

## "Temptation" The Judean Desert

This very desolate and rugged area may have been where Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted & tested for 40 days after His baptism. The Judean desert that we were in, between Jerusalem and Jericho, is an area that I feel could be frightening with a sense of impending hopelessness. Even in the daytime, some of this area seems like something kind of diabolical, especially with the types of wild animals that might inhabit this area. **No trees & very little vegetation at the time we were there. (Mark 1:12-13 NIV)** At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, {13} and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. **Mat 4:1 tells us:** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

The scriptures tell us that Jesus was 'led by the Spirit' into the desert to be tempted by Satan. (Matt 4:1) We don't know just where, and it could have been anywhere, but it is thought to have been in this area. It was only recently that the old Roman road to Jericho was improved enough for a tour bus to drive on. Even then, the road is very narrow and winding along steep mountain cliffs.

Just as Satan had, in the beginning, **tried to find out if man could become God** (Gen 3), now he sets out to see **if God really could become man**, and, if so, **would he give in to the temptations to which all other humans had yielded?** In the forms of **Pride - Hunger - Power**, etc.? Satan is powerful, but is still limited by God (Job 1:12 **The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."** Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

and 1 Cor 10:13 **No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**

Could God's acknowledgement of Jesus as His Son after His baptism cause Him to have **enough pride to be susceptible to temptation?** Would a **"If you are ...."** challenge cause Him to respond out of pride (Prov 16:18)?

**"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."**

Would a **challenge** to show how His angel protectors could rescue Him be a 'weak link', or a **promise** of earthly power over kingdoms, and not just Israel, test His ego? The pinnacle of the temple would have been a very high vantage point with the temple itself built on a high mound, and a view from the top of the Mountain of Temptation just west of Jericho would have offered a view of four kingdoms - Moab, Edom, Syria, and Israel. **Or possibly Mt Herman, the highest**

peak in Israel ? – snow capped for most of the year. Mount of Temptation about 1180 ft. above sea level whereas Mt Hermon is 9232 ft.

Who won this 'first' contest? Satan did not gain what he was asking for, but Jesus was not too hard on him either. However, Jesus knew that the real battle and victory was yet to come. The Hebrew writer said:

**(Heb 4:15 NIV)** "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." and **(Heb 2:18 NIV)** "**Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**"

**(1 Cor 15:57 NIV)** But thanks be to God! He gives **us the victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Perhaps, one of our temptations is to shirk from moral responsibility by running away and hiding, or turning our head in the other direction from someone in need of assistance. Does fear cause us not to react at times? Is that a temptation of ours to not act or respond or become involved? I am, of course, leading up to an event that took place in this area between Jerusalem and Jericho - the "Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30-37). He did **not** look the other way and pass on the other side. The area along this road would very easily provide hiding places for bandits to wait for a traveler, and then there would be many hiding places for them afterwards. How would you or I have responded?

Some people 'escape' to some 'desert' place to 'hide' from Satan and temptation, and an example of this are the many monasteries that are built off in very remote areas in order to not have contact with the 'sinful' world. And there is one built on the side of the Mountain of Temptation, as well as others located in parts of the Judean Desert in very inaccessible locations on the side of mountain cliffs. Do we 'hide' within our church buildings and in the 'safety' of our church family to avoid 'Going out into all the world to teach and make disciples'? But, for Jesus, the desert was not a place to hide from temptation, but to confront it head-on.

Instead of hiding, there are three things that God has promised about temptation that we should remember: **(1 Cor 10:13)** (scripture on p. 4) **{13} No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**

- (1) No temptation has seized you except what is common to man,
- (2) God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle, and
- (3) When we are tempted, God will also provide a way out

And, God does not tempt us, but our own desires give way to sin, allowing it to conceive, and give birth to sin. Then sin can actually lead to death.

**(James 1:13-15 NIV)** When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; {14} but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. {15} Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Jesus used Scripture as His weapon against Satan. Should we not do the same?

### **A good antidote to temptation is a strong dose of Scripture, administered daily into the heart.**

Satan is very clever and deceitful. He is always on the lookout for our weak spots, so we need to always be cautious and watchful and ready to respond. When Satan realizes that we are not going to cave in to his tricks, he will go on to

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look for an easier target. When we have persuaded Satan that we belong to God, our lives will also demonstrate that by our faith and the resulting actions.

Jericho **is** the largest oasis in the Jordan Valley, **and** is about 850 ft. below sea level. A green & luscious area surrounded by desert.

Luke 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus and the sycamore tree  
Matthew 20:29-34 – Jesus healed the two blind men

**Going back, we are all familiar with Joshua's taking of Jericho (1406 BC), a very popular Bible event. And in Joshua 6:26 is recorded:**

**<sup>26</sup>At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before the LORD is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho:**

**"At the cost of his firstborn son  
he will lay its foundations;  
at the cost of his youngest  
he will set up its gates."**

**This was fulfilled about 550 years later as recorded in 1 Kings 16:34**

**<sup>34</sup>In Ahab's time (874-853 BC), Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its**

gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

**(Gen 3:5 NIV)** "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

**(Job 1:6-7 NIV)** One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. {7} The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

**(Job 1:12 NIV)** The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

**(Prov 16:18 NIV)** Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

**(Mat 3:17 NIV)** And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

**(Mat 4:1-11 NIV)** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. {2} After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. {3} The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." {4} Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" {5} Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. {6} "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" {7} Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" {8} Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. {9} "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." {10} Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" {11} Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

**(Mark 1:12-13 NIV)** At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, {13} and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

**(Luke 10:30-37 NIV)** In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. {31} A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. {32} So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. {33} But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. {34} He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. {35} The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' {36} "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" {37} The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

**(Luke 22:3 NIV)** Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.

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**(Luke 22:52-53 NIV)** Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and

clubs? {53} Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns."

**(Eph 4:26-27 NIV)** "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, {27} and do not give the devil a foothold.

**(Col 2:15 NIV)** And having **disarmed** the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

**(1 Cor 10:5-13 NIV)** Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. {6} Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. {7} Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." {8} We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did--and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. {9} We should not test the Lord, as some of them did--and were killed by snakes. {10} And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel. {11} These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. {12} So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! {13} No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

**(Heb 2:14-18 NIV)** Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- {15} and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. {16} For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. {17} For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. {18} Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**(James 1:12-15 NIV)** Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. {13} When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; {14} but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. {15} Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

(1 John 3:7-8 NIV) Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. {8} He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.