

No Easy Fixes - Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus and Israel. The gospel of Matthew represents Jesus as a fulfillment of everything that Israel was supposed to be from the beginning. The progression of Jesus' life and ministry follows a sequence very similar to Israel's history, and details in Matthew bring this out. Immediately before Jesus enters the wilderness, He is baptized, and the Spirit of God descends upon Him. This closely matches the glory cloud leading the nation of Israel through the waters of the Red Sea (see 1 Cor. 10:1-2) into the wilderness. Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness corresponds to Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. But where Israel failed repeatedly, Jesus succeeded. Jesus summed up everything that Israel as a nation was supposed to be and successfully accomplished her task. With His death and resurrection, Jesus brought the task of the priestly nation to its fulness, transforming her into the church. Jesus continues as our pattern. As the body of Christ, we should expect, as a church and as individuals, to pass through similar experiences as Jesus. From Him, we can learn patterns for resisting temptation.

God's Word. Jesus understood His role as personified Israel. When Jesus resisted temptation, He quoted Scripture, applying the situation of the nation of Israel in the wilderness to Himself. He had a thorough understanding of Scripture and skillfully wielded it to parry the attacks of the devil. Jesus knew its content. He interpreted and applied it properly. And He corrected misuses of it. In this also Jesus sets an example for us. The Christian church is a people of the book, and we must be skillful in using it.

Temptation 1: Self-reliance. Satan tempts Jesus with turning the stones to bread. Doing this would not only satisfy Jesus' physical hunger, but Satan also implies that it would cause him to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. In response, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, a portion of Moses' sermon about the Lord's provision of manna in the wilderness. Moses says that God brings His people into circumstances beyond their control in order to test their loyalty and obedience. Our loyalty is shown in how we act during times of helplessness. Will we rely on ourselves and our sinful solutions, or will we cling to the promises and commands of Scripture?

Temptation 2: Testing God. All of Satan's temptations were deceptive. There was no way that he would actually recognize Jesus as the Son of God. In this second temptation, Satan didn't actually believe that Jesus would be rescued by the angels. He wanted Jesus to die on the floor of the temple. Satan here was tempting Jesus to prove that God was with Him. If Jesus had thrown Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, then He would have been testing God. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, part of Moses' sermon about Israel's lack of water in the wilderness. While grumbling, the people challenged God, asking, "Is Yahweh among us or not?" They were testing Him by saying that they would be convinced of His authority only if He acted in a certain way. Like Jesus, we too must resist the temptation of placing our own expectations on how God ought to act just to manipulate Him for our own advantage (or grumble and blame Him for our troubles).

Temptation 3: False worship. Satan again tempts Jesus in a place where Israel failed. When doubts arose, Israel worshiped the golden calf (Ex. 32), attributing the great acts of redemption to other gods. Similarly, Satan enticed Jesus to worship Him, and in return he deceptively offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world. Of course, Jesus could not gain dominion in this way, and Satan could not have changed that if he wanted to. But the temptation was surely enticing because Jesus knew what would be required to wrest these kingdoms from Satan's hands. Worship is closely connected to dominion since the one who is worshiped is the one who rules. If Jesus had worshiped Satan, He would have set the pattern that would have resulted in Satan's continued dominion. Once again Jesus refused by quoting Scripture that possibly refers to the golden calf incident (Deut. 6:16). Similarly, we are often tempted in many different ways to distort true worship of God. This may happen by serving false gods or by worshiping our God in a way that is dishonorable to Him. But our ability to press out Jesus' rule over all the world will be greatly hindered if we fall to this temptation.

No Easy Fixes. Temptations often promise to provide something good in a quick, easy way. Each of Satan's temptations tapped into an actual need that needed be met. But they offered an easy way to acquire them, and very often this is the allure of sin. Jesus sets the pattern for us to follow in our own fight against temptation. His successful work on the cross in defeating sin makes our own victory possible. And by His resurrection, He transformed us, His body and the new Israel, into a type of people who can more ably follow His pattern.

	What Jesus would get (supposedly)	What Jesus had to do to get it	Jesus' response	Notes
Temptation #1				
Temptation #2				
Temptation #3				