

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

STUDY EIGHT

Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

God wants us to grow when He gives us a test. The devil is altogether different. His tests are always designed to make us fail.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IT must have been an emotional highpoint for Jesus when, at His baptism, the Spirit descended upon Him and He heard His Father's affirming words, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy" (Matthew 3:17). What a glorious moment!

On the wings of this favorable wind, we might think that Jesus would sail right away into public ministry. Instead, the Spirit led Him into the howling wasteland of the Judean wilderness where few people ventured. It was the ultimate setting for solitude, the perfect place to prepare spiritually for the demands and temptations of public ministry to come.

In the sun-scorched wilderness east of Jerusalem, jackals roam, water is scarce, and little vegetation grows in the blistered soil. These harsh conditions test human endurance to an extreme. Into this barren land, the Spirit led Jesus to be tested—not so much by the conditions but by the devil, an even deadlier threat.

Do we dare follow Jesus into this desert crucible, where the flames of the devil's temptations burn hot and furious? Thankfully, we have nothing to fear, for our Savior wins the battle and emerges worthy of His calling to overturn sin's curse and disarm the devil at Calvary. In this study, we'll grow in our admiration of Jesus, and we'll learn to trust Him and follow His ways through our own wilderness of testing.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Copyright © 2015, 2021 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In the silence and solitude of your Bible study, come to the Father with an open heart as you pray.

Father, how profound is Your compassion for me when I struggle with temptation. Never once have You shamed me or turned a deaf ear to my cry for help. I do not wish to fight my battles alone but always with Your aid. I turn to You as I turn to Your Word to encourage me and guide me in Your path, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you read *Matthew 4:1–11*, try viewing the temptations of Jesus through the eyes of Matthew's original Jewish readers. For the Hebrews, the wilderness represented a sacred *meeting place* with God and a *testing place*. After God led the Hebrews out of Egypt through the Red Sea, He met them in the wilderness. At Mount Sinai, God gave the law to guide His people in righteousness and guard them against evil. But when tested in the wilderness, they failed because of their disobedience.

Like the Hebrews, Jesus also went through water (His baptism) into the wilderness to be with God. But unlike the Hebrews, He passed His tests by obeying God's law. He proved Himself worthy as the ideal Israelite, the Messiah, who would fulfill God's covenant with Abraham to bless the world.¹



Observation: Three Temptations

Let's use Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method of observation to look closely at the tests that the devil uniquely devised for Jesus.² Jesus was divine but also fully human. Reflect on *Matthew 4:1–2*. What physical and emotional factors made Jesus in His humanity most vulnerable to the devil's temptations?



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

Let's observe each temptation, and then, in the interpretation phase, we'll analyze Jesus' response and draw principles we can follow when we're tempted.

The Temptation of Bread—Matthew 4:3

What do you observe about the devil's tactics in his first temptation in *Matthew 4:3*? Consider the Father's affirmation of Jesus at His baptism as "my dearly loved Son" (Matthew 3:17). Why do you think the devil began by saying, "If you are the Son of God" (4:3)? What attack was the devil making on Jesus' relationship with His Father?

The Temptation of Sensationalism—Matthew 4:5–6

What did the devil do next to tempt Jesus (*Matthew 4:5–6*)? What do you think the devil intended to accomplish by tempting Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple?



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

The devil misinterprets and misapplies *Psalm 91:11–12* in his attempt to convince Jesus to rationalize a sin of presumption—which is doing something foolish and expecting God to pull off a miracle. Essentially, it's testing God. Will God come through for us the way we want Him to? What do you observe about how the devil twists the truth to tempt Jesus to test God?

The Temptation of Power—Matthew 4:8–9

What was the devil's final test for Jesus (*Matthew 4:8–9*)? What perceived authority did the devil have to offer Jesus rulership over the world? *Second Corinthians 4:4* gives a clue.

How did Jesus respond to each of these temptations? Like a champion! Let's examine His responses as a model for us.

Jesus didn't play with the Enemy. The devil is no plaything. He wants your soul! Don't ever doubt it. He wants your marriage, your dreams, your successes. "Mr. Charm" wants you to team up with him. But Jesus told him, "No!" —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11



Interpretation: Jesus' Model Response to Temptation

Only Jesus has ever been tempted to turn stones into bread. We all, however, have been tempted to *distrust God's providential care*. How did Jesus respond when the devil whispered in His ear, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread” (Matthew 4:3)?

*But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say,
‘People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (4:4)*

Jesus quoted [Deuteronomy 8:3](#), which refers to the manna God provided the Israelites in the wilderness. What lesson was God giving the Israelites about trusting His care, and how did Jesus apply that lesson to His situation?

Write a principle from Jesus' example as a guide when you're tempted to distrust God's providential care for you. (Biblical principles are statements of theological truth that apply at all times to all people.)



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

In response to the devil's second temptation, Jesus replied, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God'" (4:7). Likewise, only Jesus was tempted to jump off the temple. We, however, will be tempted to *do something sensational, even risky, to test the Lord*.

By quoting *Deuteronomy 6:16*, Jesus referenced the Israelites' sin of testing the Lord at Massah, when they complained about lack of water, angrily shouting, "Is the LORD here with us or not?" (Exodus 17:7). They were forcing God's hand rather than waiting in faith. What lesson was God giving the Israelites about not testing Him, and how did Jesus apply that lesson to His situation?

Write a principle from Jesus' example as a guide when you're tempted to test the Lord.

In response to the devil's third temptation, Jesus put his foot down.

"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'" (Matthew 4:10)



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

Jesus quoted *Deuteronomy 6:13* from Moses' sermon to the Israelites before they entered idol-filled Canaan. What lesson was God giving the Israelites about serving Him alone in an idolatrous culture, and how did Jesus apply that lesson to His situation?

Write a principle from Jesus' example as a guide when you're tempted to serve the worldly gods of our age.

When tempted, Jesus did what the Israelites should have done back in Old Testament times—as well as what we should do today: *quote Scripture and obey it*. He is our model and our Savior, our example to follow in our battle with sin and our Champion in defeating the Enemy.



Correlation: The Devil's Tactics from the Beginning

We can trace his diabolical strategies back to the garden of Eden. According to Satan, God couldn't be trusted. Satan insinuated that God was keeping something good from Adam and Eve, and they deserved the fruit's seductive power to make them wise like God.



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

Compare *Genesis 3:1–6* with what you've studied about the devil's temptations of Christ. Notice how Satan twisted God's words, sowed seeds of doubt in God's goodness, offered tantalizing pleasures, and hid devastating consequences. What similarities do you see in the devil's tactics?

The goal of the Enemy is to lead you into the realm of sin and hold you there. Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, cost you more than you want to pay. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Four Reminders and Warnings

As we consider Satan's tactics, let's keep four vital principles in mind to help us say no to temptation.

1. *Satan is a defeated enemy, so don't be afraid of him or intimidated by his temptations.* We have the Spirit of Christ in us who is greater than the spirit of the Adversary (1 John 4:4).
2. *Scripture is alive and powerful, so don't hesitate to stand on the Word of God.* Study the Word, memorize it, and put it into practice.
3. *The Savior is your shield and sustainer, so don't lean on your own strength.* Christ understands our weaknesses, and we can depend on His strength.
4. *Sin is a choice, so remember that you don't have to yield to temptation.* Like every other Christian, you can use your power of choice to say no to sin and yes to God's right path.



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11

How can you put these principles into action today? What verses might you memorize to fend off temptation's attacks?

The poison in every cup of temptation is distrust of God's goodness. As you close this study, write down a prayer affirming your trust in Christ as your Good Shepherd who will lead you in paths that are good for you. You don't need what sin offers because you have all you need in Christ's sufficient provision.

Had Jesus succumbed to the devil's tests, He would have disqualified Himself not only as King but also as Savior. He would have joined the world rather than redeemed it and lost His ministry before it had even begun. Much was at stake, but thankfully Jesus prevailed, and with His help, so can we.



Acing the Devil's Tests

Matthew 4:1–11



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I claim Your power through Your Word and Your Spirit to guide me into victory over sin. Thank You for Jesus who defeated the devil in His hour of testing and is able to come to my aid during my tests. I trust You wholly as my Rock, Redeemer, and Faithful Friend. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. According to Paul, the Israelites passing through the Red Sea was a kind of baptismal experience (1 Corinthians 10:1–2). God intended His redeemed people to be a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation” (Exodus 19:6), representing God to the world. However, they failed in this mission. According to Hebrews 5:5, God chose His Son to fulfill Israel’s priestly role when God announced, “You are my Son. Today I have become your Father,” after Jesus passed through the water of baptism.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”

