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TEMPTATION: Christ's and Ours

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"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED" (Matt. 3:16,17).

It is after this declaration by the Father and anointing by the Spirit that we read:

"THEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Man. 4:1).

Christ had come to be baptized of John, thus identifying Himself with the faithful, believing remnant in Israel. The Father in turn declared Him to be His "beloved Son" as the Spirit anointed Him as such. Having thus been identified and proclaimed to be the Faithful Man in the earth, He was now to have His worthiness challenged and His faithfulness tested by the arch tempter himself.

It should be noted that "tempted" means more than simply to be enticed to do evil. It carries the idea of a testing a trying out of a person's basic nature and worthiness. Thus the temptations to which our Lord was subjected were much more than merely attempts to have Him do evil. Rather they were testing Him--His worthiness and faithfulness to the position He had come to claim and occupy.

It is important to recognize that as Christ came "to be tempted of the devil" He was tested and tried at exactly the same points at which Adam and Eve had failed. The "last Adam" had now come to accomplish what the first did not.

TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS

The book of Hebrews tells us:

"For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb.2:18).

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE, yet without sin" (Heb.4:15).

Some have failed to understand these verse wondering just how Christ could have been tempted in "all points like as we are" seeing He did not live in our modern society with all its complicated situations and glittering enticements. Nor was He, it is often pointed out, a woman, so how could He face those temptations peculiar to women? We feel that a better understanding of the basic issues involved in temptation will help answer these misunderstandings.

I John 2:15,16 throw a great deal of light on both Matthew 4 and Genesis 3. Notice John's words:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 PRIDE OF LIFE, Is not of the Father, but Is of the world."

It seems that there are three basic avenues by which "the course of this world" travels to merchandise its wares: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And it is not difficult to fit Genesis 3:6 into this three-fold division: the lust of the flesh--"the tree was good for food;" the lust of the eye--"the woman saw the tree...and it was pleasant to the eyes;" the pride of life--"a tree to be desired to make one wise."

The sad results of this temptation are then given: "she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." This three-fold mode of temptation is universal and so is man's failure to stand against the test.

As Christ came to take His place as the Redeemer of man, He too was "tempted in all point like as we are." First there was the lust of the flesh--"make these stones bread;" then came the lust of the eyes--"Cast thyself down" from the temple, come down from the sky in a display of angelic splendor; last is the pride of life--rule "the kingdoms of this world" Thus Christ was indeed tempted in *all* points like as we are--but don't forget those blessed words: "yet without sin."

It is Paul in I Thessalonians 3:5 who designates Satan as "the tempter," and surely the experience of every believer attests to the continued working of Satan's program of

entanglement and enticement. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life work their woe in the best among us.

How wonderful to know that we have a Savior Who knows and understands these infirmities of ours--and who has provided victory for even the simplest believer!

THE SECRET OF VICTORY

Many have pointed out that the secret of Christ's victory over Satan lay in his total reliance on the written Word of God. Each time Satan came, Christ answered his advance with, "It is written." His effective handling of "the sword of the Spirit " sent the adversary to defeat each time.

Most fail to recognize, however, that this was not merely the random quoting of verses from the Bible. Our Lord did not, as many about us do, simply quote the first verse that came to mind. Rather His choice of verses was exactly in line with His position in the program of God then in effect.

It is beyond our present scope to deal in depth with the details of each temptation. However, several telling points should be noticed. First, each temptation offered to Christ has a real connection with something which is going to happen at His second coming. For example, He will make bread in the wilderness according to Rev. 12:6,14; He will come down from the sky according to Rev. 19:11 and will come to the temple according to Mal.3:1; He will rule over the kingdoms of this world according to Rev. 11:15.

The temptations Christ faced were far more deeply aimed than simply to trick or entice Him into making a mistake. They rather go to the very heart of the program and plan of God and His place in it. And it was because He had so firm and thorough an understanding of just where He stood in God's program that He could withstand the tempter and so devastate him.

In each temptation Christ was enticed to do something Scriptural--that is, something the Scriptures said He was to do, but He was enticed to do it at the wrong time or in the wrong manner. How important, then, to recognize that one of Satan's favorite tactics is to be Scriptural--but not dispensational. Let every sincere Bible student take note: it is not enough to be Scriptural, we must also be dispensational. If we fail to "rightly divide the Word of Truth " we will soon find ourselves in "the snare of the devil."

It should also be noted that in response to each temptation Christ quotes from the same book of the Bible. In fact, twice He quotes from the same chapter! The reason for this is not hard to discover.

The book of Deuteronomy, from which Christ quotes is the book which so anticipates Israel's possession of the promised land and her blessing in that connection. John the Baptist had been faithfully proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and as

our Lord entered His own public ministry He did so by demonstrating the loyalty and obedience to the Word of God--and especially the book of Deuteronomy--required of His beloved nation in order to receive her kingdom.

In short, Christ takes His place with the faithful in Israel and having been declared to be the Father's "beloved Son," He demonstrates both His personal right to this position and His worthiness to be followed by all those who believed. His quotations from Deuteronomy serve to emphasize all this in a touching way.

Consider, for example, His first answer. He quotes Deut. 8:3, but its preceding context should not be over- looked:

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, THAT YE MAY LIVE AND MULTIPLY, AND GO IN AND POSSESS THE LAND which the Lord sware unto your fathers.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and TO PROVE THEE, TO KNOW WHAT WAS IN THINE HEART, WHETHER THOU WOULDST KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, OR NO.

"And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee Know that MAN DOTHTH NOT LIVE BY BREAD ONLY, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OFTHE LORD DOTHTH MAN LIVE" (Deut.8:1-3).

So as Christ was tested and proven as to "what was in (His) heart" we see Him acting in full accord with what Israel should have learned from the wilderness feeding--and what she one day will learn "in the wilderness" of the tribulation: It is simple and absolute obedience to God, living by every word out of His mouth, that is required.

The same is true of the following temptations. In both He refers to Deut. 6, a chapter which focuses on Israel's behavior at a time described as "when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers" (6:10). Deut. 6 clearly shows that Israel's possession of the land depended upon her loyalty to God and obedience to Him.

With the time for the fulfillment of these promises approaching the Lord's use of this important passage in the face of Satan's attacks further shows His grasp of where He stood in the program of God and demonstrates the value of the rightly divided Word. Christ simply takes His stand in God's program and refuses to be drawn away from the position. Therein lies His victory.

A KEY FOR US TOO

By His temptation Christ is demonstrated to be the Faithful One. He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin " And His secret of victory is ours too: Total submission to God's Word to us. Remember, it was not merely that He quoted Scripture, but He quoted Scripture rightly divided and brought His life into total submission to it, May we do likewise!
