

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

It is interesting that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness specifically to be tempted by the devil (4:1). It was God's plan. Had Jesus faced no temptation, it could not be truly said that He was sinless, and as I mentioned yesterday, He had to be sinless to atone for our sins.

God does not tempt anyone (see Jas. 1:14), but He tests everyone (see Ps. 11:5; Prov. 17:3). One way He tests us is by watching what we do when Satan tempts us, just as He did with Jesus. Thankfully, God limits the degree that Satan may tempt us. Scripture promises, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Good to remember!

Jesus was tempted in every way that we are (see Heb. 4:15), so His wilderness temptation was not His only or final temptation. In fact, Luke wrote in his Gospel that after this incident Satan "departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). Satan looks for opportunities to tempt us when we are vulnerable, which is why we are admonished in the New Testament to "be on the alert," knowing that our "adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). We should, however, "resist him, firm in [our] faith" (1 Pet. 5:9). Faith in God's Word is our primary defense against Satan, because he is the father of lies (see John 8:44), and he would have us doubt the truth. That was his strategy against Jesus, but Jesus overcame him by faith, quoting scriptures that contradicted Satan's lies. We should follow His example.

Notice that Satan quoted God's Word in his second temptation. He quoted it, however, out of its biblical context, trying to make it mean something that it really didn't. God promised protection in Psalm 91 (a verse from which Satan quoted to Jesus), but not when we intentionally do something foolish, like jumping from a roof!

This is why it is so important to study the entire Bible, so that we can interpret every scripture in the light of every other scripture. The most common error in Bible interpretation is ignoring context. The Bible can be made to say just about anything by isolating scriptures. This is the chief reason people embrace false teaching and are lulled into cults. They don't know enough of the Bible, and so they are easily deceived by those who can quote a few verses.

Does Satan actually have, as he claimed, dominion over "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (4:8), and can he "give it to whomever" he wishes (Luke 4:6)? Only in one sense. From reading other scriptures, we know that Satan is the chief ruler over the kingdom of darkness. He only rules those who are submitted to him, being "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). He was offering Jesus the number two position over his evil realm, an opportunity to rule over every rank of evil spirit and every rebel human, which would have required that He commit treason against His Father.

Some, who ignore the biblical context of Satan's claims, ascribe Satan much more authority than he actually has, and make God less than all-powerful. Remember, the Bible affirms that God "is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes" (Dan 4:25, 32). Jesus and Paul both referred to God as "Lord of heaven and earth" (Luke 10:21; Acts 17:24).

The very first word of Jesus' very first sermon was "Repent!" It is through repentance that people escape Satan's dominion (see Acts 26:17-18). The call to repentance is part of the gospel (see Luke 24:47), and God confirmed Jesus' message with miracles of healing and deliverance. Doubtless one reason we see so few genuine and convincing miracles through today's evangelists is because God will not confirm a "gospel" that omits the call to repentance.