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## **6 Following the Messiah: The Temptation of Jesus**

### **Opening:**

1. You have viewed the video "Following the Messiah Episode 3 (the second half) at [www.appianmedia.org](http://www.appianmedia.org) and have worked through the study guide (Lesson Six) available at [www.appianmedia.org/free-download](http://www.appianmedia.org/free-download).
2. This study focuses on the temptation of Jesus.

### **Into the Text:**

1. The temptation of Jesus is recorded in Matt. 4:1-11, Mk. 1:12-13 and Lk. 4:1-13.
2. Comparing the three accounts is interesting.
  - Matthew and Luke are the longer accounts. Mark's is very brief; only two verses.
  - The order of the temptation is different between Matthew and Luke.  
Matthew-- stones to bread > throw yourself down > kingdoms of the world  
Luke-- stones to bread > kingdoms of the world > throw yourself down
3. There are many questions raised by the text for which I have no sufficient answer. For example: 1) Why did the Spirit lead Him into the wilderness to be tempted in the first place? 2) What is Satan's power? He takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. How? How did he show Him the kingdoms of the world? Did Satan really have the power to grant the kingdoms of the world?
4. Satan repeatedly challenges Jesus at the very core of His understanding of Himself. "IF you are the Son of God . . ." (Matt. 4:3, 6). I think the last temptation in Matthew is a similar challenge. Jesus sees himself as occupying a critical role in the plan of God as God's King.

This should give us some insight into Jesus' perception of what it meant to be the Son of God. It is associated with rulership and authority over the kingdoms of the world. Cf. 1 Tim. 5:12-16. What does this mean relative to our confession of Jesus as Son of God?

These temptations are challenges to Jesus' perception of who He was. If this perception was gained through His study and understanding of Scripture these temptations challenge Jesus' interpretations and thus His faith. It is interesting that he meets each temptation with a quotation of Scripture.

Jesus recognized Himself as the Son of God and God's King. In other words, Jesus knew who He was. This defined His purpose, goal and direction. Do you know who you are? It really comes down to your perception of your identity. The clearer you are about who you are the less power Satan has over you. The more unclear you are the more power you give him to control you. Do you see yourself as the son or daughter of God? Sent to accomplish His purpose and serve in His kingdom?

Jesus defined Himself on the basis of what was said in Scripture. Jesus did not have anything to prove to Satan or to Himself. Is that the way you define yourself? It seems we are always trying to prove ourselves in one way or another.

5. Jesus responded to each temptation with a passage of Scripture.

Stones to bread -- "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Deut. 8:3).

Throw yourself down -- "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord Your God to the test'" (Deut. 6:16).

Kingdoms of the world -- "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord Your God, and serve Him only'" (Deut. 6:13).

The first statement is foundational. Once one begins with this understanding anything inconsistent with the word of God is eliminated from one's world view. We might say, "The authority is established." Once God is recognized as the authority in one's life everything else falls into place under this philosophical umbrella.

The second temptation attempts to call the first proposition into question. "Do you really believe the first proposition? Put it to this test so that you can have "proof," no longer will you have to operate by faith or trust. I see people do this. For example, "My mother was sick and I prayed for her and she got well. That proves God really does exist. I wasn't sure before, but now I am." My question: "What are you going to do when she dies? And she is going to die."

The third temptation also calls into question the first proposition. Either you live by the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God or you live by other words. Jesus could not gain the kingdoms of the world by worshiping and serving Satan as God. The only way to have life (and the kingdoms of the world) is to worship and serve the Lord.

6. After the devil left Him, "Angels came and began to minister to Him." In this action you see the result of placing your trust in the word of God.

7. It is interesting to note that all the passages Jesus quotes are from Deuteronomy.

- a. Deut. 8:3. Read 1-3 and note the context. Jesus was familiar with the wilderness wandering and the lessons Israel was to learn there. The first lesson: Depend entirely on the Lord and what He commands you. Don't lean on your own understanding or what eases your immediate suffering. Trust the Lord.
  - b. Deut. 6:16. This passage harks back to the events described in Ex. 17:1-7. The people quarreled with Moses because they did not have any water. They questioned, "Is the Lord among us or not?" They questioned God's presence and His care for them and they wanted Him to prove Himself, which is a testimony to their lack of belief. Deut. 6:16-18 emphasizes once again the necessity of keeping the commandments of the Lord. Verse 18 says, "You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers." God is the giver of good gifts. If you perceive Him as an ogre that has brought you out of Egypt to kill you with thirst how can you trust and obey Him? If you see Him as the giver of good gifts (like His Son, cf. Rom. 8:32) then there is every reason to trust and obey. Heb. 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
  - c. Deut. 6:13. Read 6:10-13. Again the context has to do with observing the commandments and statutes of the Lord "that it may be will with you" (6:3). Verses 10-13 warn that when the Lord brings you into the land, watch yourself that you do not forgive the Lord who brought you out of Egypt and gave you this good land. Read Deut. 6:20-25.
8. There are many parallels in Jesus' 40-day wilderness experience and the 40-year wilderness experience of Israel.

Paul wrote, "With most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.' Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:6-10).

Now here is the interpretation that some give to this. "God brought all these calamities on them. They would have been fine if it had not been for Him." Like children we balk at the instruction of parents who would save us from calamity. We ascribe blame to them for our calamity when in fact they were trying to save from the calamity and so attempted to restrict us. God is giving us the words of life. We shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Reject that word and the Destroyer robs you of the life that God wants you to have.

**Application:**

1. How does Jesus' perception of the commandments of God differ from those with whom God was not pleased in the wilderness wanderings of Moses' day?
2. Which perception of the commandments of God is most like your own?
3. How does your perception of who you are in relationship to God affect your ability to stand against the Tempter?
4. How does your perception of who God is determine your actions? Is He a rewarder or a withholders?
5. If angels came and ministered to you what would they do?