

## #227 "The Temptation of Jesus"

By Brent Barnett

[www.relevantbibleteaching.com](http://www.relevantbibleteaching.com)

When Jesus was tempted in Matthew 4:1-11, the devil employed a variety of strategies, seeking to trip Jesus up. As He was feeling hungry in verse 3, Satan said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Jesus replied, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Satan knew that Jesus knew His own Word, so he tried to debate with him concerning the Word. Obviously, it wouldn't have done any good to try to convince Jesus that the Word held errors, that it wasn't inspired or infallible, or that there was no absolute truth. The devil's only hope was trickery and deceit, utilizing God's Word out of context or to a flawed end. Now, there was nothing inherently wrong with Jesus performing a miracle and turning stones into bread, but that was not Satan's angle. Satan said that, in order to prove His Sonship, He needed to do this. In reality, Jesus didn't need to prove anything, for Satan already knew he was the Son of God. If Jesus had obeyed Satan's command, Satan would have been an authority over Jesus. And there we see the end game, stealing the glory of God and desiring worship himself. This is always Satan's desire. **Obeying Satan always stems from a lack of faith because he will never instruct us to actually obey God's true commands.** There will always be a misapplication or misinterpretation leading to following the wrong authority. Jesus was not deceived because He believed and obeyed the Word of God, the only bread He really needed. He didn't need to prove Himself to the devil, for He was God. His obedience to God's Word was proof enough. Likewise, we don't need to prove anything to the devil. Jesus is our confidence and our sufficiency for life and godliness, and we can rest in Him.

When strategy number one failed, Satan took Jesus up to stand on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. Again trying to make Jesus prove His Sonship and follow his commands, he said in verse 6, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus combated a flawed use of Scripture with His balanced understanding of the whole counsel of God and replied in verse 7, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" What Satan wanted Jesus to do amounted to a faithless challenge to God for a spurious purpose. There is no glory given to God when we put God to the test. Where God has promised, He will deliver, but we must never issue God a mandate or demand, especially when it is from misapplied Scripture. To do such a thing makes us the authority as we tell God what to do for us. That is arrogance, not obedience, and Jesus chose obedience. He did not need to prove anything to Satan, He did not need to perform a miracle at Satan's command, and He certainly didn't need to demand something from God that was outside of His revealed will. Jesus didn't sin because He knew God's Word, and His understanding of the whole counsel of God enabled Him not to be tripped up by a verse taken out of context and misapplied. Satan wants us to take God for granted and view Him as a divine Santa Claus. However, God is not to be ordered around but rather worshipped. The humble will be exalted, but the prideful God will have to humble. **Satan's directives always lead to lust and pride.**

Having again failed, the devil took Jesus to a high mountain where He was able to see all the kingdoms of the world and their glory in a moment of time (Matthew 4:8, Luke 4:5). Satan said that he would give these to Jesus if only He would worship him. Satan's offer was more than just geographical and political; it was spiritual. He was saying that he would relinquish his role as prince over the world (Ephesians 2:2, John 12:31), thereby, according to flawed reasoning, opening the door to Jesus' rule. But Jesus understood that this kind of rule provided no hope of redemption. He had to go to the cross, for the death of a sacrificial, spotless Lamb was the only way to appease the wrath of God. No supposed surrender by the devil would even work for redemption because there would be no means of paying the ransom for sin. Furthermore, Jesus would have to worship Satan, thereby disproving His Sonship and making Satan out to be God, a blasphemous sin. There was no shortcut to the cross, and only Jesus' sacrifice would ensure His future rule. The temptation didn't work because no amount of incentive could make Jesus bow before any other than the Father Himself. **There are no deals with the devil that ever benefit the one agreeing to the deal.** Only the devil wins. Jesus replied to the devil in Matthew 4:10, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" Jesus, being the King of Kings, told this temporary prince of the world to be gone, asserting His power and refusing to worship anyone other than God. Jesus didn't compromise, and the devil left Him (verse 11).

As believers who seek Jesus' example as a means for learning, we see that Satan's agenda is always the same. He wants us to worship him instead of God, he wants us to obey his commands instead of God's, and he wants us to compromise and take "shortcuts" that are dead ends and death traps. If we want to stand firm as Jesus did, we must seek to know God's Word as He did. No amount of cunning or misuse of God's Word would have worked against Jesus. But too often, we, on the other hand, grow to doubt God's promises and character. Too often, we listen to the devil's coaching. Our strength, our bread, is to hold tightly to the Bible and to believe and obey it, even when it is hardest to do so. The more we walk after the Spirit, the more readily we will be aware of when Satan tries to prick our flesh into action. The pride that wells up in our hearts will become more easily apparent, and it will increasingly disgust us and move us to bow ourselves before God for His promised deliverance (1 Corinthians 10:13). When we stand firm upon God's Word like Jesus did, the devil will flee (James 4:7). Any other strategy will lead to defeat.