doing, he will build up his strength and be able to resist even more pressure in the future.

We should be encouraged to notice that because of Jesus' divine leading into a time of temptation, we can conclude that temptation itself is not sin. We will be tempted on a regular basis, but we should not beat ourselves up because of the temptations we face. It is how we handle them that counts, and in some cases, proper handling will reduce the number of temptations in certain areas of our lives. It is dangerous to take temptation too lightly, however, because we can open ourselves to exposure to greater temptations.

#### **2. What should we learn about Satan from this incident?**

We should realize from this passage that the devil is real. The Greek word for "devil" means "accuser" and he is not simply a symbolic figment of someone's imagination. He is not imaginary! He is a fallen angel determined to destroy as much of God's plan for mankind as he possibly can. He is the devil (Matthew 4:1) and the tempter (Matthew 4:3), and Jesus' dialogue with him proves that he is very real!

#### **3. What was the setting for Jesus' first temptation, and what did Satan suggest He do about it? (vs. 2-3)**

The first temptation recorded here grows out of the fact that Jesus had "fasted forty days." His hunger reveals His humanity, which is important for us. He was tempted in His humanity, just as we are tempted.

This verse is here because it shows the way the devil works. He knows areas of weakness in the lives of people, and he strikes at those weaknesses. If someone's weakness is

alcohol, he will place that temptation in his path. If the weakness of pornography, Satan knows how to attack in that area as well.

A strong desire for food naturally should be the result of a lengthy fast. Satan apparently believes that this is the best time to make his move.

When Satan said, "If thou be the Son of God" (Matt. 4:3), he was not expressing doubt about the fact. He was fully aware of who Jesus was. What he actually meant was "Since You truly are the Son of God, You have the power to do something about Your hunger. In fact, You have the power to turn the stones around You into bread." This was true, of course. Satan was not trying to get Jesus to doubt that He was the Son of God. Rather, he was telling Him to act independently of His Father. He should go ahead and satisfy Himself by His power.

At that time, however, it was the Father's will for Jesus to be hungry even while surrounded by stones He could turn into bread. He dared not do what Satan suggested.

#### **4. What does Jesus' answer to this temptation mean to us? (vs. 4)**

Satan tempted Jesus to provide for Himself. His response was to use Scripture to rebuke Satan. The response was in the form of a quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3. That passage was spoken some 14 centuries earlier concerning the Israelites becoming hungry in the wilderness. God allowed that wilderness wandering and the subsequent hunger to teach the Israelites to trust Him. After they became hungry, God then fed them with manna, something totally new to them. Jesus was aware of that fact of history, and He trusted God to meet His needs in His time and in His way.

The quote from Deuteronomy 8:3 further explained what the Israelites learned from their hunger in the wilderness: "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" (Deut. 8:3). Real satisfaction does not come by seeing to it that our physical appetites are met. Real satisfaction comes from obedience to God and His Word.

Jesus could be hungry and still be satisfied, knowing He was doing His Father's will. We too can be deprived but still content when we are certain we are living in His will. Today we face temptations to put our physical needs ahead of our spiritual needs. As a result, we can end up forsaking time with God and His Word to satisfy the cravings of the flesh. It is in these times that we need to remember the priority of Scripture. Feeding ourselves the Word of God is the highest priority. Jesus knows what His priorities are.

#### **5. In your experience, do Satan's temptation strategies change over time, or do they remain pretty much the same? Defend your answer.**

Temptations come to us today through technology that was not available in centuries past. Television and the Internet are two examples. Some of our modern ambitions, such as being able to afford certain "vanity" surgeries, would be incomprehensible to people of the first century. Satan's temptations of Jesus to satisfy various impulses of the flesh remain very powerful; we can say that they're even more alluring today given modern technological possibilities.

At the core of temptation is the pride and selfishness inherent in attempting to exalt self. This is seen in the lure of becoming "as gods" in the first sin (Genesis 3:5). Self-exaltation seems to be a theme of history (example: Ezekiel 28:1-19). Satan tempts us to put our own goals, desires, and knowledge ahead of God's will—in essence, becoming "gods" of our own lives. Truly "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

#### **PROVE YOURSELF (Matthew 4:5-7)**

#### **6. What was Satan's second temptation? What warning does this give us? (vs. 5-6)**

For the second temptation, Satan took Jesus to the highest pinnacle of the temple, located in the "holy city" of Jerusalem.

For Jesus to throw Himself off the temple in a display that would awe and satisfy people would not be God's way of revealing Himself. He would prove Himself in other ways through regular daily ministries. People would come to believe in Him as He ministered in ways that fulfilled Scripture (Matt. 11:4-6).

People spend a lot of time and effort trying to make a name for themselves. Books are written on the art of self-promotion. The goal is to make self look good in the eyes of others for personal gain and acclamation. It is this sin of pride, the pride of life, with which Satan now tempts Jesus. Satan wants Jesus to test God. Surely God will not let anything bad happen to the beloved Son in whom He is well pleased!

Since Jesus used Scripture to thwart the first temptation, Satan now decides to use some Scripture also. The passage Satan uses is Psalm 91:11, 12. This passage speaks of protection that God provides in the course of the daily events of life or from harms that come in the course of living faithfully for God.

But Satan is not using this passage in light of the context in which it was given originally. This promise of God is not a license for the reader to test God's faithfulness by doing foolish things. Thus Satan is doing something that false teachers still do: quoting Scripture with great disregard for context. Satan is twisting Scripture to fit an agenda.

It should be a warning to us that Satan knows Scripture and how to use it for his own benefit. There are times when well-meaning people might lead us astray by giving bad advice based on some Bible verse. False doctrines are built upon selective truths found in the Bible. We must stay aware and follow Christ's teachings carefully.

### **7. How did Jesus respond to Satan's lure to jump off the temple? (v. 7)**

Again, for Jesus to jump off the temple was asking Him to test the Father's faithfulness. But Jesus knows that it is not His task to manipulate God's power or presence in His life. To answer Satan's abuse of the intent of Scripture, Jesus draws on Deuteronomy 6:16: "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." The context of this verse speaks to the occasion when the Israelites tested God with regard to the availability of water.

This account of Israel's testing of God is found in Exodus 17. When Israel complained bitterly about the lack of water, God had Moses strike a rock with his rod and provide water from the rock (v. 6). Moses then called the place "Massah, and Meribah" (v. 7) because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"

We must remember that we are called to trust God, not demand of God. To demand of God instead of trusting His guidance and seeking His wisdom is an affront to His person.

### **8. What was a time when recalling a Scripture helped you resist temptation? Was your success over that temptation as simple as quoting Scripture, or was there something you needed to do?**

Although the Word of God is "quick, and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12), we should not think of it as a source of magical incantations that automatically cause Satan to flee. Satan is able to quote Scripture himself. We must *resist* the devil to get him to flee (James 4:7). This resistance certainly includes knowing Scripture, but may require more at times.

Consider the life of Jesus. From childhood He grew in wisdom (Luke 2:40-52). He set himself to obey God. He set aside time to seek God's will (Matthew 26:42). Altogether, His knowledge, wisdom, spiritual disciplines, and attitude put Him in a strong position to resist temptation.

### **PROFIT YOURSELF (Matthew 4:8-11)**

### **9. What was Satan's third temptation and offer to Jesus? (vs. 8-9)**

Satan's third and final test of Jesus related to the Father's plan for His Son to one day rule the world (Psalm 2). Satan's temptation gave Jesus the opportunity to secure that position immediately instead of having to go by way of the cross. While God's plan was for a restored kingdom after the suffering and death of His Son, Satan offered something seemingly better: Jesus could have that kingdom and all the glory associated with it without having to suffer. It was really such a simple plan - the crown without the cross.

From "an exceeding high mountain" (Matt. 4:8), Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world at once (Luke 4:5 says it was in "a moment of time"). What this magnificent scene was really like is beyond our comprehension, and how this happened is not explained in detail. What we do know is that Satan, as "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, if He would bow down and worship him.

### **10. What was the real temptation in offering Jesus something that He was already assured of having in the future? (v. 9)**

Luke 24:26 says that Jesus first had to suffer before He entered into His glory. To give in to this temptation would be an attempt to force God's plan instead of allowing God's plan to play out as He had decreed. The real temptation, therefore, is the possibility of the kingdom and all the glory associated with it without the suffering. God's plan is to make Jesus ruler, but His kingdom will not be of this world (John 18:36). For Jesus to accept an earthly throne would have pleased many in the Jewish world as they sought a military and political king (John 6:15). But Jesus knew that this was not the purpose for which He had come.

We see not only a temptation to bring about the wrong kind of kingdom, but also a wrong stipulation for receiving this kingdom in that Satan asks Jesus to worship him.

Satan offered Jesus a shortcut. Satan will offer us shortcuts as well. Jesus knew that spiritual riches come only through the discipline of a life committed to God, not through easy shortcuts. Will we learn this lesson? —C. R. B.

How often have we veered slightly away from God's Word and will in hopes of achieving something in an easier way! We then found out the hard way that it is always best to do things God's way, no matter the cost.

### **11. How did Jesus end the temptation, and what does this teach today? (vs. 10-11)**

Again Jesus confronts the tempter with Scripture in refusing to do as *Satan* suggests. Referring to Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus affirms that the only one worthy of worship is God.

Notice that in Jesus' response He combines two ideas to establish how one honors God: God alone is to be worshiped and served. Whatever one worships is what he or she focuses on serving. If Jesus bows to Satan, He will then be subject to Satan and be his servant. And so it is still. Honor, prestige, wealth, and power can look very good. When we are tempted to worship the things of this world or to seek honor for ourselves, we do well to remember that these things are temporary. Such a temptation is from Satan, and he never offers anything of lasting value. Whenever we are tempted to worship and serve anything other than Christ, we must realize that Satan is behind this. Thus with Jesus we need to say to Satan "*get thee hence*" (command for Satan to leave).

Satan could not stay around when Jesus ordered him to leave. This reminds us of the words of James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

### **12. Was this Jesus' only time to be tempted?**

Jesus had overcome the temptations brought by Satan in the wilderness, but was Jesus tempted only here in the wilderness and only these three times? Luke 4:13 indicates otherwise. The parallel account in Luke states that the devil departed "for a season", which indicates that he left to await another time to tempt Jesus.

There were several other opportunities for Jesus to sin during His years of ministry. One

is when Satan, through Peter, tells Jesus that He will not have to take the road to the cross. There, just like here in verse 10 Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan." Another time of temptation was the night before the crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We know that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15); so it stands to reason that He was tempted many other times. What is encouraging is to know that Jesus was victorious over all temptations and just as Jesus defeated Satan through the use of God's Word, so we can too. Jesus has proved Himself to be our example.

### **13. What are some times when Satan may find people particularly vulnerable to temptation? How can our realization of these times help keep us on guard?**

Like Jesus, we may face the strongest temptations during times of isolation and physical need. A glance at the calendar can help us anticipate times of high stress. Are final exams coming up? Are you expecting out-of-town visitors? Is there a scheduled surgery? Praying and soliciting prayer beforehand will help reduce our vulnerability (Matthew 26:41), as will adequate rest and nutrition.

### **PRACTICAL POINTS**

1. If the perfect Son of God had to endure testing, how much more do we (Matthew 4:1)?
2. Testing often comes to us in our most desperate need (vs. 2-3).
3. Even the satisfaction of a true need is not right if not done the right way (vs. 4-5).
4. The Lord's prerogative is to test us, but for us to test Him shows faithlessness (vs. 6-7).
5. Worldly powers pale in comparison with the power of one's faithfulness to God (vs. 8-10).
6. When the testing of our faith is complete, if we have endured it faithfully, God's comfort and encouragement will be upon us, never to forsake us (v. 11).

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **...Yet Without Sin**

Ultimately, the purpose of Jesus in coming to earth was to be the sacrifice for the sins of everyone. But to offer a sinless sacrifice, Jesus had to be the lamb without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19). The episode of the three temptations was not a chance for Jesus to prove to the Father that He was worthy of this mission. Rather, the temptations that God allowed Jesus to face demonstrated to Satan and to all humanity that victory over temptation is possible.

The temptations Jesus went through mirror the temptations we face. First John 2:16 states that "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." In observing the response of Jesus in Satan's temptations, we learn how to deal with Satan's tactics.

Recall that Jesus was tempted just as we are, yet He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). The devil was beaten in the battle of the three temptations. By resisting the devil, we will be better able to overcome sin. Unlike Jesus, we will not be totally without sin because in our weakness we will continue to stumble. But as we resist by following the example of Jesus, we will develop a stronger walk with a greater capacity to deal victoriously with future temptations. A key to victory is to be aware of Satan's schemes at the outset (2 Corinthians 2:11).

When tempted, look to the one who has been where you are. Jesus endured temptation, and He will help us in our times of temptation. May the words of Hebrews 2:17, 18 encourage us all: "Wherefore in all things it behooved 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."

**PRAYER**

Forgive us, O Lord, of those times when we willingly cooperate with the devil. Grant us awareness of his schemes. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the example of Your Son, help us resist the devil so that he flees from us. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

**THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

We are not sinless, but we can sin less.

**ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON**

Next week's lesson is "**Demonstrated in Acts of Healing.**" Miraculous healings performed by Jesus were dramatic and faith building. They included help for the blind, the demon possessed, the lame, the lepers, the deaf and others. Even the dead were raised to life. Jesus' messianic character and ministry were revealed in His acts of healing. Study Matthew 9:27-34; 11:2-6.

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