

IN TIMES OF TESTING

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.” —LUKE 4:1-2

Jesus was thirty years of age and had lived a clandestine life. He had never preached a sermon, nor performed a miracle, and it wasn't until His baptism that people began to realize who He was. Right after His baptism, He was led by the Spirit into the desert where for forty days He was tested by God and tempted by the devil.

At the end of forty days, Jesus had not eaten. The longest anyone can go without food and not seriously damage their bodies is about 42 days. Jesus is at his most vulnerable when Satan said, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’.” Satan then takes Him up to a high place, displaying all the kingdoms of the world and offering them to Him on the condition He worship him. Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only’.” The devil then leads Him to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem and says, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully...’” Jesus again quotes Scripture. “It says, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’.” (Luke, Chapter 4).

God had tested Jesus in His attitude towards resources – “Am I going to trust my Father to provide for me?” Towards responsibility – Satan offers Jesus a fast track to leadership and prominence, but Jesus knew His responsibility didn't lie in producing leaders, but in producing and

training servants from whom God would make leaders. Towards reputation – Jesus wasn't interested. Philippians 2:7 says of Him, "He made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant."

God entrusts power to those who will trust Him for their resources, responsibilities and reputations. Our most vulnerable areas are not our weaknesses, but our strengths, and the temptation is to exercise those strengths in independence of God. The devil did not come looking for weakness in Jesus, but rather to exploit His strengths by trying to get Him to operate in independence of His Father.

The devil will always offer an attractive alternative to the will of God, and sometimes God, in His wisdom, will take us right to that 40th day, not so that He'll learn something about us, but so that we might know something about Him and about ourselves.

PRAYER: Dear Father, I know times of testing produce strength, character and perseverance. May I always look to your word in times of trial and testing.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I leaning on the word of God in times of testing and trial?