



June 21, 2021

Tempted in All Ways Like Us

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. - (Hebrews 4:15)

When Jesus began his ministry immediately after being baptized by his cousin John, his first challenge involved undergoing severe temptation at the hands of Satan. God's Spirit led him into the wilderness for that precise purpose. The testing took place over a period of forty days, during which time Jesus was confronted with three kinds of temptations. First, with Jesus experiencing hunger pangs from fasting, Satan suggested a way of proving that he is the Son of God: turn hard stones into edible bread. Jesus' response? *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4).*

Next, Satan urged Jesus to prove his bona fides by leaping off the pinnacle of the Jerusalem temple so people could watch angels catch and gently set him on the ground. Jesus' response: *"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God'" (Matthew 4:7).* Finally, the devil tempted Jesus to worship him in exchange for becoming king of the world. Jesus silenced him with these words: *"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (Matthew 4:10).*

Notice how Jesus' temptations align with both those of Eve in the garden and John's threefold description of "the world" (the Satanic system of life).

We may wonder about the devil's challenge that Jesus throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple? What does this appeal to? Notice that this temptation involves Satan saying, "If you are the Son of God" (v. 6). That is a messianic title. Wouldn't Jesus have been a big shot around Jerusalem if he had come fluttering down from the temple? Everyone would have said, "Oh, you must be the Messiah!" That is about appearance. It touches upon the human desire to look good in other people's eyes, to be well thought of. We all know the tug. As in the case of Eve, we usually think this refers to things we look upon and find appealing. But wanting to look good to others is also a form of the desire of the eyes.

When Satan's third attempt was to offer Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, he was hoping Jesus would yield to what he, Satan, knew so well: the temptation of the big ego—pride of one's own power and accomplishments. Imagine being the king (or queen) of the world. What power! What glory! Now that would be something. Jesus didn't take the bait.

Reflect: Satan's way of dealing with people is to catch them up in these three patterns and then make them think they are doing what they want to do. He causes them to obsess over the immediate things they want, and he assures them there's no need to be concerned about the consequences.

(Q) Is there some wonderful thing that Satan is providing you with an armload of reasonable explanations of why you are justified in having it, moral qualms aside? Are you able to identify which of these three patterns of temptation he is utilizing?