

JESUS DEFEATS THE DEVIL

Matthew 4:1-25

Key Verse: 4:4

"Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." '"

Today's passage tells us that Jesus was led by the [Holy Spirit](#) to be tempted by the devil and Jesus defeated the devil thoroughly. In the past the devil blocked all men from coming to God. But Jesus' victory opens to all men the possibility of coming back to God. We thank Jesus that he won the victory over the devil's temptations. 4:18-25 explains what Jesus did at the outset of his earthly messianic ministry.

I. Jesus was tempted (1-11)

First, the temptation of the bread problem (1-4). Look at verse 1. "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." Verse 1 says Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to confront the devil. In this case, Jesus was the challenger and the devil was the defender. As we know well, Jesus is gentle and humble. Jesus is never militant or belligerent. Why then does Jesus have to fight the devil? Jesus had to stand where the first Adam failed, at the temptation of the devil, whereby the devil captured all human beings as slaves of sin and darkness. As long as the devil rules the world, men are slaves of the devil, not children of God. This is the reason Jesus had to confront the devil and fight a battle. But the battle was not easy. Throughout history, since Adam gave in to the devil's temptation and lost the battle, the devil has defeated every man with the power of sin and death. Julius Caesar was a hero, but he humbly knelt down and bowed his head to the ground before the power and authority of the devil. Ghengis Khan, who had once conquered Russia, also humbly knelt down and bowed his head to the ground before the power and authority of the devil. This is the battle no one dared to challenge. Since Adam lost the battle the devil wielded his power over men and made them very fatalistic and sorrowful. But Jesus fought the battle with the devil and won the victory. The battle was so hard that Jesus was totally exhausted after the fighting was over. So the angel of the Lord came down and ministered to him. Jesus' battle with the devil basically solved man's fundamental problem. Now man can come to God freely and go back to his kingdom together with Jesus.

We cannot ignore the existence of the devil just because it is too horrible to think about. The devil is not ambiguous existence. The Bible tells us the devil was originally an angel and an important member of God's rule (Ez 28:14). When God worked with him closely, he became proud. Finally, he abandoned God's holy mission and left God. Soon he became the enemy of God. Jude 6a says, "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority...." In light of this verse the devil is the angel who abandoned God's holy mission.

The devil has many names: "Satan" (Rev 12:9), "evil spirit" (Lk 4:33), "ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph 2:2), "ancient serpent" (Rev 12:9), "dragon" (Rev 12:3), and "liar and murderer" (Jn 8:44). Among his names, "liar and murderer" is the most fitting name for him

because the devil's main weapon is lying to ruin God's people. He has many thousands of faces to deceive people. The devil is the adversary of God. He works passionately to hinder God's salvation work. Worst of all, the devil plants doubts in the hearts of the children of God. The devil makes men stumble so that they fall into the power of darkness (Col 1:13a). The devil blinds the minds and hearts of men so that they cannot see God and his kingdom (2 Cor 4:4). These days the devil rules people in the name of unlimited human freedom. The devil paralyzes men's consciences. The devil replaces a value system and moral standards in men with corruption and violence. But the devil cannot do such evil things to the end. Finally, the devil will be cast into hell. There, he will suffer eternal condemnation. Revelation 20:10 says, "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Look at verse 2. "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." Jesus needed fasting prayer for forty days in order to prepare for his earthly messianic ministry. After fasting forty days, Jesus was too dehydrated, drained and exhausted to fight anyone. The devil did not miss a chance. The devil was ready to tempt Jesus. Look at verse 3. "The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'" The devil knew that Jesus was so hungry that he might eat shoe leather after fasting forty days. The devil knew that Jesus needed bread. So the devil tempted Jesus to make bread by any available means, be they good or bad. The devil's temptation was very appealing and persuasive. If ordinary people were tempted by the devil with this bread problem, every one of them would say, "Yeah, you're right!" In a movie, a man was starved for a week as punishment. For the first two days he had no problem. But after several days, he began to eat cockroaches and all kinds of insects which appeared in his prison cell. After forty days of fasting, Jesus was very hungry. But Jesus did not use his supernatural power to make stones into bread as the devil suggested. Instead, Jesus relied on his Father for the provision of food. This is basic Christian faith. Otherwise we have nothing for which to depend on God.

We must examine this temptation very carefully. Why is the bread problem so serious? Before Adam's Fall, there was no bread problem; bread was freely given. But after Adam's Fall, man was cursed to eat bread through hard labor. Man also lost the holy mission to take care of God's world (Ge 3:19). From then on, Adam had to sweat a lot every day just to earn three meals a day for himself and for his children.

The bread problem is the future security problem. The future security problem is the money problem. Many people are shackled by this gruesome bread problem. One WIU princess' father died in a tragic accident. She was always sorrowful. But through 1 to 1 Bible study she accepted Jesus Christ and his kingdom as her living hope. So she made a commitment to write testimonies and pray with our fellowship. Her landlady, who is a Christian, should have been so happy for this one young girl's change in Jesus. But whenever she takes time off from work to attend our meetings, her landlady rebukes her saying, "You know, Bible study doesn't pay the rent!" Many parents do not support their children. So some grandparents have bumper stickers which say,

"We are spending our children's inheritance." The bread problem makes many people extremely restless. One man said, "Believing in God is good, but we must make money first." So he worked hard in a bank for 25 years and retired at age 55. Then he died of a stroke after a few months of retirement. He thought he was wise. But in reality he was a rich fool. Without God's blessing, no one is secure. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

What did Jesus say? Look at verse 4. "Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."'" Here Jesus teaches that man is both body and soul. Man must eat bread to maintain his physical body. Likewise, he must have God's word to feed his soul. Otherwise his soul dies. Communists believed bread would solve man's problem. But they completely failed because they could not control thirsty souls with gunpowder. Capitalists thought a rich life would make man happy. But rich life only corrupted man's body and soul.

Second, the temptation of an easygoing life (5-7). When Jesus defeated the devil with the word of God, the devil also made use of God's word to tempt Jesus. Look at verses 5 and 6. "Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."'" The devil tempted Jesus to try to fulfill God's will in an easy way, avoiding sufferings and death on the cross. The devil knew Jesus' agony of soul to obey the will of God to die on the cross as a ransom sacrifice. So the devil tempted Jesus to fulfill God's will in an easy way. The devil tried to persuade Jesus to take an easy way, saying, "You are good to obey God's will to die on the cross. But why don't you try a more intellectual, scientific, effective and easier way?" At this point the devil reveals his hidden intention. Look at verse 6. "'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."'" The devil is saying that if they saw this miracle all people would follow Jesus and listen to him when he preached the good news. These days, many people are brainwashed by the devil to think, "Easygoing life is the best!" Even young men follow the easygoing lifestyle. As a result, their spirits are corrupt and they are powerless to do anything. God made man to work hard and bear much fruit. Without working hard, there is no fruit. There are many sayings concerning this truth: "No pain, no gain." "No fighting, no victory." "No cross, no crown." The devil always tempts us by saying, "Why do you suffer so much? Take it easy, man!" The devil is always ready to deceive men to be easygoing and corrupt.

How did Jesus defeat the devil? Look at verse 7. "Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'" God's will for his Son Jesus was to die on the cross for the sin of the world. This was God's wisdom. Therefore those who want to avoid the way of the cross are not following God's truth; they are testing God. No man can doubt God's plan of world salvation through his Son Jesus Christ. But the devil tried to persuade Jesus not to obey God's will

through suffering and death, but to take an easy way. Jesus rebuked the devil, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." God's will is always glorious, but it is very costly. The devil always whispers to us not to suffer, but to take an easygoing way. We should not listen to the devil's lie. There is no easy way in the world. The way of the cross is the most glorious way.

Third, the temptation of political ambition (8-10). Look at verses 8,9. "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'" When we meditate on this verse we find it is the temptation of political ambition. Here the devil is saying, "You have to be a ruler of the world. If you become ruler of the world, how easy it would be to evangelize the whole world!" That's the devil's deception. No one can evangelize the world with political power. To fallen men, the desire to rise to political power is the strongest. History proves that many who wanted to be king killed their own fathers and brothers. In modern times there are many who want to be their own man. They are fallen men who want to be a king to rule others by any means like Vladimir Lenin. To fallen men, the desire to become a king to be worshiped is too great to control.

How did Jesus defeat the devil? Look at verse 10. "Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only." ' " We must grow in faith until we can say to the devil, "Away from me, Satan!" We must "worship God only." When Jesus depended on God's word from the beginning to the end, he won the victory over the devil's temptations. Mainly, Jesus quoted the words from Deuteronomy. He had absolute faith in God's word. He defeated the devil's temptations with the word of God. Then the devil sensed that he lost. The devil had never lost before, but he lost to Jesus completely.

II. Jesus begins his messianic ministry (12-25)

First, Jesus delivers messages (12-17). When Jesus began to preach the good news of great joy, the situation was not favorable. John the Baptist, who was so popular among men, had been imprisoned. The place where Jesus preached the gospel was the poorest and most desolate place, where the most sorrowful people had lived. At that time, the people of Zebulun and Naphtali were known as the most sorrowful and miserable people who ever lived in the world. But when the gospel was preached they were no more sorrowful. They became joyful. Look at verses 15 and 16. "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles--the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

What was the content of Jesus' message? Look at verse 17. "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" Jesus' message was the same as that of John the Baptist. Jesus believed that people should repent of their sins and come to God.

Second, Jesus calls the first disciples (18-22). Look at verses 18-20. "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,

Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him." It is surprising to know that Jesus called his disciples at the outset of his messianic ministry. Actually, Christians are not ordinary people; Christians are all learners of Jesus. Without a learning mind, no one can be a Christian. Furthermore, Christians are disciples of Jesus. One disciple is worth more than 100,000 cultural Christians.

Third, Jesus heals the sick with messianic compassion (23-25). Jesus was not merely a speaker; he was a man of acts. Wherever he went, he preached the message of repentance and the kingdom of God, and at the same time he healed the sick among the people. There were all kinds of sick people: those who were suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed. They came from all over. Jesus touched them with messianic compassion one by one. Then they were healed and they were overjoyed by heavenly joy.

Today we studied the temptation of Jesus. We cannot review them all. The bread problem is the most serious problem in this country. Even teenagers work hard to earn their bread when they should study hard. Many are sick with anxiety attack, heart attack, and hatred caused by the bread problem. At this moment, we must ask God's mercy that God may help us solve the bread problem from our hearts so we may be happy.