

In our last session we talked about how Jesus identified with humanity by undergoing the ceremony of baptism. That is, being immersed in water as a sign of cleansing from sin. Even though Jesus never sinned Himself, He chose to experience this ritual just as God calls us to.

OK, the next step is to take this identification even further by allowing Himself to be tempted with sin, just like we are. As the Book of Hebrews describes, Jesus can show compassion for us because He knows what it's like to be tempted, and He did it without yielding to sin, the word "sin" meaning to miss the mark of God's ideal. In all the things Jesus went through, He never missed the mark a single time and He is there to help us in our struggles and temptations as well.

OK, it's time to introduce you to the being we know as Satan. The name Satan means enemy or adversary, one who opposes. He is not just a symbol or allegory of evil. He is a real, personal being. That's what Jesus taught and that's how Jesus dealt with him. But on the other hand, a lot of our ideas about Satan are just plain silly, derived from folklore and horror movies. He is not a guy in a red Cape with horns and a tail who sits on your shoulder and pokes you with a pitchfork.

He is described in the Bible as transforming himself into an angel of light. He is a very intelligent, cunning being able to disguise himself with a deceptive beauty. You can read some background on him in Ezekiel 28:16-19 and Isaiah 14:12-14.

He was originally a sinless angel known as Lucifer, one of the highest beings in Heaven. But he was drawn away by pride, which is the root of all sin. He led a third of the angels in a rebellion against God and they were cast out.

Jesus said He actually saw Satan being cast like lightning out of Heaven.

Notice the factors in Isaiah 14 12-14 that motivated Satan's actions. He wanted to "... ascend to heaven. .. raise his throne above the stars of God.. ascend above the heights of the clouds... make himself like the Most High.'

Think about this: When humans sin, aren't these the things that motivate us too? We want to be sovereign over our lives, rather than submitting to God.

And these were Satan's motivators when he came to Adam and Eve in the Garden. Humans are God's highest creation, bearing His own image and Satan wanted to try to come between that very special relationship.

We know the story. Adam and Eve are given free reign over the garden except for the one tree they were forbidden to eat from. Of course, that was where Satan went to work, trying to breach man's relationship with God.

First of all, he tries to cast doubt on God's Word, "Did God REALLY say that?" That's where it

always begins, trying to put a question mark where God put a period. Then he emphasizes that the tree was beautiful to look at and the fruit was pleasant tasting. So there was a carnal, fleshly side of the temptation. There was also an appeal to their pride, how eating of it would make them "as God." Satan's tactics haven't changed and Adam and Eve sadly yielded to that temptation and brought the curse of sin and death to all humanity.

1 John 2:16 tells us that sin falls into three categories : The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These were the avenues by which Satan tempted Adam, and they were the same tactics he tried to use on Jesus, who the Bible calls the second Adam. However, this time the results were drastically different!

As we discussed last time, Jesus had just been baptized and anointed with power by the Holy Spirit. But from there, He is led by God into a period of isolation where He would be tempted by Satan. That's an important lesson for us. God sometimes leads us into difficult times and just because things are hard or painful that doesn't necessarily mean that you are outside of God's plan. In fact, if you are going to enter God's will, you will probably have to contend for it all the more!

The eternal future of the human race is riding on this. If Satan could get Jesus to sin, the entire plan of redemption would be ruined.

So Jesus goes into the wilderness, praying and fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, like Moses and Elijah had done before Him. He is tired. He is hungry. He is fatigued. And that was the point where Satan takes his shots. That is another important lesson. When we find ourselves in times of mental or physical duress, be on guard all the more because Satan will often take advantage of that if he can.

So the first area Satan tries to exploit is Jesus' hunger. "If you are really who you say you are, turn these rocks into bread." But Jesus would have none of it. He responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3-4: Man will not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God.

Next, Satan tries to trip Jesus up with pride. He takes Jesus to the highest point of the Temple, which was about 180 feet above the ground. He challenges Jesus again saying "If you are really the Son of God, throw yourself down from here." He then quotes from Psalm 91 about God's promise of angelic protection. Friends, Satan knows Scripture and doesn't mind twisting it to his purposes, so be on guard against that as well. But again, Jesus hits back with more Scripture Deuteronomy 6:16, you shall not tempt the Lord or put Him to the test.

Finally, Satan shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world with all of their wealth, power and sensual pleasures. He tells Jesus that it will all be His if He will fall down and worship Satan. Of course, Jesus knows where His priorities are. He once again replies with Scripture,.

Deuteronomy 6:13 You shall worship the Lord only. After this, Satan finally gives up, at least for a time and the angels come to comfort Jesus.

Numerous times the Bible describes itself as a sword. It's a spiritual weapon that we can use just like Jesus did. We can use it to respond to temptation in our own lives. It shows our submission to God rather than to the temporary pleasures Satan offers and James 4:7 promises that as we yield ourselves to God and resist the devil he will run in terror! The second Adam had succeeded where the first one failed so miserably.

And this was the victory which would ultimately manifest on the cross, where Colossians 2:15 tells us that Jesus "spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." This is military terminology. The image being drawn is that of an army overthrowing a rival kingdom, stripping its ruler naked and parading him down the streets in humiliation. This is exactly what Jesus did to Satan. Had the forces of darkness known this, they would not have crucified Him .

There will come a day when every knee, including Satan's will bow down before the Lord Jesus and I for one, can't wait to watch that!