

Lesson 45: Jesus, When Tempted, Resisted and Rebuked Satan

Have you ever wanted to just get away from it all? Perhaps some of us would like to find a quiet stream deep in some remote area. That's quite common in our culture.

You may have heard of the true story of Aron Ralston, a 27 yr old mountaineer and outdoorsman who wanted to get away from it all. He was an adrenaline junkie who liked taking risks and in April 2003, 27-year-old Aron Ralston took a day trip in Blue John Canyon in the remote Utah Canyonlands National Park. He violated the cardinal rule of such outdoor pursuits. He didn't let anyone know where he was going. He found himself in his element with just the beauty of the natural world around him. Then, eight miles from his truck, in a deep and narrow slot canyon, an eight-hundred-pound boulder tumbled loose, pinning Aron's right hand and wrist against the canyon wall and he encountered the line where death meets life, he finds himself facing death and a survival against the odds.

After running out of food and water on the fifth day, Ralston decided to [drink his own urine](#). He carved his name, date of birth and presumed date of death into the sandstone canyon wall, and videotaped his last goodbyes to his family. He did not expect to survive the night. Here is the actual video message that he recorded, pretty much expecting it to be his last will and testament.

After waking at dawn the following day he had an [epiphany](#) that he could break his [radius](#) and [ulna](#) bones using [torque](#) against his trapped arm. He did so, then amputated his forearm in about one hour, with his [multi-tool](#), which included a dull two-inch knife.

You can read Aron's story in its entirety in his book, **Between a Rock and a Hard Place** which is also documented in the 2010 film, **127 Hours** with James Franco

Immediately after his baptism, Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. Unlike Aron Ralston, he's not doing it because he's an adrenaline junkie or trying to escape the daily routine of life. Jesus is going into the wilderness to confront Satan and to overcome every temptation that Satan throws at him.

Why is this important? Because you and I will find ourselves in a wilderness-type situation from time to time, where we may be abandoned by others and find ourselves all alone, much as Aron Ralston when he was pinned against that canyon wall by an 800-lb boulder.

How do we handle temptations that we encounter daily? You may be in a financial wilderness right now where you don't have enough money to pay your bills and the creditors are knocking down your door and in hot pursuit to extract every cent that they can from you. Or you find yourself in the wilderness physically, and you're suffering in pain and doctors are not giving you any hopeful answers. What do you do? How do you face this physical suffering? Or a conflict at home where it seems that your marriage and family are falling apart. What do you do? How do you face tomorrow?

How do we endure when it seems like we're all alone. How can we face the trials and temptations that Satan sets for us like a trap?

We're going to discover those answers as we look at Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness.

After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River he was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. It has been said that when you discover that all you have left is God, then you will realize that God is all you need.

Jesus had all he needed in the wilderness. We need to remember that the wilderness was a difficult time for him. It is important to hold on to the fact that Jesus was fully human so that he felt real hunger when he didn't eat.

Before we begin, let's do a review of Lesson 44: God sent John to teach and baptize and John baptized Jesus.

1. What area of Israel did John the Baptist do his baptizing? **The Judean wilderness which descends down to the Dead Sea.**
2. John was preparing the people for what? **For the coming Savior, Deliverer, the Messiah.**
3. What message did John preach to the people? **That they must repent and change their attitudes towards God, themselves and sin.**
4. Has anyone ever kept all the commandments of God? **No one except Jesus. He is the ONLY one to keep all God's commandments which enabled Him to be the perfect, sinless sacrifice for all humanity.**
5. Many people believed John's message. Is it enough to just believe? **No, you need to repent and be baptized into Jesus.**
6. Remember the illustration of the cloth being dyed and taking on the color of the dye. We said that baptism implied what? **Identification. In water baptism, you take on a new identity.**
7. According to New Testament theologian N.T. Wright, what is the starting point in our Christian pilgrimage? **Baptism. In baptism, we are buried with Christ and raised to newness of life in Him.**
8. What were the 3 groups of religious leaders who resisted John's message as well as Jesus Himself? **The Scribes, Sadducees & Pharisees.**
9. What was John's testimony? When asked by the religious leaders, "Who do you say you are?" What was his reply? **"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord."**
10. If John baptized people for repentance, after they had changed their minds and hearts about God and sin, why was Jesus baptized? If Jesus did not sin, why was He being baptized by John? **Jesus was baptized to be our example so that we too would follow Him into the waters of baptism. Jesus was also baptized to be anointed as our Great High Priest.**
11. What did God the Father say as Jesus came up out of the water? **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."**
12. How did John know who the Deliverer, the Messiah would be? **God told John that when he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Him, He would be the One coming who would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**

Let's begin by reading **Matthew 4:1-11 (ESV)**

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

⁶ and said to him, "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, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall 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 glory.

⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Many people in our society today, having no understanding of saving faith, view what they call religion as a "crutch"—sort of a prop for people who can't stand alone. They do not realize that man cannot stand alone; all men need a Savior.

The story of Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness is a clear portrayal of our Lord and Savior, the only one who has ever FULLY obeyed the Father and resisted the Devil.

Yes, Jesus was gentle and meek; but He was also all-wise, all-powerful, holy Creator God. He will one day throw Satan and all who have followed him into the Lake of Fire.

A. Satan tempted Jesus.

Theme: Satan fights against God and His will. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He hates man.

Matthew 4:1(NCV)

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

God created Lucifer perfect. This is what God says about His creation of Lucifer:

Ezekiel 28:12-13(NCV)

You were an example of what was perfect, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You had a wonderful life, as if you were in Eden, the garden of God. Every valuable gem was on you: ruby, topaz, and emerald, yellow quartz, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and chrysolite. Your jewelry was made of gold. It was prepared on the day you were created.

So God is telling us that Lucifer was perfect, full of wisdom and beauty, and adorned with the most precious of jewels.

But then, look what happened. Let's read further:

Ezekiel 28:14-17(NCV)

I appointed a living creature to guard you. I put you on the holy mountain of God. You walked among the gems that shined like fire.

Your life was right and good from the day you were created, until evil was found in you. Because you traded with countries far away, you learned to be cruel, and you sinned. So I threw you down in disgrace from the mountain of God. And the living creature who guarded you forced you out from among the gems that shined like fire.

You became too proud because of your beauty. You ruined your wisdom because of your greatness.

I threw you down to the ground.

Lucifer became full of pride because of his beauty and he learned to be cruel and he sinned against God. Interesting that the Bible tells us that Satan learned to be cruel. And even today, cruelty is something we learn, and the best teacher of all is Lucifer himself.

In the book of Isaiah 14:13-14(NCV), we gain further insight into how Lucifer tried to take God's place in Heaven:

You told yourself, "I will go up to heaven. I will put my throne above God's stars. I will sit on the mountain of the gods, on the slopes of the sacred mountain. I will go up above the tops of the clouds. I will be like God Most High."

Lucifer who is now known as Satan made a choice to rebel against God in the very beginning. And notice he is challenging God's authority, and today, we see Satan using pride, rebellion and the challenge to authority all around us. He is causing us to do the very thing that he did in heaven, rebel against God and every authority that God has established here on earth. And he instills us with pride and arrogance so that we think we know better, so that we think we are wiser and smarter than anyone else, so that we think our way is the right way and no one else had better get in our way, or else.

Since the very beginning, Satan has been continually evil. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God, and now we see him trying to tempt Jesus to rebel against God, his Father.

Satan wanted to bring Jesus under his control so Jesus would not be able to be our Deliverer, our Savior.

B. The first temptation: Turn stones into bread.

Theme: Christ is man.

Matthew 4:2(NCV)

Jesus ate nothing for forty days and nights. After this, he was very hungry.

Although Jesus is God, He was also a real man. He became hungry and tired just as we do. Here's that scene from the film, *Son of God*.

When we are tired and hungry, that's when we are perhaps most susceptible to the temptations of Satan.

Theme: Satan fights against God and His will. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He hates man.

Theme: Jesus Christ is God. Yeshua (Jesus) is holy and righteous.

Matthew 4:2-4(NCV)

Jesus ate nothing for forty days and nights. After this, he was very hungry.

The devil came to Jesus to tempt him, saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell these rocks to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written in the Scriptures, 'A person does not live by eating only bread, but by everything God says.'"

1. **Turn stones into bread.** The first temptation picks up immediately on the fact that Jesus was hungry, that he had not eaten for forty days. The tempter said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

Here’s that scene depicted in the film, Son of God.

We need to ask the question: Is there anything wrong with Jesus turning stones into bread to satisfy his hunger? Jesus was on a spiritual mission and He was fasting. Satan wanted to preempt that mission and get Jesus to satisfy a material need without any thought of the Father’s will. But Jesus would not act independently from His Father. Jesus told Satan that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

I want to show you this very scene depicted in the film, **The Greatest Story Ever Told**. Now in this film which was made by George Stevens in 1965, he does a very interesting thing. He presents Satan, not as someone evil and ominous as what we just saw in the Son of God, but instead, he presents Satan as a kindly, old gentleman, who seems to care about Jesus and doesn’t seem malevolent or outwardly evil at all.

For me, this is how I think Satan comes to us—he comes disguised as someone who is gentle, caring, and seems to have our best interests in mind. He doesn’t come to us as someone who is scary or evil looking. He could come in the person of a good friend, or a relative, or a coach, or teacher. But his desire is always to distract us from doing God’s will, and in essence to abort any desire to please God or follow His plan and purpose for our lives. Jesus is saying here in this first temptation that it is better to be hungry than to be satisfied and living our lives in disobedience to God’s will for our lives.

C. The 2nd Temptation: “Throw yourself down from the temple.”

Theme: Satan fights against God and His will. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He hates man.

Matthew 4:5-7(NCV)

Then the devil led Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and put him on a high place of the Temple. The devil said, “If you are the Son of God, jump down, because it is written in the Scriptures: ‘He has put his angels in charge of you. They will catch you in their hands so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.’” *Psalm 91:11-12*

Jesus answered him, “It also says in the Scriptures, ‘Do not test the Lord your God.’”

Here is that scene depicted in the Jesus Film.

Alan Ross of the Beeson Divinity School writes: If the first test was in the realm of the physical, the second is a test of the spiritual. In fact, the test strikes at the heart of the previous victory. Jesus had escaped that temptation by showing that He was not just physical but spiritual, that He could accept the hunger and the weakness if it meant obeying God. And so Satan wants Him to do something spectacular

to demonstrate that He is spiritually perfect. Satan was saying to Jesus, “Very well, you have shown your trust in God in response to my first appeal; so now show your trust in God by flinging yourself from the pinnacle of the temple.” This, no doubt, was to be in full view of all the assembled people; they would witness that God was with Jesus in a very special way.

What is interesting now is that Satan himself quotes Scripture in making the appeal. He quotes from a psalm that says that God will give the angels charge over him so that he will not dash his foot against a stone ([Ps. 91:11,12](#)). The psalm is a psalm of trust, telling how God protects his people. **It was never intended to be claimed apart from practical wisdom. God promises to protect His people; but He has also given them common sense.**

Satan was quoting portions of Psalm 91:11,12.

- Satan knows the words of God in the Bible, but he uses them in the wrong way.
- Satan twists God’s words in order to trick people.

Remember how he tricked Eve? Satan asked her, “Did God say that you aren’t allowed to eat any of the fruit from the trees in the garden?”

Satan knew what God had really said to Adam, but he changed it just a little. Satan is a liar and a deceiver.

Theme: God is faithful; He never changes.

Satan told Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple to test God who had promised to take care of His Son.

Jesus did not have to test His Father to see if He would take care of Him.

Matthew 4:7(NCV)

Jesus answered him, “It also says in the Scriptures, ‘Do not test the Lord your God.’”

Here is that scene and what it might have looked like, from the 1965 film The Greatest Story Ever Told.

God the Father had promised to take care of His Son, so Jesus simply trusted His Father’s words.

Theme: Man must have faith in order to please God and be saved.

D. The 3rd Temptation: Fall down and worship me.

Theme: Satan fights against God and His will. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He hates man.

Matthew 4:8-10(NCV)

Then the devil led Jesus to the top of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor.

The devil said, “If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you all these things.”

Jesus said to the devil, “Go away from me, Satan! It is written in the Scriptures, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’”

- Satan could offer Jesus control over the people in this world because, when Adam rebelled against God and followed Satan, Satan became the god of this world.
- Satan had gained influence over the minds of the people of the world so he could lead them to do the evil things he had planned.
- Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him.

Allen Ross from Beeson Divinity School makes this observation:

There is no mountain in Israel high enough to see much of anything. But the idea is probably that the devil provided some vision of these kingdoms. And the promise was that he would give them to Jesus if only Jesus would fall down and worship him. Luke adds that Satan claimed he had been given these kingdoms and it was his right to give them to whomever he wished. Satan was saying to Jesus, “Look, you came as the king to inherit the nations. Here they are. Why go through the trouble of being the suffering servant to get to the crown. Give me one moment’s homage and I will abdicate.”

Allen Ross continues:

First, the offer was coming from the one who is the prince of liars. **Who would knowingly do a deal with the devil?** Jesus will later explain ([John 8:44](#)) that he was a liar from the beginning and the truth was not in him. **What a lie this was.** Did Satan actually imagine for one moment that the Son of God would believe him? Never would Satan have given him the kingdoms; that was simply the bait for him to bow before the evil one. Unfortunately, far too many people have believed the evil tempter. Adam and Eve surely did.

Second, all Satan could offer were the “kingdoms,” plural kingdoms--these warring, divided, conflicting powers and races in the world. Who wants them? But, the Father had promised the Son a Kingdom, united in peace and righteousness and harmony. Of course, there is no way to inherit such a kingdom apart from redemption, apart from changing human nature to make it fit for the kingdom, for without it there would never be peace and harmony in the world. **Satan’s offer is a cheap substitute.**

Allen Ross really sums it up: Everything Satan offers us is always a “cheap substitute” of that which God wants to give us.

You might remember that....

In the beginning, Satan tried to take God’s position as the ruler of the whole universe. Satan failed, but many angels followed him. Then Satan took control of the human race so that they would worship and serve him. Satan knew that Jesus was God’s Son, so Satan tried to take God’s place by asking Jesus to worship him.

Here’s that scene depicted in the Jesus Film.

All who have not been delivered by God from Satan’s control are serving Satan instead of God. Jesus defeated Satan by telling him what God really says in the Bible. Jesus did not change God’s words as Satan did.

Theme: Jesus Christ is holy and righteous.

E. Jesus is God

Theme: Jesus Christ is God. Theme: God is supreme and sovereign.

Furthermore, Jesus is far greater than Satan: Jesus is also God.

- In the beginning, He created Satan as Lucifer, an important and beautiful angel who should have served God.
- Jesus will one day throw Satan into the Lake of Fire which God prepared for him and all his followers.

Satan, that rebellious, created spirit being, could not make Jesus sin. Satan is a strong enemy, but he is no match for Almighty God. The battle is not at all like men show it. God is not a “force”; He is a Spirit.

As Allen Ross puts it, The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness “...ends with Christ’s victory over the tempter because of His knowledge and use of the word of God. The attack of Satan was made against every vulnerable point--hunger, trust, and responsibility--and when these were held firmly, there was no other area the devil could attack. He struck at the material or physical need of food, but he found one who knew the spiritual was more important than the physical; he struck at the spirit’s confidence in God, but found one whose trust in the Father did not need testing; and he struck at the carrying out of the divine commission, but found one who was determined to carry out that plan in a divine way. Thus was Satan defeated.

F. The Power of God’s Scripture

One very clear one would be the necessity of knowing Scripture, knowing what God’s will is (not for a career for your life, but the day in and day out spiritual life of devotion and obedience to God). This involves both understanding and being able to use the word of God in making choices between what is good and what is evil.

Each of these temptations dealt with knowing what is most important in life--obeying the word of God--and not living only to satisfy the flesh, or making a living, or using spiritual resources just to meet physical needs.

I think there are several lessons here for each one of us. You can probably meditate on these for a while and find other examples of how the temptations would work in life, and how knowing what God wants would prevent them. The bottom line is that Jesus demonstrated for us how to achieve victory over temptation. In other words, we do not have to sin.

One thing that the rabbis taught on temptation is helpful. You work the issues and temptations and choices out like a business person, with a profit-loss ledger. If you make this choice and do this, what are the benefits, and what will the cost be? In many cases the cost, including fallout afterward, is just too high. A wise decision will count the cost.

G. Satan left Jesus for a short time.

Matt. 4:11 (NCV) "So the Devil left Jesus, and angels came and took care of him."

Theme: Satan fights against God and His will. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. He hates man.

Theme: Jesus Christ is holy and righteous.

Satan knew he was defeated, so he left Jesus for a while.

But Satan came back many, many times and tried in every way he could to get Jesus to disobey God.

Hebrews 4:15-16(NCV)

For our high priest is able to understand our weaknesses. When he lived on earth, he was tempted in every way that we are, but he did not sin.

Let us, then, feel very sure that we can come before God's throne where there is grace. There we can receive mercy and grace to help us when we need it.

H. Conclusion

Jesus is the only one who has ever fully obeyed God and resisted the Devil.

Jesus Christ was fully man; He is also God. He is the only one who can deliver us from sin, Satan, and death.

So what we have seen here in this lesson is the great drama between Satan and Christ. It ends with Christ's victory over the tempter because of His knowledge and use of the word of God. The attack of Satan was made against every vulnerable point--hunger, trust, and responsibility--and when these were held firmly, there was no other area the devil could attack.

He struck at the material or physical need of food, but he found one who knew the spiritual was more important than the physical; he struck at the spirit's confidence in God, but found one whose trust in the Father did not need testing; and he struck at the carrying out of the divine commission, but found one who was determined to carry out that plan in a divine way. Thus was Satan defeated.

Next Lesson 46: Jesus begins his public ministry: The Choosing of His First Disciples and His First Miracle.