

FASTING AND TEMPTATION

In the context of being tempted by the devil, Jesus fasted. Fasting emphasizes focused attention and dependence upon God.

Matthew 4:2 (NKJV)

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

Fasting in the Bible is consistently associated with concentrated prayer. It is a form of self-discipline that shuts out even the mundane activity of eating so that nothing distracts from concentrated prayer and focus on God. In the OT it was a form of humbling oneself before God (Ps. 35:13).

There were two types of fasting. 1) Total fasting from all food and drink was normally restricted to one day. Pious Jews fasted twice a week in this way – on Monday and Thursday (cf. Lk. 18:11-12). 2) There was also long-term fasting in which one would continue to drink liquids, but would not eat, or eat very minimally. Luke 4:2 says of Jesus: “***in those days He ate nothing***”. So this was obviously a long-term fast in which He evidently drank but ate nothing.

“Throughout the Old Testament, forty is often associated with sin (Genesis 7:4; 12; Numbers 14:33; 32:13; Deuteronomy 9:25; 25:3; Psalm 95:10; Jonah 3:4).” – **Stanley Toussaint**

Experts tell us that 40 days is about the limit that one can fast without putting oneself in physical jeopardy. In a prolonged fast, after a few days, the feeling of intense hunger dissipates only to return with a vengeance at the end of 30 or 40 days. Jesus was at this very intense phase of feeling VERY HUNGRY (cf. Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8).

And here came the devil. He looks for opportunities when we are hungry, tired, weak, sick, lonely, overwhelmed, etc. He NEVER fights fair. His goal is to bring a person down and take advantage of every potential vulnerability to do so.

“There are a number of parallels between Jesus’ temptations and the testing of Israel in the wilderness (Dt 8:2). Israel was led by the Spirit (Neh 9:20) as was Jesus (Mt 4:1). Moses fasted for 40 days (Ex 34:28; Dt 9:9) and later Elijah did as well (1 Kg 19:8). Matthew may allude to these possibly to indicate Jesus was the supreme prophet.” – **Moody Bible Commentary**

Luke 4:2 says of Jesus, “being tempted for forty days by the devil.” This would seem to indicate that various temptations had occurred throughout the 40-day period, but at the end of this time, Satan came with full intensity with everything he had to throw at Christ.

Ephesians 6:13 (NKJV)

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.