
Spiritual Warfare Part VI

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How did Jesus respond to Satan and Spiritual Warfare?

Matthew 4:1-11

In Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13, immediately following His baptism by John (John 1:29) and just before the start of His public ministry, Jesus was hammered and challenged by face-to-face Spiritual Warfare (Matt. 3:13-17; 4:12-17). Jesus was led out into the desert to be tempted by Satan with the destiny of His creation and humanity at stake. During this time, He fasted and remained true and loyal to who He was and to His mission to come. Satan pulled out all of his efforts and abilities in a futile attempt to convince Jesus to serve him. In so doing, Jesus would receive greater honor and glory *faster* by having more control. Does this sound familiar in your life too? The problem was that Jesus already was fully God, already owning total sovereignty, glory, and control. Satan based his attack on what he thought would be Jesus' greatest weakness, His humanity. However, Satan failed, as Christ, using His humanity and not His divinity as identification and model for us, defeated Satan's attack through Scripture, the Spirit, prayer, and obedience. We are in Christ so we are clothed in Him, so this tactic will not work on us, unless we allow it.

So, in Christ we have His love and power at our disposal. Satan's tactics can't work on us either unless we allow them to!

Look what Jesus did to combat Satan and his lies, temptations, and antics: He prayed and fasted. This went on for forty days! When we are in Christ and when He is working in us, Satan will try to attack us with all he has. He will use everything he can to convince us we have made a mistake and we need to trust in ourselves or any substitute other than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Look how Satan engaged in Spiritual Warfare with Jesus.

Satan thought he "had" Jesus, and attacked Him at the classic place of weakness in humanity. He used his lies and tactics against the Lord Creator of the Universe. Yes, Satan's chief job is to try to rob us of what God gives, but we have the power to stop him!

1. **The first temptation was Satan's appeal to the lust of the flesh.** Going without food for forty days must have made Jesus very hungry! Satan challenged Jesus' identity to try and break His obedience and satisfy His fleshly hunger. However, Jesus responded with Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live by bread alone..." We need to be dependent upon the Lord and His Word to help us fulfill physical needs.

2. **The second temptation was Satan's appeal to pride (5-7).** Again, he challenged Jesus' identity, and set Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, telling Him to *throw Yourself down!* Jesus again responded with the Word, quoting Psalm 91:11-12 and Deuteronomy 6:16. Satan also uses Scripture, but he abuses it by taking it out of its context and twisting it to serve his purpose. When we misuse Scripture, we are modeling ourselves after Satan! Furthermore, we should never even consider testing God!
3. **The third temptation had Satan appealing to the lust of power** by taking Jesus to a high mountain to show Him the kingdoms of the world. Then, Satan offered to give them to Him if Jesus would worship him (8-10). Jesus again responded with Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13; *you shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*

Jesus refused the easy path and the shortcut to power over the nations (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). The temptations ended, as our Lord was victorious without caving in to sin! You can call this "temptation, round one," because more confrontations were to come, culminating with Satan's defeat at the cross (Luke 4:13; Matt. 16:21-23). The great news is *we can do the same*; we can defeat Satan, because he is actually already defeated. All we need do is present to him Jesus the Victor! We share the same adversary and the same temptations Jesus did—Satan and the woes of life such as immorality, materialism, and pride (1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 2:15-16).

Jesus took our place, as our representative and example, in overcoming Satan! What He did on the cross pulled together the synergistic combination of the Holy Spirit working in us and the Word....so, you need not worry about the devil as much as you need to worry about and act on your character! This is a great comfort, because He overcame with the same power and ability we have; thus, we too can overcome tribulations and temptations, even from Satan himself (Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 12:2-3)! We can take heart that Jesus understands us and what we go through; therefore, we can never say, *but, but, you do not understand...* We overcome when we yield to His truth, example, strength, and faith! Do not despair; we have the same ability to overcome as Jesus had!

- We have the same tools to overcome Satan and temptations in general. Remember, Satan has already been defeated! We have the authority and ability to repel Satan by the blood of the Cross. However, we must never take him lightly, for spiritual warfare and our conflict with him are very real (Eph. 6:12)!
- Satan does not tempt us just to get us into trouble or to do wrong; he does it to distract us from God. Satan seeks to have us lose what God has to offer. By giving in to him, we are of no use to God, because we have bought the lie. Our outlook has gone from truth to fiction, from betterment for others and ourselves to causing harm!

- Jesus used the Word of God and prayer as both offensive and defensive weapons, and so can we (Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:17).
- Jesus was focused on God's plan, as we must be with our faith, trust, and then obedience to Him (Eph. 6:16; Heb. 10:35-39).
- The Bible, our faith, and prayer pack a three-fold attack and defense, which Satan does not have a chance of winning!
- When we abuse the Bible, we are behaving like Satan! When we use it well, we are modeling Christ (2 Pet. 3:16).
- We need to keep in mind our hope and our place in eternity (Rev. 2:10, 26-27; 3:21).

For us today, we can learn that we can trust and rely on our Lord. Material things will not satisfy us. Maybe they will for a while, but all we will have is longing for more, never satisfied. True spiritual nourishment comes from God's Word and our spiritual growth through worship, service, and prayer. When we abuse the Bible, we are behaving like Satan! When we use it well, we are modeling Christ (2 Pet. 3:16). Satan does not tempt us just to get us into trouble or to do wrong, but to distract us from God. Satan seeks to get us to lose what God has given or has to offer. In so doing, we are of no use to God, because we have bought the lie. Our outlook has gone from truth to fiction, from betterment for others and ourselves to causing harm! The way to spiritual maturity and the glory of our reward is not in finding shortcuts, but temperance through learning, experience, and overcoming adversities. It is a long and difficult process (Acts 14:22; Rom. 2:7)

Discussion Questions:

1. What were or are some of the biggest temptations that you have struggled with?
2. Why do you suppose the Spirit led Jesus to be tempted?
3. How important is being loyal to your family and friends? What about your loyalty to God?
4. Satan tried all of his efforts and abilities to convince Jesus to serve him. What might Satan do to get you to serve him?
5. Satan will attack us, which we should expect! So, do you? Why would some Christians believe they do not have to worry about persecution or hardships?
6. What can you do to stop Satan's threats and indictments from being appealing to you?

7. Satan's chief job is to try to rob us from what God gives. You have the power to stop him! What is that power, and how do you or can you use it?
8. Christ has overcome Satan with the power resources and abilities we have available to us. Thus, we too can overcome tribulations and temptations, even from Satan himself. How can this be a comfort to you?
9. Even the devil cannot stop God's plan for us. So, how does this passage affect spiritual warfare?
10. Which of the temptations Jesus faced would have tempted you?
11. What can you do to develop a response to Satan's attacks?
12. The way to spiritual maturity and the glory of our reward is not from finding shortcuts, but tempered through, learning, experience, and overcoming adversities. It is a long and difficult process. How can you make this a reality in your life?