

Obedience in Temptation

Key Verse: “*Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.*”
—**Matthew 4:10**,
New International Version

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 4:1-11

AFTER HIS BAPTISM AT thirty years of age, Jesus was led by God’s Holy Spirit into the desert where he fasted and reviewed the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies to determine the Father’s will for himself. He soon realized that he was the greater Passover Lamb for the world of mankind, and his life on earth would include mistreatment, suffering, and ultimately lead to his death.
—John 1:29; Heb. 2:9

Jesus “was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan.” (Mark 1:12,13, *NIV*) In this we have another proof that God and Jesus are separate beings, since the Bible clearly states that God cannot be tempted. (James 1:13,14) The temptations Satan was permitted to present before Jesus were from different standpoints. However, they all had the same objective, which was to cause Jesus to do his Father’s work in ways which were contrary to his Father’s will. The same test comes to all the Lord’s followers.

The first temptation was, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones be become bread.” (Matt. 4:3, *NIV*) The enticement was that Jesus, being hungry, should use the power of the Holy Spirit to provide himself with food.

This, however, would have been a misuse of the power which God had given to him. As the Lord's followers, we may, at times, have similar temptations such as asking God to intervene in our life for our own fleshly convenience or advantage, or to avoid pain and suffering.

Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (vs. 4 *NIV*) Our life is not wholly dependent upon what we eat, but rather obedience to the word of God. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28, *NIV*

Satan's second temptation was to mentally take Jesus to the top of the Temple, saying, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down." Satan then misapplied a Scripture, stating, "It is written: He will command his angels concerning you." Jesus replied, "It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matt. 4:5-7, *NIV*) How important it is, when seeking the correct meaning of a Scripture, to examine other related verses in the Bible and ensure the proposed interpretation is in full harmony with the rest of God's Word, his character and principles. We may, at times, have similar temptations to show or prove that we are children of God by performing some noteworthy works to be seen of others. However, the work God has given to us is to be "transformed by the renewing" of our mind.—Rom. 12:1,2

Satan's third temptation was to show Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world," saying, "All this I will give you ... if you will bow down and worship me." (Matt. 4:8,9, *NIV*) Jesus realized earth's dominion could be properly attained only by following God's will. Our Key Verse gives his immediate and explicit reply. The Lord's followers may also experience this temptation, to look for an easier way, without sacrifice or self-denial. However, God's way, the narrow way, is the only path which leads to glory.—Luke 9:23; Rom. 2:7; II Tim 2:11,12 ■