

Making It Real Jesus Engages the Enemy

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As we studied the unseen realm throughout the old testament, we saw, quite clearly, that there is a conflict going on.

At times, such as in Deuteronomy 32 or Psalm 82, we see some of the results in statements YAHWEH makes.

At other times, such as in 2 Kings 6, we see clearly that when your vision is unimpeded, it's crowded out there

Unlike all other warfare worldviews, the Old Testament repeatedly stresses the absolute supremacy of one God over all others, and therefore unequivocally maintains that this one God is never threatened by his enemies.

Boyd, Gregory A.. God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict (p. 172). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

Entering into the new testament we see this unseen realm clearly defined for us, thanks to the actions of the Messiah.

He came to establish the Kingdom, and as such, He is mission driven and centered on that. Warring against Satan and building the kingdom of God are, for Jesus, one and the same activity. (Boyd 1997, 186)

But for Jesus, the enemy was perceived as highly individualized—demonic powers who exercised control over actual men and women within the borders of Israel. From an eschatological perspective, Jesus was carrying out a new Exodus and Conquest, routing the enemy that had occupied the land and held individuals in his thrall. God's reign could not be established apart from defeating the occupying forces. By binding the strong man and plundering his property, Jesus actually advanced the kingdom. (Longman III 2010, Kindle Locations 1228-1232)

As Jesus us about to show us, this enemy is prepared and has goals established.

2 Corinthians 4:4

"in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they will not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (NASB 2020)

Whether we like it or not, we have been born into a world that is at war and has been for centuries. There are only two sides to this war, and you are on one or the other.

We are involved in an invisible war. This cosmic conflict has eternal implications; lives are at stake. The enemy's strategies affect us every day. When was the last time you honestly considered that some struggle or relational conflict was rooted in satanic opposition? (Ingham 2015, 18)

2 Corinthians 10:3–6

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage battle according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete." (NASB 2020)

Our enemy is formidable, but as we will see with Jesus and how He personally deals with the unseen realm, we are not in a defensive fight.

We do not fight for victory; we fight from victory. As believers in Christ, we are invincible. The Bible has given us numerous promises of victory over the power of the enemy. (Ingham 2015, 21)

1 John 4:4

"You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (NET)

1 John 5:4–5

"because everyone who has been fathered by God conquers the world. This is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our faith. Now who is the person who has conquered the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (NET)

James 4:7

"So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you." (NET)

We stopped last week immediately after God placed the entire universe on notice that His chosen representative, the second power in heaven throughout the Old Testament, the Angel of YAHWEH, the WORD of YAHWEH, the Captain of YAHWEH's host, was here on planet earth in person incarnated as a man and ready to reverse what the enemy had started in Genesis 3,6,and 11.

Luke 4:1–13

"Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the desert, where he was tempted by the Devil for 40 days. In all that time he ate nothing, so that he was hungry when it was over. The Devil said to him, "If you are God's Son, order this stone to turn into bread." But Jesus answered, "The scripture says, 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone.'" Then the Devil took him up and showed him in a second all the kingdoms of the world. "I will give you all this power and all this

wealth,” the Devil told him. “It has all been handed over to me, and I can give it to anyone I choose. All this will be yours, then, if you worship me.” Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!’ ” Then the Devil took him to Jerusalem and set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, “If you are God’s Son, throw yourself down from here. For the scripture says, ‘God will order his angels to take good care of you.’ It also says, ‘They will hold you up with their hands so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.’ ” But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” When the Devil finished tempting Jesus in every way, he left him for a while.” (GNB)

Continuing with the theme that Jesus is leading a second Exodus, we see Him cross the Jordan and enter the same territory that Joshua entered as Joshua began the war to kick out the interlopers who were in the promised land.

Jesus is beginning the same actions, His opponents are spiritual, as were Joshua’s, as well as, we will see as we continue in the gospels, physical, just like Joshua. Jesus though will succeed and utterly destroy the enemy.

Reference to Israel’s own wilderness sojourn in Sinai and southern Transjordan is explicit throughout. The setting elicits correspondence, as does the forty day period of fasting, the nature of the temptations themselves, and the scriptures quoted. In each case, Jesus, as the newly recognized “son of God” and representative of Israel, faces the same struggles that Israel faced in the wilderness, but this time “Israel” triumphs. (Taylor 2016, Mt 3:13-Lk 4:15)



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)



(Bolen, Judean wilderness near Jericho 2012, Used with Permission)

Cosmic Geography

Several things for us to remember as we go into the temptations. Why Judea, why here? Why not somewhere else? It is all about cosmic geography.

Cosmic geography is the term we apply to how people envision the shape and structure of the world around them. (Walton 2011, 86)

Genesis 11:4–9

Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.” (ESV)

It goes back to the basics of the Deuteronomy 32 world view.

Deuteronomy 32:8–9

“When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.” (ESV)

Israel, this specific piece of land, and those who live on it are YAHWEH’s. They are His portion and they understand life through that lens. They belong to Him. That is why Messiah had to come to them, they are YAHWEH’s portion, they will reject Him, but He will achieve His goal

Acts 17:24–27

“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” (NKJV)

Paul's rationale for his own ministry to the Gentiles was that it was God's intention to reclaim the nations to restore the original Edenic vision. Every person in every nation was given the opportunity to repent and believe in the risen Christ (Acts 17:30–31). Salvation was not only for the physical children of Abraham, but for anyone who would believe (Gal 3:26–29) (Heiser 2015, 120)

Acts 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (NKJV)

Notice the progression that Jesus states. From Israel, outward. Paul reflected that in his ministry by going to all locations originally indicated in the Genesis 10 table of nations. Israel is ground zero for the retaking and the reversal of what was stolen.

We only see three temptations, but in the Greek of Luke 4 we see something.

Luke 4:1–2

“Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He was hungry.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is on the offensive the entire time. This is not a conflict that Satan wanted, it was one Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit, initiated.

The picture is that of the Anointed of the Lord on the offensive and led by the Spirit to confront the devil. (Stein 1992, 145)

Fully equipped with all gifts for the execution of His calling as Messiah, the divine Redeemer, He is for forty days tempted of the devil. The conflict with the prince of the forces of darkness demands His attention and powers to such a degree that, although for days on end He had taken no food, it was only at the end of that period that He was conscious of hunger. The sense of physical need had been supplanted throughout by the violence of the spiritual conflict. (Geldenhuis 1952, 158)

The grammatical hint, in the Greek, is in verse 2, specifically the word for “being tempted.”

Πειραζόμενος - periazomenos

The present participle (literally being tempted) indicates that Jesus was tempted throughout the forty days and that the three temptations were the culmination of this time of temptation. (Stein 1992, 146)

So the first temptation, after spending 40 days in the Judean wilderness, Jesus was hungry, and that is where the first attack comes. Each temptation began with a specific attack challenging the deity of the visible YAHWEH.

Luke 4:3–4

“And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” And Jesus answered him, “It is written: ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.’ ”” (NASB 2020)

The one who was created, the one who was throne guardian over YAHWEH's throne, the one who absolutely knew who he was talking to, starts off by challenging His deity. We see this same challenge repeated today by those who wish to show that God does not exist.

This worked on Israel a few years back, let's give it a go.

Exodus 16:2–3

“The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by

the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” (NRSV)

Deuteronomy 8:1–3

“This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” (NRSV)

Remember, the pre-incarnate Christ was also the one who accompanied the nation. He was there when they grumbled, and He was there when YAHWEH made provision for them. Satan wants Jesus to question who He is and be insubordinate to YAHWEH by making bread for Himself. Jesus refuses.

Next, in Luke, Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain

Luke 4:5–8

“And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory, for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” Jesus replied to him, “It is written: ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ” (NASB 2020)

Matthew 4:8–10

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their grandeur. And he said to him, “I will give you all these things if you throw yourself to the ground and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: ‘You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’ ” (NET)

...mountains often have a symbolic function in a literary context, and Matthew’s gospel is particularly known for remembering significant moments in Jesus’ ministry on mountain tops (Matt 5:1; 17:1; 28:16). In the ancient Near East they were potent symbols of the divine and in the Hebrew Bible they carried royal and eschatological significance. Delivered from the mountain top, the Tempter’s invitation to world domination in exchange for idolatrous worship has an air of power and authority and it marks the climax of our story. Certainly a reference to Israel’s disastrous fall into idolatry in the wilderness, the temptation to worship other gods continued to plague Israel throughout its history, and eventually led to the exile. The mountaintop setting may have also alluded to eschatological expectations such as those found in Mic 4:1–4 that spoke of the longed-for restoration of Israel and envisioned a day to come in which Mount Zion “shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills.” In this day, the nations—no longer oppressors—will come to worship YHWH and all will live in peace. If intentional, this temptation appears to offer Jesus a means by which to accomplish this goal. (Taylor 2016, Mt 3:13 - Lk 4:15)

By the way, the mountain is probably the last incident, not the second, Luke does not profess to relate all events chronologically. We have to remember that Luke and Acts were prepared specifically for the defense of Paul before Caesar.

Had Jesus given in, it would have been an acknowledgment that Satan’s permission was needed to possess the nations. It wasn’t. Satan presumed power and ownership of something that, ultimately, was not his but God’s. The messaging behind Jesus’ answer is clear: Yahweh will take the nations back by his own means in his own time. (Heiser 2015, 279)

The final temptation related by Luke is the second one related by Matthew. It takes place at the temple.

Luke 4:9–12

“Then the devil brought him to Jerusalem, had him stand on the highest point of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘with their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You are not to put the Lord your God to the test.’” (NET)

Likely envisioning a specific location, we must consider first-century Jerusalem’s layout and architecture to pin-point the site. In Jesus’ day, the Temple Mount was walled in with a great retaining wall to create a level platform surrounding the Temple as part of Herod the Great’s enlargement of the Jewish holy precinct. The south-eastern corner of this retaining wall towers over a precipitous drop into the Kidron Valley and thus many have equated this location with the “pinnacle” mentioned in the temptations. However, the southwestern side, though less dramatic, had a unique function that better fits the proposed purpose of this temptation. Known to us from Josephus as the “place of the trumpeting”, this spot was used to announce Jewish holy days. Temple personnel would, upon observing the appropriate celestial signs, blow a shofar to announce to the community the beginning of Shabbat or other festivals. Because first-century residential Jerusalem was settled on the hills south and west of the Temple Mount (and not on the east), this was the most logical location from which to make announcements. (Taylor 2016, Mt 3:13 - Lk 4:15)

Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:16. Let’s look at the context, one which is to provide obedience to YAHWEH alone.

Deuteronomy 6:16–19

““You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.” (NKJV)

Satan quoted Psalm 91 in this temptation, he does know his Bible and is really good at eisegesis. He is also aware of what was being thought in the local culture, so he put these two pieces together.

It should be noted that the rabbis identified the person addressed by God in Psalm 91 with the Messiah. The Midrash, known as Pesiqta Rabbati (162a), records a traditional belief that Messiah would manifest himself standing on the roof of the temple. (Geldenhuy 1952, 162)

Luke 4:13

“Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.” (NKJV)

Again, let’s look at the Greek.

καιροῦ - kairou = until (another) time, for a while. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 497)

Until the time appointed by God. (Delling 1964-, 461)

The Greek of this verse may be understood as follows: “When the devil had ended every possible kind of temptation, he departed until a suitable time.” In every possible way that he could think of he assailed the Saviour, but without avail. So he departed when vanquished, but not for good. (Geldenhuy 1952, 163)

In any case, Jesus, at the outset of his ministry, faced the ancient enemy on his own ground. (Longman III 2010, Kindle Locations 1078-1079)

Thus, we should consider the possibility that the angels of Mark 1:13 are not simply emissaries of heavenly hospitality, but in their assistance(diakoneō) provide strategic counsel to Jesus the divine

warrior at a crucial moment of eschatological warfare. In the temptation, the warrior is tested in an initial ordeal, an encounter between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. (Longman III 2010, Kindle Locations 1084-1086)

Matthew 4:11

“Then the devil left him, and angels came and began ministering to his needs.” (NET)

Jesus begins the process of inviting disciples but more than that, begins His mission.

Luke 4:14

“Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region.” (NLT)

Matthew and Mark relate that Jesus was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth, so He moves to Capernaum.

Remember the first word from YAHWEH through a prophet after over 400 years of silence – repent. What are the first words from the Son of God, YAHWEH incarnate.

Matthew 4:17

“From that time Jesus began to preach this message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”” (NET)

He called disciples, and then something incredible, for the very first time in the scriptures we read about a demon being cast out of a person.

Luke 4:31–37

And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!” And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. (ESV)

Mark 1:21–28

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. (ESV)

The question of the demon in verse 24 (Mark 1:24)—which may just as well be read as an exclamation (“You have come to destroy us!”)—accentuates the warlike mission of Jesus against the demonic world. The recognition by the demon of Jesus’ identity, “the Holy One of God,” is probably an attempt on the part of the demon to overpower Jesus, premised on the ancient idea that to know a person’s name is to know his or her identity and so gain power over the person. “Holy One of God” was not a Jewish messianic title (used elsewhere of Jesus in the New Testament only in the parallel passage, Lk 4:34, and in Jn 6:69 on the lips of Peter) and could possibly indicate only a recognition of Jesus’ close relationship with God. (Longman III 2010, Kindle Locations 1096-1100)

...those in the demonic kingdom know who Jesus is and have suspicions about what he has come to earth to do (see v. 34; 3: 11). 65 He has come to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3: 8), and the demons know this means their destruction. Jesus rebukes the demon, telling him to “be silent” (Mk 1: 25), literally, “be strangled” (phimoō). After Jesus strangles the demon with his divine authority, the demon throws the man to the ground and leaves him with a shriek (v. 26). This is what the kingdom of God means! (Boyd 1997, 186)

The defeat of demons, falling on the heels of Jesus’ victory over Satan’s temptations, marks the beginning of the re-establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus himself made this connection absolutely explicit: “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20 ESV). And since the lesser elohim over the nations are cast as demons in the Old Testament, the implications for our study are clear: The ministry of Jesus marked the beginning of repossession of the nations and defeat of their elohim. (Heiser 2015, 280)

As we see in the example of Jesus engaging one on one with Satan in the wilderness, and then His taking the battle directly to the enemy and reclaiming territory, Jesus absolutely understood the nature of reality. As such, for us to think and live Biblically, we have a challenge.

Being a biblical Christian means living in the supernatural now, not only theoretically but in practice. If a man sits in the one chair, and denies the existence of the supernatural portion of the world, we say he is an unbeliever. What shall we call ourselves when we sit in the other chair but live as though the supernatural were not there? Should not such an attitude be given the name “unfaith?” “Unfaith” is the Christian not living in the light of the supernatural now. It is then Christianity that has become simply a “good philosophy.” (Schaeffer 1982, 259)

Ephesians 6:10–18

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.” (NRSV)

The imperative, “be strong in the lord,” is in the present passive. As believers, we cannot empower ourselves, we have a source we must rely on and He is the only one who can provide the empowering.

He is the person with whom believers have been brought into union (cf. 2:21; 4:1, 17; 5:8; 6:1, 21), and thus the sphere in whom they now live their Christian lives and from whom they derive their strength. They no longer fall under the tyranny of the prince of the power of the air (2:2), but have come under Christ’s loving rule and headship. For this reason they can be urged to ‘be strengthened in him’: he supplies all they need in their spiritual warfare. (O’Brien 1999, 461)

If we are living in the reality of our position in Christ, we recognize we are already more than conquerors, there is nothing that can separate us from His love, nothing in either realm. We are adopted by Him and as such, He is the one strengthening us in “the strength of His might.”

John 14:12–14

“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!” (NLT)

For believers in Jesus—people who really believe he is the Son of God—we have to admit that there's a world we can't directly observe. That's the testimony he gave us. He didn't refer to demons in the abstract. They spoke to him and he spoke back. That tells us that this unseen realm is just as real as touching your skin, as real as kissing your children on the cheek when you tuck them in, as real as the back pain you feel after getting rear-ended, and as real as watching a beautiful sunset. (Ingham 2015, 36)

Jesus shows us how to live – how daring are we?

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