



THE LIFE AND TIMES

of

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Water & Wilderness
Baptism's Blessing &
Temptation's Triumph



Matthew 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11, and Luke 3:21–23a

Jesus baptism took place in the Jordan River around AD 29, in a time of heightened messianic expectation. The Jordan River flows through the Great Rift valley, descending sharply from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea (the lowest point on earth), creating a setting of stark contrasts between lush riverbanks and surrounding arid wilderness. Near the traditional baptism site in the lower Jordan, the river moves through a valley framed by rocky hills.





Baptism was a recognized Jewish purification rite, but John's version stood out in a powerful way. Traditional Jewish washings focused on ceremonial cleansing for ritual purity, but John's baptism called for true repentance, a deep spiritual renewal, and a fresh covenantal alignment. It summoned Israel to realign their hearts with God's promises and expectations, preparing the way for the Messiah.

At Jesus Baptism one of the first things we see is the **Trinitarian presence** displayed with clarity. All three Persons of the Godhead are present. The Father speaks from heaven, affirming the Son's divine identity and mission. The Son stands in the water, submitting to baptism and identifying fully with humanity. The Holy Spirit descends in bodily form like a dove and rests upon Him, anointing Jesus for ministry.

This simultaneous appearance of **Father, Son, and Spirit** serves as a direct biblical witness to the Trinity, one God existing in three distinct Persons, perfectly unified in purpose. As conservative biblical scholarship has long recognized, the Father's declaration, the Son's submission, and the Spirit's descent together reveal the relational unity within the Godhead, each Person distinct yet working in complete harmony to confirm Jesus' humanity, deity, and mission.





At this point Jesus was **about thirty years old** as He stepped into public ministry. That age appears to be no coincidence. Jewish tradition marked thirty as the time when priests and Levites took up their full duties (Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, and 47). It was also the age at which the prophet Ezekiel received his prophetic calling.

In the first-century Jewish world thirty represented maturity, a balance of energy and wisdom. God's timing was intentional. It highlights preparation and readiness rather than haste, and it models for us the importance of allowing time for spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth before assuming public leadership.

The text of Jesus baptism prompts a question:

Why was a sinless Jesus baptized?

Jesus supplies a direct answer in Matthew 3:15: “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

John’s baptism called people to repentance, yet Hebrews 4:15 declares *Jesus was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, yet without sin*. He sympathizes completely with our weaknesses because He took on our humanity fully, but He remained untouched by sin.





In the Old Testament, righteousness often refers to living in complete obedience to God's law and fulfilling the prophetic promises.

First, Jesus is fulfilling this by stepping into the full scope of that covenantal righteousness. He identifies with Israel's call to repentance, completing John's preparatory ministry, and embodying the perfect obedience the law demanded - but no one had ever achieved.

Jesus identified fully with sinners in His baptism.

By stepping into the waters that stood for repentance, He aligned Himself with a people who needed grace, even though He needed none Himself. This foreshadowed the cross, where He would bear our sin in His body.

Second, the baptism marked the public launch of His ministry. It was the commissioning moment. The Spirit descended, the Father spoke in affirmation, and the Son stood obedient and ready. The Trinity appeared together, confirming His role as Messiah.





Third, Jesus' baptism set the example of perfect obedience. In submitting to the Father's will here, He established the pattern of surrender that every follower is called to follow. The sinless Savior teaches us that baptism is ultimately about yielding completely to God's will and God's mission.



Place your response in Chat:


What did you learn about Jesus' baptism that you didn't know before?

Have you been baptized to testify of your faith in and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13

Fresh from the baptism **Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to face temptation.**

Testing followed right on the heels of the baptism. The wilderness was a **barren, rocky plateau in the Judean Desert**, cut by deep *wadis* (dry riverbeds that can suddenly flood with runoff from distant rains, ending in steep cliffs and abrupt slopes separating plateaus) that drop toward the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley. It is a place of isolation, scarce water, extreme heat by day, and few travelers, the very picture of a place of testing.



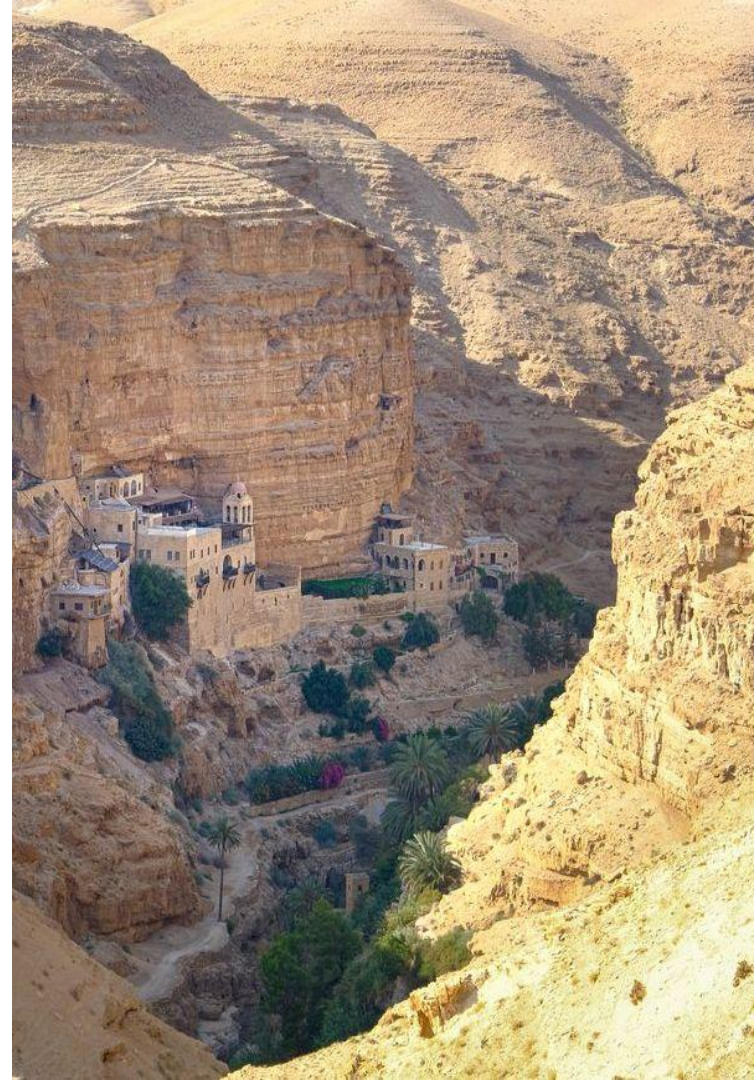
Wadi Qelt - a deep canyon and stream that runs from the Jerusalem hills to the Jordan River near Jericho. Known historically as a treacherous "valley of the shadow of death" It features Roman aqueduct ruins and the stunning 5th-century St. George's Monastery.



Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights. After such an extended period. Secular medical observations of prolonged water-only fasts note significant physical effects: the body of a grown man can lose 40 to 60 pounds as it shifts into starvation mode, breaking down muscle tissue for energy, leading to **profound weakness, fatigue, and reduced capacity.**

Mentally, studies show increased stress hormones, possible cognitive fog, and heightened vulnerability. Jesus, in full humanity, faced the enemy in this state of real human limitation.

The word translated “tempted” in these passages is *peirazō*. In the Greek of that day, *peirazō* often referred to **testing** something to determine its quality, much like a metalsmith tests the quality of their materials.





Satan is **testing in the darker sense** of attempting to cause failure. The adversary is the devil, *diabolos*, the **slanderer** and accuser of God's people (Revelation 12:10). Scripture presents him not as a symbol or abstract force, but as a **real spiritual/personal being** (the adversary of God and His people) who seeks to oppose truth, accuse the righteous, deceive nations, and destroy what God has made.

The Bible identifies him as the thief who comes only to **steal, kill, and destroy** (John 10:10), operating not merely against individuals but against families, societies, and even nations. He is **a liar and the father of lies** (John 8:44), often working through partial truth to advance error. According to the apostle Paul, he **blinds the minds of unbelievers** (2 Corinthians 4:4), so that truth and reality itself appears distorted and even reversed.

This understanding is not new to the Church. **John Bunyan**, the Puritan writer, observed that Satan's chief strategy is not always spectacle or noise, but deception. He wrote: "*The devil is an enemy to man's soul, and he labors continually to **keep the soul in darkness** and bondage.*"

That same insight appears in *The Screwtape Letters*, where the senior tempter instructs his apprentice devil with a warning about how the enemy prefers to operate. **C. S. Lewis** points out that the devil works quietly, steadily, and deceptively **until error feels normal and darkness feels reasonable.**

Lewis writes: "*The safest road to Hell is **the gradual one**, the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, **without warning.***"

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HATE.

(John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I)



Place your response in Chat:

What did you learn about Jesus' testing in the wilderness that you didn't know before?

What partial truths do you need to avoid to stay clear of darkness, temptation and sin?

Scripture pulls back the curtain, a bit, on the devil's origin with sobering insight: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12).

Jesus Himself declared, "**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven**" (Luke 10:18).

This is whom Jesus meets in the wilderness.



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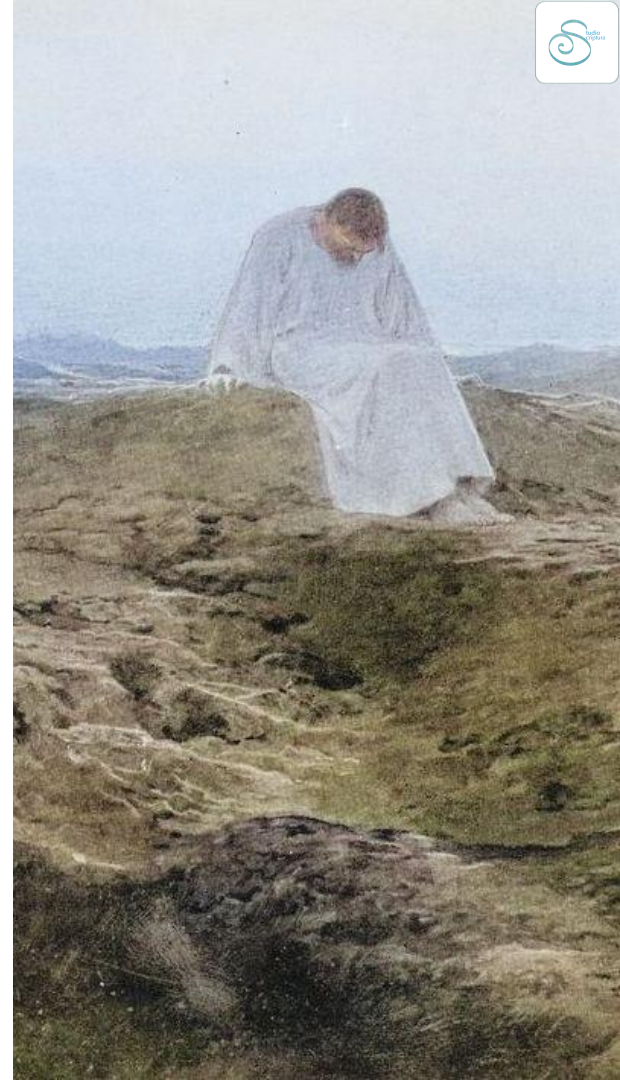
(John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I)



Mark uses *ekballō*, a forceful term that literally means “drove” or “cast out,” suggesting urgent divine compulsion of Jesus into the wilderness. The Holy Spirit orchestrates this encounter to ready Jesus for ministry.

As **Calvin observes**: *the Spirit's action displays divine initiative, ensuring that Jesus' temptation unfolds according to **God's redemptive plan** rather than Satan's whim.*

The temptation is not merely moral testing, but messianic validation. This testing was not accidental. It confirmed His fitness to serve as the promised Messiah. The wilderness became the proving ground where the obedient Son demonstrated His readiness to carry out the Father's mission.





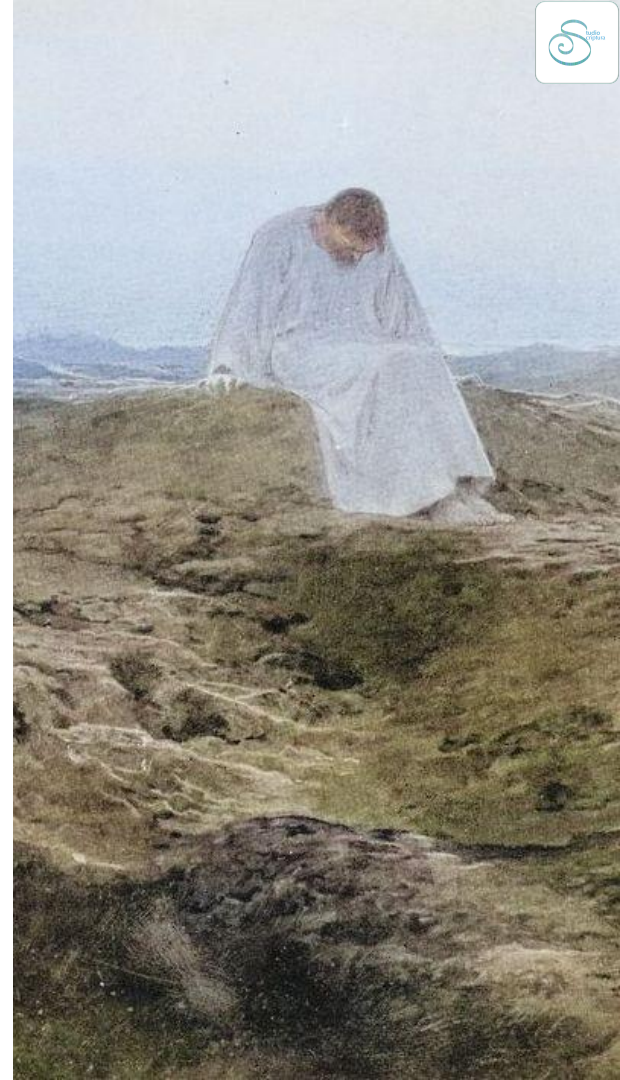
At the heart of this account is **Jesus' success set against the failures of Israel and Adam**. Israel endured forty years in the *wilderness* yet fell through unbelief and disobedience. They complained about manna and tested God at Massah, as Hebrews 3:16–19 and 4:6 record. Their unbelief barred them from God's rest.

But Jesus, the faithful Chosen Servant, succeeded over forty days in a similar desolate setting. **He was victorious where Israel failed**. Jesus travels the road Israel could not, opening the way to true rest for His people. Jesus retraces Israel's steps **but walks them in perfect obedience**.

Simultaneously, **Jesus triumphs as the Second Adam.** Adam's failure brought sin and death to the entire human race. **Romans 5:12** states, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Yet Jesus faced temptation under the harshest conditions, and **His victory brought life.**

Romans 5:15 declares, "But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many."

The same contrast appears in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49. **Jesus, the last Adam,** reverses the first Adam's failure in Eden and secures righteousness for all those of faith.





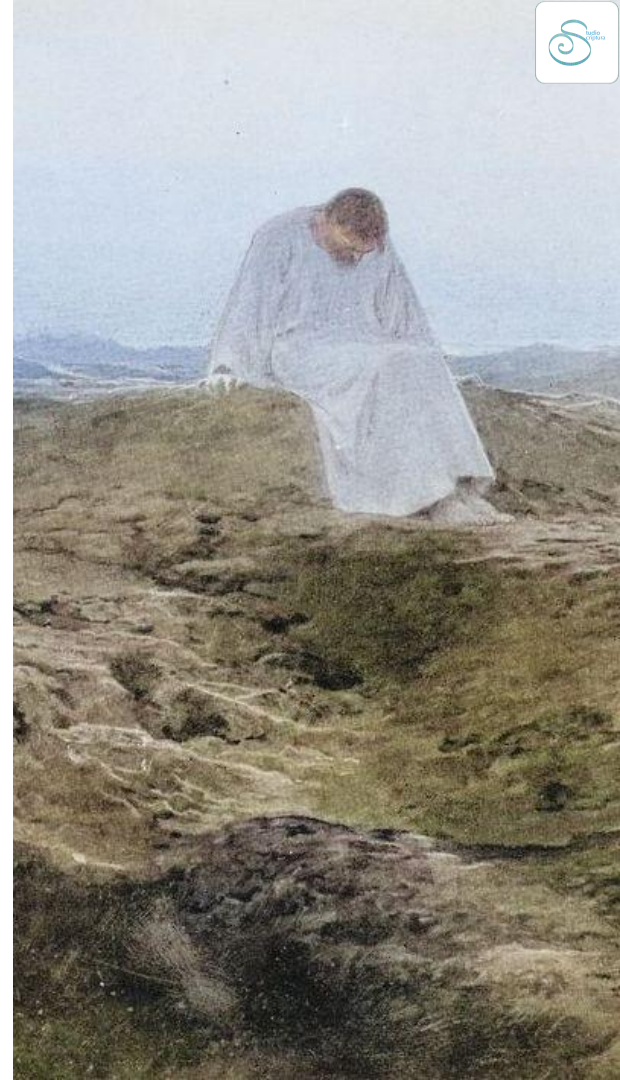
This is what theologians call **Federal Headship**. Adam acted as the representative head of humanity, and his disobedience affected all who descended from him.

In the same way, Christ stands as the representative head of all who trust Him in faith. His obedience counts for those who belong to Him.

Where **Adam's failure brought condemnation, Christ's obedience brings justification.**

Luke's genealogy, placed between baptism and temptation, **clearly links Jesus back to Adam,** underscoring that the obedient Son succeeds where the first son failed. By one Man's obedience many are made righteous.

The imbalance is not that we inherited Adam's sin (we would have sinned all by ourselves) but that Jesus died in our place and credited us with His righteousness.





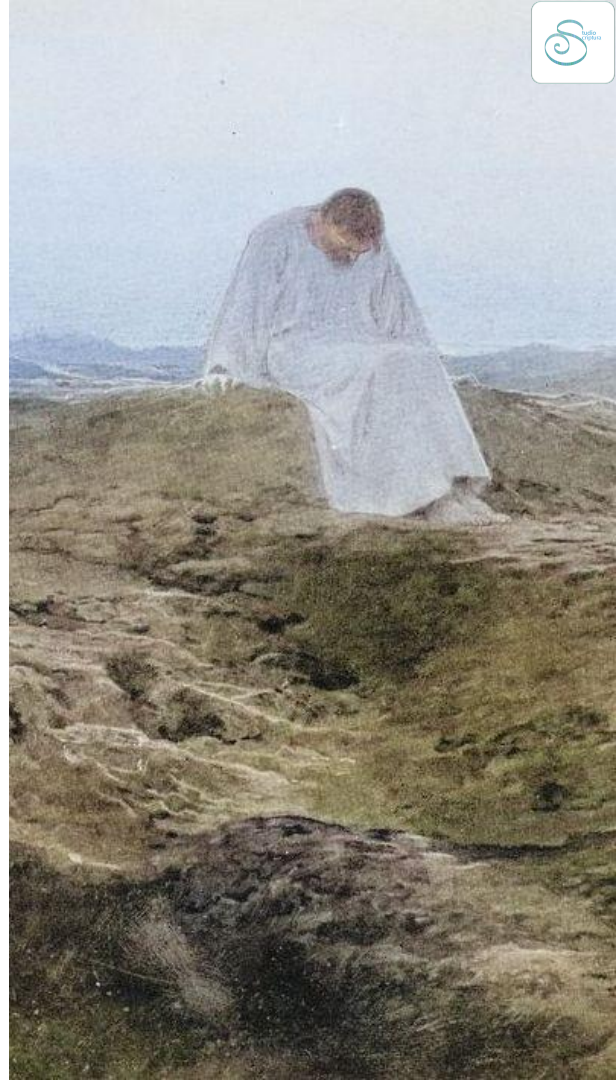
Jesus' victory over temptation rested on Scripture. Each passage Jesus quoted **came from Deuteronomy**, the book given to Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land.

By answering from that book given to Israel as they were about to exit the wilderness, Jesus showed Himself to be the faithful Israelite who trusted the Father and **trusted the power of the Word.**

The Temptations

First, the tempter said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread” (Matthew 4:3; Luke 4:3, NKJV). This was designed as **a double-tap approach** by the devil: doubt and lust. Notice he says “if” you are the Son of God. The adversary was not asking a question but attempting to introduce doubt about what God had already declared at the baptism of Jesus: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17, NKJV).

This is similar to the very **first temptation in the garden**, where he creates doubt by questioning God’s Word: “Has God indeed said...?” (Genesis 3:1, NKJV). Then comes the lust of the flesh, pressing on real hunger after forty days of fasting in that weakened physical and psychological state (Matthew 4:2; Hebrews 4:15).



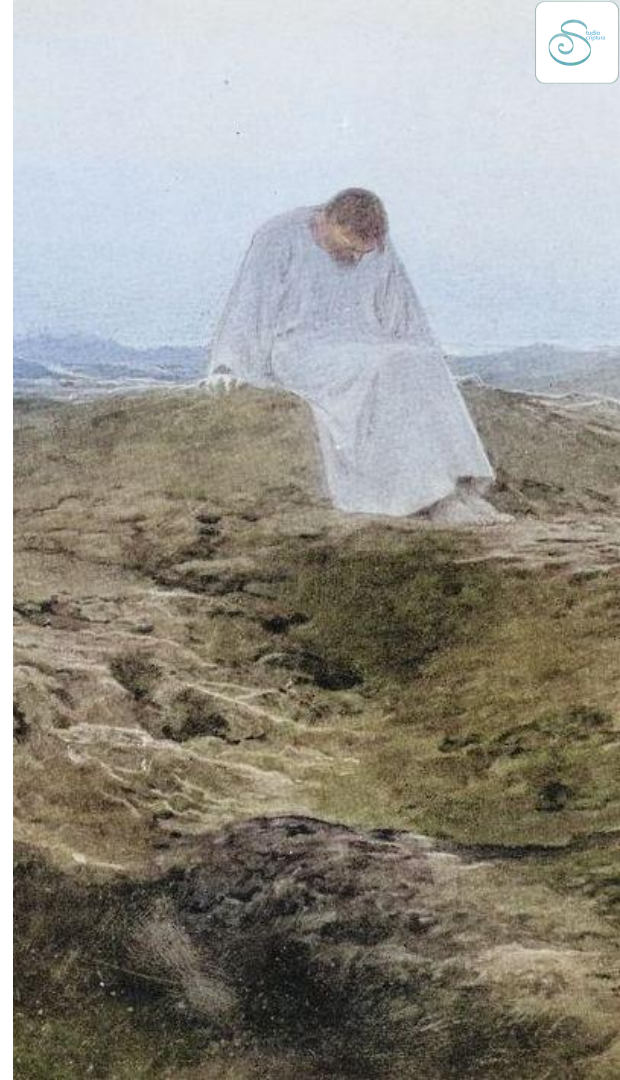


Jesus replied from Deuteronomy 8:3: **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4, NKJV). Bodily need never overrides trust in God’s Word. Where Israel yielded to physical and spiritual want in the wilderness (Exodus 16:2–3; Numbers 11:4–6), Jesus trusted God’s provision and remained obedient to the Father and the Word!

Second, the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and offered them in exchange for worship. This was lust and pride - a desire for worldly power that would shortcut the cross.

The offer of the kingdoms was not imaginary. Satan proposed a shortcut to rule: authority without sacrifice, glory without obedience. Jesus rejected that path because the kingdom promised by the Father could only truly be secured through the cross.

Jesus answered with Deuteronomy 6:13: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."

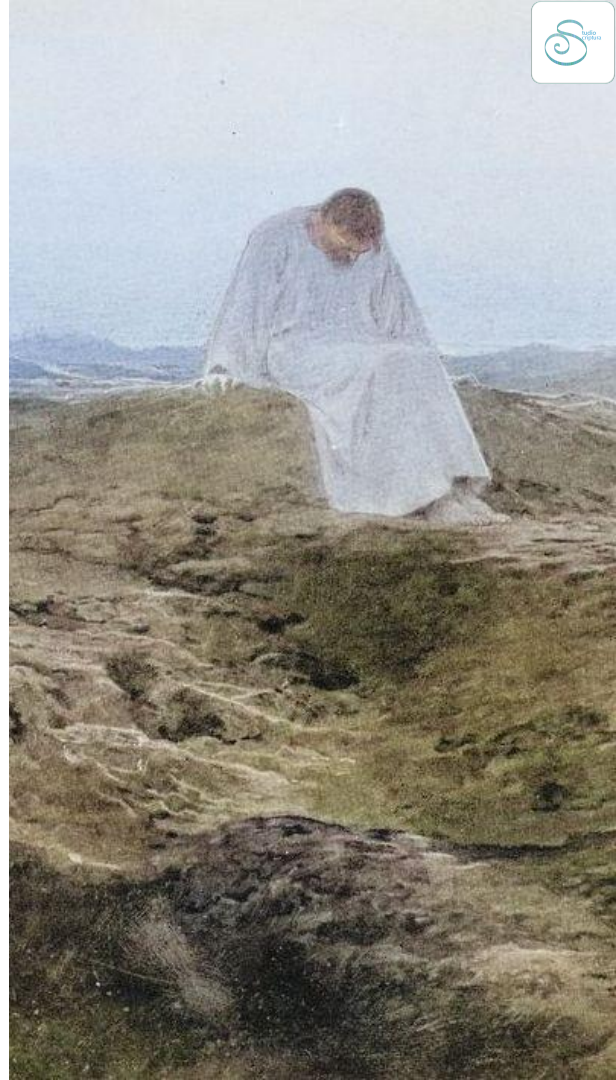




Third, the devil placed Him on the temple pinnacle and urged Him to throw Himself down, **misquoting Psalm 91** about angelic protection. This was deception via the *misquoting* of scripture and the pride of life, presumptuous testing of God. Jesus countered with Deuteronomy 6:16: **“You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”**

Jesus models what it looks like to **hide God's Word in one's heart** so we do not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11) and to study the **whole counsel of God** rather than proof-text for our own agenda (Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 2:15).

The sufficiency of Scripture for resisting temptation is on full display here, and it remains the **same weapon** the Spirit places in our hands today.





Place your response in Chat:

How would you summarize the importance of Jesus victory over temptation/testing in the wilderness as compared to Adam's and Israel's failures?

The Pattern of Temptation:

James 1:14 explains, “Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” The term for desire is *epithymia*, a desire that **has become disordered**. Sin starts when the deceiver and our will twists legitimate desires into disordered lusts. Rationalization is the mind’s way of excusing those twisted desires. It begins by calling the wrong harmless: “It won’t hurt anyone.” Then it calls the wrong necessary: “I need this to survive.” Then it calls the wrong good: “This will make me happy and everyone should be doing it.”

Each step darkens one’s understanding and hardens the conscience.

Augustine saw sin arising when *the will distorts good desires*.

Calvin spoke of the human heart as *a factory of idols*.

John Owen warned, *Be killing sin or it will be killing you*.





Deception is part of the design of temptation. Satan can appear as an angel of light, twisting Scripture out of context. He blinds minds and works with **half-truths** to sow error.

He hunts with stealth, like a lion, hidden for as long as possible while approaching prey, often working together with others to surround the target while staying concealed.

Or, with bigger prey, he charges openly and brazenly to corner it strategically before moving in for the kill.

The enemy hunts like wolves, **chasing relentlessly** and testing for weakness, separating their prey until the vulnerable one is isolated and subject to easy attack.

Here is how we combat temptation.

First, submit to God. James 4:7–8 commands, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” Practically this means daily surrendering our will in prayer, refusing to negotiate with sin, drawing near through meditation on His Word, and choosing obedience even when it feels costly. It is the quiet decision in the moment of pressure to say, “Not my will, but Yours.”

John Chrysostom stated: “*Christ teaches us that we must overcome the devil, not by miracles, but by forbearance and long-suffering, and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory.*”





Second, put on the whole armor of God, as Ephesians 6:10–18 details: truth around the waist, righteousness as breastplate, the gospel of peace on the feet, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with perseverance.

In daily life this is reminding yourself of who you are in Christ before the day begins, speaking gospel truth to your heart (and others) when fear or pride rises, practicing regular memorization/meditation on Scripture so it shapes your thinking rather than responding poorly to your circumstances.

“Do you mortify the sin in your life? Do you make it your daily work? Always be at this work while you live! Do not miss a day from it.

You need to be killing sin, or it will be killing you.

Sin not only *troubles* us, but if left alone, it produces soul *destroying* sins. If sin had its way, every unclean thought or glance would become adultery, every thought of unbelief would become atheism. This is part of the deceitfulness of sin, which hardens men’s hearts and leads to their ruin.

John Owen, The Mortification of Sin in Believers, Chapter 2





Third, take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, according to 2 Corinthians 10:4–5. This is vigilance in the thought life. When a tempting idea enters your mind, name it for what it is, refuse to nurture it, and replace it immediately with truth from God’s Word that you have memorized.

“The first thing to be observed is, that Christ uses Scripture as His shield. This is the true way of fighting, if we wish to make ourselves sure of the victory.”

John Calvin (1509–1564, reformer), Commentary on Matthew 4

Fourth, overcome by the **blood of the Lamb** and the **word of our testimony**, as Revelation 12:10–11 declares. Practically, this is remembering the finished work of Christ at the Cross and speaking it aloud, telling yourself and others what Jesus has done by sharing your testimony with someone or declaring it out loud to yourself. The accuser is silenced when we stand on the blood and verbally declare your testimony of faith!





Fifth, meditate on God’s Word and hide it in your heart, following Psalm 119:9–11. This is not casual reading; it is storing Scripture deeply in our minds/hearts that it rises up in the moments of testing. Make it your practice to memorize and reflect on key passages until they become part of your instinctive thinking.

Sixth, seize the way of escape God always provides, as 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises: “No temptation has overtaken you except as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Sometimes that escape is simply fleeing the situation: changing the channel, leaving the room, ending the conversation, not clicking that website or YouTube video. God has promised a way out and we are called to take it.

Christ was victorious where Adam failed.
Christ was victorious where Israel failed.
Christ is victorious where we fail.





His obedience is not merely an example to follow. It is the righteousness we receive.

Through faith, God credits the perfect obedience of Christ to the believer's account. That is the heart of justification.

His triumph is not merely an example; it is the very foundation of our salvation and the daily strength for our obedience.

Let's pray and thank God for His obedient Son who victoriously stood against temptation and testing for us!



Place your response in Chat:

On which of the six steps of combating temptation due you need to double your efforts?



This class was prepared through personal study of Scripture and careful engagement with trusted scholarship on the Gospel of John. Generative AI tools were used to assist with certain aspects of research, organization, and the drafting of phrasing. All final interpretations, judgments, and content reflect the convictions of Studio Scriptura.