

# The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Matthew 4:1-11 we find the account of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. The Scripture tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After He had fasted forty days and nights, He was hungry, and this is when the tempter came to Him with his deceptions, which included twisting the meaning of Scriptures in an attempt to coerce Him into transgressing the word of God.

The devil’s first two temptations are a type of brazen and arrogant challenge in which he is essentially saying to Jesus that if He really is the Son of God, then He should prove it. First he said to Jesus that if He really is the Son of God, then He should command the stones before Him to become bread. Jesus responded to this first temptation with a Scripture passage from Deuteronomy 8:3, when He said: “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4).

In his second temptation, the devil cleverly tried to use Scripture himself in an attempt to justify his challenge to Jesus. He taunted Jesus by saying that if He really is the Son of God, then He should throw Himself down off of the high place where they were, because the Scripture says: “He will command his angels concerning You, and on their hands they will bear You up, so that you will not strike Your foot against a stone.” (Psalm 91:11-12). Jesus answered this second temptation of the devil, this time citing Deuteronomy 6:16: “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Matthew 4:7).

Finally in his third temptation, the devil used a false promise, an outright lie, to tempt Jesus when he promised to give Him all of the kingdoms of the world if

He would bow down to worship him. Again, Jesus met the devil's temptation with Scripture, this time from Deuteronomy 6:13 when He said: "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" (Matthew 4:10). Though the devil promised Jesus the kingdoms of the world in this third temptation, they were not his to give, and it was not in his power to give them, because as God's word tells us in Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it."

As believers, there will be times in our lives when we will be led, as Jesus was, by the Spirit of the Lord into a "wilderness" of our own difficult and trying circumstances, where we also will be tempted to transgress God's word. Our "wildernesses", or the places and circumstances in which our faith is tested, will take different forms and manifest themselves in different ways. They will be harsh and barren places in life where we will be tempted to transgress God's word as a way out of our painful and trying conditions, just as Jesus also was tempted.

The devil will often bring temptation to us in times like these, when we are more vulnerable. We may be hungering for some gratification that God has withheld from us, according to His sovereign plan and purpose for our lives. At such times the devil may come to us with all kinds of reasons why we, under the circumstances, are entitled to obtain what we want for ourselves, even if it means transgressing the word of God.

During these times, our response to temptation should be the same as Jesus' response to His temptations: we are to stand fast upon the truth of the word of God, being obedient to His commands, and using the instruction we have from the Scriptures to meet every argument and enticement of the devil. Sometimes these enticements may even come by the twisting of a passage of Scripture to justify some sinful course of action, just as the devil tried with Jesus during His temptation in the wilderness.

In the same way that the devil twisted the Scriptures in his attempt to deceive Jesus, false teachers will also twist the Scriptures, isolating them from the context of the passage in which they are found, or isolating them from the rest of the Scriptures as a whole, in an attempt to make them say something that they want them to say. These messages are usually very appealing, and people want to believe they are true, but these false teachings are in fact inconsistent with and even contradicted by other Scriptures.

The motive of the false teacher in bringing such messages is usually financial gain, as Paul wrote to Timothy (I Timothy 6:3-5), and as Peter instructed us in his second epistle (II Peter 2:1-3, 13-14). The origin of these false teachings is the devil, whose servants masquerade as servants of righteousness (II Corinthians 11:14-15), but in reality they have been taken captive by the devil to do his will (II Timothy 2:26).

Knowing that temptations may come our way through false teachings, let us understand that we are to hold firmly to the truth of the word of God during our time of trial and testing. Let us be wary of the false teacher who twists or isolates Scripture passages in order to formulate his own doctrines, by which he claims to have insights from the Scriptures as to how we can obtain the things we desire for ourselves in life. Let us also be wary of the devil's deceptions and the twisted reasoning that he may present to us during a time of hardship in our lives, in an attempt to get us to transgress God's word.

Our sovereign and loving God directs our steps, and we should understand that sometimes we may be led by the Spirit, as Jesus was, into a barren "wilderness" of our own troubling circumstances, where we too will be tempted, and our faith will be tested. In such times we share in this aspect of the sufferings of Christ. And as we have seen from the Scriptures before, God has ordained that our share in the sufferings of His Son will achieve for us a share in His eternal glory (John 12:24-26, Romans 8:17).