

BIBLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Robert C. Veil, Jr.

Question: Was Jesus actually tempted to sin? I thought, as the Son of God, he was above that.

Answer: Yes, Jesus was actually and literally tempted to sin. In fact, he was “tempted in all points, like as are we,” (Heb. 4:15), “yet without sin.”

The comprehensive tempting of Jesus is recorded in Mt. 4:1-11 and Lk. 4:1-13. Focusing mainly on Luke’s account, there are several interesting observations from the text. First, it says that Jesus was “led in the Spirit.” The tempting of Jesus was intentional, and in accordance with God’s will. It had a purpose, which is explained in Heb. 2:17-18: “Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” Since Jesus has personally experienced and endured the afflictions and temptations which are common to humanity, he is specially qualified to be our high priest, our mediator.

Secondly, we notice that the temptations endured by our Lord were many and varied, even though only three are specifically identified in the text. Those three occurred at the end of those 40 days, “when they were completed,” (Lk. 4:2). Forty days is a long time, and in fact that number is often used in the Bible to suggest a full and complete period of time. Jesus was being actively tempted by the devil throughout that entire period.

Thirdly, we are told about the specific temptations, which are representative of the three general types or areas of temptation: 1) Lust of the flesh, 2) Lust of the eyes, and 3) Pride of life, (1 Jn. 2:16). These are the same three avenues or approaches used by Satan to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden: 1) Good for food, 2) Delight to the eyes, and 3) Desired to make one wise, (Gen. 3:6).

Satan appealed to Jesus’ fleshly appetite by suggesting after 40 days of fasting that he convert desert stones into delicious bread. Anyone who has ever eaten fresh-baked, hot dinner rolls, particularly when especially hungry, knows the power of such a temptation. The temptation to pay reverence to Satan in exchange for all the kingdoms of the world which he was *shown*, was primarily an appeal to the lust of the eyes, and the promise of special care and protection appealed to the

pride of life, (4:3-12).

In each case, Jesus responded with the power of the Word, for he quoted scripture: 1) Man shall not live by bread alone; 2) Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve; 3) Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God. The fact that Jesus felt the best way to respond to Satan's temptations is by quoting the Word of God should tell us something. It indicates the power and all-sufficiency of the Word in all of life's situations. and it reminds us of the need to be familiar with it, so we can recall and use it as needed.

At the close of the temptations, Matthew's account includes a comforting detail in vs. 11: "Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." God was concerned about his son, and even though it was necessary for Jesus to experience these terrible temptations, when he had withstood all, he was comforted. Similarly, God is mindful of our suffering and afflictions. He will not permit us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, (1 Cor. 10:13), and is anxious and prompt to comfort us afterwards.

Robert C. Veil, Jr. has been a gospel preacher with the Church of Christ for over 40 years. He currently preaches monthly for the Broad Top Church of Christ. Submit your Bible questions to him at Central Church of Christ, 90 Waverly Court, Martinsburg, WV 25403.