

THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

- NEW TESTAMENT -

CHAPTER 10

Tempted of the devil

Matthew 4 vv 1-11

Mark 1 vv 12 and 13

Luke 4 vv 1-13

When Adam, still sinless, walked in that glorious Paradise, God made a covenant with him. That covenant was named the COVENANT OF WORKS. Adam was the head of the covenant of works. If he obeyed God and His commandments, then he would by that means earn eternal life himself.

Alas, Adam did not obey. He was disobedient and ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this way he had broken the covenant of works.

But then God revealed in Paradise the COVENANT OF GRACE. The Lord Jesus is the head of the covenant of grace. There, God promised that the Lord Jesus would come.

Adam could no longer merit salvation, no the whole human race can never be saved by its own efforts. Yet God's people will be brought to heaven, through grace. Another would earn salvation for them. The Lord Jesus would come and He would indeed obey. Moreover He would bear the punishment in the stead of all His people.

Now the Lord Jesus HAS come. Often the devil had attempted to prevent it, but he always failed.

Yes, when the Lord Jesus was born, the devil was quick to try to murder that Child. Herod had all the little children in Bethlehem and its surroundings slain.

But God was in front of the devil and when the massacre began in Bethlehem, the young Child Jesus was out of reach of the murderer and on the way to Egypt. So that plan too, failed.

Now the Lord Jesus is a thirty-year-old Man. The devil cannot stop Him now, for He has come. What now?

I know that this part is difficult for you, children, but I must tell something about it. Pay careful attention.

The devil had succeeded in tempting Adam, the head of the covenant of works. Oh, if now he could also succeed in tempting the Lord Jesus, the Head of the covenant of grace, then the victory would be his. Then not one man could ever be saved. If the Lord Jesus committed but one sin, then He could never pay for the sins of others, then He would have to suffer and die for His own sin. Then He could never be the Saviour.

The devil intends to try just that. Who knows, (thinks he), perhaps he will succeed. He will do his very utmost. He hopes that the Lord Jesus will be disobedient too, and then - then, he, the devil is the winner and God the loser. Children, that cannot of course, happen. God never loses!

I will now tell you how the devil tried to do this. Just listen.



The desert where the Lord Jesus was tempted

Through a wild, lonely wilderness there wanders a man. It is a desert full of rocks and deep, sheer precipices. No one lives there, no one can live there. Only wild animals creep about stealthily. Yet in these inhospitable surroundings there walks a Man. Who is He? — What is He doing there? — That lonely Man is the Lord Jesus.

In the last chapter we told you that Jesus was baptised by John. Directly afterwards the Lord Jesus departed, and sought solitude. Why? — Just read what the Bible says: "To be tempted of the devil".

There, the Son of God dwelt among the wild beasts. For days, for weeks He remains there, alone. Alone? - No, the devil is close by, and he will try to tempt Him.

Eat? - No, the Lord Jesus does not eat, for there is nothing to eat. For forty days and forty nights the Saviour lives there without

partaking of any food.

Can you still remember, that Moses was forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai, without food and drink? Can you still remember how the prophet Elijah fled before Jezebel to Mount Horeb, and that he too did not eat for forty days and forty nights? That was a divine miracle.

Well now, the Lord Jesus too has been forty days and forty nights in this fearsome desert without food. At the end of this time He becomes very hungry. No wonder, for He has a normal human body which needs sustenance.

And then the devil attempts to make the Lord Jesus commit a sin. In that desert there may be no people, but the devil is certainly there.

All over the place lie large and small stones. Suddenly the devil says to the Lord Jesus "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." By this Satan means

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"Surely you don't need to suffer hunger. If you really are God's Son, show it. Demonstrate it. Change these stones into nice, nourishing bread, and eat as much as you like."

Yes, the devil was quite right, don't you agree? The Lord Jesus did not have to suffer hunger, for He was God almighty.

Yet the Lord Jesus does not do it. - Why not? Is He not able? — Well of course, Jesus is not only man, but as I've already said, also God. He can do all things. Later we shall tell you about many miracles which the Lord did.

But here the Lord Jesus refuses to perform a miracle for Himself. What? Should He follow the advice of the devil? Should He demonstrate to the devil that He is in truth the Son of God? No! Just read what answer He gives.

He says: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God".

It is as though the Lord says "No, devil, I need not care for Myself. My Father, who is in heaven, will care for me. If God does not bless the food, then it is no good to Me."

That applies to us too, boys and girls. The Lord must bless our food. That is why we always ask a blessing before eating. Thousands of people don't do that, they do not need the Lord's blessing. Others are ashamed to do it. what do you do? Are you ashamed too? No, surely not?

The Lord Jesus knows also that bread without His Father's blessing cannot feed. His Father knows what He has need of; knows that He is hungry. Shall Jesus then provide himself with food? Then it would be just as though He could not trust God, His Father. That would be sinful.

That is just what the devil was aiming at.

So you can see how dangerous the temptations of Satan are. The Lord Jesus knew the difference between good and evil, but often we do not. That is why we must repeatedly ask the Lord for wisdom.

The devil's attempt to make the Lord Jesus sin has failed. But he doesn't yet give up, no, he will now try again in a different way. Who knows, perhaps he will then succeed. How then is he going to try this time? Look, there next to each other at the top of the temple stand the Lord Jesus and the devil. In the Bible it says: On a pinnacle of the temple". That means "against the railing round the flat roof". On the highest spot then.

But, surely the Lord Jesus was in the desert? — And now he is in Jerusalem, for there stood the temple, didn't it? How does the Son of God come to be so suddenly in Jerusalem? Well, the devil took Him up, and He went with him.

There they stand now, and look below them. The temple was built on a mountain, so it started at a great height. Beside this, the walls of God's house were themselves high. Thus they look down into a double depth, a depth so great as to make one dizzy.

All of a sudden the devil says: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." We would put it thus "Just jump down there".

Again the devil says "IF". He means "You act as though you are the Son of God, now, just prove it". He wants the Lord to let it be seen. But the prince of darkness says still more. The first time the Lord Jesus had used a text from the Bible. Well now, the devil also will take a text from God's word. The devil knows the Bible too, better than we do. Do you know what he says? Just read it. "for it is written, He shall give His

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angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

By this, the devil means "You need not fear that you will crash headlong, for God, Your Father, will send angels and they will catch you and put you down safely on the ground".

Will the Lord Jesus do it? Will he demonstrate for once, that He really is the Son of God? We would, wouldn't we? We are so fond of showing off. We so much enjoy praise and honour. That is because we have an evil, proud heart. We do anything for self-glorification.

But the Lord Jesus does not do it. He refuses. But why? What did it matter? Surely that was not sinful? - Yes, boys and girls, it was indeed sinful, for it was not necessary.

That is why the Lord answers "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Tempt? — What is that? To tempt means in this connection to place oneself needlessly in danger. If the Lord Jesus had cast Himself down, then He would have challenged God wilfully imperilling Himself and that is sinful. That is why He refuses.

There is also a lesson for us here, children. How often we tempt the Lord. Especially perhaps boys are culprits here.

In the winter when it begins to freeze, and the ice is not yet strong enough, then you still go on to it, don't you? Why? - Well, then your friends will see how brave you are. You want to show them that you dare. You think that that is courageous. No boys, that is not courageous, you are tempting God. When you get up to any such dangerous pranks, then you are tempting God. We can tempt God in thousands of different ways. How often you too commit this sin. Take

note of this and refuse to do it. Forsake such foolhardiness.

Certainly, what the devil says is true. God will protect His people, but there is something else written which the devil purposely leaves out. The words are: "In all thy ways". The way down from the roof of the temple was the steps, and what Satan desired was impossible, for that was no way.

The devil twisted God's word. He always does that. The devil does not use the Bible, he misuses it.

This story is full of warnings, yes, for us.

This is the second temptation. This is the second time that Satan tries to induce the Lord Jesus to sin. Yet this attempt too fails. Well then, he will try a third time.

This time the devil takes the Lord Jesus to another place. Not that Satan has power over the Son of God. O no, but the Lord Jesus permits Himself to be taken. He goes voluntarily. They both climb a mountain, a very high mountain. Which mountain that was we do not know. Probably it lay near to Jericho.

When they reach the top at last, Satan shows the Lord Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He shows Jesus all the splendour and riches of the world. How he did this, we are not told. Only that it was "in a moment of time". "All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them", says the prince of darkness "if Thou wilt worship me". He wants the Lord Jesus to fall before him on His knees and worship him.

The Saviour had come on earth to strive with Satan. He would suffer and die. He would bruise Satan's head.

"Well," says Satan then, "that is not necessary. You can gain your end much more

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simply. You need not suffer and die. You can have it all from me for nothing. Just ask, and it is all yours."

Oh, what a temptation that is. We do not willingly undergo pain and suffering. If it is at all possible we try to escape trouble and anxiety.

Would the Lord Jesus do that too? Would He worship the devil, get all for nothing, without suffering, without dying?

No, boys and girls, the Lord Jesus does no such thing. What? Must He worship the devil? He came not to ask anything of the devil, but He came to defeat the devil.

The Lord Jesus is filled with holy indignation, for such a thing would DISHONOUR His heavenly Father. That is the finish.

"Get thee behind me, Satan" declares the Saviour's voice, "for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

The prince of darkness departs. He has to go. His infernal plan to make the Lord Jesus sin has failed. With the first Adam it had succeeded; with the second Adam, the Lord Jesus, it had failed. He goes away disappointed.

The Lord Jesus remains behind alone. Alone? - No, the heavens open, and angels come down into that lonely desert. And, we are told, they "ministered unto Him". His heavenly Father did take care of Him.

This chapter tells us a little about the conflict of the Lord Jesus with Satan. No, the Lord Jesus does not flee from the devil, but rather goes to meet him. He seeks the devil in the desert or wilderness.

Oh, the Lord Jesus will conquer. He cannot sin, for He is the Son of God. Here the great Redeemer was already engaged in freeing His people from the slavery of Satan. He strove with the prince of darkness and because of that, God's people shall sing for ever in glory to His praise.

Now, the great question for us is this. "Is He our Saviour?" If the Lord Jesus does not free us from the devil's chains, then no one can. Then we shall be eternally damned, with the devil. Ask then, day and night if He will help us. He can even now, but our lives are so short.

Who knows, those prayers may still yet be heard and answered.

What the devil did then to the Lord Jesus, he still does now. Satan tries again and again by temptations to lead us into sin. The Lord can give power to resist these temptations.