

THE DEVIL AND THE BIBLE

Satan is a master at temptation. He is good at it. He brought all his temptation “skills” to bear in seeking to get Christ to sin. And yet Jesus came through unscathed. How did He do that? Note the following.

Matthew 4:5 (NKJV)

5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

Luke switches the order of the second and third temptations, evidently for thematic purposes, but the content is the same. The chronological order is represented here in Matthew. The word “then” here in Matthew at each juncture indicates sequence. Also, the Lord’s command to the devil, “Away with you, Satan,” at the end of the third temptation argues that Matthew followed the actual historical order.

The holy city is Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 122; 137:4-6; Mt. 27:51-53) and the word “pinnacle” means “wing” or “pointed extremity” referring to a high point on the temple complex. The word for “temple” (Gk. hieron) is the general word, not just referring to the sanctuary, but rather to the entire temple complex. Many commentators think this was probably a place located on the east wall of the temple where there was a sheer drop of about 500 feet into the Kidron Valley below. However, it may have been a HIGH point situated where He could make a grand flying entrance into the public temple courtyard so all could see it in grand fashion (cf. Jn. 6:30).

Rabbinic tradition held that the Messiah in coming to Israel’s deliverance would make a grand appearance from the temple roof. They got this based on a certain understanding of Mal. 3:1

Malachi 3:1 (NKJV)

1 “Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, **Will suddenly come to His temple**, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 4:6 (NKJV)

6 and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

Satan's angle was to try and get Christ to use His Personhood as the Son of God in a self-serving sort of way. Again, it should be understood in the sense of, ***“Since You are the Son of God...”***. And since Christ appealed to Scripture in refuting his first temptation, Satan also quotes Scripture as well. Satan knows the Bible quite well. And so, to buttress his challenge, Satan quoted from Psalm 91:1-2. The only problem is – he MISQUOTED the text. He left out one very important part.

Psalm 91:11–12 (NKJV)

11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, **To keep you in all your ways.**

12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

The devil conveniently left out that God's promise for protection applies to the Messiah walking in all God's ways. As it was the devil twisted the Word to make it a matter of TEMPTING God. Instead of properly TRUSTING God as stated, the devil made it a matter of sinfully TEMPTING God. Evidently, Satan was tempting Jesus to prove He was the Messiah in a most sensational way on His own independent terms. It would gain Him immediate acclaim. But again, this would be to act INDEPENDENT of the Father and contrary to His SERVANT role.

Temptation to Self-Glory

Gen. 3:6 – “desirable to made one wise”

Matt. 4:6 – “throw yourself down”

1 Jn. 2:16 – “the pride of life”

Matthew 4:7 (NKJV)

7 Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’ ”

Once again in refuting the devil Jesus quoted Scripture, this time He used Scripture to correct Satan's misuse of Scripture, quoting this time from Deut. 6:16.

Deuteronomy 6:16 (NKJV)

16 “You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.

Jesus saw what Satan was tempting Him to do was to in effect sinfully tempt God. Throwing Himself off the temple would not be an exercise in TRUSTING GOD, but rather in TEMPTING GOD.

To tempt God is to put Him to the test! It is the exact opposite of submissively trusting Him! To tempt God is to challenge Him to act. It is to try and force Him to act. It is an attempt to try and manipulate God. In effect, it puts the person in the role of playing God, while God is in the position of being subservient. That NEVER works. God insists on being God!

In Deut. 6:16 Moses was referring back to the incident at Massah where they lacked water and complained against Moses.

Exodus 17:7 (NKJV)

7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because **they tempted the LORD**, saying, **“Is the LORD among us or not?”**

To try and force the Lord to act on your terms is to TEMPT the LORD! God cannot be forced or coerced! To try and do so is an assault on His LORDSHIP! It is sinfully presumptuous as it fails to yield to God and TRUST Him to act according to His faithfulness!

Many Charismatic teachers really fit into this mold. We can reverently ask, but we cannot demand. It is SIN to ***“Name it and Claim it!”*** on your own terms! We pray in Jesus' Name – which is to say, ***“according to His will”*** (cf. 1 Jn. 5:14-15). We are not in charge of God being our servant. Who are we to TEST Him? He is God, and we are His servants. Keep the order straight. Jesus, in His state of humility, did just that.

Footnote: When Jesus said, ***“It is written again”*** this shows that sound doctrine is properly understood in light of the totality of Scripture. If you take Scripture in isolation (out of context) you can make the Bible say almost anything. We must always consider the WHOLE counsel of God and not take things out of context. Scripture always agrees with the whole of Scripture when properly understood. ***“A text without a context is a pretext”***.

The word properly applied is our greatest defense against the onslaughts of the devil! Paul in Ephesians 6:16 in the context of spiritual warfare exhorts us to take up the shield of faith by “which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Jesus did this masterfully!

Satan is the master of temptation, Jesus proved to be the Master of the Word, and by it He mastered the devil! The devil is defeated by the Word!