

When God Leads You into the Desert

Introduction: We are not alone in the desert. Jesus has promised never to leave us alone nor forsake us in our times of weakness and need. He Himself knows what it is like to be in a wilderness place. He has been tempted in the desert -- with all the things that can tempt us -- yet He did not succumb to that temptation to sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Having gone through what He did in His desert, Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, and come to our aid when we face the sufferings and temptations in our desert places (2:18). So, let's look at Jesus' temptations in the desert:

1. All temptation is a battle for our will -- and the war is always between obedience or disobedience to God.
 - a. Adam and Eve fell to the temptation to disobey God's word in order to get what they wanted, and their sin broke the worlds.
 - b. Jesus came into the world to redeem it from the deadly consequences of their sin. His obedience to God's will had to be absolutely complete; His only purpose was to do God's will (Heb. 10:5-10).
2. There are several common misunderstandings people have about temptation:
 - a. "Temptation is sin." (see Matt, 5:27-28)
 - b. "Good Christians don't get tempted because they have dealt with their unrighteousness." (see Heb. 4:15 and 1 Cor. 10:13)
 - c. "If you are being obedient to God, you will not come into temptation."
(see Matt. 6:13)

d. "Temptation only proves that you already have lusted in your heart for something you shouldn't have." (see Jas. 1:12-15)

Before Jesus' Temptations:

1. Jesus was baptized in water and filled with the Holy Spirit.

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, Matthew 3:16

2. Jesus was commended by God as His well-pleasing Son.

and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Matthew 3:17

3. Jesus had already begun His ministry.

And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, Luke 3:23

4. Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness Luke 4:1

On What Will We Live?

Introduction: Before Jesus comes to this critical juncture in His ministry, He has already experienced several significant developments. Even though He is the Son of God, He must still learn obedience and approach His assignment from God the Father in exactly the same way that all of us must do so:

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Philip. 2:5-7

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. Hebrews 5:8

1. Jesus had already been baptized in water and filled with the Holy Spirit (Matt.3:16).
2. God had publicly commended Jesus as His "well-pleasing Son"(Matt.3:17).
3. Jesus had already begun His ministry (Lk.3:23).

From this we learn that neither being in a desert nor coming into temptation are necessarily indications of gross carnality or spiritual rebellion. Of course, deserts or temptation can be due to willful disregard of God's way for us. But Jesus -- in the desert and in the midst of severe temptation -- was being obedient to God.

Food in the Desert: Jesus was tempted throughout His 40-day ordeal. The specific, three temptations recorded by the gospel writers culminate the assault of the devil on Jesus' determination to obey God. As such, they are very instructive to us.

The temptations will make more sense to us if we remember two contrasting episodes in the history of God's dealings with people: Adam and Eve in the Garden *and* the people of Israel in the wilderness on their way to the Promise Land. Adam and Eve failed and gave in to their temptations; so too did the Israelites. In order to redeem the race of humankind, Jesus must succeed where the First Adam failed (see Rom.5:12-21).

Likewise, if we were ever to come into our Promise Land, Jesus must obey God's every instruction and not question His leadings like Israel did, nor act of his own accord and break faith with God like Moses did at the waters of Meribah (see Deut.32:50-52 and Nu.20:8-13).

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days; and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.' " Luke 4:1-4

1. We are particularly susceptible to temptation when we are tired, lonely, weak, hungry, stressed, uncertain, sad or stuck. When we don't have what we need or want, it is tempting to get it for ourselves.
2. Jesus answers Satan's challenge by quoting relevant scripture. He uses the word of God to gain perspective Himself, and to refute the essential lies Satan suggests:
 - a. The Son of God can do whatever He wants.
 - b. Authority can be used to take care of yourself and meet your own needs.

Deuteronomy 8

vs. 1-2

1. Being careful to attend to God's words will enable us to:
 - a. live = revive, nourish, recover, restore, preserve life
 - b. multiply = increase, succeed, abound, have authority
 - c. possess the land = occupy, drive out squatters
2. God leads us into the wilderness to see what is really in our hearts -- He allows our circumstances to bring us low to see if we will still hold to His way.

v. 3

And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

3. When we are depressed by or needy in our circumstances (physical, emotional, or mental), we can go one of two places: either we conclude that life depends on us *or* we elect to believe that only God can sustain our life.
 - a. God alone is the source of life.
 - b. Anything from any other source produces death.

"IN WHOSE SIGHT WILL YOU LIVE?"

Context: The first of the recorded temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness is about *provision* -- by whose hand would Jesus live? Would He provide for Himself and meet His own needs, or would He wait on God to supply whatever God knew was important?

The second of the temptations is about *power* and *prestige*. In His temptation we can see our own:

Luke 4

v. 5 *And he led Him up...*

... showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

v. 6 *... it has been handed over to me.*

I will give you all this domain.

... and its glory...

v. 7 *... worship before me and it shall all be yours.*

v. 8 *Jesus answered...*

Not all leadings in the desert are God's

Not all of what can be seen spiritually is necessarily of God.

Adam's sin gave the devil power over the earth (Roman 5:12; Hebrews 2:15). See also 1 John 5:19 and John 12:31.

exousia -- Authority, power, control. The authority God offers us is different from what the devil offers us.

doxa -- Dignity, honor, reputation, i.e. what others think.

We can choose to seek glory either from God or from others, never both (1 Thesalonians 2:6-7 and John 5:41, 44).

Whose presence do we count as the most important?

It's best to start with Scripture as our conclusions.

Deuteronomy 6

v. 12 *Watch yourself lest you forget the Lord who brought you...*

"He who began a good work in you will finish it" (Philippians 1:6).

v. 13 *Fear your God;*

He has the final say.

Worship Him;

Do what He says to us.

Swear by His name (7x's)

Our completion will come from Him.

v. 15 *The Lord in the midst of you is a jealous God.*

(See James 4:5) We cannot serve two masters.

v. 16 *Do not put the Lord to the test.*

He is always among us.

v. 18 *Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord.*

What is the best in His eyes will not always seem best to us.

That it may be well with you.

yatab -- Make well, sound, beautiful, happy, successful; mend, benefit.

v. 19 *Driving out all your enemies*

We want to control our impulses, God wants to deliver us from them.

UNDER WHOSE COVERING WILL YOU LIVE?
AND BY WHOSE AGENDA

Provision, Power and Protection. Jesus' three temptations in the desert centered around these human longings. Our temptations and trials will usually do so also. God wants to provide for us; He wants to give us true authority, and He offers us refuge in times of danger or distress. But He gives them in His way and in His time.

Most temptations try to get us to take for ourselves things that God already intends to give to us. Either we are tempted to choose the wrong means to satisfy a legitimate hunger, or we choose the wrong use for something God has already given us. When we become *the focus of* or *the reason why* we do something, we usually succumb to temptation. When the Lord is the focus, it keeps everything in proper perspective.^{2a}

The Third Temptation -- Luke 4:9-12

vs. 9-11 1. Although the devil does not control our comings and goings, he does have limited power to arrange unfavorable circumstances and to lead us into difficult life situations (See Job 1:12). He tries to take advantage of us when things are particularly difficult in our life.

2. Satan quotes scripture to his advantage, and he challenges and condemns us on the basis of a *partial* presentation of truth. The *whole* counsel of God can reduce our vulnerability to deception and condemnation.

a. The devil does not quote verse 13 of Psalm 91: "THE YOUNG LION AND THE SERPENT YOU WILL TRAMPLE DOWN."

b. Neither does he include the whole context of the Psalm:

1) God's protection and shelter are for those who dwell (abide, settle down) under His covering.

2) If we live in His truth and His promises, they will situate us in safety and well-being no matter what our situation may be.

3) Bad things do happen to Godly people, but if we make God the safe place to which we flee, those bad things will not prevent us from experiencing His full provision for our life. Throughout our life, He will:

- ☞ deliver us
- ☞ set us securely on high
- ☞ answer us
- ☞ be with us in trouble
- ☞ rescue us
- ☞ give us significance
- ☞ satisfy us with long life
- ☞ show us His salvation

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6, just as He did during His first temptation.

- v. 12
1. We test God when we set up situations to see if He will prove Himself to us.
 2. God has already proven Himself with mighty miracles on our behalf.
 3. The issue is how we respond to Him, not how He responds to us. He sets the agenda, not us.
 4. Obedience is "for our good always and for our survival" (Deuteronomy 6:24).
- v. 13
1. Temptations and deserts happen *periodically*; God abides *perpetually*.