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Temptation of Jesus (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the temptation of Jesus in Matthew chapter 4. He notes that while the devil is often thought of as appearing in physical form to tempt people, temptation can also come in the form of subtle suggestions or thoughts. Gregg also explores the symbolism of the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness and how it relates to the history of Israel. He emphasizes that while Jesus was fully human and capable of sinning, he did not sin and his victory over temptation is a model for Christians today.

Transcript

Today, would you please turn to Matthew chapter 4. In your Life of Christ schedule, I think it listed Luke 4 as the principal passage for us to work on today. This is number 10 session in your listing, although we've actually taken more than 10 sessions to get here, but on your chart it's the 10th session. We had listed as the principal text to work from Luke chapter 4, but instead we're going to take the parallel in Matthew 4. It's the story of the temptation of Jesus.

It's the first 11 verses of Matthew 4. It is also found in Mark chapter 1, though greatly abbreviated, only two verses in Mark chapter 1 are devoted to it, verses 12 and 13. And then in Luke, we have the longest account actually in Luke, Luke 4, verses 1 through 13. Now, you might say, if Luke has the longest account, why is it that we take the Matthew account instead to work from? Well, we will bring in all the details from Luke's account that are omitted by Matthew.

We'll make reference to them. The reason I'm going with Matthew's account is because actually Luke and Matthew differ as to the order of the last two temptations. Matthew has them, all three temptations, in a certain order, and then Luke reverses the order of the last two.

And it's my subjective judgment, my subjective opinion, that I think that Matthew probably preserves the original order. And Luke, for reasons unknown, has given them in the switched around order. So, I figure I'll work with Matthew.

To me, it follows logically more, although I can't be certain that it's better than Luke. We'll just see what both of them have to say. I'd like to read to you then, Matthew 4, verses 1 through 11.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry. Now, when the tempter came to him, he said, If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning you. And in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Jesus said to him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God. Again the devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, All these things I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.

Then Jesus said to him, Away with you, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve. Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him. Well, there are so many great things to say about this passage.

It is just so chock-full of information and of thoughts about Jesus and so forth. Of course, it is the first thing that has happened since his baptism. He was baptized in the river Jordan.

The Holy Spirit came upon him there in the form of a dove. A voice announced that he was the Son of God. And we see that a number of things in this passage obviously are the natural sequel to that.

One, we saw the Holy Spirit coming down upon him. Here we see in verse 1 of chapter 4, he is led now by this Holy Spirit who has come upon him. He is led into the wilderness to be tempted.

Mark and Luke also emphasize the role of the Spirit in Jesus going into the wilderness to be tempted. Though they say it a little differently. In Luke 4.1, it goes like this.

Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit returned to the wilderness of Jordan. It said Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. This was as a result of course of the Holy Spirit coming upon him in the previous chapter at his baptism.

So now he was filled with the Holy Spirit according to Luke 4.1. In Matthew it is put he was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness. And in Mark's version, he says immediately

the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. Which is rather, maybe a bit of a shocking concept really.

The Holy Spirit driving him. The idea of being gently led by the Holy Spirit is not too difficult to stomach. But to be driven by the Spirit is much more of a violent, aggressive kind of an action on the Holy Spirit's part.

I don't know exactly why Mark chose that word to describe the function of the Holy Spirit in leading Jesus into the wilderness. Driving him perhaps because of Mark's emphasis on immediacy and on fast motion. If you've read the Gospel of Mark, you know that in the first chapter alone, many times the word immediately, immediately, immediately is used.

He doesn't want the story to lag at all. Everything is immediately after whatever happened before. And perhaps the idea of immediately, the Spirit drove him into the wilderness suggests that he was driven, he moved quickly, he wasted no time.

Like a man who is driven or obsessed by a calling or whatever. I'm not sure, but it is interesting that he mentions him being driven by the Spirit. Because the imagery of someone being driven is that whoever is driving him is behind him, like with a whip.

Whereas being led by the Spirit, which is the way Matthew says it, is more like a sheep being led by a shepherd who is out ahead of him. Anyway, apparently both ways of speaking about the Holy Spirit are scriptural enough. Although the idea of being led by the Spirit is far more common in the scriptures.

Let's make some general observations before we talk about specific verses. First of all, it has been observed by some that this is the only story in the Gospels for which the only possible source must be Jesus himself. That is the source of the information of what took place.

All the other stories in the Gospels could have been told to the writers by someone else other than Jesus. Well, I should say, you know, the stories about the birth of Jesus could have come from Mary or could have come from Joseph. I mean, that information could have been gathered from those sources.

The stories about the public life of Jesus certainly could have been derived from the disciples' own experience with him and what they had witnessed themselves. But on this occasion, Jesus had no disciples yet. And even if he had had them, they wouldn't have witnessed what went on because he went off into isolation for 40 days and 40 nights.

And there was nobody there except the devil. And obviously we don't consider the devil to be the source of this story. Therefore, Jesus must have told this story to his disciples.

All the other things the Gospels record could be just observations the apostles made of when they watched or listened to Jesus or what they had gathered from other second-

hand witnesses. But this story is the only one in the Gospels that depends entirely on Jesus having told it to his disciples for them to know it. And of course, unless we take a somewhat different view of inspiration, say Matthew, Mark, and Luke all, they just kind of got it right from the Holy Spirit directly.

And some people no doubt think of inspiration in Scripture that way, but most of us, as we read it, realize, especially in Luke's case, Luke didn't claim any such inspiration. He just said he got his information from those who were eyewitnesses and so forth. And therefore, the Gospels either got their information from somebody or else sought themselves, like John did and Matthew did, much of what they said.

But here, Matthew wasn't present and Luke wasn't present and Mark was not present, nor was anybody else, when Jesus was in the wilderness. And therefore, this story must have been told to them or told to his disciples by Jesus himself. And in that respect, this story stands out from all other accounts about the life of Jesus in the Bible.

Another consideration here is whether the encounter with the devil that he had was a visible kind of a confrontation or whether it was more like the temptations we go through. Now, the devil tempts us as well, in fact, in the same ways that Jesus was tempted, though maybe not with the specific temptations, yet the categories in which Jesus was tempted are very much like the ones we are tempted in. We'll talk more about that later.

But when we are tempted, I have not yet met the person who is usually tempted by meeting Satan face to face. Now, I've met a few people, or maybe at least one, that claims to have seen Satan on some occasion, and maybe so, I don't know. But I'm not sure that they saw him on a regular basis, and I don't know anybody, really, who would say that their temptations usually come to them by Satan appearing to them.

Now, Jesus, we're told in Hebrews 4.15, was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4.15 says that. Jesus was tempted in all points like we are.

Now, I think one of the things that makes temptations particularly difficult for us is that we don't see the devil. It's his subtlety. Think about it.

Think of the thing you are tempted to do most often that isn't right. I'm sure that you can all think of something. And now imagine that someday you are alone in your room, and the devil materialized in front of you and said, you know who I am, I'm the devil.

Now, I want to tempt you to do this thing. Would you find it easier or harder to resist that temptation on that occasion? I don't know about you, I would find it much easier to resist, because I would in no way want to submit to the devil. And of course, one of the biggest problems in temptation is that it creeps up on you so much that you don't even realize you're being tempted until it's begun to snowball to a certain extent.

And then it's harder to quit, harder to call it off. But it seems like one of the devil's principal advantages in temptation is remaining himself somewhat concealed. And making subtle suggestions to our minds that we mistake for our own thoughts.

So, of course, we don't have our guard up against them. But if he appeared before you and said, hi, I'm the devil, I've got a proposition to make to you, not one of you would be seriously tempted, I would imagine. Unless your devotion to God is somewhat shaky.

Certainly, if you had devotion to God as much as Jesus did, to have Satan appear before him and say, listen, I've got an alternative for you here to God's will. I'm sure Jesus wouldn't find it tempting at all. Therefore, I am of the impression that when it says the devil came to him and said these things to him, that the devil probably came to him and said those things to him similarly to the way the devil comes to us and says those things.

All my life growing up knowing this story, I always pictured a confrontation between Jesus and the devil and they're looking at each other and arguing and so forth. Just as I got older and considered it more, my impression has been more along the lines of thinking that Jesus just had these thoughts come to his head in the form of temptations, which he recognized to be from the devil. He knew what the devil was saying to him and he knew what to say back to the devil.

The story would be told in the same way in either case. It just seems to me that if Jesus' resistance of temptation on this occasion was to be greatly commended, I would say it would be much easier for him to resist temptation if he saw the devil face to face and knew who that was than if he just had, like we have, suggestions snuck into his mind. Now, did Jesus experience those kinds of things? Did Jesus experience subtle temptations in which the devil hoped to catch Jesus unawares in a sin? I'm quite sure he did.

When Peter, an accessory of Philippi, tried to persuade Jesus not to go to the cross, Jesus recognized the devil behind those remarks. Certainly, the devil was trying to tempt Jesus in a similar way that he tempts us through friends, well-intentioned friends even, who think they know what's good for us and what they have in mind for us is actually different than what God does. But Jesus knew that that was the devil talking to him.

What implications would it have? If we said this isn't literal, whether we should take the serpent in Genesis as literal or not, to me it's a very different kind of situation. For one thing, I think we can take this basically literally in the sense that to say the devil came to him and said this could be taken either way. It came to him visibly or invisibly.

It would still be the devil coming to him. If I say to you the devil came to me last night and made this suggestion to me, you would probably assume I didn't mean that he appeared to me and made this in audible words, but you would probably understand me to mean that this suggestion came to my head and I recognized it as not myself but the devil making the suggestion. In other words, that would be a fairly literal way of speaking

about it in either case.

In the case of Genesis, there are some who have felt that is a symbolic story about the serpent talking to Eve and so forth, but it's not told in such a way. The way it's told, she was conversing with this serpent. There is an interesting thought that the serpent might not have been a literal way of talking about the devil, might not have been a literal animal, but certainly the devil is symbolically called a serpent many times like in Revelation and so forth and probably in Luke 10 and 19 where Jesus had to give you authority over serpents and scorpions.

And when Jesus called the Pharisees seed of vipers, certainly had the devil in mind there. Frankly, I never thought of it before, but I have the impression that since the Bible says the serpent was the most subtle of all the creatures that God had made, it's compared with the other creatures. And then later when he's cursed, he's going to go in his belly and he'd be the most cursed of all creatures and so forth.

It sounds like he's talking about an animal of some sort rather than some invisible spirit that is simply called, symbolically called a serpent. But it's an interesting suggestion, but I think the Genesis account lends itself more to, I think the features of it lend itself more to a literal conversation between the woman and the serpent than this one would necessarily have to. Now, there is of course in this the question of Jesus being transported from place to place by the devil.

He's taken to Jerusalem, here he's out in the wilderness fasting and the devil takes him to Jerusalem and stands up on a pinnacle of the temple and then later takes him to a great high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world. The question I would have is, did Jesus actually geographically move to these places? It's possible, of course. These are two supernatural individuals involved here.

The devil I think could probably transport people, even in out of body experiences. And Jesus, there's probably no limit to what he could do if it was God's will. And it was his will for him to be tempted here, that's why the spirit drove him into the wilderness for this very purpose, to be tempted.

It was God's will for him to endure this. So, maybe he was really transported, but I'll tell you how I've come to think of it. You know, when Satan put him on a high pinnacle, or when Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world, I suspect that this happened sort of while Jesus was actually all in the wilderness, but he was contemplating these things.

I think Satan gave him visions. And I'll tell you why. I mean, you can certainly disagree with it and there's nothing at stake as far as I know, whether you agree or disagree with this.

But, otherwise we have to assume that Jesus let Satan lead him around. You know, I

mean, the devil couldn't forcibly carry him away against his will. If the devil said, come here, I want to take you to Jerusalem, he'd say, okay.

You know, I mean, it seems kind of strange to have Jesus letting the devil lead him around. Or if the devil did it forcibly against Jesus' will, that's even scarier. You know, what, the devil's got more to say about where Jesus goes than Jesus does? Of course, there's a third alternative, and that's that the Holy Spirit who led him into the wilderness in the first place to be tempted also led him to go to these places that the devil was going to tempt him.

That's possible too, although the way the text is worded, it says the devil took him to such and such place. It doesn't say the spirit did. So, I mean, the question of how literal these geographic movements were is, to my mind, the issue here is the actual presence of a legitimate bona fide temptation.

And if Jesus was in the wilderness and the devil sort of gave him a vision, sort of portrayed before his eyes all the kingdoms of the world. And by the way, there was something miraculous about that, because you don't just go up on a high mountain. And from there visually see all the kingdoms of the world, especially not in Jerusalem.

You just, I mean, you just, you couldn't see all the kingdoms of the world from there. Furthermore, it says in Luke's version that he showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Which, that added detail seems to indicate that it was a visual, you know, a supernatural kind of vision where he was suddenly in a moment's time he saw all the kingdoms of the world.

It sounds like it was a vision more than anything. He might have been on a high mountain, in fact, in the wilderness where he was fasting when he had this vision. But the devil is showing it to him.

Probably, you know, he wasn't seeing with his natural eyes these things, but there was more of an experience going on in his awareness. And that might have been the case from the pinnacle of the temple also. I'm not sure, you know, I mean, maybe we should picture Jesus actually going back to Jerusalem, out of the wilderness for this particular temptation.

Climbing up on this, you know, strange posture at the top of this high point of the temple looking down over the Kidron Valley and so forth. But to my mind, maybe not to yours, it doesn't matter, but to my mind, it has real temptation. If Jesus was sitting there and the devil was getting him to see this in his mind, just picture yourself.

You could go there to the temple, you could jump down, you could call for the angels. Just think of how that would turn out, you know. I mean, the angels would carry you down and you could prove you're the son of God that way and so forth.

I mean, what I'm saying to you is I personally think Jesus stayed in the wilderness the whole time. And that a lot of this geographic movement was the devil taking him in his mind or in a vision or something to these places. One reason to say so is that in Mark's gospel, Mark suggests in the way he words it that the entire 40 days was spent in the wilderness being tempted.

That the temptations all took place in the wilderness, whereas if he'd actually took him to the literal temple, then he had to leave the wilderness at least for that temptation to go to Jerusalem. In any case, if that suggestion doesn't commend itself to you, then whatever other view feels better to you, feel free to hold on to. But I just sensed that if Jesus was tempted in the sense of seeing Satan right there and there was an actual man-to-man kind of conversation going on, looking at each other in the face and so forth, like the classical painters sometimes depict it, then Jesus' resistance wasn't as commendable.

Just because it wouldn't be as hard to say no to the devil if he came and looked you in the face. Maybe you think it would be harder and maybe it would for some people. I don't think it would be for Jesus and I certainly don't think it would be for me.

It's harder for me when the devil sneaks up behind me and makes suggestions and I don't know it's him until it's progressed a little too far or further than would make it easy to stop. Anyway, that's just a consideration. You can take it however best you think the material would be applied.

Another general observation or consideration is whether Jesus could sin or not. I think I've mentioned before that there are Christians who hold to a doctrine of the impeccability of Christ, which means he was incapable of sin. If I understand the reasoning of these people correctly, I think it is based on the fact that, of course, we know Jesus was God and the Bible says in James that God can't sin.

And since God can't sin, if Jesus was God, then presumably he couldn't sin either, they think. Now, I think that's how they reason. Now, all Christians, whether they believe in this doctrine of the impeccability of Christ or don't, they all agree that he didn't sin.

The question is whether there was really an option there for him, whether he could have sinned or whether all this was a sham. Whether all this temptation was just going through the motions, but nothing really was at stake here because Jesus couldn't do what the devil said anyway because he was God and he couldn't sin. It's a hard question on the one hand because what does it mean that God can't sin? Is it that he's physically incapable or is it that it goes against his grain, against his nature to sin? I think the latter is true.

He's totally pure and holy and it's against his nature. You can't do what is against your nature. You can't do anything that's against human nature to do.

For example, you can't fly like a bird. It's not in your nature to do so. You can't produce sap like a tree because you don't have a tree's nature, you have a human nature.

You'd produce something else. But the point here is if God's nature was in Christ and God by nature can't do anything impure or unholy or whatever, then you could see why there might be an argument in favor of the impeccability of Christ in this case. But there are some alternative considerations.

One of them is that it says in James, it doesn't just say God can't sin, it says he can't even be tempted to sin. And yet Jesus is clearly said to have been tempted. In James chapter 1, verse 13, it says, Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. Now, it says God cannot be tempted with evil. Jesus was tempted, the Bible specifically says that's why he went there in Matthew 4.1. He went to the world to be tempted by the devil.

So we have to say that in some sense, what was true of God and of Jesus before he came to earth, there was some limiting, some handicaps. There was some emptying of himself, as it says in Philippians 2, when he became a man. And one of the things at least that changed was that he was now capable of being tempted.

Does that mean he was also capable of sinning? I would think so. And the reason I would think so is what is temptation except a real attraction to doing the wrong thing? That's what temptation is, is it not? That he was capable of being attracted to evil, which God himself is not. Jesus as a man, we have to, when we talk about the incarnation of Christ, not only emphasize the deity of Christ, which is very important, but we have to take full stock of what the Bible says about his humanity as well.

And as a human being, he lived under a number of handicaps that he did not experience prior to becoming a human being. God doesn't get weary, but Jesus got weary. God doesn't sleep, but Jesus slept.

God knows everything, but Jesus didn't know everything when he was on earth. He had to increase in wisdom in favor of God and man. God is everywhere at once, but Jesus wasn't everywhere at once when he was on earth.

God can't sin, but I think Jesus could, because all those things I've just said that were different about Jesus from God are parts of being human. And if Jesus was incapable of sin, there's a couple of points I'd like to make. One is he was not fully a free human being at all.

He was less free than we are. That he was a man with no freedom. He wasn't fully human at all, in other words.

Is it not the case that when we argue why God gave man the option to sin, it's because

God wanted man to be distinct from the animals, and that he was a creature with choice, that he could do the right thing or the wrong thing? If that is a correct way of seeing things, and I believe it is, biblical, then if Jesus was incapable of sin, then he's the very kind of person that God didn't intend to make in the garden, someone who couldn't sin, someone who couldn't make any choice. And I believe the Bible emphasizes that he was, in fact, the second Adam, or the last Adam. And Adam certainly was capable of sinning.

Furthermore, if Jesus couldn't sin, then his victory over Satan throughout his life was no big deal. He had no other way he could have been than the way he was. He couldn't sin, so all of this temptation was not really temptation at all.

It was just a show, just a play acting. Now, it should be further said that if Jesus could not sin, then he was not tempted in all points like we are. Because one of the things that makes my temptation most difficult is that I'm capable of obeying my temptation.

I'm capable of sinning. If Jesus was not capable of sinning, then he wasn't tempted like I am. And let's face it, when he was told to turn rocks into bread, it must have been something he was able to do.

If the devil told me to turn rocks into bread, I wouldn't even be tempted. Because I can't do it. I don't have the power to do that, and I'd say there's no temptation there.

And if the devil tempts you to do something you can't do, you hardly feel tempted. If sinning was something Jesus couldn't do, then temptation to sin was something that would hardly be any struggle for Jesus. There'd be no real temptation at all.

In what sense, then, could he be said to be tempted like I am? Obviously, it seems obvious to me, that even though the Bible says that God is holy and does not sin, doesn't even get tempted to sin, yet in becoming a man, Jesus took on enough of human nature to make him capable, or at least potentially, of sinning. And that is why it is such a marvelous and wonderful thing that he didn't. That he never did sin.

He was tempted at all points like we are, yet without sin. And the great victory that this story demonstrates is that a man who fully could have been, who could have succumbed to temptation, did not. I mean, look at it.

He fasted for 40 days. The first temptation was to turn rocks into bread. Presumably, Jesus could have done it.

When you're fasting for 40 days, most people would be hungry. And hunger is the very thing that provides the temptation to eat. Even to eat if it's not appropriate for you to eat.

I mean, that's where your temptation would come from, your hunger. We're specifically told Jesus had not eaten for 40 days and he was hungry. The presence of hunger was

with him, just like it would be for you or me.

And is that not the basis of the temptation itself, to eat? It seems to me if he couldn't obey that hunger, then it's a strange way of talking about temptation. It seems to me that the very temptation of Christ in this case is one of the proofs that Jesus was human as well as God and that sinning was not an impossibility for him. But it was something he didn't do.

Now, in addition to following the story of the baptism, by the continued emphasis on the Holy Spirit, at his baptism the Spirit came upon him. In this story, the Holy Spirit drives him, leads him. He's full of it.

Full of him, I should say, the Holy Spirit. But besides that, you've got the continuing theme of the Son of God. Because it was at Jesus' baptism that the voice from heaven said, You are my Son.

This day have I begotten you. And some of the temptations begin with the challenge. If you are, in fact, the Son of God, then prove it.

Now, Jesus had the word of his Father on that matter. But what proof did he have that he was the Son of God? He'd never yet done a single miracle. He'd never had anything supernatural demonstrated in his life, except for his conception, but he wasn't around to see that.

And therefore, there might have been the temptation, and there obviously was. It's recorded. He had this temptation to prove that he was the Son of God.

It came to his mind, whether Satan stood in front of him and spoke it in audible terms, or whether he just put it in the back of his mind, one way or the other, the suggestion came to Jesus that he should prove that he is the Son of God by turning rocks into bread. And that he should prove that he's the Son of God by jumping off the pinnacle of the temple. But he rejected those suggestions.

Again, whether they came to him subtly or blatantly is, for this point, irrelevant. The suggestion was a real suggestion that entered his brain, and which he really had to apparently struggle with momentarily, and then reject. We don't know how long the struggle went on.

Like I said, Mark actually words it as if Jesus was tempted for the entire 40 days. Although the series of three temptations that we read of here in Matthew and Luke all took place at the end of the 40 days, because it says after 40 days he was hungry, and that's when this tempting began. But there must have been some temptations hitting him from time to time, even during the 40 days, for Mark to speak the way he did.

Although there's another interesting possibility. Mark says, let me read Mark's actual

words for you, I've been alluding to them, I'll read them to you in his own gospel. In Mark 1, 12 and 13 it says, And immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness, and he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

That's quite a condensed version of the whole story. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. Only, by the way, only Mark mentions the wild beasts.

For what purpose? I'm not sure. Let me suggest to you some symbolism in this story as well as, you know, I take it as a literal thing that Jesus did these 40 days. He didn't eat, he was hungry, he had these temptations, he overcame them.

Then he came back from the wilderness and the devil left him for a while. But there is symbolic meaning in it too, I believe. Because Jesus having been baptized, passing through the water as he did, and being baptized in the Spirit, passing through the cloud as it were, was then tested forty days in the wilderness, as Mark puts it.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10. Here the Apostle Paul remembers these events in the history of Israel. 1 Corinthians 10, beginning with verse 1. What's he talking about? He's talking about the 40 years their bodies were scattered.

They were tempted or tested in the wilderness for 40 years. Right after they were baptized in the sea, that is, passed through the water of the Red Sea. They passed through the waters in order to emerge in the wilderness where they were tested for 40 years.

Jesus, now by the way, Paul does not liken that to Jesus in this passage in 1 Corinthians. He likens it to us, to our baptism in our lives. He says in verse 6, these things became our examples.

In the Greek, types. These are types of Christian experience. These things became our types to the intent that we should not lust for evil things as they did.

So Paul sees a connection between Israel's history and our own personal history. Israel went through a baptism of sorts by passing through the Red Sea. We've been through water baptism.

They were under the cloud just like we're under the Holy Spirit who comes upon us. And they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. And that's analogous to our own life of temptation and overcoming temptation and so forth.

That's what he's saying here. He's likening the Jews' deliverance from Egypt, which is like our conversion, and their passing through the Red Sea, which is like our baptism, and their wandering through the wilderness for 40 years, which is like our Christian life of

being tested and being led by God and so forth. He likens that to the Christian experience.

But you know, there's a sense in which Jesus' own experience mimicked that. In fact, Jesus' own experience is the example for us. I suggested when we talked about Jesus being baptized, he may have done so only so that he could associate with us.

There's no excellent reason, you know, overarching, transcendent reason why Jesus should have been baptized except that the Father wanted him to. But why did the Father want him to? Probably so he might associate with sinners. That's what God expected us to go through.

But Jesus, I guess what I'm trying to say is that what happened to the Jews when they got out of Egypt, went through the water, and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, there's a picture there of Jesus' own early life and ministry, as is pointed out by Hosea and Matthew quoting Hosea. In Hosea 11.1, where it says, When Israel was young, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. Remember that? That's a statement about the Exodus in Hosea, but it's quoted by Matthew as being about Jesus when he went into Egypt as a child.

And so there's some connections already made by Matthew earlier. Previously, Matthew has in chapter 2 likened the childhood of Jesus to the childhood of Israel, the nation. And now we see him going through the water of baptism and going into the wilderness for 40 days.

He couldn't afford 40 years like the Jews did, but a day for a year is actually a principle that comes from the story of the Exodus. Because, remember, the spies spied out the land of Canaan for 40 days. And when they came back and the people decided they weren't going to go into the land because of that, God said, OK, for each of those days that the spies spied out the land, I'm going to give you each one year.

40 years for the 40 days in the wilderness. Remember that? You haven't read it this year probably, but if you've read it before, that's in Numbers chapter 14. But the point here is that the idea of a day corresponding to a year in that particular connection actually comes from the Old Testament itself.

Jesus spending 40 days being tempted by the devil resembles Israel at the beginning of their career, spending 40 years in the wilderness. It's a different wilderness. Jesus was in the wilderness of Judea.

They were in the wilderness of Sinai. But there are other similarities. Jesus quoted three times from the scriptures to the devil in this story, and always from Deuteronomy.

All three quotes that Jesus gives are from Deuteronomy, which is a book that was written by Moses of sermons that he preached to them when they were in the wilderness being

tempted. And when they were, of course, about ready to go into the Promised Land and their period of temptation was almost over. But so was Jesus' testing of this particular time almost over when this set of three temptations happened.

And he quoted from Moses' words to the Jews in the wilderness, what God said to the Jews, or what Moses said to the Jews, Jesus took as a word to himself to guide him in this time of testing. Man shall not live by bread alone. You shall not worship anyone but the Lord your God.

And you shall not tempt the Lord your God. These three statements that Jesus quoted were all from Deuteronomy. So, it again seems to connect it.

If you look at Hebrews chapter 4, the writer of Hebrews is urging the Christians not to follow the same bad example as the Jews in the wilderness who perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief, because they didn't pass the test. He's telling his readers that they're being tested too and they need to not fall away like others did. So, he says, actually in Hebrews 3 and 4, it makes reference to a psalm, quotes from Psalm 95.

But in Hebrews 3.7, it says, Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of the trial or testing in the wilderness, where your fathers tested me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Therefore, I was angry with that generation. I said, they always do go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

So, I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest. Now, this is quoting from Psalm 95. It mentions that God was tempted by these people for forty years while they were being tempted in the wilderness, tested.

They were testing God's patients too. Which is why at the end of that time in Deuteronomy, Moses said, don't put the Lord your God to the test. Don't tempt him.

But according to Psalm 95, which is here quoted by the writer of Hebrews, it's Psalm 95 verses 7 through 11. God said that it was a time of testing for the Jews, but also a time of testing for God. They tempted him.

They tested him in the wilderness for those forty years. Now, Jesus was man, and he was God, undergoing temptation these forty days in the wilderness. And there's an interesting set of ways to look at this.

For one thing, Jesus was, as we know, the last Adam. Adam and Eve were tempted in the Garden of Eden, and they fell and brought their whole race of all who were in them into disaster. Whereas Jesus was the last Adam, he was tempted also and did not fall.

And he therefore brought righteousness, as Paul points out in Romans 5, on the whole

race that were in him, the church. Now, what I want to say about this is that the testing of Jesus in the wilderness corresponds to a certain extent to the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. One serious difference was, although both were tempted to eat what they should not eat, Jesus was tempted when he was starving to death.

Adam and Eve were gluttoned with food. Therefore, one would expect them to do a little better under similar temptation than Jesus did. Amazingly, they did more poorly than he did, although their circumstances were ideal, and they weren't exactly hungry.

But here we see a replay of that pristine encounter between the original Adam and Eve and the serpent. And now we see a second encounter with similar things at stake. The fate of the world.

The fate of humanity. The destiny of mankind is at stake here, just like it was in Genesis 3. The outcome here was the opposite, however. And that is one of the important things.

But another thing that this reminds us of is, as I pointed out, the testing of Israel in the wilderness. Jesus was tested in the wilderness. Forty days, I think, to symbolize the forty years.

And he was starting a new Israel. And just as Israel at their inception had to go through this time of testing, so did the Israel that Jesus was beginning, which he later picked twelve apostles to be the twelve leaders of, just as there were twelve patriarchs in the original Israel. That Jesus, the true Jew, the true founder of the new Israel, had to go through a time of testing in the wilderness at the beginning, just like Israel the nation did originally.

And there is a correspondence, as I pointed out, to what Jesus went through here and what Israel went through. So he is kind of playing two roles here. He is like the role of the second Adam, going through something like what the first Adam went through.

And he is like the founder of the new Israel, going through something like what the original Israel went through. And there is something more too, because he is God as well. And God was tempted for forty years by the Jews' misbehavior.

I would like to suggest something very strange to you. I mean, it is probably strange to yours, it would be strange to me too if I hadn't thought of it myself. Since I thought of it myself, it is either of the devil, and I don't know it, because he didn't face me off front and give it to me that way, or else it is an insight of the flesh or of the spirit, one or the other.

I don't know which. But here is a thought. It is possible that there is even another layer of symbolism to this whole encounter.

And that is, Jesus is in the role of God. He is said to be, by Mark, with the wild beasts in

the wilderness. Matthew and Luke don't mention that, but that is a point that Mark makes especially, that Jesus was with the wild beasts out there.

But they did him no harm. As far as we know, they were at peace with him. But Satan came out to tempt him.

Now, who was it that tempted God in the wilderness for forty years, but Israel? Who was it that Jesus said were the children of the devil, but Israel? Who was it that Jesus, in the book of Revelation, twice said were the synagogue of Satan, but those who said they are Jews and are not, but lie, he said in Revelation 2.9 and Revelation 3.9, both times. Jewish people who claim to be the Jews, but Jesus says they are not worthy of the title, so they are really the synagogue of Satan, as Jesus said to some of them in his days. Certainly not all Jews, because the disciples were Jews, and Jesus was a Jew too.

But basically, the bulk of those Israelites, their reaction to him was, they tested God in a sense, when Jesus came, just like they did back in the days of Moses. And their rejection of Jesus certainly was the ultimate testing of God's patience. And interestingly, after they rejected him, there were forty years, another forty, for some reason, that preceded the destruction that came upon them.

I don't know if I can connect all of these things legitimately, or even in my imagination, but I find it kind of interesting, because if you look at 1 Thessalonians, I think chapter 3, something Paul said, I find interesting. In 1 Thessalonians, actually chapter 2, there's also a statement in chapter 3 I'd like to look at. 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 18.

Paul said, Therefore I wanted to come to you, even I Paul, time and again, but Satan hindered us. And then he says in chapter 3 verse 5, For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. Now, here he makes reference to Satan and the tempter, words that are interchangeable.

By the way, they're interchangeable in the temptation of Jesus accounts too, because in Mark he says Satan was tempting Jesus, and in Luke and Matthew it says the devil, and in Matthew it specifically also mentions the word the tempter. So all three terms are used interchangeably. We'll see that as we go through verse by verse.

But just something interesting here. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2, verses 17 and 18, that he's greatly desired to return to Thessalonica, but something prevented him. He said the devil prevented him.

Satan hindered us. But in what way did Satan hinder him? Through what means? I mean, let's face it. We hear so much teaching about our victory in Christ over the devil, and spiritual warfare and stuff.

I mean, the way some people would have it, all you have to do is just rebuke the devil

and he runs away. So why did Paul have trouble getting past the devil? Why couldn't he get back to Thessalonica? How could the devil stop a mighty apostle like Paul from getting back to Thessalonica? Well, I think we can understand it by looking not only at this passage, but also at a passage in the book of Acts. In Acts chapter 17, don't turn there now, but you can look there on your own.

When Paul was in Thessalonica, he was driven out by resistance he received from the Jews. The Jews in Thessalonica took him before the courts and insisted that the courts throw him out.