

## Overcoming the Lust of the Flesh

*Matthew 4:2-4*

## Jesus' Temptations

- Both Matthew and Luke record three temptations.
- But those were not Jesus' only temptations.
- During the 40 days:
  - ◆ Luke 4:2 - for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.
- After the 40 days:
  - ◆ Luke 4:13 - When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

## The Three Temptations

- 1) Representative of the temptations Jesus faced over that 40 day period.
- 2) The climax of the temptations that come at the end of the 40 days.

## The Three Temptations

- 1) Selective
- 2) Representative
  - ◆ Not every kind of sin
  - ◆ Root causes of every kind of sin
  - ◆ Cf. 1 John 2:15-16 - Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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 is from the world.

## The Progression of Temptation

- 1) All sins spring from temptation.
- 2) All temptations spring from sinful lusts (cravings).
- 3) All sinful cravings ultimately spring from three root, sinful cravings.
  - ◆ the lust of the flesh
  - ◆ the lust of the eyes
  - ◆ the boastful pride of life.
- 4) The three root temptations spring from three normal, God-given human desires.

## Three Roots of Temptation

- **Root temptation #1**
  - ◆ 1 John 2:16: the lust of the flesh (sinfully craving the satisfaction of the body's appetites)
  - ◆ Root sinful desire: personal pleasure
  - ◆ God-given desire: the legitimate, physical desires for food, the physical relationship in marriage, sleep, etc.
  - ◆ Jesus' 1st temptation in Matt. 4: Turn bread into stones

## Three Roots of Temptation

- **Root temptation #2**
  - ◆ 1 John 2:16: the lust of the eyes (sinfully craving to have what the eyes see)
  - ◆ Root sinful desire: personal prosperity
  - ◆ God-given desire: the desire to work hard in the fulfillment of what we have been designed to do and to enjoy the fruit of that labor
    - \* [Note: this is preliminary and subject to change as I continue to study this temptation.]
  - ◆ Jesus' 3rd temptation in Matt. 4: sinfully pursue the kingdoms of the world

## Three Roots of Temptation

- **Root temptation #3**
  - ◆ 1 John 2:16: boastful pride of life
  - ◆ Root sinful desire: personal glory
  - ◆ God-given desire: the desire to bring glory to God
    - \* [Note: this is preliminary and subject to change as I continue to study this temptation.]
  - ◆ Jesus' 2nd temptation in Matt. 4: jump from the temple to confirm His Messiahship to others

## The Three Temptations

- 1) Selective
- 2) Representative
- 3) Instructive
  - ◆ a) To demonstrate Jesus' own power over temptation.
  - ◆ b) To provide us with a pattern for overcoming temptation in our own lives.
  - ◆ Our Lord's biblical response to temptation provides a wonderful pattern for each of us to follow in our own battle with temptation.

## I. The Preparation (2)

- "And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry."
  - ◆ 40 days *and nights*
  - ◆ Only three men in Scripture
    - \* Moses at Sinai (Ex. 34:28)
    - \* Elijah on the way to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8)
    - \* Jesus
  - ◆ Jesus only did once
  - ◆ Only one fast clearly commanded: the Day of Atonement.

## Application

- 1) Jesus' faced and overcame temptation of the bodily appetites in its most extreme form.
  - ◆ a) To say no to his bodily appetites was to risk imminent death.
  - ◆ b) He never gave in.
- 2) Temptation often follows great moments and events.

## II. The Temptation (3)

- "And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
  - "The tempter came..."
    - ◆ During the forty days, Satan tempted by making suggestions to the mind.
    - ◆ At the end of the 40 days, Satan shows up in physical form.
    - ◆ 4:11: "then the devil left him."

## "If you are the Son of God."

- In Greek, several conditional constructions
- One of them does insinuate that the condition is unlikely.
  - ◆ E.g., John 5:46 – "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.
- Matthew uses a conditional construction that assumes the condition is true.
  - ◆ The speaker may believe it or may not.

## The Root Temptation?

- It's the temptation to satisfy the desires of the body outside the will of God.

## How Does Satisfying the Body Become Sin?

- 1) Seeking gratification in excess
  - ◆ Sleep – lazy
  - ◆ Food – gluttony
- 2) Seeking gratification by means contrary to God's Word
  - ◆ Satisfy the normal desire for food by stealing
  - ◆ Satisfy the normal desire for physical intimacy with a member of the opposite sex but outside of marriage or pornography.
- 3) Seeking gratification in ways contrary to God's original design and intention
  - ◆ Food: Bulimia
  - ◆ Sex: Homosexuality, pedophilia, bestiality
- 4) Seeking gratification becomes idolatry
  - ◆ The fulfillment of that desire becomes more important than obeying God.

## III. The Biblical Response (4)

- "But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

## The Wrong Conclusions

- a) Jesus quoted Scripture in the face of temptation.
- b) Jesus overcame temptation.
- c) So if I just memorize a few passages that touch on my temptation and quote them when I'm being tempted, then I will overcome temptation.

## Several Important Premises...

- 1) The Scripture is both authoritative and sufficient for dealing with the spiritual issues of this life.
  - ◆ Matt. 4:4 - But He answered and said, "It is written..."
  - ◆ Cf. Eph. 6:17 - take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

## Several Important Premises...

- 2) God is sovereign over our physical circumstances.
  - ◆ Deut. 8:1
- 3) God is the one who provides for every legitimate need.
- 4) God at times chooses to deprive His children of the normal fulfillment of our physical desires.
  - ◆ Deut. 8:3a – “He humbled you and let you be hungry.”

## Several Important Premises...

- 5) When God chooses to deprive us, He has great spiritual ends for our good.
  - ◆ a. Humbling our hearts
  - ◆ b. Testing our hearts
  - ◆ c. Instructing our minds
    - \* With what great lesson?
    - \* Deut. 8:3 – “that He might make you understand [know] that...”
    - \* “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”

## The Spiritual Conclusion

- “Like Israel, I am clearly in the wilderness and without my physical needs being met at God's will.
- “I will not pursue the satisfaction of my physical needs contrary to God's will.
- “Because if God chooses, He can intervene and meet my needs, even supernaturally as He did in providing manna for Israel.”