

## Understanding Temptation Matthew 4

### Introduction:

1. Why do we sin against God? Why do we mess up, make terrible choices, and then have to live with the consequences? Why do we get ourselves into bondage to sin and certain destructive patterns of behavior?
  - Have you ever done something that you knew was wrong and then thought, “Why did I do that?”
2. It is because we give in to temptation. Webster’s defines “temptation” as “that which is presented to the mind as an inducement to evil.”
  - That definition definitely agrees with Scripture.  
2 Corinthians 11:13
3. Satan is the ultimate author of all evil enticements (1 Thessalonians 3:5; Ephesians 6:11; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Peter 5:8). One way that he does it is by using people (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Proverbs 1:10; 16:29).
4. We live in Satan’s world system, and every day we experience temptations. In our text, Satan attempts to tempt Christ three distinct and separate times.
  - Each time Satan was unsuccessful, but he was persistent.
  - After the first two attempts, he failed, reloaded, and came back with a different temptation.
  - If he could get Christ to consider and ultimately concede on just one of them, Christ would be a sinner, and therefore He would be unfit to die for our sins. Three times he tried to tempt Christ.
5. Interestingly, there are three different types of temptations in this world that correspond with the nature of mankind – we have a body, soul, and spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5:23) Obviously Paul believed that temptations could come at each level.
  - There are temptations that deal with the **body** – fleshly desires that don’t honor God, but simply gratify the evil passions of our flesh.
  - There are temptations that deal with the **soul** – they deal with our will, our ability to make choices and decisions, and are designed to lead us away from God’s will. Those temptations provide us the opportunity to make decisions, and if we make

the wrong decision, it is because we based it on our own will and chose to walk by sight, not by faith in God's Word.

- There are temptations that deal with the **spirit** – our inner man that is supposed to connect with God and worship Him. These temptations deal with replacing the worship of God with other things. This causes us to have a lack of humility and dependence on God. Worshiping the things of and in this world cause us to depend on something other than God, which brings a false sense of joy and satisfaction in this life.
6. This threefold nature of temptation is explained in 1 John 2:16.
- The lust of the flesh, which corresponds to the body.
  - The lust of the eyes, which corresponds with the soul. The eyes are the gateway to the soul which influence the mind and thoughts.
  - The pride of life, which corresponds with the spirit. This is where we say (or our actions show), “I don't really need God or need to worship Him. I can find fulfillment elsewhere.”
  - We face temptations in all three areas.
7. Hebrews 4:15 states that Christ was tempted **in all points** like we are, yet without sin. This doesn't mean that Christ faced every conceivable temptation in the world (there are many). This is referring to the threefold nature of temptation.
- Satan tempted Christ at all three levels – body, soul, and spirit. He was tempted in all points like we are (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life).
  - There are several different **forms** that those temptations can take, but there are only three roots, and Christ was tempted in all three.
8. Adam and Eve fell to all three of them in a beautiful garden (**Genesis 3:6**):
- “*And when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food***” – the lust of the flesh.
  - “*And that it was pleasant **to the eyes***” – the lust of the eyes.
  - “*And a tree to be desired to **make one wise***” – the pride of life.
  - She fell prey to the deceptive temptations and “*she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.*”
9. Mankind fell prey to all three roots of temptation, but Christ conquered all three of them. Let's compare Adam and Christ:

- Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden, but Christ was tempted in a lonely wilderness.
  - Adam was at his best when tempted, but Christ was hungry.
  - Adam was the king of the old creation, but Christ is King of a new creation.
  - Adam sinned and lost his dominion over the earth, but Christ obeyed and will ultimately regain total dominion over the earth.
  - Adam fell to temptation and was defeated – therefore, he brought death to humanity. But Christ was tempted and victorious – He brought life to all who will trust in Him.
  - Satan’s temptations succeeded in bringing about the fall of the first man (first Adam), but they failed with the Son of man (the last Adam).
10. It is essential that the believer understand the nature of temptation and be equipped to overcome temptation. Sin promises us so much, but leaves us ruined, scarred, and empty.
- Adam and Eve thought they would get pleasure and wisdom from eating the forbidden fruit, but they got neither.
  - Just like Adam and Eve, we can convince ourselves that giving in to temptation and doing wrong is a good thing. We think it will bring us happiness.
  - There is a trail of tears and destroyed lives that go all the way back to Adam and Eve who believed the same lie. “I’m the exception. Sin will be a really good thing for me.”
- James 1:14-15**
11. But the good news is that we can overcome temptation. If we know Christ, He lives within us, and the Bible declares, “*greater is he that is in us (Christ the Conqueror) than he that is in the world (Satan the deceiver).*”
12. Hebrews 2:18 states, “*For in that he himself (Jesus) hath suffered (He experienced what we go through) being tempted, he is able to succor (aid, help) them that are tempted.*” See also, Hebrews 4:15-16.
13. We **can** overcome temptation! We can resist the devil or refuse to give place to him. Victory can be ours each and every day. The Bible assures us of this. Ephesians 6:16
14. How do I take the shield of faith and quench those fiery darts? Next week we will examine each of Satan’s attempts to seduce and tempt Christ, and we will discover the key to overcoming temptation.