

## Matthew 4a

**After being baptized (3:16), who led Jesus into the desert (v. 1)?** The Holy Spirit of God.

**For what purpose?** To be tempted by Satan. This temptation was necessary to demonstrate His moral fitness to do the work for which He had come into the world. The first Adam proved his unfitness for dominion when he met the adversary in the Garden of Eden. Here the second Adam will meet the devil in a head-on confrontation and will emerge unscathed.<sup>1</sup>

Plus.....after identifying with sinners in His baptism, Jesus would now be able to identify with them in their temptations (Hebrews 4:15; 2:18).

**How long was Jesus without food (v. 2)?** Forty days.

**Who approached Him at this vulnerable point (v. 3)?** Satan. After 40 days, when the Lord was hungry, the tests began. Satan attacked Jesus when He was vulnerable physically.

**What was the first temptation (v. 3)?** *"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."* This was a temptation to use God's gifts for selfish purposes. Satan suggested that Jesus use His miraculous powers to provide food for Himself.

But that was not the will of His Father for Him. The Father's will was for Him to be hungry in the desert with no food. To submit to Satan's suggestion and satisfy His hunger would have been contrary to God's will.<sup>2</sup>

**What was Jesus' response (v. 4)?** He quoted from the scriptures, *"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'"* (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Jesus faced Satan as a man, not as God. He did not use His own divine powers to overcome the enemy, which is just what Satan tempted Him to do. Rather, He used the spiritual resources that are available to all people, including us, namely, the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason, that He is an example for us of one who successfully endured temptation and overcame the enemy; which makes Him qualified to become our great high priest (Hebrews 7:26-27).<sup>3</sup>

**What was the second temptation (vv. 5-6)?** *"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:" 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

Satan took Him up to the highest point of the temple. Here Satan said, in essence, "Why don't You do what the people are expecting and make some marvelous display? After all, the Scripture says His angels will protect You and You won't even hurt your foot as You come down." Satan may have thought if Jesus could quote Scripture to him, he could quote it too.<sup>4</sup>

**What was Jesus' response (v. 7)?** Again, Jesus resisted the attack by quoting Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:16). *Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not test the Lord your God.....'"*

God had promised to preserve the Messiah, but that guarantee presupposed living in God's will. To claim the promise in an act of disobedience would be testing God.

It is wrong to demand that God prove Himself faithful to His promises by giving us what He has promised on *our* terms. The proper procedure is simply to trust and obey God (Deuteronomy 6:16-17).<sup>5</sup>

**What was the third temptation (vv. 8-9)?** *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world with all their splendor. He had the power to give all these kingdoms to Jesus at that time—if only Jesus would bow down and worship him. This, of course, would have meant Jesus would never have gone to the cross which would have thwarted God's plan for salvation.

**What was Jesus' response (v. 10)?** For the third time, Jesus resisted temptation by quoting from the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:13): *"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

Worship, and the service that flows from it, are for God alone. To worship Satan would be tantamount to acknowledging him as God.<sup>6</sup>

**What was Satan's next move (v. 11)?** Having his attacks thwarted, the tempter departed (cf. James 4:7).

**What happened to Jesus at this point (v. 11)?** God sent messengers ("angels") to assist His faithful Son (cf. 1 Kings 19:4-8). The Father rewarded the Son with divine assistance and further opportunity for service, because Jesus had remained faithful to Him. This is God's normal method.<sup>7</sup>

From the temptation of Jesus, we learn that the devil can attack those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit, but that he is powerless against those who resist him with the Word of God.<sup>8</sup> The importance of memorizing scripture is obvious.

Many have observed that Satan followed the same pattern of temptation with Jesus that he had used with Eve (Genesis 3). First, he appealed to the lust of the flesh, the desire to do something apart from God's will. Second, he appealed to the lust of the eyes, the desire to have something apart from God's will. Third, he appealed to the pride of life, the desire to be something apart from God's will (cf. 1 John 2:16).<sup>9</sup>

It is of first importance to remember that Jesus Christ is God and that God cannot sin. Despite Jesus' inability to sin, the temptation was very real. It was possible for Him to be faced with enticements to sin, but it was morally impossible for Him to yield. He could only do what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19), and it is inconceivable that He would ever see the Father sinning. He could do nothing on His own authority (John 5:30), and the Father would never give Him the authority to yield to temptation. The purpose of the temptation was not to see if He would sin, but to prove that even under tremendous pressure He could do nothing but obey the Word of God.<sup>10</sup>

It is also important to realize that Jesus, even in His sinless human nature, actually suffered when He was tempted. It was not an easy ordeal for him to go through this encounter with Satan (Hebrews 2:18). As a result He is uniquely qualified to help us when we are tempted because He fully understands the intensity of it.

Earl Radmacher illustrated how Jesus could not have sinned this way: Suppose you had a thick iron bar and a thin wire. The bar represents Christ's divine nature and the wire His human nature. The bar cannot be bent, but the wire can. Yet, if the wire is fused to the bar, the wire cannot be bent either. Thus the fusing of Christ's divine and human natures meant that He could not sin.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1212.

<sup>2</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 112.

<sup>6</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1214.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 115.

<sup>8</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1214.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 115.

<sup>10</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1212.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 118.