

# Out of Egypt

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[ 0 : 00 ] Lord, who for our sake did fast 40 days and 40 nights, give us grace to use such abstinence that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey your godly motions in righteousness and true holiness.

To your honor and glory, who lives and reigns with the Father, the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen. Please be seated. Now, if that prayer that I just prayed seems a little out of place today, that's because it's the colic assigned for Lenten 1.

You may have noticed that. That prayer is prescribed along with our sermon text today. Matthew 4, verses 1 to 11 is commonly known as the temptation of Christ.

If you're not there in your Bibles, you may turn to it on page 809. It begins with the abstinence of our Lord and it ends with angels attending to him.

But it's more than our Lord's abstinence and temptation. We could draw the conclusion that this text is about our Lord's obedience to the word and the will of the Father.

[ 1 : 22 ] Yes, our text begins with these words today. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.

The temptation of Christ comes after the baptism of our Lord, when Jesus was given this audio visual affirmation of his identity. You remember a voice from heaven said, this is my son with whom I'm well pleased.

That's the audio. And then an appearance from heaven represented like this, the Spirit descended like a dove. That's the vision, audio, visual affirmation of our Lord's identity as the Son of God. The temptation of Christ comes, though, before the Beatitudes. That is, the opening of Jesus' mouth and teaching of both the law and gospel.

Jesus will then, after that, begin with a very peculiar declaration in the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes that goes like this, Blessed are the poor in spirit.

[ 2 : 33 ] Quite shocking in some respects. Well, the temptation and obedience of Jesus isn't so shocking, though, in some respects. All attempts to thwart Jesus' ministry up to this point have failed.

So why not come out and just take Jesus head-on? The same way as Adam and Eve were taken head-on with physical needs and cynical suggestions by the tempter.

As well as the Israelites when they were in the wilderness, who also had physical needs and submitted their own cynical suggestions to God. Even though a bit of Jesus' temptation here resembles that of Moses' meeting with Yahweh on the mountain when he fasted for 40 days and met with God face to face.

But what's happening here? What's happening is this. I think that God is using Satan's temptation of Jesus in order to show us what true humanity, what human nature really looks like.

After hearing that Jesus is the Son of God without using the word Son of Man, that comes later, we get an enactment of human nature in the face of temptation of sin or the temptation to reject the Father.

[ 3 : 58 ] I want to look at two things this morning. That is the humanity of Jesus and the temptation of our Lord. Let me put it this way. In these verses, we'll learn of two things. Of real humanity and real temptation.

So let's look at real humanity first. Christians believe that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. But they didn't come so easily to the church in the beginning. And while the Bible testifies clearly to the two natures of Jesus, his humanity and his divinity, the early church had to contend and then confess in our creed that Jesus was fully human and fully divine.

Jesus wants to make it really clear, very early on in Matthew's Gospel, that he is human. How do we know that? Well, Jesus is led up into the wilderness by the Spirit.

Jesus doesn't take this upon himself to go into the wilderness after his baptism. He doesn't, you know, kind of take a gap year, as it were. Thinking, you know, my childhood and early adolescence, that youthful adulthood was kind of rough, and so I kind of deserve a break.

They tell me the wilderness, you know, is a nice place to find myself. I think I'll head into that place of desolation. Now, Jesus doesn't take it upon himself, but the Spirit, the same one that descended upon him in the form of a dove, not against Jesus' will now, is the one who led him into the wilderness.

[ 5 : 27 ] The wilderness is the same place where Yahweh led his people out of slavery after Egypt into this place where their hearts would be exposed, and then they would be disciplined by him and learn the law of the Lord.

But Jesus didn't need this discipline, though it was the Spirit that led him there to reenact something. Jesus, as a human, is about to do something that Israel wouldn't do.

Israel was rebellious in the wilderness. And we think that human nature, for some reason, equals sinning. But actually, that's sinful nature, not human nature.

Sinful nature is human nature twisted or turned in upon itself and away from God. Human nature, then, isn't sinning.

It's just limited. And Jesus will show us a real man or true humanity obeys God. Jesus uniquely, then, fulfills human nature in this wilderness place where Israel couldn't and wouldn't.

[ 6 : 36 ] He will be tempted by the devil, but he will not fall as a man. Adam and Eve fell, and so did Israel, but Jesus, as a man, will not fall. He will be tempted, but he'll resist that.

And as a man, Jesus will face the devil. And unlike our temptations, Satan will hold nothing back. You see, God will not let us be tempted beyond our ability to resist sin.

There's something of a filter or a screen. So if you think when you read this, well, what do you expect? Jesus wasn't really a man. Or, well, his temptation wasn't that great after all.

He was perfect. Satan was restricted in no way in his temptation of Jesus like we are as men and women. Jesus, fully human, faced this serious temptation.

Jesus, as a man, resisted temptation as God wants us to do, too. But Jesus is this unique man in perfection. So I want you to think of this.

[ 7 : 42 ] Every time that you face temptation, think, Jesus did it for me. I can resist, too. And when I do resist it, then I become like Jesus because he comes into my life.

I'm united with him. He's united with me, enabling me, then, to resist temptation because he uniquely did it for us. That's the first thing. He's a real man.

But this is a real temptation. And let's look at these temptations in turn. Jesus, this real man, facing this real temptation that's even greater than ours, and it happens in three places.

A wilderness, the holy city, and temple, and then a high mountain. So first then, this first temptation, though I think that it's helpful to think them not only as negatively, but as positively.

Positively, we're seeing in this first temptation that we can live by, or Jesus lives by, the word of God. Jesus is tempted to command stones to become bread.

[ 8 : 46 ] Jesus resists the temptation with a quote from the fifth book of the Pentateuch. He says that, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Now here, Jesus isn't saying that bread and physical needs aren't important, but he is saying that there are other needs, and even a greater one. The greater need is to live by God's word.

That is the Father's instruction. The law is good and perfect teaching. And having our daily bread in all things is a gift of God.

But before that is to know that God has spoken to us through the revelation of Scripture. And that is quality of life, which equals the word of life.

Not good health, or wealth, or even happiness. But quality of life is founded on the word of God. First. That's the first temptation.

[ 9 : 48 ] And to live by the word of God. The second one is, positively this, is trust, don't test God. The next temptation at the holy city is the one to trivialize the temple.

The temple is the place of God's presence, his power, and his promises. And the tempter wants Jesus, the man, to misuse God's promises now that Jesus has introduced the subject of the word of God.

And so, the tempter uses Psalm 91 that we read before. Like the first temptation, the devil cynically suggests, if you are the son of God.

The first two temptations are ones to get Jesus to rely on his divine nature at the expense of his human nature. But Jesus resorts to this.

Again, it is written, referring to the word of God, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Jesus knows the difference between these two natures that are connected and united.

[10:52] He knows divine knowledge is infinite. Jesus knows that human knowledge is limited, which requires trust in the one who knows all.

It's really interesting that the text that Satan refers to here comes later in the psalm, but listen to this verse with respect to trust in God.

Verse 2, right out of the gate in Psalm 91, he says, I will say unto the Lord, thou art my refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I will trust.

So Jesus is saying definitively that we need to trust, not test the Lord when we're at our weaknesses and know our human limitations. This is Jesus' retort.

This is Jesus' retort to the devil. And it means relying on the word of God and believing and obeying God's word, not testing him. We know less.

[11:50] God knows more. We trust in him and the knowledge that he has. That's the second temptation. The third one then, positively though, has turned into this. We need to worship and serve the Lord, our God only.

Finally, in the third temptation, the devil shows his motivation. The devil is fundamentally not only a tempter, but a pretender. He pretends to be God and wants what only God can have.

And always has been that way. He pretends to have the authority to give Jesus the kingdom and glory. If he has that, it's only because it's been granted to him. And now if only Jesus worships and serves the devil, will he get what he wants?

This gets to the crux, I think, of humanity. Men and women, us, all of us, are made for this very reason, to worship and to serve the Lord.

This is our greatest calling. Jesus will obey and serve his father exclusively like Adam and Eve and Israel wouldn't.

[12:58] Our satisfaction and quality of life is only in this though, knowing that Satan hates it when Jesus denies him this temptation. Satan hates it when we deny God this exclusive privilege.

And the promise of God's kingdom and his glory are preeminent. So what does he want from us? What does he ask? He asks that we would worship and serve him and him only at the exclusion of anything else.

And so from here then, Jesus will go from that mountain and teach from the mountain. Next week you'll hear about this, but the first thing that he will say with respect to this glory and to the kingdom of God, that it is for those who know that they are blessed because they are poor in spirit.

That we lack something, that we are limited, that we desperately need the Lord in order to enjoy the benefits of being subjects in the kingdom of our Father who is in heaven.

So Jesus, in these temptations, in the resistance of them, but knowing that we must not worship anything else other than the Lord our God and serve him only, comes to us when we know how poor in spirit we are and we need what only God can give to us.

[14:22] So where do we go from here with this then? I think that the first, sorry, the second reading from James is quite instructive. Verse 18 of chapter 1 says this, Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Jesus relies ultimately on God's word and the resistance of the temptations. That's what this is saying here as well. But there's something that's redeemed here that was lost when Adam and Eve fell.

And so through this, through Jesus doing for us what we could not do for ourselves, would not do for ourselves as humanity, then become this first fruits.

We can become what Adam and Eve lost, what they fell from because Jesus does for us what we can't do for ourselves. Then we can, by his nature in us and us being united with him, resist this temptation.

That's the first thing. And the second and last thing is into this final paragraph of predestination and election. The article reads this way, Furthermore, we must receive God's promises and in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture and in our doings, that will of God is to be

followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.

[ 15 : 54 ] Absolutely central to knowing what God has called us to, how he has predestined and elected us and that salvation is only in Christ. This living out what God has in mind for us.

Absolutely founded, absolutely rooted in God's word to us. His promises in the scriptures, God's will and God's word.

That's the only way that we can do what God has in mind for us. knowing what his word is to us and walking in those ways. I speak to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.