

**The Readings**

**Reading 1 – Examples of people tempted – 1**

[a] Peter Matthew 26.69-75 [b] Esau Genesis 25.29-34

**Reading 2 - Examples of people tempted – 2**

[a] Achan Joshua 7.21 [b] Samson Judges 14.16-17

[c] David 2 Samuel 11.2-4

**Reading 3 – Examples of people tempted – 3 : Adam and Eve Genesis 3**

Reading 4 – Deuteronomy 6.10-16; 8.1-10

Reading 5 – The Temptation of Jesus Matthew 4.1-11

Reading 6 - The Temptation of Jesus Mark 1, 12-13; Luke 4.1-13

Reading 7 - Prayer to Father as Sons Mt 6.5-15

Reading 8 - Prayer in Gethsemane Mt 26.36-46 Mk 14.32-42,

Reading 9 - Prayer in Gethsemane Lk 22.39-46, Jn 18.1, 12, 27, 14.31.

Reading 10 - God's trials are not temptations James 1.12-18

Reading 11 - John 4.27-38

**Reading 12 – Sources of temptation:**

[a] From sinful human nature Ephesians 2.1-3; James 1.14; Matthew 5.29-30 and [Mark 9.43-47; Matthew 6.23; Romans 7.18-23

[b] From other people 2 Peter 2.18; Genesis 3.6; Prov 5.3-6

[c] From Satan Genesis 3.1; 1 Chron 21.1

[d] From the world 1 John 2.16

**Reading 13 – Inevitability of Temptation. 1 Cor 10.13; Prov 7.21-22, Matthew 13.20-21**

**1 - The good news of the Kingdom has now begun in earnest.**

1.1 We have seen that John the Baptist's appearance and his work of preaching and baptising with water led up to the obedience of Jesus to the word of God which was brought through John.

1.2 We saw how Jesus, in committing to the word of John, acted in obedience and that the voice of God broke through and announced the pleasure that He had in his Son. Jesus is now committed to do the work of the kingdom, and has been baptised in the Jordan, and the Spirit of God has descended and remained upon Him. As the One who has received the Spirit without measure, He is also the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit whom John foretold as the one who was "greater than" himself.

1.3 It is important to remember this immediate commitment which Jesus has made in his baptism for it makes clear to us the setting of his immediate temptation. Indeed, it is in the light of this stance He has just taken, in obedience to John's preaching, that the temptation is issued.

**2 – We are temptable**

2.1 From the creation of the world and of men and women, made in God's image, there has always been a situation which requires them to live in a way where each event is a time when what comes forth from their heart is shown by their actions.

In this sense each event is a test - and in relation to God, a test of obedience. It is an opportunity to display the work of God; the relation between man and God. In any given

**1 - The gospel of the kingdom**

**2 - We are temptable**

situation then, when God sets it up, as it were, He has in his mind to show forth, for his glory, what it is that He has placed within the heart of man. In this way, the obedient action of the man is a manifestation of the character of God, who made him in his likeness.

In the normal course of events in an unfallen world then, for example in the garden, all that God "sets up" - all the 'givens' - will be events which will show forth God's glory through the life of the man or woman.

2.2 From the time of the fall, many events in life constitute a presentation of a situation from the dark side, from Satan's side, with the express intent to not show forth what is in man to the glory of God, but to subvert him to obey some one other than the God for whom he was made.

This is not the glory for which Satan himself was made to have; for he too, having the nature of a cherub [Ezekiel 28.14], was intended by God to live for God's glory. To Satan was given the opportunity of glorifying God as a cherub; as an angelic personage in the heavenlies, rendering obedience to the Lord. Satan's unauthorised attempts to make man to directly obey him constitutes a stolen form of the glory which is only God's to have from men and women.

2.3 Only a personage who has already fallen can tempt another. Knowledge of sin is only gained by doing it. The Scripture presents to us the rebellion of Satan [Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28] as a given which has already taken place before the tempting of Adam and Eve by the snake in the garden.

2.4 Presuming the fallen state of man then, when we are tempted we are registering within ourselves the power of certain lusts which carry us away and entice us. These lusts are the fruit of the fall within us - they mark us as fallen ones, ones who have already obeyed the devil. They are a sign that we have come under his power - our nature has been subverted to obey Satan. If we are carried away by this enticement, then the lust will be conceived and gives birth to sin, which in turn brings forth death.

### **3 - Temptation and testing - a study in James 1.12-18.**

3.1 It follows from 2.3 above that, because He is good, indeed the very definition of the word, God tempts no one. He Himself cannot be tempted by evil; so the implication is that He would be acting contrary to His nature and character if He did that to anyone else. On the basis that God expresses Who He is by what He says and does.

God's character is without shadow upon it, it is unvaryingly good and true. So whatever circumstances we receive from Him we can trust His character that these are not intended by Him that we should fall over. He never sets us up like that; to believe so is to have confused the work of God with that of the devil.

3.2 The devil tempts us so that we might fall over and fail.

3.3 It is in this sense of 2.5, that the Lord always tries or tests his people. And particularly after the new birth of the kingdom of God, the baptism in the Holy Spirit [See 2R Gospels 4, 6.4], God is always looking for opportunities to demonstrate the wonderful life which He has implanted within us through the resurrection power of the risen Lord. So we should count it all joy when we suffer various trials [ #362 James 1.2-8; Romans 5.1-4, 8.28ff]. They are opportunities to show forth the hidden life within us for his glory - we have been restored to be able to become what we ought to have been in the first place.

3.4 We are refined and encouraged when we come through tests that Father has given us.

### **4 - Jesus was "led by the Spirit"..."to be tempted by the devil".**

4.1 The temptation of Jesus, follows immediately after the Baptism. In this way, the Gospel writers make clear that the temptation mounts a challenge to the commitment which Jesus has irrevocably made in that Baptism.

**3 - James on temptation and testing**

**4 - "led by the Spirit"**

4.2 We see in Scripture that the normal attitude of any man or woman is to avoid temptation, to flee [Proverbs 6 & 7] from it, and to ask the Lord to "not" lead us into temptation [# 059, Mt. 6.13].

All the more surprising then, to find that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus results in Him being lead into the desert [#021]. And even more so to see that He is not lead there for prayer and fasting at the commencement of his ministry; or to contemplate matters He has just taken in hand; but for the express purpose [so Mt 4.1] to be tempted by the devil. Luke 4.1 has Jesus led about by the Spirit in the desert, and all that time being tempted by the devil; Luke then presents the encounter with Satan as a culmination of that period of that forty day temptation.

This leads us to consider this episode in Jesus' life as a matter in which the kingdom of God took the initiative, it is an aggressive encounter which we see here from heaven's side. Whilst the devil is seen to be the author of the temptation - nevertheless there is an engagement here which is sought by the kingdom of God; this is, in the Gospel writers understanding, a period of direct confrontation.

4.3 There is an aspect of this temptation experience which is made clear from the way sinners usually find themselves tempted by the devil. It is the devil who, while man is in the fallen state, has the initiative. It is the devil who goes out to tempt men and women; they do not come to him in order to be tempted by him; they may wickedly co-operate when tempted, but as to the initial movement it is the devil's.

4.4 Behind this expression of the initiative of the kingdom of God is the tacit assumption that the devil would not set out to tempt Christ. He finds himself confronted by the proper Man; it is the devil who is cornered here, and the engagement is one of God's making, not the devil's. In this way already there is the dawning upon the earth a return to right order as an angel, albeit rebellious, is forced to confront the proper Man and to serve Him in what He is doing. He is the one who will plunder the devil's kingdom and set free the captives which he had taken. He must turn and face Jesus even though it will be to lose the encounter; he must face it because it is required of him by a Man, who in doing this for others, opens a door for all men and women to resist the temptations of the devil when he comes to fallen men and women.

## 5 – Jesus temptable because He took flesh

### 5 - Jesus temptable

5.1 Man, as he is fallen, is always the one who seeks to judge his neighbour, himself and also God. He will not confess his sins, his rebellion, even his own fall. His constant unwillingness to repent like this is his continuing in sin - it renews his sin over and over again. Jesus' sinlessness is seen in that he does play this game. He took our flesh, the nature of man as it comes from the fall. He is, in his human nature, constantly open to the temptation of sin.

5.2 In the likeness he has with us, He was also unlike us in action: He did not yield to temptation. He found the cost of obedience a suffering in a fallen world: it was something learned in the doing [5.8]. In his condition he was like all other men, in his action He was without sin.

5.3 We have seen before [2R Gospels 4, 3.3] that Jesus, in being baptised by John took his stand with us as people who were under the judgement of God. He committed Himself to the service of God and men. And that he went into the water of the Jordan, confessing His sins [sins which were ours as to their doing] in obedience to the preaching of John. In taking this stand with us Jesus acknowledged God to be in the right concerning His verdict on our sinful life which was in need of redemption.

5.4 The letter to the Hebrews [2.11-18] makes clear that Jesus could be tempted. He is not ashamed to call us brethren [2.11] on the basis we are from the one progenitor [whether we think of Adam or Abraham]. Jesus is a true partaker of "flesh and blood" in like manner as us [2.14]. It is as one who has suffered being tempted that he is able to be the High Priest, representing us who are also temptable [2.17-18]. He can sympathise with the weak and was at all points tempted as we are, but without sin [4.15].

The Birth tells us that He was a true man, one who took true flesh, from his mother. It was of one who, being born of a real mother, with flesh and blood as real as the sons of other mothers [See 2R Gospels 2,8]. It is imperative to believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh [1 John 4.1-2] and not to be half hearted here.

The Baptism tells us that a true man stood with us and was not ashamed to call us brothers. He was an obedient man to the God - full of faith towards the word of God through the prophet John.

The Temptation tells us that we have a real man who is temptable, and is also an obedient man and a true son of God, who resists the devil, who flees from him until another time.

5.5 "It was fitting that the devil be defeated in that same human flesh in whose death he had gloried" Hilary

## 6 – "In the wilderness...fasted forty days and forty nights"

## 6- Forty days and nights

The early commands of God in Genesis make for us a connection between the word of God and food

At the temptation of Adam and Eve, the issue was that they had already known God as One who spoke to them and he had led them into a knowledge of Himself as their Creator and Provider. In this way they had taken that knowledge, in obedience to the Lord's command and had the experience of it to themselves. It was not the things eaten which however are the focus. It was that they had obeyed the word of God to eat of the garden that had led to the experience of the eating of the food and the provision of the garden. In this way the act of obedience, to take and eat what was commanded to be eaten is, at the same time, the taking of the knowledge which the eating brings in to their experience. The savouring of the food provided is at the same time the practical knowing of God in His provision for them.

It was the second word of God about eating which really makes this clear. For here was another word, which alike addressed them about the trees in the midst, and yet in the negative, not to eat. If this word was to be obeyed it must mean that the act of not eating would lead them into a knowledge of God as well.

It was in the act of not eating that they would have come to the knowledge of the sonship of God. It would have been an event in which they would have, by 'not eating' in obedience to the word of God, led them to come into the knowledge of sonship, of knowing God as Father. That was a knowledge which would have been theirs as they lived by every word of the mouth of God. What is common to both events was the previous matter of the word of God. What was expressed into their experiences was that their obedience to the first led to knowing what food was; it was taking up what the word of God had provided by obeying the word to take it up. That is the relational element in the exchange. It links for us the meaning of sonship, with the eating of bread and the not eating of bread, both of which are a matter of obeying the word of the Lord known as Father.

This matter is put to the test very strongly by the Hebrew people in the wilderness, where they find themselves in the desert and very hungry. In the Exodus 16, God make it clear that he will provide for them meat in the morning and the bread from heaven in the evening, "that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in my instruction." [Ex 16.4].

The manna is at first unrecognized as the fine flake like frosting on the ground. They did not see it as food to eat, until Moses made it clear that "this is what the Lord commanded [Ex 16.15-16]. Later, they found it to be like coriander seed, and to have a taste like wafers and honey [Ex 16.31]. They ate it for 40 years until they came to the border of the promised land. [Ex 16.35].

It was not a delight to the eyes, nor was it materially attractive, it was so unlike any other food that they had eaten that it could only be identified by the source of its coming, it was what the Lord had commanded. In this way it was shown by its sensual unattractiveness to show forth the real meaning of all food, they would live, as all men and women do, by what the Lord commanded.

## 7 – Moses, Elijah and Jesus – 40 days and 40 nights

7.1 So far we have been led to an understanding of what eating and “not eating” of material food means in connection with the word of God. There are some places, in the lives of Moses and Elijah in particular, where they are seen to not eat. In both cases Moses and Elijah were in the middle of a powerful time of revelation from God. They were in the process of a rich statement of His word to them. They were attending to what He was saying to them in an intimate and close way. Their attention was thoroughly taken up by the exchange.

This association of the act of not eating is interpreted to be the way they entered into the revelation. It was not, it was a result of the revelation – they did not abstain from food, they did not need it, such was the revelation that they were enduring. We have often confused cause with result; grace with works.

7.2 In regard to **Moses** he was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. He did not eat bread nor drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the word of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. [Ex 34.28]. Notice that this is not portrayed as a fast, in the sense of abstaining from food because of an act of will. It is not said that Moses was hungry either; it rather points to the other matter which was engaging him, he was receiving the Word of the Lord as a covenant for Israel.

And it was this same word which sustains us materially that points us to the source of all food and life, the word of God itself. This was the point of what seemed to be Moses “fasting”, it was associated with the richness of the feast of the word of God which was being brought forth for the life of Israel. This is what would give them a powerful experience of sonship, to know that God would care for them, and take them into the fellowship of His life. This was the reason He saved them from Egypt, that they might be with Him and serve Him, to share His life. He saved them that He might dwell among them [Exodus 29.44-46].

### 7.3 – Elijah 40 days and nights in the strength of heavenly food [1 Kings 19]

The same issue is shown in the **case of Elijah** [1 Kings 19.8]. Suffering under the powerful threat of Jezebel, that she would take his life to avenge the killing of the prophets of Baal, he fled into the wilderness a days journey, and under a juniper tree, sat down to pour out his heart to the Lord. [1 Kings 19.4]. He begged the Lord to take his life. And an angel came to him with a bread cake, baked on stones and a jar of water. Here is a provision of a small meal, and yet the angel advises him to eat and drink for the journey is too great for him. Well, he awoke and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food provided by God for 40 days and 40 nights. Once again, the issue is not fasting, but of being sustained as he is about to receive the word of God in the still small voice at Horeb, the mountain of God.

It was the quality of the relation between Elijah and the Lord which is testified to throughout his life. He was the Lord, “before whom I stand”. Now here, there is no mention of him being hungry, as was the case with Moses. It was because scripture makes us focus on the feast of the word of God these men were given. They were men of wonderful revelation of the Lord, and the way Scripture does this is to show that they didn’t need to eat, for they had other food which satisfied them at the time. They were “not eating” for they were sharing in the life of God so richly that they had food of another sort, but from the same source as material food, which was the word of God [John 4.27-42].

### 7.4 Abstinence from food by act of will for a purpose

Abstaining from food as an act of will of the human being is what we understand as fasting. We sleep and then, after a whole night of not eating we break our fast with the first meal of the day – it is breakfast.

Neither Moses nor Elijah are fasting in that sense, they are not eating because something else is going on, and with such an intensity that they are leaving off eating for the time. And they are sustained over this time. 40 days and nights becomes a wonderful expression of the sustaining of these men by the word of God which is the primary food of mankind. We live by this word, and when they are engaged in this way they are so sustained that the lesser food

## 7 - Moses Elijah and Jesus



is not required; it may be left untaken.

## 8 - Jesus comes into the wilderness, and is not eating

8.1 He fasted 40 days and 40 nights and afterwards he was famished [Matthew 4.2 NRSV] The use of the Aorist participles in Matthew strengthen this reading. Luke 4 strikes a slightly different way of putting it.

This issue of fasting for 40 days and nights draws a parallel from the two OT persons of Moses and Elijah. A matter which is also central to the Transfiguration as well.

Jesus has just participated in as the heavens have been opened and the Holy Spirit has descended upon Him. He has had a rich sonship feast, and been declared Son of God from heaven, to say nothing of the prophecies which have preceded his coming. Then this is expressed to us as it was in the OT, he goes into the wilderness, the place where the people were alone with their God and he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. And it does not say that he was hungry then, it says that afterwards he was hungry.

It is at that point the devil chooses to attack him, and that through the same way he did Eve, at the point of the satisfaction of her senses.

All this is background to the reply Jesus gives to Satan on this issue. We do not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceeds from the mouth of God.

The forty days indicates that Jesus has come from a powerful encounter with the Father, by the Spirit. He has been driven into the wilderness by the express will of God and under that initiative will encounter the devil.

The material which the devil knows and has seen about Jesus is that of the early prophecies of Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, the angel, John the Baptist's teaching and preaching, and much more. The attempt to kill Jesus just after his birth had already been set in motion. So, we must not think of the devil approaching this encounter without understanding that the encounter is important and that Jesus is a significant individual.

The form of the opening statement is that there is much to show the devil that he is encountering a man with great revelation of God, like Moses and Elijah. And the conveyance of the title Son of God had been made openly.

The occasion for the launching of the attack is that after the 40 days Jesus is hungered and is experiencing hunger then. The devil drives at a man through his fleshly drives.

## 9 - The Temptation to abandon his standing with sinners.

9.1 We have seen in 3.3 above, that the three Gospel writers are unanimous that this was a leading of the Spirit; indeed Mark has Jesus driven [ekballei] into the wilderness by the Spirit. It is to launch an offensive that the Spirit drives Jesus.

9.2 Fasting and hungry - expression of a sinful man's unworthiness to live, his lack of fellowship with God, and a fasting response implies that we are estranged from God. There is his readiness to suffer death because of his sins, so it shows the radical nature of a man's repentance. This is the meaning of his fasting according to the form of the servant.

9.3 Jesus, unlike other men, is willing to expose Himself to temptation. He is a person who will have to suffer temptation on the offensive, not on the defensive. He is not one who waits passively to be tempted, simply as the tool of the devil, as a prey of Satan. He is the prey of Satan, but not as a loser, but as an opponent who has come to the earth for a specific purpose and goal.

9.4 As a child He had found his coming a constant goad and source of anxiety to the devil. We are told of the opposition which took place to the birth of Jesus, that as an Israelite and the son of Israel who gave birth to Him [Revelation 12.1ff]; how Satan awaited him to devour the child the woman gave birth to. We see Herod the Great, as the authority ruling in the name of the great Gentile power of Rome, attempting to catch Jesus in a net of slaughter of

## 8 - Jesus in the wilderness

## 9 - Tempted to abandon us

local children. Joseph and Mary guarded him then, with supernatural guidance about what to do. This attack of the devil was blatant, murderous and operated by powers in his hand.

9.5 In the temptation in the wilderness the devil is direct and clear, but the temptations are not any attempt to break the law of God. The devil is not presented as godless, or dangerous - rather, the temptations take the form of advice, some wise counsel.

The direction of the counsel is that Jesus should no longer take the way of a sinner repenting, standing in line with the other sinners. It suggests that He be not true to the direction he has begun when he entered the Jordan River. The way offered was no cross and easier, self-serving pathways to accomplishment of the goal.

## 10 - What was He tempted to actually do?

10.1 *The first temptation* was to, after being hungry following the forty days, turn the stones around Him in the desert to bread. He is to "tell this stone to become bread" [Lk 4.3]. Notice that the concern for Jesus to eat is not primary. The force of the command is to perform a pretentious miracle. The occasion of Jesus' hunger is simply used as a re-inforcing feeling which He would be experiencing. It is a command presented to a hungry man - but the suggested action would commit Him to a self-centred action.

It is an appeal to use the power of His own word to save and maintain his own life. If He had yielded to this then He would have been deflected from the encouragement of His Father from heaven and the sustaining comfort of the Holy Spirit in his current work in the identification and standing with sinners - and he would have, long term, undone the possibility of the cross, the ultimate work of standing with and for them. And all this because He would have fed Himself.

In *refusing to do what was asked* Jesus sustained his hunger and trusted in God to actually, through His Word to bring him sustenance and care of His own provision. His trust is well founded - he finds that there are angels sent later to minister to him [Mt.4.11]. In resisting the devil who would deflect him from his obedient course he, in fact, sustains course, and so remains obedient. This is important for, the point of life for the obedient man is not to only resist the devil - such resistance only matters because it is, at the same time, the holding to the form of obedience already engaged in doing the word of God.

In *answering the devil*, Jesus uses only what an obedient man can who has just been tempted to use his own word for his own ends - he answers in words of Scripture [Deuteronomy 8.1-10] which are not addressed to all creatures of God but especially to man. "Man shall not live by bread alone." [8.3] is quoted from a section where God is giving the reason why He tested the people in the wilderness for the forty years. It was to humble them and to test them, and to know what was in their heart. It was to make them understand that they did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It was a matter God knowing and of men understanding this thing which was the purpose of the test. [John 4.27-38] has the same dedication of Jesus to make it his food to do the will of his Father - food which was contrasted to that which others encouraged Him to eat.]

10.2 *The second temptation* comes in the suggestion that Satan, to whom [See Note 1] all the "kingdoms of this world" [Lk4.5, Mt 4.8] belong, should give Jesus lordship over it, at the price of Jesus falling down and worshipping Satan. It seemed a reasonable and practical solution which seemed allied to Jesus' mission.

This is the enticement to an easier way than repentance, than standing with sinners who hope for forgiveness, than seeing evil conquered, than seeing sin dealt with as a power which enslaved man. He was asked to bow privately to Satan, so that the world would then be ruled ostensibly by Jesus but really by the devil; - in short, everything would have remained as it had been. All he had to do was nod at the devil. Many men have been successful this way.

What *Jesus refused to do* was to worship an angelic creature of God. Not only because that was not appropriate between man and angel [which it isn't], but because worship by a man is only appropriately directed to the God in whose image he is made. So He persisted in

**10 - What was Jesus tempted to actually do?**

obedience; achieving righteousness for us.

In *answering the devil* Jesus speaks the Scripture again. The section of Deuteronomy 6.10-15 reminds the people that as they enter the promised land they will be receiving lands and cities which they did not build - receiving things easily, and without work. They need to watch themselves God reminds them, lest they forget the Lord who rescued them from slavery; a place of being under lords who causes them to work for no reward. Jesus quotes [6.13] "You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by his name."

10.3 The *third temptation* is that Satan leads Jesus to the Temple, stands Him on the pinnacle and then invites Him to throw Himself down, on the basis that God will bear Him up.

The setting is significant; there is the implication [in Lk] that the pinnacle of the temple in the city of Jerusalem is of greater issue than the high place from where all the kingdoms of the world can be overseen.

Satan's suggestion, as a Psalm-quoting creature, is that Jesus should now commit an act of supreme, blind, absolute confidence in God. Such an act would be fitting for someone who was a Son of God.[See Note 2] .

Satan's suggestion is also drafted on the basis of the words he has heard from Jesus already: that Jesus is going to live by the word of God and also worship only Him.

What *Jesus is refusing to do* here has nothing to do with a grandstanding display. There is no hint here of spectators, there are no onlookers who will in some way give acknowledgment or value to this action.

What is at issue is that Jesus is being encouraged to test God out for Himself. To make himself sure of his relationship with God as Son by a headlong plunge which will assure him that God is with him. It is as if a man shall carry the work through in his own faith, to take the work into his own hands, it is to initiate the movement, to be certain of it by having a part in it. It is to make use of God for his own experience and knowledge of his own favour with God. He would have, by an act which looked like great piety and mystical enthusiasm, betrayed the cause of God by making it his own cause for aggrandisement. He would have been forcing God to act in such a way that he would have glory for Himself - it is ultimately a driving of a wedge between the Father and the Son relationship. A relating between them which has the son glorifying the Father by his obedience, and the Father glorifying the Son by acknowledging Him - a matter which ultimately must wait until the resurrection.

What Jesus is refusing to do is to tempt God Himself. [That is, on the basis of this robust faith that Jesus has in God, Jesus would have been demanding that God accept him because he believes so strongly in Him. All this instead of receiving a sinful man in Christ and by Him.] Jesus rejected the ecstasy and the satisfaction of religion; identifying it as the supreme form of sin.

In *answering the devil* Jesus continues in Deuteronomy 6.16 where God continues his warnings to the people of Israel. It is not to test God as they tested Him at Massah. At Massah, over the matter of God providing water to drink, the issue was, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" [Exodus 17.7].

10.4 Notice that, because we are in the wilderness, the abode of demons, the presence of Satan, the form of the righteousness which Jesus is displaying is negative = He does not sin. We should not miss this however as the place where He is winning, establishing righteousness for us.

## 11 – Does the engagement with the devil bring him some sort of honour?

Here is one of those places where the humiliation of the Son of God who has taken the form of the servant is the answer to our question. For, the obedience to the Holy Spirit requires that Jesus confronts and resists the devil, coming under his pressure to be tempted. We shall see this difficulty again in Gethsemane, where the yielding to the adversaries to put Him to death looks like weakness and yielding to their force, when it is an obedience to Father, and to the main purpose of God to go to the cross.

The fact that the kingdom of God is going out to meet the devil so as to take him on in

11 - Honour to the devil?



the great struggle should not be misunderstood. It is not that God is, by stooping to engage with him, is lowering Himself, or exalting the devil.

We have already considered this aspect under the humiliation of the Lord when we considered his Incarnation. It has to do with the fact that the Lord has identified Himself so full with us in our condition – while we were helpless. He has to do this work for our sakes, it is not for his own sake. In this way He seeks out his adversary because he is our adversary and master.

Neither should we misunderstand the Lord in allowing the adversary an initiative – He follows the devil's leading of the discussion not out of weakness but out of patience. Just as we could say that in leading, the devil did not show strength but pride. We need to take into account that the Lord acts and allows Himself to be acted upon to do everything for our salvation. We need to include in our understanding these passive elements – for when voluntarily embraced by someone in humility they constitute and “active passivity”. They are a temporary yielding necessary to the engagement of the enemy.

## 12 - Considering the structure of the Gospels: “the devil departed from him until an opportune time”.

12.1 Jesus as the Judge - When we come to consider the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness we are demanded to understand where this fits in the overall theme of the work of the Lord as portrayed in the Gospels. The Temptation is the beginning of the aggressive action of Jesus acting as Judge of those He encounters. He begins with the devil who he judges and pushes back. He strides on through Pharisees, scribes, leaders, ordinary people, young rulers, judging them all alike, and they can find no sin in Him; try as they might. Even the disciples he shows that He is their Judge, they are shown to be inadequate and sinful. It confirms the strong picture which John the Baptist preached; of the one who would Judge and put the axe to the trees, the man with the winnowing fork in his hand.

12.2 But at Gethsemane there is a turn taken where it becomes clear that after that Jesus is the person who is judged by them. Jesus is no longer the Subject of what happens, He is the object of what happens. After Gethsemane we have a betrayal, and arrest, trials in various courts, torture, execution and burial. Those who are to be judged are given the space, freedom and power to judge. Even the Barabbas incident is a scandal, and Simon the Cyrenian is forced to carry the cross. The oppression, anguish, silent suffering, and friendlessness of Jesus is acute – “numbered with the transgressors”.

12.3 The Resurrection tells us how this remarkable saga became the Gospel, the good news. The man who is defiled, shamed, mocked is justified, glorified, vindicated, declared Son of God.

12.4 These are the three segments of the Gospels which allow us to understand the large themes and the theology. Gethsemane is the other “opportune time” of Satan.

12.5 In Gethsemane Christ's temptation turns on His struggler to go through with it. The struggle of the disciples is “what if He does?”

### Notes

#### **Note 1 - kingdoms of this world handed to Satan.**

In fact, there is a truth behind what Satan says when he puts it, “...it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whom I wish” [Lk 4.6b].

The kingdoms of this world have been handed to him by man, in the sense that man had the authority over the earth, and by his compliance to Satan's desires, has given it into his hand. But it is also true, that back of this, God has handed them over to Satan as well. In doing this God cements Satan in his deception that he is “like God”. This is the form of the wrath of God upon him now.

*12- the devil departs until later*

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***Note 2 - Satan's view of obedience is angelic.***

Behind this idea is that the obedience which is required by sons is blind, unthinking, unknowing obedience. This is consistent with the angelic mind of Satan, which understands that relationally towards God he works on the basis of command and execution of command. But it is not as a man is required to know obedience. Jesus makes it clear that his disciples are not slaves but friends - they know what the programme is; they understand the mind of the Master.