

First Sunday in Lent – Temptation in the Wilderness:-

In His identification with humankind the Lord Jesus was “*tempted as we are, yet without sin*” Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15. In these temptations which the Lord Jesus suffered and rejected we can find echoes of the ones we encounter and maybe fall into time after time. This Lent we need to take the opportunity to face up to what may be wrong in our lives and to come close to the Lord in repentance. We look at the temptations suffered by our Lord and some suggestions as to how they may apply to ourselves.

Remember that these temptations came directly after the ‘spiritual high’ of hearing the commendation of the Father in the voice from heaven – see Luke chapter 3, verse 22.

The Temptations :- Read Luke chapter 4, verses 1 - 13:- These verses could be entitled “The Battle with the Devil joined”. The phrase the Spirit “leading” Jesus into the wilderness comes in both Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels. Mark chapter 1, verse 12 gives us a more forceful description! It happened straight after the baptism and Jesus was acting under the compulsion of the Spirit. (See Hebrews chapter 5, verses 7 - 10).

Verses 3 – 4:- First there is the temptation of human need. Jesus is fasting; He is hungry. The Devil says “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” Note the “*If*” ! The Lord Jesus, here and throughout His ministry depended on His relationship with the Father. It is on record that He spent time alone in prayer. (e.g. Luke chapter 6, verse 12). He replies to the Devil quoting Scripture – “*Man does not live on bread alone.*” - Deuteronomy 8:3.

Verses 5 – 8:- In the second encounter of the Lord Jesus with the Devil, He is tempted to take a short cut to authority. The Devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. See Luke chapter 4, verses 5 – 7. No need for suffering and a cross. The Devil promises “*All this will be yours, if you worship me.*” Jesus replies: “*You shall worship the Lord your God. Him alone shall you serve.*” - Deuteronomy, chapter 6 verse 13. Note that the Devil is called “*ruler of this world*” in the Gospel of John chapter 14, verse 30 and the First Epistle of John chapter 5, verse 19.

Verses 9 – 12:- The final encounter is the temptation of the selfish use of power. A public spectacle would easily win the support of the crowds. Now in Jerusalem, the Devil makes Jesus stand on the parapet of the temple and again suggests that God would honour the relationship if it were true ‘that He was ‘Son of God’. And then the Devil quotes Scripture! “*If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here! He will give his angels charge of you to guard you . . . lest you strike your foot against a stone.*” (Psalm 91, verses 11 – 12). The Lord Jesus had the assurance that he was the Beloved Son of God the Father – Luke chapter 3, verse 22. He again counters the temptation with scripture “*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*” - Deuteronomy 6:16.

For ourselves, this Lent, we need to be aware that a time of blessing or heightened spiritual awareness can be rapidly followed by temptation or attack. If the Lord Jesus Christ himself experienced this vulnerability, then we His disciples should expect the same!

We should ask ourselves how far we are influenced by ‘wants’ rather than ‘needs’!

Do we really need those ‘extra’ advertised items?

Will it benefit my ministry / influence / authority if I ‘pull rank’ and take advantage of it?

Would a ‘miracle’ or two be a short cut to church growth? (Make the Church Great Again!)

Remember that the only ‘Influencer’ we need is the Lord Jesus Christ!

“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”
Matthew chapter 6, verse 33.

Terry Brighton 6 / 3 / 2025