

Weaving the Word

Jesus' Temptation Continues

Part 5 – December 22, 2013



Do you test God? Because God *hates* being tested! Yet, we've been testing God since the Garden. And ever since Eden the lie's been the same: The deceiver says I should know and control what God asks me to trust. We're required to live with the tension of trust. And, we don't like it, and the enemy knows it, and exploits it!



Last week we saw that, Jesus suffered temptation more than anyone, because he fought *every battle* to its bitter end. (Heb 2:18, 4:15) It's a big mystery as to how the divine Son of God could *possibly* be tempted; but, it's a big *mistake* to diminish His suffering.



Maybe God made Jesus' divinity into something like the slack safety-line of a rock climber. That's how I picture Jesus! It doesn't assist in the effort and it doesn't diminish the conquest. But, it keeps you from being dashed against the rocks.

And as you grapple your way up, the higher you climb and the closer you come to the conquest, the more you must trust the cord you can't feel. It had to be *something* like that.

God can't *grow* in *wisdom* (He *is* wisdom) yet, Jesus *grew* in wisdom. (Luke 2:52) God can't *become* something *good* (He *is* goodness) yet, Jesus *became* our *merciful, faithful* High Priest! (Heb 2:17) God can't be tempted. (James 1:13) And yet ...

... we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.
— Hebrews 4:15 NIV

Theologians argue that Jesus couldn't *really* be tempted, couldn't *question*, couldn't struggle that way. But, one of God's omnipotent abilities is to *un-remember*. And I'm *so glad!*

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers **[calls to mind (Strong's H2142)]** your sins no more." — Isaiah 43:25 NIV

If God desired to slack Jesus' recall, in *any way*, for the sake of fighting our fight, and feeling our pain, and earning the right to die for your gain, who's gonna tell Him *He can't?!*

This wouldn't be a display of weakness, but *unfathomable power!*



Some of you wondered why Jesus followed when Satan “led him” (Luke 4:5, 9) But remember, Jesus was being “led by the Spirit ... *to be tempted*”. (Mat 4:1) So, the Spirit was leading Jesus to follow the enemy into battle. Why? Jesus was being prepared and the devil was being *played!*

We’ll only be prepared to the degree we’ve been trained, tried, and tested. Think Navy Seals. And when it comes to our enemies and obstacles, we must trust that cord.



Some of you were bothered that Matthew and Luke list the order of the temptations differently. But, the order *isn’t* the point, so the order can be best arranged for their intended audience. Like how you might arrange a photo album either by chronology or by theme. Both are valid. Luke, a gentile writing an investigative report, (Luke 1:3) arranges by the sequence of Jesus’ scripture quotes. Matthew, writing for Jews, arranges by sequence of Israel’s trial in the wilderness.



Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” – Matthew 4:4 NIV

The Israelites said ... “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” – Exodus 16:3 NIV

They had trust issues. Do *you* ever accuse God of not treating *you* fairly? We test God when ask Him to conform to our will. Mark doesn’t even *mention* the temptations. But instead, says ...

... he [Jesus] was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals ... – Mark 1:13a NIV

Mark is writing to the believers in Rome, just as they’re starting to be persecuted and punished *with wild animals!*



Satan leads Jesus to the top of the Temple and says, “Throw yourself down”. How high do you picture it? Two or three stories? The porch in front of the sanctuary was 18 stories tall! *180 feet!*¹ Yet, in Jesus’ famished, fatigued, fuzzy-headed condition, it seemed to make a lot of sense. It was *cruelly* enticing. Maybe it seemed like a justifiable way to know what He was called to trust? But, again Satan got *played*, and God spoke *through him*, to guide and direct and *encourage* His Son.

Big mistake on the devil’s part, quoting scripture; it *never returns void*. (Isaiah 55:11) Satan arrogantly-ignorantly quotes Psalm 91.

¹ 120 cubits; 2 Chronicles 3:4, regarding Solomon’s Temple; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8.3.64-65, regarding Herod’s

["Didn't God say"] ... he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. [And here he stops. But, what's the next line ... that he himself has called to Jesus' mind?] You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name." – Psalm 91:5-14 NIV

And, just as Moses rebukes those in the wilderness, Jesus uses Moses' words to rebuke the devil as well as to reinforce Himself.

Do not test the Lord your God ... – Deuteronomy 6:16a NIV

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!" (Job 13:15 NKJ) All sin comes down to distrust. I don't trust that God loves me, is watching over me, or is perfectly providing what's eternally best for me. It's always either trust or test. Which will it be? *You decide*. We test God whenever we demand that He prove what He has promised. And, we *make* this demand by grumbling and complaining. We might as well be shouting, "Show us a sign!" (John 2:18)

According to the ancient historian, Hegesippus (A.D. 110-180) Jesus' brother James was martyred by being thrown off of the Temple. Satan probably thought he scored a minor victory ... till he realized James' death only strengthened the resolve of every believer, by causing them to recall Jesus's victory. *Played!*

He couldn't get Jesus to *throw* Himself down, so he tries to get Him to *bow* Himself down, as he had gotten most of Israel to bow down to idols, in spite of David's passionately appealed.

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God ... if you hear his voice, [Jesus heard it at His baptism] do not harden your hearts as you did ... in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. [Jesus saw the heavens open and the Spirit descend] – Psalm 95:6-9 NIV

All it took with Israel was an offer of a shortcut and control.

The devil led him up to a high place [most likely in the spiritual realm] and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, [We struggle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world (Eph 6:12)] and I can give it to anyone I want to." – Luke 4:5-6 NIV

High place? Big mistake! From this vantage point Jesus can clearly see where all the kingdoms of the devil's dark and dying world really are ... *down* in the *valley* of the *shadow of death!* And Jesus knew *His kingdom* could never be of *this world*. (John 18:36)

Jesus answered, "It is written: [Deut. 6:13] 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" – Luke 4:8 NIV

This world is not our home. It doesn't really even *exist*, except as a mist, a vapor, a passing shadow. Paul says "offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from *death to life*". (Rom 6:13)

Paul calls Jesus, “the Last Adam”. (1 Cor 15:45) And, I believe the wilderness is the inauguration of restoration of everything lost in Eden. At Jesus’ baptism the Great Garden Reversal begins! Adam *ends up* being sent out, into the wilderness, among the wild animals; so, *this* is where Jesus *must begin*. It’s a grotesque reverse-reenactment in what Paul calls a *dark-mirror world*. (1 Cor 13:12)

In the Garden, Satan’s tactic was, “**Did God really say?**” (Gen 3:1) In the wilderness the devil’s tactic becomes, “**But, didn’t God say?**” (Luke 4:10) He’ll say whatever it takes to get you from trusting to testing. In the Garden, Satan said, “**Come to the tree, and bow to me.**” And, in the wilderness, Satan said, “**Don’t go the tree (the cross), instead just bow to me.**”

In the Garden, *God* said, “**Trust me about the tree and I will bless you, and will live,**” and they *didn’t*. They *tested* God. In the wilderness, God said, “**Trust me about the tree and I will crush you, and you will die,**” and Jesus *did!* He *trusted*.

If we always obeyed knowing exactly how it’ll benefit our eternal best, God would be reduced to a means to a selfish end. “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.” (Luke 4:13) “... and angels came and attended him.” (Mat 4:11b)

This is the first mention of angels appearing to Jesus. Is it? If so, they’d have a lot of catching up to do as they *celebrate!* Did Gabriel grab Him and say, “**I’m the one who told Mary to name you Jesus!**” Did others gush out, “**We’re the ones who sang to the shepherds!**” Did they cheer and bow and yell: “**You did it! You trusted! Incredible! You’re halfway home!**”

Do you know where His next recorded angelic visitation occurs? The *great* battle, where He sweats drops of blood, yet *continues* to *trust*: the Garden of Gethsemane – the ultimate *anti-garden!* Where Judas reenacts the great betrayal, by placing his lips on the true and better Tree of Knowledge. (Mark 14:45) And where the young man flees naked from the garden. (Mark 14:52)



Then, Jesus becomes the true and better Tree of Life; only, in *dark-mirror world* it’s the Tree of Death, but death *itself* dies!

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness ... – 1 Peter 2:24a NIV

Then, the Last Adam’s side is opened with a spear, and water and blood pour out to cleanse and create the bride, the church. And now, we’re almost to the end, or rather, the *beginning* ...



At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a *garden*, and in the *garden* a new tomb ... – John 19:41a NIV

And when He left it, He left His *grave clothes* in it. But, He didn’t return to heaven until after He appeared. (John 20:17)

So, what was He doing in the meantime? It seems He was walking in the garden, naked, with God. And, all things were restored. All because, He *trusted* when He was *tempted*.