

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS
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From Matthew 4. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS, PART 1

This text signals that The Lord's confrontation with "the devil" was *a prearranged encounter* (v.1, 2.) "The Holy Spirit" " led" "Jesus" "into the wilderness" (v. 1.) Therefore, one concludes that this confrontation was *a rigidly structured event*. And the temptation event was *sponsored by The Holy Spirit*.

By generalization, one knows in advance that every temptation-structured event puts the one tempted in a difficult place. The Lord teaches us how to understand and respect the *dynamics of temptation*. Jesus was accomplished at transmuting (causing a change in form of) temptation-- from a personal collapse of faith into a demonstration of the power of obedience.

There are at least seven elements in the temptation structure.

#1. The Setting: The event unfolded in the wilderness, inhospitable and sparse. But that place was not allowed to act as a context , affecting behavior.

#2. The Purpose of the Holy Spirit: It is His intention to test us in the cauldron of materiality.

#3. The Tempted: Jesus exemplified every individual believer in the same state.

#4. The Tempter: A warped super-personality defying our faith.

#5. Personal Conditions or Experience: Jesus was in a state of exhaustion. Vulnerability is *the devil's advantage* .

#6. Time: Moments, hours, days, months, years. Who knows?

#7. The Response: One will respond to the dynamics of temptation by effective faith or by its collapse.

#8. Temptation is a large part of life. A daily ingredient, affecting the substance of our lives. We must learn how to conquer it.

From Matthew 4. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST, PART 2

The first temptation (v. 1-4): FAITH IS COUNTER-EXPERIENTIAL

#1. "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (v. 4.) The temptation event protracted over time. Protracted: meaning to unfold over a certain amount of time; 40 days and nights precisely. Protraction is how we experience the passage of events, circumstance and temptation. Such things extend through time. The longer the time lasts, the more difficult the temptation becomes.

#2. But Jesus teaches us by demonstration that our reasoning and behavior must contract back upon the word of God.

#3. Proof of this is in the Lord's immediate reference to Deuteronomy 8:3. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (v. 4.)

#4. *Our experience of protraction will necessarily challenge our determined practice of contraction.*

#5. In other words, experience protracts, but faith contracts. Often a believer prefers to deal with protraction of experience by rational means. Yet Scripture instructs us to deal with protracting experience by the contraction of faith.

#6. Here is the clash between human personal experience and the practice of obedience to the Word of God.

#7. This structured event of temptation had a purpose. It was to test and prove the priority of biblical contraction in its efficacy against the experience of temptation.

#8. The "Law of Contraction" will not allow for the harmonization of Scripture and experience, nor that of faith and human reason. The law of contraction is exactly *counter-experiential*.

This is how we deal with temptation. Learning to do this determines whether we conquer temptation, or it consumes us.

From Matthew 4. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST, PART 3

The second temptation (v .5-7.) A SATANIC CONTRIVANCE: THE ILLICIT READING OF SCRIPTURE

#1. The devil attempts to engage Jesus in a consideration of the meaning of Scripture. He cites Psalm 91:11, 12. The idea is to "put the Lord your God to the test" (v. 7.) Jesus refuses the suggestion to "throw yourself down" (v. 6.)

#2. The Lord appeals to *a different use of Scripture*. "On the other hand it is written" (v. 7.) To establish His point, the Lord refers to Deuteronomy 6:16. "You shall not put he Lord your God to the test" (v. 7.)

#3. The Master *does not pit one verse against another. He pits one motive against another.* The satanic motive is to make use of Scripture to create a case for leveraging the revealed understanding of God. In a test situation, people can see themselves in a position to exact favors from God based on an illicit reading of Scripture .

#4. Jesus did not fall for it. He knew that *one's motive for reading The Bible precedes the meaning of Scripture.* The motive screens the Bible, looking for any text that could in any way support the motive.

#5. Suppose the motive is to discredit the Bible. That is an *illicit use of Scripture.* Satan hoped to gain the concurrence of Jesus in the redirection of revealed meaning.

#6. One's personal motives can come to bear on Scripture in such a way as to seek "justification" for the already-positioned motive.

#7. Motive finds what it wants. There is a revealed and therefore necessary motive for using the Bible. That motive is to worship God and serve Him only (v. 10.)

Any illicit reading of The Bible does not allow for the finding of light, truth, understanding nor wisdom. We often think of methods, but motives are more powerful.

From Matthew 4. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST, PART 4

The third temptation (v. 8-11) THE CONDITIONAL: DISTORTION OF WORSHIP

#1. The reality of God, the power of God and the Word of God, from the biblical witness, are all categorized as *unconditional*. That is to say, they are subject to nothing. Everything else in all creation is quite *conditional* .

#2. The temptation: "All the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (v. 8) "I will give You, if You fall down and worship me" (v. 9.)

#3. The Lord's *unconditional response* : "You shall worship The Lord your God, and serve Him only" (v. 10.) The core of the temptation was for Jesus to reverse the poles, *to make that which is unconditional, conditional.* The conditional is subject to time, subject to history as process, subject to human reason. *This dynamic is the substance of every temptation that we face.*

#4. The devil hoped that in Jesus, human vanity would be elevated to the unconditional, while the reality of God would be treated as the conditional. OPTIONAL?

#5. "Worship"(v. 10 -- from Deuteronomy 6:13) is a kind of act that separates the mind from the temporal setting. Worship of anything conditional is forbidden by Scripture.

#6. True worship is the personal acknowledgement of the revealed cosmology; the structure of the universe under God. It recognizes the hierarchy of God over man and materiality. Worship is obedient to the revealed order that governs human behavior.

#7. *Jesus teaches us that what we really worship is the very thing we believe to be unconditional.* This being so, our experience is never to be treated as unconditional. Satan hoped that Jesus would do this. He refused.

#8. Worship is not primarily stylistic. Rather, it is our confirmation on a daily basis that the God of the Bible is unconditional and that we are not.

From Matthew 4. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS, PART 5

#1. Temptation is a *sensible* danger for all believers. It is also a necessary constant of life. Faith is tested by temptation. It is unavoidable. How we handle temptation creates a personal profile, and all aspects of life bear the marks of our fight against temptation or our surrender to it.

#2. Verses 1-4 have the reader to understand that the powers of human experience backed by human reason offer no determinant to temptation. Indeed, the only true force able to shun temptation is *the spiritual phenomenon of faith*. The power of a faith ever contracting back upon the word of God stands firm in the conviction that "man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (v. 4, via Deuteronomy 8:3.) Experience (the bread) is not the bedrock reality. God is. Biblical faith, thus, is *counter-experiential*.

#3. Verses 5-7 make an issue of human motive. Satan had a motive, and therefore he chose a text (Psalm 91:11, 12) to use against Jesus. There is a rule here. *Methodology follows motive*. This apparently applies to the broadest reach of human behavior. Jesus knew exactly what that motive was. Hence, He cites a text clarifying His own motive: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (v. 7 via Deuteronomy 6:16.) *Temptation is a test of motives*.

#4. Verses 8-11 address one's understanding of the relation between God and the universe of materiality and one's experience of it.

Every temptation tests our grasp of the nature of God. Is He purely unconditional; and therefore in no way subject to time, history and the material? Or is God subject to His own creation? That is, is He conditional to it?

In every temptation this question is asked and answered depending on our response. There is only one right way: "You shall worship The Lord your God. And serve Him only" (v. 10 via Deuteronomy 6:13.)

#5. Heaven draws the line on our answer to personal temptation.

