

The Four Gospels of the Bible, Tempted by Satan in the Desert

Matthew 4:1-11

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days..." (NIV)

Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the Test. The Devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the Test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the Devil took advantage of in the first test: "Since you are God's Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread."

Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth."

For the second test the Devil took him to the Holy City. He sat him on top of the Temple and said, "Since you are God's Son, jump." The Devil goaded him by quoting Psalm 91: "He has placed you in the care of angels. They will catch you so...that you won't so much as stub your toe on a stone." Jesus countered with another citation from Deuteronomy: "Don't you dare test the Lord your God."

For the third test, the Devil took him on the peak of a huge mountain. He gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth's kingdoms, how glorious they all were. Then he said, "They're yours—lock, stock, and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, and they're yours." Jesus' refusal was curt: "Beat it, Satan!" He backed his rebuke with a third quotation from Deuteronomy: "Worship the Lord your God, and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

The Test was over. The Devil left. And in his place, angels! Angels came and took care of Jesus' needs. (The Message)

Scripture...and then more scripture

In this "test" of Jesus, scripture is throughout; first, by Satan, then by Jesus. What is interesting and ironic is that Satan knows the scriptures; this "master of darkness" knows the scriptures – but would expect different from a once angel?

Hungry...but for what?

Can you imagine not eating for a month or more? Jesus went over month without eating and, being human, must have been very weak and listless. If you ever gone a day or two without eating, you know how much it can change your thinking and mindset, let alone your physical strength. Why did Jesus fast before this "test"; why did he deprive himself of tangible bread (or food) while remaining focused on the intangible bread of life? **The bread of life true must be true sustenance...**

This temptation might be loosely described as the one of **pride**; where Jesus, obviously famished in his obedience to fast, could use his abilities or supernatural power to fashion bread...or anything else. He remained resolute in his stead-"fast"-ness of obedience...rather than sacrifice...

H. Kirk Rainer

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Test but no test

Jesus made clear the truism that the Lord is not to be tested; apparently, Satan – who knows of such a truth – is every so persistent...and devious. This temptation is sometimes called the one for **power**; that Jesus was tempted to call on the power of God in response to a sort of dare or challenge. Jesus did not fall for it; but instead, reminded Satan of what he already knew.

Can Satan make such an offer?

Was Satan bluffing Jesus, or could he have offered Jesus all the land –as far as he could see? Don't forget that Satan is lord of the present earth...and so, his offer was real. Jesus' response to the temptation suggests that Satan's offer is legitimate; **Possession** is another possible word to represent the offer; property is wealth, and wealth is a sense of security...

The problem with possession (to include property) is that it can be lost – even destroyed by natural or human activities. From the earliest of history, “the land” was known to be the most secure or tangible form of wealth; but whether the “bubble burst” through bad mortgages and inflated valuation, or for other reasons; still, land can lose its value, its worth, and everything else that serves as security.

Pride, Power, and Possession

This collection of words, or title, could very well be a Jane Austin novel. But in actuality, these three words represent a timeless set of temptations and trappings for the humankind.

- **Pride** (in the worst sense of the word) is self-glorification – even exalting to the level of a god (deification).
- **Power** is pursued in most any area of life and in one or more methods or types: money (or wealth) is a form of power; information or knowledge can be power as well; and then there is physical power such as the military of individual strength, etc.
- **Possession** is the final “p-word” of this gospel scripture, and has strong association to power and pride; possessing something or someone is a form of power and, with ownership and/or control, can produce pride.

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