

Tempted By Satan

Read Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 3:1-13.

When reading the Bible, recognizable images/patterns emerge. One of these patterns is trees. The Hebrew word for tree is *es*, used 162 times in the Old Testament. Trees are a big deal in the Bible. We should pay attention when the Word (Jesus) mentions them.

In the Garden of Eden, there were two trees. One was the Tree of Life. The other? The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

From any tree of the garden, you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you from it, you will surely die (Genesis 2:16).

Unfortunately, the first man chose poorly. Adam decided that he would be like God and eat from the tree Satan offered to the first couple.

Talking Points

- Jesus spent the forty days following His baptism wandering in the wilderness for 40 days. This region is where Israel wandered for 40 years following their refusal to take the Promised Land.
- Jesus neither ate nor drank for the entire time He was in the wilderness. When Jesus was weakened by hunger and thirst, Satan tempted Him three times.
- With each temptation, Jesus countered Satan's offer with a quotation from the book of Deuteronomy. Each of Jesus' responses began with "It is written..."
- Satan's temptations accomplished two of Jesus' critical objectives. Jesus demonstrated Himself as the perfect man, qualified to be the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Second, Jesus proved His divinity.
- Jesus is fully human and fully God... to this day.

Background

The first Adam was presented with a simple choice to obey or not. In essence, God said, "Choose Me and you will live. Don't eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. You can eat from any other tree, but that one tree was deadly."

Taking the form of a serpent, Satan called God a liar. *You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it (the tree), your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4b-5).*"

Throughout the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), the trees growing at the "high places" of pagan worship echoed the same choice for Israel that God had given Adam and Eve.

The design structure of the Bible leads learners to look for a favorable outcome or conclusion, building on a yearning for victory over Satan.

Following the garden story of the fall, the redemptive story of the Gospel unfolded through the lives of deeply flawed men and women. At tree after tree throughout Israel's history, no one qualified as the long-awaited Victor.

At the Jordan River near Jericho, Jesus suddenly appeared at the Jordan River and received the endorsement of His Father and the Holy Spirit. Following His baptism by Yochanan the Immerser, Yeshua entered the wilderness to be tested by Satan.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father but from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:16-17).

All Have Sinned?

Except for Enoch and Elijah, every person who has ever lived on Earth has died. Why? It is because no one is guiltless. We all deserve to die until Jesus.

Satan offered Yeshua the same choice offered to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, and untold billions of people. But with Jesus? Three temptations. Three victories!

Long before being tempted by Satan in the desert, Jesus was victorious over Satan. Satan knows Jesus. The Son of God was there when Satan was thrown out of heaven. The Son of God made the first sacrifice in the Garden of Eden. Jesus struck the final blow to Satan's head three days after dying on another tree.

Satan is already dead; he just doesn't know it. What about you? Are you dead or alive? Have you chosen the right tree? Choose life!

Bible Conversations

- Skim through the book of Genesis. Identify the places where God was worshipped on mountains. Notice the references to trees or wood in those passages.
- In the accounts you identified above, mountains were associated with the worship of God. Other mountains were associated with the worship of "other gods." Find some of those in the Old Testament.
- What do you believe? Who are the "other gods?" Who is Satan?
- How would you explain the temptation of Jesus by Satan to someone interested in the story of Jesus?