

# The Temptation of His Life

## Matthew 4:1-11

### 1. General lessons

#### a) **Tempted or tested?**

The word translated *tempt* is also used to mean *test*. Temptation in itself is not a bad thing. (cf. Abraham was *tempted/tested* by God in the sacrifice of Isaac, Gen. 22.1ff)

#### b) **Why go into the wilderness?**

- ∅ The Spirit sent him there – masochism is never encouraged in Scripture
- ∅ Jesus needed to be alone, to be with God and think things through before launching into his public ministry

#### c) **First the benefit, then the reaction**

After the high-point of his Baptism and the endorsement of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, Jesus then goes through a testing time. We are particularly vulnerable after great spiritual experiences (eg. Elijah after the defeat of the prophets of Baal - 1 Kings 18-19). But if we stand firm, special blessings will be ours ('... angels came and attended him' v11).

#### d) **Where was the focus of the battle?**

The real battle is for the heart and mind and soul. This is where the Evil One directs his darts.

### 2 Specific lessons

#### a) **Temptation No. 1** (vv3,4)

'Change these stones into bread.'

A double temptation:

- ∅ To use his power for self gratification
- ∅ To win followers by giving them bread – there were many hungry so why not feed them with bread?
  - but what sort of followers would he get?
  - It would address the symptoms but not cure the disease
- ∅ 'Man does not live by bread alone' (Deut 8.3). True satisfaction requires dependence on God.

#### b) **Temptation No. 2** (vv5-7)

'Draw people to yourself by signs and wonders.' After all, God had promised to

protect him from harm (Psalm 91.11-12).

Why not?

- ∅ Because he would have go on producing ever greater sensations – any faith in him would be superficial
- ∅ Because it is a wrong use of God's rescuing power – don't deliberately put yourself at risk
- ∅ 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test' (Deut 6.16). To rely on signs & wonders is not to trust but to distrust.

#### c) **Temptation No.3** (vv8-10)

Jesus had come to save the world, so why not work with the powers-that-be and save everyone a lot of trouble? But:

- ∅ Any so-called salvation achieved by such compromise would be worthless
- ∅ He came down from heaven to our level so that he might lift us up to God's level in heaven. You can never defeat evil by compromising with evil.
- ∅ 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only' (Deut 6.13). So, away with you, Satan!

### 3 Some final thoughts

#### a) **A battle is won, but the war goes on**

The devil left him – but came back again and again, in particular in Gethsemane. 'Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.'

#### b) **How are we tempted and tested?**

- ∅ To use our gifts and privileges in the wrong way
- ∅ To use spectacular methods to attract followers
- ∅ To compromise the truth – thinking the end justifies the means

#### c) **Who is the source of the story?**

Jesus himself must have told his disciples, for their benefit. His example helps us in our struggles. See 1 Corinthians 10.13:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

## Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

<sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

<sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

<sup>6</sup> "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: " 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

<sup>9</sup> "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

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**Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
and his righteousness  
and all these things shall be added unto you:**

**Allelu-, alleluia!**

**Alleluia, alleluia;**

**alleluia, allelu, alleluia!**

**Ask, and it shall be given unto you;  
seek, and ye shall find;  
knock, and the door shall be opened unto you:**

**Allelu-, alleluia!**

**Man does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word  
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord:  
Allelu-, alleluia!**