

Jesus—Old and New Testament Examples of **Resisting the Tempter's Snare**

The "visitor" to the website's "Visitor's Corner" is and has been a personal friend of mine for many years (50 to be exact). Tom and I have worked together, laughed together, cried together, and challenged each other to be all we can be as we stretch toward the finish line of life.

Tom Jones is more than a friend, he is like a brother. He has advanced and met the challenges faced as he and I moved up in management as a team and fellow traveler in the business world.

In the 50 years we have known each other, we have found our families living within ½ mile of each other for 47 of those years. He was at my bedside in the hospital when I did not think I would make it. Sherry and I treasure Tom and Fadra's friendship. Although we might be on our last leg of the mile relay, we both feel we need to give it all until that final chapter in our lives. He teaches the seniors at his local church in Burleson, Texas. He provides quality teaching with a "spirit of excellence."

The real challenge for the Christian is to "constantly realign our hopes and dreams with God's eternal kingdom." With that in mind, we will take a different view of events that shaped Jesus' life and the same type of events that have shaped and are still shaping our lives.

Part of this shaping is to study the impact that the writings of the Old Testament had on the evolving first century Christianity and how God realigned and continues to realign his relationship with mankind. This continuing story has left an impact on our everyday lives and will have an impact for generations to come.

Again, as we study the challenges Christians face today, we are not to lose sight that the Holy Bible is made up of both the Old and the New Testaments; both of which play an important part in our everyday existence. Both Testaments (Old and New Covenant) are relevant, practical, and imperative (necessary) in understanding our salvation through faith in Jesus, our Savior, Our Redeemer, and final sacrifice for our sins.

The Scriptures used in this writing are: **Deuteronomy** 6:4-6, 13-16; 8:3; 30:19-20; **Psalms** 91:11-12; **Matthew** 1:21; 4:1-11; **Revelations** 11:15

In these Scriptures we see that Moses is dying. God's people are about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Moses, who has been their leader for more than a generation, cannot go with them. The Book of Deuteronomy appears in the Bible as an extended farewell from Moses to the children of Israel as they move forward to a new life.

Before they part company, Moses reminds them of their past; of lessons learned, about what the Lord has said and done; and about what God expects of them. He wanted to prepare them for the future challenges that they would face in the new land. Moses knew that they were about to be exposed to a new way of life, and to personal luxuries that up to this time they could have only dreamed about. They were being counseled as to the consequences of idolatry and lack of faith. The spiritual path that they need to follow is being laid out for them. Reading from **Deuteronomy 6:4-6...**

⁴Israel, listen! Our God is the LORD! Only the LORD! ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength. ⁶These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. (CEB)

The “**Great Commandment**” as presented here to the people of Israel is meant to be their religious cornerstone. This commandment provides focus for “the people’s faith built relationship with God” and is still applicable for us today.

God knew that in this new land, the Israelites would be surrounded by people who worshiped other gods. He is forewarning them of the problem that they will face and provides explicit instruction for faith building emphasis that is required on their part. They are being told to “**Love the LORD their God with all their heart, all their being, and all their strength.**”

Question: Even when we know its wrong, why is it so easy to yield to temptation that we know will lead us astray?

Reading from **Deuteronomy 6:13-16...**

*¹³Revere the LORD your God, serve him, and take your solemn pledges in his name! ¹⁴Don’t follow other gods, those gods of the people around you—
¹⁵because the LORD your God, who is with you and among you, is a passionate God. The LORD your God’s anger will burn against you, and he will wipe you off the fertile land. ¹⁶Don’t test the LORD your God the way you frustrated him at Massah (**MAH-suh**). (CEB)*

They were being told that they are not to test this God of theirs; that this God of theirs is a passionate and jealous God. Moses tells the people that they must turn to and trust God. He wanted them to be faithful and wise in their future endeavors. These verses focus on safeguards in the relationship between the Lord and his people. Offered are three positive exhortations for God’s people to employ: “revere,” “serve,” and “take solemn pledges.” All three involve making the Lord the centerpiece of everyday life.

These three elements focus on placing **loyalty and faithfulness** in a dominate role in the relationship between God’s people and the Lord.

Throughout the Book of Deuteronomy choosing faithfulness to the Lord is equated with choosing life itself. Reading from **Deuteronomy 30:19-20...**

¹⁹I call heaven and earth as my witnesses against you right now: I have set life and death, blessing and curse before you. Now choose life—so that you and your descendants will live—²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying his voice, and by clinging to him. That’s how you will survive and live long on the fertile land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors: to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (CEB)

God’s ultimate mission was to bless all the nations through Israel. This requires God’s people to be faithful; if this is not achieved, they by default would lose the blessing God has graciously given them. For that reason, the focus here is on the response of the people to God’s grace.

Question: What’s the difference in losing God’s blessing vs. being punished by God?

The reference to *Massah* (**MAH-suh**) provided an example of the people’s unfaithfulness in the past. It was to remind them of what happened to their ancestors when this occurred. One of the main points of understanding this writing is that Jesus was a “Student of the Bible,” he knew the scripture; even more important, he knew God. With that in mind, the “*Temptation of Jesus*” as described in the Book of Matthew, is important for the Christian to understand our challenge when we are faced with similar situations/temptations.

This episode is about “**The Testing of Jesus.**” It follows immediately on the heels of Jesus’ baptism. As he came up out of the water, Jesus enjoyed the presence and received the affirmation of both the Holy Spirit and the Father God.

The next scene, however, is completely different, because a major change for Jesus occurs. Far from the cool moisture of the Jordon River, the Spirit now leads Jesus into the hot, dry desolation of the wilderness far from the companionship of John the Baptist and the crowds; Jesus is presented as being isolated and alone. He has entered the hot desolate confines of the desert where nourishment was not readily available. Time passes, Jesus has fasted for 40 days and nights. His human body is screaming for food. Remember, Jesus had feelings, temptations, and desires as we did.

This wilderness test was no accident. This was the very place where Israel was led after they were freed from slavery in Egypt and as a people took a wrong turn in the road; this was the very place where God’s people took a 40-year detour as a result of their Idolatry and disobedience. In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus returns symbolically to the scene of Israel’s detour and offers to the

people a new way, a new path, and a new choice. Reading from **Matthew 4:1-2...**

¹Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. ²After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. (CEB)

The Spirit has led Jesus into the wilderness specifically “so that the devil might tempt him.” The devil was the first, but would not be the last to challenge Jesus. In fact, temptation would occur right up to that final day on the cross as depicted with these words found in the 27th chapter of the **Gospel of Matthew...**

“If you are God’s Son, come down from the cross.”(CEB)

During his earthly life, Jesus would, in a way, relive the nation of Israel’s life as described in the Old Testament but do it victoriously. For Israel, the time in the wilderness was difficult. God’s people had repeatedly failed to be faithful in light of the challenges they faced. Jesus, however, succeeded where Israel had failed. He lived the perfect life as a means of empowering his people to live as God intended. This was done to point the way forward for generations to come. Reading from **Matthew 4:3-4...**

³The tempter came to him and said, “Since you are God’s Son, command these stones to become bread.” ⁴Jesus replied, “It’s written, People won’t live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God.” (CEB)

These words are not a model of how God plans to tempt us but rather how Jesus has gone before us so that we can be victorious in our lives. Preparation, however, is imperative. Bible study consisting of both reading and hearing the Scripture and developing a truthful insight of what has been read and heard is critical.

Question: Jesus was hungry, using today’s logic, what would have been wrong with a little snack? When we’re tempted, what logic will we use?

Take note that the suggested condition of proof of Jesus’ divinity was not divine at all, the test was entirely human in nature; that being, doing whatever it takes to satisfy hunger. Jesus declined, as he related his situation to the Old Testament Scripture that described a time during the Exodus from Egypt. Reading from **Deuteronomy 8:3...**

³He humbled you by making you hungry and then feeding you the manna that neither you nor your ancestors had ever experienced, so he could teach you that people don’t live on bread alone. No, they live based on whatever the LORD says.” (CEB)

This verse focuses us on God as the true source of life. Jesus refused to use his power or position as Son of God to meet his own needs because he had settled the issue of entrusting his life to God up front. Jesus' status as Son of God was not a means for his personal self-preservation or for advancing his own agenda. It was to complete the mission that God the Father had sent him to earth to accomplish. This was as described in the **Gospel of Matthew 1:21...**

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (CEB)

The implication for us as Jesus' followers is that we must use our God given gifts for something greater than our own needs. We are to do our part, ever so large or ever so small, in achieving God's mission. Reading from **Matthew 4:5-7...**

⁵After that the devil brought him into the holy city and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, ⁶“Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written, I will command my angels concerning you, and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone.” ⁷Jesus replied, “Again it's written, don't test the Lord your God.” (CEB)

Here, the devil is not seeking truth, only challenging it. He knew full well that Jesus was God's Son; he knew full well who he was dealing with. As an instrument of temptation, the devil misuses the words found in Psalms 91:11-12...

¹¹Because he will order his messengers to help you, to protect you wherever you go.¹²They will carry you with their own hands so you don't bruise your foot on a stone. (CEB)

With his answer Jesus refutes the devil's misuse of God's word with a reverent understanding of the Scripture and the right application of it. False teaching, like opportunity for sin, is always present in our lives. Yes, God will protect his people; but there is a deeper meaning, a deeper principle. God's people are not to put God to the test. God has already demonstrated his faithfulness. Jesus has used Scripture again to redirect the focus from himself and to put it back on God. Reading from **Matthew 4:8-11...**

⁸Then the devil brought him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹He said, “I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰Jesus responded, “Go away, Satan, because it's written, you will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.” ¹¹The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him. (CEB)

The fact that the devil offered Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world” suggests that they are his to give while the Scripture tells us a different reality. The kingdoms of the world already belong to Christ as depicted in the **Book of Revelations 11:15...**

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will rule forever and always. (CEB)

In response to this third temptation Jesus quotes from the verse found in **Deuteronomy 6:13...** *¹³Revere the LORD your God, serve him, and take your solemn pledges in his name! (CEB)*

The testing concludes with two encouraging developments: the devil leaves and angels come. It should be noted that the devil does not leave permanently, he’s always hanging around. Jesus’ response illustrates to us that by resisting the devil we can cause him to temporarily flee. The sad part for us humans is that he will continue this cycle of temptation each and every day.

Question: What is the Devil’s mission? What part do we play?

The two obvious characters in this story are Jesus and the devil. But the written word contained in the “Holy Scripture” is an equally prominent player. Scripture is cited by Jesus in each of the three temptations. Jesus has answered “it’s written.” If Jesus himself relied upon the written word, how much more of a necessity is it for you and for me? The devil departed, and God’s angels came. The time for Jesus’ testing had ended. Now it was time for Jesus to begin his public ministry and unleash the kingdom of God.

The stated purpose of this writing is to grasp how Jesus’s response to Satan was emphatically saying, “no...to temptation.” This should empower us to renounce evil, injustice and oppression.

As we seek to become persons whom God can use to change the world, we need to make sure that we are prepared to participate fully in the life of “God’s dreams.” Preparation for us, as it was with Jesus, is a key ingredient to being successful in saying “**no to temptation.**” This preparation makes it possible for “God’s dreams” to become reality.

Prayer: Lord, lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from all evil, temptation and sin. Empower us to say no to false gods and say yes to your will and way; in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.