

## Strengthened in Temptation

### **God's Word:**

*Matthew 4:1-11*

### **Key Verse:**

*"But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

- Matthew 4:4



### **Breaking It Down:**



Matthew 4:1-11 records the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by Satan. This event falls between two key things in Jesus' life on earth. It follows His baptism by John in the Jordan River, after which God declared: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:17) And it comes right before Jesus begins His earthly ministry of teaching, preaching, healing, and, ultimately, dying for the sin of the world. Thus, the events in today's passage are Jesus' final preparation before He begins his public ministry. We know this is part of His preparation because it is God who authorizes this period of temptation.

Matthew 4:1 tells us that Jesus was "led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." God does not tempt us to sin, but He does allow it in our lives when He knows we have the ability to resist.

Verses 1-11 show Satan tempting Jesus three times and, in each case, Jesus withstanding the temptation by knowing and properly applying the Word of God. The tempting doesn't begin, however, until *after* Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days and nights without food. Then, the first temptation goes directly at Jesus' weakness: His physical hunger. Satan not only challenges Jesus' identity – "*If you are the Son of God*" – he challenges Him to prove it by exercising His heavenly power.

Jesus resists both the challenge to His identity and His hunger, and responds with the words of Deuteronomy 8:3, which says that "Man shall not leave on bread alone, but

on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Thus, Jesus showed where He found His strength and sustenance: in the spiritual bread of the Word.

The second temptation repeats the challenge to Jesus’ identity and calls on Him to jump off the top of the temple in Jerusalem to prompt God’s angels to rescue Him. Again, Jesus turns to the Word of God in resisting, this time to Deuteronomy 6:16, which states that, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

In the third temptation, Satan offers Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world if He will bow down and worship him. This time, Satan has his eye on his ultimate goal: to usurp God and be worshipped. Jesus resists the temptation to claim what will one day be His (kingship), and refuses to worship Satan. This time, He not only quotes scripture, He sends Satan packing.

At verse 10, He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:13, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’”

This ends this period of temptation, but Satan did not give up. He wanted Jesus to fail and to sin against God. He wanted to stop the course Jesus was on, which was to defeat Satan’s last stronghold, which was death. But, we know how the story ends. Jesus died for our sins, but He rose again, becoming the firstborn of the resurrection of life.



### **Living It:**

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus “was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” He understands how tantalizing the devil makes sin appear, how he comes to tempt us when we are weak and discerns where we are most vulnerable. But our advantage is that Jesus shows us it is possible - even when our flesh is weak - to withstand the temptations of the devil. The devil didn’t approach Jesus until after He had been in the wilderness and hadn’t eaten in 40 days. Then, he went straight at Jesus’ weakest point by tempting Him to use His heavenly powers to turn stones into bread. But Jesus didn’t fall for it; He didn’t need to prove Himself to Satan.

I Corinthians 10:13 says: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and 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.”

Maybe Satan is trying to get you to try to take a “short cut” (in other words, cheat). Maybe he’s telling you it’s O.K. to tell a “white lie” (a lie is a lie and God hates



them all). Or, maybe he wants you to believe there's a better way than God's way and that His ways are "old fashioned" and the Bible was written for a particular time (but God doesn't change and His wisdom applies to all times because He knows the beginning and the end).

The bottom line is, Jesus showed us, in the final preparation for His earthly ministry how to defeat the devil: with truth. Specifically, knowing the Word of God and properly applying it. Stand in His Word and His wisdom and we have the strength to endure any temptation.

But to do that, we need what Jesus had: a thorough knowledge and understanding of God's Word. If we're going to find strength in our temptations, we need to be armed with the Word, so get to it. Study your Bible. Meditate on it. And be ready to stand against every temptation. Remember: You, like Jesus, are a child of God and can be equipped for every good work.



### **Questions:**

1. Identify the three places in this passage where Satan tempts Jesus. List the things he does and says in each temptation.
2. Identify the three verses where Jesus responds to Satan. Explain what Jesus uses to defeat Satan each time.
3. One tactic Satan used with Jesus and he uses with us is to tempt us when and where we are weak. Pray and ask God to reveal to you areas in your life where you are weak and therefore vulnerable to temptation. List at least two areas.
4. List three things you have learned from this week's lesson that can help you to overcome sin in your life.



### **Do It!**

Now that we know Satan tempts us where we are weak and we've identified areas where we struggle, find at least three scriptures that deal with these issues. Memorize them so you are armed next time you are tempted. If you are having trouble finding verses, ask for help from a mature Christian such as your parents, or youth leader, or teacher, or pastor.

