

The Power of God's Word

Matthew 4:1-11: *"¹ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. ² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. ³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. ⁵ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. ⁸ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. ¹¹ Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."*

I. Verse 5—"A pinnacle of the temple"

- A. Now, the devil set the Lord on a pinnacle of the Temple (or the highest point of the Temple). Satan then suggested to Jesus that He jump.
 1. Have you ever been at the top of a tall place like over a cliff or a look out point, and suddenly, you feel the daring urge to jump?
 2. That urge comes from the devil.
- B. This was a temptation for the Lord. This was a temptation for the Lord was because of the mission that God the Father had given to the Lord Jesus in Isaiah.
 1. **Isaiah 49:5** says, *"And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him."*
- C. When the Lord Jesus looked at His life as a man He saw that God had formed Him from the womb to be God's servant with the mission in life to "Bring Jacob again to him."
- D. More than anything else, the Lord Jesus wanted to please God the Father who gave Him that mission.
- E. When the Lord Jesus left Heaven, that mission was ringing in His ears. He might have thought, "I must bring the Jewish people back to God again. That is why I have been sent to earth."
- F. When it was suggested to Him that He turn and go to the Gentiles, He replied in **Matthew 15:24**.
 1. The verse says, *"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*
- G. The problem was what happened when He came to the Jewish people in **John 1:11**.
 1. **John 1:11** says, *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."*
- H. The Jewish people did not receive Him and did not listen to Him. The response of the Jewish people to Him was (and still is) clearly described in **Isaiah 53:3**.
 1. **Isaiah 53:3** states, *"He is despised and rejected of men."*
- I. This broke His heart, and the devil knew this.
- J. Where Jesus was standing was like the center stage for the Jewish people. Here, the temptation came.
 1. The temptation was "Look. Here you are in the place that is the most admired by the Jewish people. You are now in the highest point of this most admired Temple. Just think of what would happen if you come flying through the air from the highest point of the Temple, and you land safely. All the Jewish people will realize that you are God the Son—the Messiah. You can then bring all the Jewish people

back to God. You can please God the Father by fulfilling the mission that He gave to you Just jump.”

2. That temptation appealed to His pride to be admired and honored by the Jewish people. That was a temptation of the pride of life whereas the first temptation was a temptation of the lust of the flesh.
- K. Verse 5 of transporting the Lord to the Temple and putting the Lord on the highest point of the Temple was all done so quickly.
- L. That suddenness was also part of the temptation to the accepted by the Jewish people. The Lord would be seen as the person who suddenly appeared in the Temple. This was the prophecy given to the Jewish people about how they would see the Lord in **Malachi 3:1**.
1. **Malachi 3:1** says, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”
 2. So, the temptation from the devil was “If you just appear and jump, then you will be seen from **Malachi 3:1** as the Lord who suddenly came to His Temple.”

II. Verse 6—“If thou be the Son of God”

- A. The last temptation was hurled at the Lord as a doubt in **Matthew 4:3**.
1. The verse says, “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”
- B. In both the first and the second miracle, the deity of the Lord Jesus was challenged with the same doubt of “If thou be the Son of God...”
- C. Of all the doctrines about the Lord Jesus, the one that is challenged the most is the deity of the Lord Jesus.
1. Jehovah Witnesses challenge the deity of the Lord Jesus by saying that the Lord Jesus was not God.
 2. Mormons challenge the deity of the Lord Jesus by saying that we are all gods and equal to the Lord Jesus.
- D. When Satan put the Lord Jesus on the highest point of the Temple, that was reminiscent of Satan’s desire that caused him to fall.
1. **Isaiah 14:13-15** says, “¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ¹⁵ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”
- E. Satan wanted to be at the highest point; Satan put the Lord at the highest point of the Temple.

III. Verse 6—“Cast thyself down”

- A. From that highest point, Satan said to the Lord in **Matthew 4:6**, “Cast thyself down.”
- B. This scene here is so typical of Satan as we see Satan in verse 5 “setteth on a pinnacle of the temple.” In verse 6, Satan says, “Cast thyself down.”
1. Satan fell by pride and arrogance and he seeks to get others to fall by pride and arrogance.
 2. Satan raises a person up in pride for one purpose, so that he might cast that person cast down.
- C. God casts a person down into humility so that he might raise that person up.
- D. This scene of Satan wanting to exalt so that the person might be cast down is an illustration of pride.

1. **Proverbs 16:18**—*“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”*
 2. **1Peter 5:6**—*“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”*
 3. **Luke 14:11**—*“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*
 4. **Luke 18:14**—*“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*
- E. In the first and the second temptation, there was a definite position that Satan had put himself in. It is seen in **Matthew 4:3**.
1. The verse reads, *“Command that these stones be made bread.”*
 2. **Matthew 4:6** says, *“Cast thyself down.”*
- F. These were definite commands.
- G. What Satan was doing here was giving orders to the Lord Jesus, and if the Lord Jesus had obeyed those orders, then Satan would have accomplished his original sinful goal of **Isaiah 14:13-14**.
1. The verses say, *“¹³ I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.”*
- H. If the Lord had done what Satan commanded Him to do, then Satan would have said, “I finally did it! I finally was able to exalt myself above God! I finally got God to obey my voice which puts me above God!”
- I. God grants the devil limited power, but not absolute power. God gives the devil limits to what he can and cannot do.
- J. God sets definite limits, and the Bible talks about the limits that God sets with the waves. God sets the limits of how far the waves can travel in **Job 38:11**.
1. **Job 38:11** says, *“And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?”*
 2. When you stand on a seashore, you see out there the wave form. It looks so great. As you stand on the sand, it looks like that wave is going to destroy you as it builds and crests and breaks and roars towards where you are standing. Then it stops and goes no further.
 3. That is God’s picture of limited power that he gives to the devil.
- K. We can see this limited power that God gives to the devil in verse 6 when the devil said to the Lord Jesus, *“Cast thyself down.”*
1. In that statement, the devil wanted the Lord Jesus to fall from the highest point and be destroyed.
 - a. Satan thought that would have been great to have the Lord destroyed at this early point in the Lord’s mission.
 - b. If Satan could have gotten the Lord to destroy Himself before the cross, that would have been great for Satan.
 2. The devil had power to transport the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem.
 3. The devil had power to set the Lord Jesus on the highest point of the Temple.
 4. The devil had reached the limit of the power given to him by God.
 - a. The devil wanted the Lord Jesus to fall from that point and be killed, but the devil could not push the Lord Jesus off.
- L. The Lord Jesus experienced Satan’s power to transport Him into Jerusalem.
- M. The Lord Jesus experienced Satan’s power to set Him on the highest pinnacle of the Temple.

- N. But, the Lord Jesus did not feel the hand of Satan on His back pushing Him off the pinnacle.
- O. Instead, the Lord Jesus only heard the voice of Satan say to Him to “*cast thyself down.*”
- P. There was no hand on His back; there was only the persuasive, tempting voice.
- Q. That is a picture of the limited power of Satan in our lives.
 - 1. God grants Satan great power against us, but that power is limited.
 - 2. Satan may get us into a dangerous place where sin is very possible, but Satan will not have the power to force us to sin.
 - 3. At the point of sin, God says to Satan, “That far and no farther.” All Satan can do with us is to persuade and influence and entice, but he cannot sin.
 - 4. Satan can make Eve come face-to-face with that forbidden fruit, and Satan can make that forbidden fruit look absolutely beautiful. Satan can entice Eve to eat that fruit.
 - a. But, Satan cannot put the fruit in Eve’s hands, and Satan cannot put the fruit in Eve’s mouth.
- R. Satan could not make Eve sin, and the same is true for us. God will always limit Satan’s power against us so that we have the power to decide to sin or not to sin as described in **1 Corinthians 10:13**.

- 1. **1 Corinthians 10:13** says, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*”
- 2. The devil can persuade, but he cannot force.
- 3. Sin is a personal choice.

IV. Verse 6—“*For it is written, He shall give his angels*”

- A. To support his enticement to jump, Satan now quotes Scripture in verse 6.
 - 1. **Matthew 4:6** says, “*And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*”
- B. Satan has used Scripture to encourage the Lord to jump off the Temple, and the Scripture Satan has used to support his enticement is from **Psalms 91**.
 - 1. **Psalms 91:9-12** says, “*Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;⁹ There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.¹⁰ For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.¹¹ They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.¹²”*
- C. There was truth in the Scripture that Satan used.
 - 1. It is true that Angels are dispatched to care for God’s people; we can see that in **Revelation 7:11**.
 - a. The verse states, “*And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.*”
 - b. We see a scene in Heaven of angels around God’s throne, praising God and ready to serve God as stated in **Psalms 103:20**.
 - c. **Psalms 103:20** says, “*Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*”
 - 2. In Revelation, the angels are not only standing around God’s throne, the angels are also standing God’s people.

- a. **Hebrews 1:14** says, “*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*”
- D. What Satan was saying through **Psalms 91:11** that the angels have been charged to protect and care for God’s people is true.
- E. The point is that there was truth in what Satan said about angels being charged to care for God’s own.
- F. There is always truth in deception, but there is always error or wrong in deception. There was wrong in what Satan was saying, because Satan had misquoted that Scripture.
- G. The only problem is that there was a key part of that verse that Satan left out.
 - 1. **Psalms 91:11** states, “*For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*”
- H. Satan left out “in all thy ways.” God will keep thee in all thy ways, but what ways are those?
 - 1. Those ways are when the previous verse is obeyed in **Psalms 91:9**.
 - a. **Verse 9** says, “*Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation.*”
 - 2. When the Lord has been made a person’s refuge, when a person has made the Lord his home, or when a person is walking with the Lord in submission and obedience, then his ways will be God’s ways.
- I. Ps 91:11 is not saying that God will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways when you go out your own away from God’s ways.
 - 1. When a person goes his own way away from God’s way, then he forfeits God’s protection.
- J. If the Lord had cast Himself down off the Temple, the Lord would have gone a way that was not God’s way. The Lord had no call from God to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple.
- K. That would have been sin. There is a difference from the Lord saving us from our sins and the Lord saving us in our sins.
 - 1. The Lord saves us from our sins, but the Lord does not save us in our sins.
 - 2. By grace, the Lord saved us from our sins
 - a. **Ephesians 2:5** says, “*By grace ye are saved.*”
 - 3. But, **Romans 6:1-2** says, “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?¹ God forbid.²*”
- L. This is how Satan misused Scripture.
- V. Verse 7—“*It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt*”
 - A. In the first temptation, the Lord used Scripture. With the second temptation, Satan countered with Scripture.
 - B. When Satan used a Scripture, Satan was acting like the birds that ate up the seed of the Word of God.
 - 1. By using Scripture, Satan was trying to snatch away Scripture from the Lord’s hand as it says in **Matthew 13:19**.
 - a. **Verse 19** says, “*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*”
 - C. Satan has just countered the Lord’s verse with another verse. The Lord could have become discouraged and said, “What’s the use? If I use a scripture, then the devil will use a Scripture. Maybe, I should stop using the Scriptures and use something else.”
 - D. No! The Lord did not abandon Scripture, and that is why the word “again” is so important when the Lord spoke in verse 7.

1. **Matthew 4:7** says, *“Jesus said unto him, It is written **again**, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”*
- E. The word “again” shows us that even though Satan used Scripture, that did not cause the Lord to abandon Scripture. The Lord went back to Scripture again.
 1. We have only one weapon against the enemy, and it is the Word of God.
 - a. **Ephesians 6:17** states, *“And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*
- F. The Lord did not answer the fool Satan according to his folly
- G. Instead, we can see the Lord quickly going into the armory of Scripture and looking over all the verse weapons. He made His selection which was **Deuteronomy 6:16**.
 1. The verse says, *“Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God.”*
- H. What the Lord was saying with that verse is that if the Lord had cast Himself down, He would have tempted the Lord to have to save Him from the fall.
- I. Even with the discouragement of seeing Satan use the same weapon that the Lord used, the Lord still continued to use Scripture to resist and overcome the devil.
- J. That still leaves us with a question.
 1. In verse 6, Satan said with another Scripture, “It is written.” The Lord responded in verse 7 with another Scripture, “It is written”
 2. Did that mean that the Scripture Satan used (**Psalm 91:11**) contradicts the Scripture the Lord used in **Deuteronomy 6:16**?
 3. No! All Scripture is true.
 4. What the Lord did was to use another Scripture of **Deuteronomy 6:16** to explain the meaning of **Psalm 91:11**.
- K. That shows us that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.
- L. We have seen in this passage all of the following:
 1. Our enemy the devil does not give up. He is like the tailor constantly studying us and re-cutting the cloth to make a new coat that fits our vulnerabilities.
 2. Our enemy can even use Scripture to persuade us. How important it is for us to immerse ourselves in Scripture!
 3. God gives limited power to the devil against us.
 - a. How encouraging it was that there were only three temptations and not four! That is because God said, “No fourth temptation.”
 4. No matter how strong the temptation, each one of us is personally and solely responsible for our sin.
 5. No matter what the temptation is, we have one weapon which is the Word of God.