

Lesson # 4 -- The Greatness of the Temptation of the Lord Jesus

Introduction

- A. Jesus Christ came into the world as our Representative to rescue us.
  - B. Due to the Fall of Man and our sinful condition we have brought upon ourselves a bondage and death from where there is no escape in ourselves.
  - C. In order to break that bondage and set us free from death, the Lord Jesus had to be a member of our race. He was therefore born of the Virgin Mary. He took upon Himself our human nature while remaining God.
  - D. In His baptism the Lord Jesus chose to identify Himself with us in symbolic death and resurrection.
    1. His baptism pointed to His Crucifixion and Resurrection.
    2. The opened heaven indicated He was the way to God.
    3. The Holy Spirit anointed Him for service.
    4. The Father spoke His approval of the Savior and of the silent years in Nazareth.
  - E. In this lesson we wish to consider the greatness of the Lord Jesus as we see Him enduring a time of intense temptation.
- I. The Basic Issue in the Temptation.
- A. The Background.
    1. In the Incarnation the Lord Jesus took our human nature in all its fullness. He was limited to and characterized by our thinking, our emotions, and our bodily desires. He lived with our resources of life while knowing that He was the eternal Son of God.
    2. Through the Incarnation He was made susceptible to all forms of human temptation, with the exception of direct solicitation to evil. He did not have a fallen nature.
    3. While the Lord Jesus, as the holy Son of God, could not sin, yet, because He had our nature and lived our life He was open to and very vulnerable to all of the temptations related to natural desire. He was not omniscient in His humanity. He had to pray and find the will of God for His daily life.
    4. It must be emphasized that the Lord Jesus was acutely aware of the sinfulness of the human race. He also understood fully the demands of divine holiness. This must have caused Him great suffering.
    5. While the Son of God was victorious in the temptation -- the battle was not easy. Satan knew the Savior was the "last Adam" (I Cor. 15:45) and made every effort to get Him to sin. It is significant that the temptation lasted forty days and nights and that at its close angels came to minister to the Savior.

B. The Issue Stated.

1. In the Incarnation the Lord Jesus chose to lay aside the manifestation of heavenly glory and the independent use of His attributes.
2. This choice meant that He lived in total dependence on the Holy Spirit in using the resources common to all believers. This was the will of God for Him.
3. The central issue revolved around the will of God. The Lord Jesus had chosen to do His will and to do so in total dependence upon Him.
4. The goal of Satan in the temptation was to get the Savior to step out of the will of God and use His own ability.

II. The Temptation Proper.

A. The First Temptation. Matthew 4:1-4

1. The human need: Hunger.

- a. God created the human race to hunger and to satisfy that hunger by eating. This is a divinely ordained activity.
- b. The Lord Jesus was hungry in the will of God. He had been fasting for forty days and nights. No provision had been made for food.

2. The attack: Satisfy Your hunger.

- a. J. Oswald Sanders summarized what others have said and described this as the temptation "to satisfy a legitimate appetite by illegitimate means." (The Incomparable Christ, p. 61)
- b. Satan appealed to the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and acted subtly as a benefactor. He suggested He use His ability to meet His need.
- c. This temptation probably came without great fanfare, challenge, pressure or demand. There was only the quiet thought "You are the Son of God -- use Your ability -- satisfy Your hunger by making the stones bread."
- d. The goal of Satan was to get the Savior to act contrary to the will of His Father and act on His own -- put a stop to the temptation -- and satisfy His own need.

3. The repulse: "I choose to be hungry in the will of God."

- a. While tempted to act as God He chose the resources of man. He said "Man shall not live by bread alone . . . ."
- b. The Lord Jesus was tempted to satisfy His own legitimate need -- but He chose to depend on God for His needs. "Man shall not live by bread alone."

- c. The Lord Jesus was tempted to think of himself first. But He chose the truth -- put God first -- and depended on Him. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
- d. The Lord Jesus was tempted to solve His problem of hunger by reason. He chose to depend on the authority of the Word of God and the goodness of God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

B. The Second Temptation. Matthew 4:5-7

1. The human need: Assurance of a life of faith and God's acceptance.

- a. In the first temptation the Lord Jesus expressed His trust in God and the enemy was defeated.
- b. God created us to know we are accepted by Him and to enjoy the assurance and confidence of divine fellowship.
- c. The Lord Jesus had our desires. He was acutely aware of the meaning of faith and enjoyed fellowship with His Father.

2. The attack: Prove Your faith.

- a. Since the Lord Jesus had defeated the enemy by expressing faith, now Satan suggests that He express and prove that faith by leaping down from the temple and thereby claim the promise of protection.
- b. This is what Sanders calls "The temptation to produce spiritual results by unspiritual means."
- c. Satan quoted Scripture to induce the Lord Jesus to fanatically prove His faith .

3. The repulse: "My trust does not need proof -- God is not to be tested."

- a. By going to the Scripture the Savior showed how the text used by Satan did not apply to His situation. He indicated by the statement "It is written again . . ." that no statement from the Bible can be applied if in the circumstance it contradicts other Biblical statements or principles.
- b. The Lord Jesus again took refuge in the will of God and in dependence on God. His Kingdom would be established by the work of God -- not by the public display of His spirituality.

C. The Third Temptation. Matthew 4:8-10

1. The human need: Fulfill the purpose of Your life.

- a. God created mankind for a purpose. He has a plan for our life. It is the will of God that we achieve that purpose and enjoy the benefits of our labour.

- b. The Lord Jesus knew that eventually He would be given all the kingdoms of the world. (Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6,7)
2. The attack: "Accept the kingdoms of the world from me and avoid the cross."
    - a. This attack is described by Sanders as "The temptation to obtain a lawful heritage by unlawful means."
    - b. The Lord Jesus, with our nature, not only desired to accomplish His work and receive the kingdoms, but he also knew the meaning of the suffering of the Cross. He feared pain and sought to avoid suffering and death as any other member of the race.
  2. The repulse: "I reject you Satan. I worship God alone and receive only what He gives me. I trust Him for the fulfillment of My life."
    - a. The Lord Jesus again maintained His total dependence on God. He took refuge in the will of God.
    - b. This is a demonstration of how to use the Scripture. The promise is "The truth will make you free and be your protection." John 8:32; Eph. 6:14 The Lord Jesus claimed the truth and it was His protection, strength, and refuge.

### III. The Lessons To Be Learned from the Temptation.

- A. Jesus Christ, as our Representative, was victorious over the enemy His Temptation. He dwells within us and offers us His sympathetic help in all our trials and temptations. Heb. 2:17,118; 4:14-16; II Cor. 1:3,4
- B. The pattern of temptation.
  1. The strategy of the enemy in temptation. Gen. 3:1-7
    - a. The first step was to question the truthfulness of God's Word. The enemy raised doubt in the mind of Eve and then later contradicted the truth. Satan subtly transferred Eve's authority from God and His Word to herself -- but with the interpretation coming from himself.
    - b. The second step was to get Eve to question the goodness of God. Satan carefully insinuated that God had withheld a good thing from her. Because of this God was not good and should not be trusted.
    - c. The third step was to raise the question of Eve's wisdom in living according to God's directions.
    - d. The fourth step was to suggest a course of action based on deception. Why shouldn't she eat of the tree? Why shouldn't she make up her own mind?

2. Our vulnerability to temptation. I John 2:15-17

- a. The first area of our vulnerability has to do with the desires of our body. In the Garden Eve was shown that the tree was "good for food." Gen. 3:6 In the temptation of the Lord Jesus the first appeal was to His hunger. Matt. 4:3 The Christian who obeys the dictates of his body is in trouble. We are told to control our bodily desires within the will of God. Rom. 6:12; I Cor. 9:27
- b. The second area is related to the desires of the eyes. This has to do with visual and mental delight. Often the Christian will succumb to looking upon and delighting in that which he would never do. The world of literature and entertainment makes its appeal here. The tree was "pleasant to the eyes" to Eve. The Lord Jesus was "shown" the kingdoms of the world.
- c. The third area is that of pride. This includes those more common items such as possessions, relationships, and abilities, but it also points far beyond them. The emphasis here is on that very fundamental arrogance of the human heart when it presumes that it knows what is right and wrong, and is able, by its own resources, to direct the course of life without God. This is seen in the Garden when Eve was shown that the tree would make her "wise." In the temptation of the Lord Jesus it was the appeal to "prove your ability and your faith."

C. The Biblical encouragement related to temptation.

1. Temptation itself is not a sin. James 1:2,12
2. Temptation is under the control of God. I Cor. 10:13
3. God has promised to deliver us out of temptation. I Peter 2:9

D. The Biblical basis for refusing temptation.

1. We must have the correct attitude: I can overcome. I Cor. 10:13
2. We must initiate the correct action: Refuse in faith. Heb. 4:16
3. We must instigate the correct attack: Resist in faith. I Peter 5:8,9

Comment: God is not going to allow temptation to go beyond our ability to resist -- if we practice the truth and resist Satan. We must recognize the part we must play in the temptation, the part circumstances may play, and the part Satan may play. We must learn how to take charge of our mind, emotions, will, and bodily desires. By all means reject the temptation and the Tempter in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and maintain that stand!