

40-04-07-Christ's 3rd Temptation

Lent, temptation, eyes, attractions, elevation, control, compromise

Mat 4:8-9

Temptations remind us to keep our focus on what's really important.

INTRODUCTION:

–**Mat 4:8-9 (NIV)**, *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."* We know of these 3 temptations only because Jesus told his disciples about them. Luke says more came later. If He kept having them, *so will we*. He overcame them, *so can we*. But Jesus reported this episode to teach a perspective: HOM.idea.

–Because Jesus stuck by His identity as a human, the devil stopped his appeal, "if you are the son of God," but continued with a focus on 3 aspects of Christ's human messiahship as *prophet, priest and king*. Turning stones to bread would make Jesus a *magician-prophet*; a safe jump off the temple would make Him a *spiritual giant*. The 3rd temptation was a *quick trip to world dominion*. What the 1st Adam lost, Jesus, the 2nd Adam could retrieve painlessly in an instant: "*Honor me, and I'll give you the throne that Adam never got to sit upon.*"

–Was this a *real* temptation? If Jesus was human, it was– **Heb 4:15**, For 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. As a *human*, God faced temptations exactly like these and passed each test. What He learned through them, He wants teach us: **HOM.idea**. (Re-read the **text**.)

I. The Higher the Devil Takes You, the More You Can See

- A. The 1st temptation at *ground-level* was **personal**; the 2nd on "the pinnacle of the temple" was **social**; this 3rd one, on a "*high mountain*," was **global**. (In tempting people, Satan starts small and works up.)
- B. People moving from low to high positions may gain more elevated ambitions. (Satan helps turn *elevated* ambitions into *selfish* ones.)
- C. Many fall from the heights of position and power, where more opportunities for selfishness become visible. [**Many preachers**, who knew about King David's sin of adultery and murder, fell into the same sin and murdered their testimony for Christ.] (The higher someone is, the more they can see with "the lust of the eyes," and the harder they can fall.)

TRANS: The devil takes you up to take you down. With God, the way down is the way up— Mat 23:12, For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. By Incarnation, Jesus took the low path of a ‘suffering servant,’ and is now exalted— Rev 19:16, On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Satan’s attempt to topple Him only gave Jesus a better look at the world He came to save. **Temptations remind us to keep our focus on what’s really important.** But Satan still thinks...

II. The More Things You See, the More Your Values Will Change

- A. So, the devil “*showed him all the kingdoms of the world*” (How better to impress a *poor carpenter* from a *tiny town* in a *conquered land*?): “*See the glory I gave to Pharaohs & Caesars! I’ll give it to you!*”)
1. If Satan’s a liar, was he lying to Jesus?— Luke 4:6, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.” (But 3 times Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world;” Paul called him “the god of this world” and “the prince of the power of the air;” Heb 2:14 says, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy **him who holds the power of death**—that is, **the devil**. Satan’s dominion is death.)
 2. After the Fall and until Resurrection Day, creation is subject to death and decay, which are realms of power in Satan’s control.
 - a. [**Science explains:** all work depends on extracting energy from a dying cosmos as it moves toward greater *disorder & decay (entropy)*. This means all worlds, all progress & organization eventually decline and dissolve.]
 - b. “him who holds the power of death –that is, the devil” is in charge of this *dying* process (except when God intervenes by miracles and temporarily thwarts the natural law of entropy.)
 - c. Since 1 John 5:19b says, “the whole world is under the control of the evil one,” then Satan’s offer of “*all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor*” was a legitimate proposal and a real temptation....
- B. Other men caved in to his visions of *power* and *glory*, so the devil reasoned that Jesus, too, would fall for ‘seeing is believing.’
1. Instead, this vision gave Jesus sermon material to use later— Mark 8:36, What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?
 2. Instead of changing Christ’s values, seeing how the rich enjoyed ‘the good life’ from the dying energy of slaves and of exploited workers, it only *strengthened* a value-system nurtured by His

commitment to *loving God* and *loving His neighbor*.

3. This visionary display of the world-system reminded Jesus of His *higher calling*, which He would later describe during another test— John 18:36a, Jesus said [to Pilate], “My kingdom is not of this world.”

TRANS: By the sights and sounds of what this world treasures, Satan lures us to adopt this world’s values. But when “everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does” **tempts** us, 1 John 2:16-17 reminds us of what’s really important: “The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” “*All this I will give you,*” Satan said, “*if you will bow down and worship me.*”

III. Satan’s Price Tag for Power is Having Less Real Control

- A. Satan knew prophecy. If this man was to be the Messiah destined to rule the world, surely he would jump at the chance to *join the one who had run all the world-systems for all of human history*.
1. Showing off the Roman Empire was his best example of expert skills and political power to impress this would-be Messiah.
 2. But first (as he did with Eve) Satan tried dislodging Christ’s trust in God: “*What has Your ‘Voice from heaven’ given You so far? Nothing! Look around. I control everything you see! I can deliver the goods! Just kneel. Confess allegiance to the real ‘god of this world,’ and you get it all, right now, with no work, no waiting.*”
- B. This proposal was the glory... of subservience: enjoy the *position*, the *power*, the *glory*, but Satan retains the real control.
- C. In his insane rebellion, Satan is blind to how *his selfishness foils his own ambitions* and ends up fulfilling the divine will. (Satan’s offer only reminded Jesus that the real blessing humans are to seek isn’t to be in charge but to surrender full control to God.)

CONCLUSION:

—Temptations are *real*, but they’re *dangerous* only if we don’t follow Christ’s example. Jesus reported this desert episode of His own testing to teach us that **temptations remind us to keep our focus on what’s really important**. He passed the test, and so can we— John 16:33 (NLT), “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”