

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

Matthew 4:2-4 | The First Temptation

May 1, 2022

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 4.
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we were introduced to the Three Temptations of Jesus Christ.

It really was a brief overview of this thing we all struggle with every single day of our lives—temptation to sin.

The biggest keypoint and takeaway from last week's sermon is the word *temptation* in Matthew 4:1.

+ MATH 4:1 - Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

In English, the word *tempt* means— “tempt to do evil.”

But the Greek form ~~for the word “tempted” in verse one~~ is *peirasmós* (per-ahz-mos).

Peirasmós.— means much more than our English definition.

Peirasmós.— “to test or prove.”

Last Week: KEYPOINT:

Peirasmós is a neutral word that can be used as a testing for good or a temptation for evil.

When I think of a car being in neutral, I can either go forward or in reverse.

It's a choice.

Spiritually speaking, when you go through a trial yourself, God is the one testing you for good.

He's allowing you to experience pain and discomfort for the sole purpose of building your spiritual muscle.

God is developing your character, integrity, and moral compass.

But from the demonic standpoint, *Peirasmós* is a temptation to trick you into sin.

God wants you to put the car in drive and move forward into holiness.

Through the test and trials of life, God desire ^{that} to move you away from your old life of sin.

While everyone and everything else wants you to put your car in reverse to stay where you are and do what you've always done.

So, dear friends, if you can grasp this concept of Biblical trials, temptations, and tests — *Peirasmós*—

It will change your life.

It will change your perspective as you're going through the trial itself.

It will even change your theology.

In other words, it will change the way you think about God and how He is working in your life today—through the trials you are currently experiencing.

We must go through the trial—not around it. That's all a review.

INTRODUCTION:

Well, today, we're going to build upon our understanding of *Peirasmós*.

As we ~~will~~ study the first temptation of Jesus Christ.

Before we get to Matthew's Gospel, please give me a few minutes to set his narrative up.

I want to start in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:15—For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, (High Priest is Jesus) but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.

Have you ever wondered how Jesus was tempted in every way like we are?

Was Jesus truly tempted with anger, lust, laziness, drugs, and depression?

Scripture says yes, but how?

Because the Gospels only give us three of Jesus' temptations.

And none of these temptations are things we'll ever be tempted with.

Well, over the next several weeks, we will address ^{that} ~~those~~ questions.

And we're going to start today by taking a quick look at Luke's Gospel.

Luke 4:1 NLT—Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,

Luke 4:2 NLT—where he was tempted by the devil for forty days.

So Luke specifically tells us that these three temptations are not the only temptations of Jesus.

Luke tells us that Jesus was tempted throughout His entire time in the desert.

And not only that, look at this...

+ **Luke 4:13**—*After the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.*

Jesus was tempted throughout His entire life like we are.

Matthew, however, only gives three of the temptations.

Do we have a contradiction in Scripture?

No, keep in mind that the Gospel writers have a different theme and audience for writing their specific Gospel.

Luke tells us that there were many temptations, while Matthew focuses on what seems to be the last three temptations.

It's not a contradiction. It's a matter of perspective.

Within the many temptations from Luke, Matt focuses on three.

Now keep in mind that nobody was in the desert to witness any of this.

So these three temptations were the ones that Jesus shared with his Apostles.

Now, Scripture doesn't say how many other temptations there were—or what they were.

But Jesus—providing us with these three—that means something.

There is a reason that Jesus selected these three specific temptations.

And the reason Jesus chose these three temptations is that they are representative of every other type of temptation.

We're going to learn over the next several weeks that these three temptations point to the very root of every kind of temptation that you and I experience.

How so? Well, let's find out.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:2-4 CSB

Matthew 3:16— When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

Matthew 3:17— And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

Matthew 4:1— Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:2— After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 4:3— Then the tempter approached him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Matthew 4:4— He answered, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Matthew 4:5— Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

Matthew 4:6— and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

**He will give his angels orders concerning you,
and they will support you with their hands
so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone."**

Matthew 4:7— Jesus told him, "It is also written: **Do not test the Lord your God.**",

Matthew 4:8— Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

Matthew 4:9— And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me."

Matthew 4:10— Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.**",

Matthew 4:11— Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 4:1—Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:2— After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Scripture doesn't tell us what specifically Jesus was doing during these forty days and forty nights.

However, other parts of Scripture does combine fasting with prayer—fasting and prayer are two sides of the same coin.

Fasting is a means of where Jesus' focuses intently on communicating to and listening from The Father.

So there is no doubt that Jesus was praying to The Father during this time.

Now, we have discussed several times how Jesus is the new/second Adam.

Jesus' life is vicarious—meaning that Jesus must accomplish what Adam and the nation of Israel failed to do.

Adam and Israel were supposed to be obedient.

But they weren't obedient.

They were rebellious, just like you and me.

Matthew 4:2— After he had fasted forty days and forty nights.

So if Jesus's life represents the nation of Israel as a do-over, that number forty should jump out at us.

The number forty points us back to the Exodus.

Jesus was in the desert for forty days while the nation of Israel was in the desert for forty years.

So let's turn there to see what happened.

Deuteronomy 8:2— Remember that the Lord your God led you on the entire journey these forty years in the wilderness, so that he might humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

In verse two, we see the comparable Hebrew version of the Greek word *Peirasmós*.

Nāsâ—(nee-saw)— test, try, tempt, put one to the test.

So we see this kind of testing all throughout Scripture.

God's testing grows His people up into maturity—AND at the same time— is an effort to prevent people from sinning.

Deuteronomy 8:3— He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat...so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Notice here how the test came first for the nation of Israel— and then God intervened to provide food.

They had to wait on the Lord for provisions.

Deuteronomy 8:3 is how Jesus responds to Satan's temptation—and we'll see that in a moment.

Matthew 4:2— After he had fasted forty days and forty nights...

Luke's Gospel tells us that Satan was tempting Jesus the entire time.

And what Matthew does here in verse two is interesting.

Matthew focuses on what seems to be the last three temptations.

We see this in how Matthew wrote this narrative.

Matt repeatedly said, “then/again” after each temptation, suggesting a chronological order.

Matthew 4:2— After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

I don't know about you, but it seems like a pretty big understatement to say that Jesus was hungry after fasting for more than a month.

Also, notice how specific Scripture is, “forty days and forty nights.”

I point that out because there are many religions where people will fast during the day and then gorge themselves at night— and then fast through the day again.

Not Jesus—He didn't eat anything.

Not even bugs and wild honey like John the Baptizer.

Now, last Sunday we discussed the difference between Adam in the Garden of Eden and The New Adam in the Judean desert.

We see the correlation here today in verse two as well.

The Serpent came to Adam and Eve when their stomachs were full.

Adam and Eve weren't even hungry when tempted to eat the fruit—and they still ate it.

On the other hand, the devil came to Jesus on the verge of starvation.

Because forty days is about the longest time a human can fast without permanent bodily harm. — So I'm told. — as a body/science

If you've ever fasted, you know there are some hunger pains within the first several days.

But, around forty days, there will be some new pain.

These pains are not because of hunger but because the body is beginning to starve itself.

It was at this point—the point of starvation, where the devil came to Jesus.

But, even though Jesus was starving physically, He was prepared mentally and spiritually.

KEYPOINT #1:

Temptation loses its power when we're prepared.

The greatest threat to temptation is unpreparedness.

Matthew 4:3—Then the tempter approached him...

Adam and Even had each other when tempted.

The nation of Israel was in community when tested.
But not Jesus.

Jesus was isolated and alone.

At this moment, Jesus is starving.

He's physically weak from the lack of sustenance.

In other words, Jesus is the perfect victim for a roaring, roaming, hungry demonic lion.

And the demonic lion says this...

Matthew 4:3— *"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

In ~~verse 3~~, the context of this verse is not so much that Satan is planting a seed of doubt, although he often does.

But this verse could be translated, *"Since you're the Son of God."*

Satan knows that Jesus is the Son of God.

James 2:19 NCV—*You believe there is one God. Good! But the demons believe that, too, and they tremble with fear.*

All that to say this...

Satan is not going to get into a discussion of Jesus' identity.

Jesus' identity has been made known by God the Father in...

Matthew 3:17— *And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."*

So the implication is not whether or not Jesus is God's son, but rather, what type of Son will Jesus be?

Will He be disobedient like Adam?

Will He be stiff-necked like the nation of Israel?

Or will He be perfectly obedient, fulfilling all righteousness?

So what's Satan's ^{Agenda?} angle by this statement?

Matthew 4:3— "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

At this moment, Jesus' physical human body is starting to break down due to starvation.

There's an easy fix for that.

So the Devil tempts Jesus to satisfy his human need and the human desire for food by turning stones into bread.

Question: Where is the sin in that?

After all, Jesus creates food for the feeding of the 5,000 Jews and the 4,000 Gentiles.

So what's the problem?

First of all, verse one tells us that Jesus was in the desert for one reason—

Matthew 4:1—Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

This whole thing is about temptation—it's not about food.

Secondly, as we read through the Gospels, Jesus never once uses His divine powers for personal benefit.

Philippians 2:6 NCV—Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit.

The Gospels show that Jesus never performed any miracle to make his life easier.

And that's a theme we also see throughout these three temptations.

Matthew 4:3—tell these stones to become bread.”

Picture this, Satan is tempting Jesus, as Jesus is beginning to starve to death—

And Satan points to all these stones laying around—as he's saying, ***“tell these stones to become bread.”***

Now, we've all been tempted in many ways, but none of us have ever been tempted to turn stones into bread in the presence of Satan.

Jesus' temptations were unique because He is unique. This is obvious.

Satan is not suggesting that Jesus do anything blatantly evil...that's too easy to spot.

Reading between the lines...Satan is saying,

“You're hungry—you're on the verge of starvation—all you have to do is turn these stones into bread!

What's the big deal about that?!”

After all, you're the Son of God. You shouldn't have to starve.

Look, Jesus, you're hungry.

If you can turn these stones into bread—and I know you can—because you're God's Son!—

Then feed yourself! You don't have to wait on Your Father.

You are a man, and you need food to survive.

How could the Father allow His own Son to go hungry?

He provided manna for those rebellious children of Israel?

And here you are—the perfect Son of God—getting ready to die of starvation.

If He lets you die in this desert, how can you fulfill your mission?"

That kind of conversation sounds pretty convincing, doesn't it?

Do you guys see the actual temptation?

It's not about bread.

The temptation is for Jesus to take control of His own life.

Since Jesus is the Son of God, this appears to be an invitation for Jesus to misuse His divinity apart from The Father's will.

The problem is that if Jesus chooses to make bread from these stones—for his own benefit—Jesus then steps outside of The Father's will.

He would step outside The Father's covering.

The temptation is a self-serving use of Jesus' divine power.

From Satan's perspective, being hungry is incompatible with Jesus being the Son of God.

At the end of the day, Jesus was being tempted to:

- doubt the Father's Word,
- to question Father's love,
- and to be suspicious in the Father's provision.

How does Jesus respond?

Matthew 4:4— Jesus answered, "**It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**"

Three simple words—*It is written.*

Today, we say... "The Bible says."

We'll notice here that all three of Jesus' responses begin with **It is written.**

Jesus was not referring to something contained in a book that made the Jerusalem Times Best Sellers List.

Jesus quotes God's Word—not mans.

Jesus responds by quoting from Deuteronomy 8, which we looked at earlier.

By quoting that text, Jesus is linking His temptation experience to Israel's in the desert.

Jesus is aware of ^{His} the daily need to depend on the Father for bread, ^{BUT} and He will not use His divine power as a cosmic magician.

Jesus will not perform a miracle independent of God's Will.

Jesus will not supersede His own will over the Fathers.

Jesus will not take control out of The Father's hands and grab it for himself.

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8 because we need to learn that physical bread is not enough to live on in this temporary life.

For us to survive and thrive, we need not only physical bread but also spiritual bread.

John 4:34—“My food is to do the will of him who sent me...

John 6:35—“I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.

As Christians, we are never justified in complaining and worrying about our legitimate human needs.

We are *always* better off trusting in the promises found in Scripture.

If we don't choose to trust God with His promises, we choose to trust in ourselves.

If we trust in ourselves, we're living a lie—that says that our physical well-being is our most crucial need.

And that's not true.

What is true?

Matthew 4:4— Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Jesus' first word in responding to Satan's temptation was **man**—*"Man shall not live by bread alone."*

It is important to note that Jesus faced the devil *as a man*, not as the Son of God.

It's like the devil kept reminding Jesus of that.

Satan said three times, *"If you're the Son of God."* Not the Son of Man.

But Jesus points the devil back to the real issue of the temptation.

Jesus is going through this test as a human being—just like you and me.

And by quoting Scripture, Jesus is saying...

"It doesn't matter how much food I have to eat.

God will preserve my life with food or without food as long as He wants.

If He wants to take my life today without food, so be it.

So be it if God wants to take my life today with food.

Regardless, I choose to Trust The Father with my provisions."

PREACH:

Now, the question of whether Jesus could have sinned comes up in a conversation like this.

Many people say it is impossible for Jesus to sin—Because Jesus is the Son of God.

And since Jesus is God, other parts of Scripture say that God can't sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22)

And that's true.

However, Jesus has two natures—a divine nature and a human nature.

Jesus is truly God = Son of God.

Jesus is also truly human = Son of Man. *-born of A woman-*

We cannot divide these two natures between Jesus—there's a lot of heresy that happens when you do that.

But we can distinguish between them.

During Jesus' lifetime, He got hungry, tired, and died.

Those were signs of His human nature— not His divine nature.

Jesus, as the Son of God, doesn't get hungry or tired and never dies.

Jesus' human nature was a real human nature with all of the limitations that go with it. humanity.

KEYPOINT #2:

Jesus had the ability to sin, or He's not truly human.

In other words, if Jesus had been incapable of sinning, the temptation in the wilderness is nothing but a lie.

Jesus was able to resist all the temptations because He not only knew Scripture—but also obeyed it.

Take note, Satan also knows Scripture—but he refuses to obey it.

In fact, Satan is the greatest theologian apart from Jesus.

Why is that? To be the greatest deceiver, you must also be a great theologian.

As a conservative, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-filled, Bible-believing church, we tend to downplay Jesus's humanity.

We like to focus on Jesus' divinity.

But if we focus too much on Jesus' divine nature, we'll miss a crucial lesson that the Gospels teach us.

And that is— Jesus lived a perfect human life in complete obedience to God the Father.

KEYPOINT #3:

Jesus is not only the substitution for our sins but the model for our lives.

Nothing supernatural happened as Jesus was being tempted.

Jesus overcame human temptations with the same spiritual resources that we have today.

KEYPOINT #4:

1. *The power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:1)*

The same Holy Spirit that led Jesus into the desert is the same Holy Spirit that dwells in you—if you're a Christian.

2. *And the power of God's Word ("It is written").*

And it's with those two powers that Jesus overcame temptation number one.

And it's with these same two Powers that you too can overcome your temptations.

PRAY:

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