

Rebellion and Redemption Victory in the Wilderness

Lesson #6 for February 6, 2016

Scriptures: Matthew 1:20-23; 3:7-12; 4:1-10; John 9:39; Deuteronomy 34:1-4; Revelation 21:10.

1. How many times do we have recorded in Scripture when Christ and Satan were in direct conflict? How many times do we have a record of what actually happened? What about Revelation 12:7-12? Genesis 2&3? Job 1&2? Daniel 10? The temptations we are studying this week? The Garden of Gethsemane? And, the Cross? Are there any others? Would the casting out of demons by Jesus qualify?
2. When Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden and God spoke to them about the future, He also spoke words to the serpent. What do you think Satan thought when he heard God's words to the serpent? Satan was certainly hoping for a cordial relationship with the human race and not hatred!

... Yet as the plan of salvation was more fully unfolded, Satan rejoiced with his angels that, having caused man's fall, **he could bring down the Son of God from His exalted position**. He declared that his plans had thus far been successful upon the earth, and that when Christ should take upon Himself human nature, He also might be overcome, and thus **the redemption of the fallen race might be prevented**.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 66.1. [Bold type is added.]

3. When Christ met Satan in the wilderness, it was not the first time they had been in direct conflict. Had Christ won all of the previous battles? Or, would you say that Satan apparently won some of the battles like the battle in the Garden of Eden? Satan claimed, and God recognized, that when Christ was preparing to come the first time, Satan was the prince of this earth. Christ came to win back His lost territory.
4. If one has lost something in a war, how does s/he win it back? What kinds of weapons were used in that war? Did Satan win the war in heaven? Of course not! Did he win the war in the Garden of Eden? What do you think? So, when and how does he win any war? On what basis did he claim that this world was his domain? If he won it by deceiving Adam and Eve, what methods would be appropriate for Christ to win it back? Deception? Trickery? No! God "can" and will only use truth and love. God wins by revealing the truth. Did it look like God had won as the flood was taking place?
5. Read Matthew 1:20-23; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-20; and Hebrews 1:1-13. In these passages the Bible writers made it very clear that it was God Himself who came down to be "Immanuel—God with us."
6. Can you spell out clearly several reasons why Jesus came to this earth?
 1. He came to restore what Adam had lost. (Romans 5:12,15) On several occasions while He was on this earth, the crowds wanted to make Him king. So, what did the Jewish people think the Messiah was going to do for them? They

wanted a messiah who would help them kill the Romans, not a Messiah who would be killed by the Romans! That was all backwards! They were looking for another Saul!

2. Jesus came, lived, and died to give us a clear choice. Each of us must decide whether we want to live a life like His and be loving; or, if we want to continue being selfish and then die as He died. (John 9:39; 1 John 3:8) Thus, He brought judgment to human beings. In what way did Jesus destroy the works of the Devil? In what way did He bring judgment? Did dying on the cross destroy the works of the Devil? Or, bring judgment to anyone? How?
3. Luke 19:10 tells us clearly that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. His plan was to take away our sins. (John 1:29) What did Jesus need to do to “seek and save the lost”? Couldn’t God have saved the lost without Jesus having to die? Don’t we believe that God is all-powerful—omnipotent? So, why couldn’t He save us without Someone dying? On the other hand, if God was not willing to save us without Someone dying, how can we believe that He is loving, kind, and trustworthy? Surely, at any time, God could have destroyed the Devil. Why didn’t He? Why is the Devil alive and well on planet earth? God actually will keep Satan alive until the great controversy is over.
4. **Jesus came primarily to show us what God is like.** He came to correctly represent the Father so that we could have good evidence for knowing Who can be trusted and Who is telling us the truth. Satan deceived one-third of the angels. If Satan conquered our original parents by persuading them to believe a lie, what does Jesus need to do to win us back? He needs to tell us the truth! What does it actually mean to trust Someone? Or, to have faith in Someone? Did Jesus manage to show us the truth about God? Ellen White wrote:

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890, par. 6,9. **Contrast *The Signs of the Times*, December 4, 1893; *Manuscript Releases*, vol 18, 358.3-359.1; *RH* August 14, 1900; *YI* November 21, 1883; *RH*, November 1, 1892 par. 12. [Bold type is added.]**

7. What do you think was the response of the Jews when John the Baptist appeared on the east side of the Jordan River and began preaching about a coming Messiah? It had been 400 years since there had been any prophet among them. Read Matthew 3:7-12. Why did John the Baptist use language suggesting the final judgment when he was giving his introduction of the Messiah? Did the coming of Jesus bring a kind of final judgment to the Jewish people? Or, did the Jewish leaders bring judgment on Jesus?
8. There are several parallels between the story of the children of Israel leaving Egypt and traveling to the promised land and the story of Jesus Himself. Neither John nor Jesus attempted to lead any kind of political movement either among the Jews or against the Romans. What did they preach? They quoted Isaiah and Jeremiah, suggesting that God would prepare a world for society's most vulnerable—the blind, the lame, the pregnant, mothers with toddlers, and all who seek salvation from their sins.
9. Read Luke 24:25-27. What passages from the Old Testament do you think Jesus quoted? Did He have access to some inspired writings that are no longer available to us? If God's professed people in New Testament times so greatly misunderstood what the Messiah was going to do, is it possible that the second coming of the Messiah will be different from what we expect? The Jews wanted a messiah who would come and help them either conquer their enemies or get rid of their enemies. What are we hoping for?
10. Read Matthew 4:1-3; compare Luke 4:1-2. Is this a description of God working with the Devil? For a much expanded explanation of the temptations of Jesus, read *2SP* 85-98; *DA* 114-131; *5BC* 1079-83; *1SM* 94-95;223,227-8;252-6;267-89; *EW* 155-8.

It is impossible for man to fully comprehend the strength of Satan's temptations to our Saviour. Every enticement to evil, which men find so difficult to resist, was brought to bear upon the Son of God in as much greater degree as his character was superior to that of fallen man.—Ellen G. White, *2Spirit of Prophecy* 88.1.

Christ in behalf of the race was to conquer appetite, by enduring the most powerful test on that point. He was to tread the path of temptation alone, with none to help or comfort him. Alone he was to wrestle with the powers of darkness, and exercise a self-control stronger than hunger or death. The length of this fast is the strongest evidence of the great sinfulness of debased appetite, and its power over the human family.—Ellen G. White, *2Spirit of Prophecy* 89.1.

11. Jesus was not led into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted by the Devil. Instead, the Devil approached Jesus when he thought he had an edge because of the fasting that Jesus had gone through. Jesus went to the desert at that time to fast and pray in preparation for His mission. I believe that during His ministry, Jesus communed every night with His Father and the Holy Spirit in preparation for what was coming the next day. (Luke 6:12-16) During those sessions, the Father and the Holy Spirit would reveal to Jesus what They knew would be necessary for His ministry the coming day.

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be

alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 114.2.

12. Who else found Jesus in the wilderness?

He [Jesus] had been separated from his mother for quite a length of time. During this period he had been baptized by John and had endured the temptations in the wilderness. Rumors had reached Mary concerning her son and his sufferings. **John, one of the new disciples, had searched for Christ and had found him in his humiliation, emaciated, and bearing the marks of great physical and mental distress. Jesus, unwilling that John should witness his humiliation, had gently yet firmly dismissed him from his presence.** He wished to be alone; no human eye must behold his agony, no human heart be called out in sympathy with his distress.—Ellen G. White, *2 Spirit of Prophecy* 99.2. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

13. When Satan appeared to Jesus in the wilderness, what was his demeanor? Did he appear with horns and a long forked tail? Or, did he appear as a bright, shining angel, suggesting that perhaps Jesus was the one who had “fallen from heaven”? However, Satan could not conceal his identity but quickly made it clear when he said, “***If*** you are the Son of God...”
14. Many writers including Bible writers have compared and contrasted the fall of Adam and Eve with the victory of Jesus in the wilderness. (See Romans 5.) How would you compare the temptations that Eve and then Adam faced with the temptations that Christ faced? Were Adam and Eve hungry and starving? At that point in time, Jesus must have looked pretty bad. If Jesus had turned a stone into bread, would it have proved anything? Jesus proved His divinity by coming to this earth, living as a human being, and descending to the point of death on the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8) He did not need to prove anything to the Devil. Jesus suffered through many temptations to perform miracles that He could have done but which we could never do, like turning stones into bread.
15. Satan sought to trick Jesus by quoting from Scripture in his second temptation. (Psalm 91:11-12) Would Jesus have proved anything by jumping off the temple? (Matthew 4:5-7) Trying to force God’s hand to protect Him if He did jump would have been a case of presumption and not faith. God had never told Him to jump. Of course, if God had told Him to jump, He would have jumped.
16. Read Matthew 4:8-10; Deuteronomy 34:1-4; and Revelation 21:10. It was not Satan’s purpose just to give Christ a tour of the world! No doubt, Satan recognized what Jesus already knew—that he was, in fact, Satan. So, he proposed to Jesus what he had always wanted, that is, to have the Son of God recognize him as a divine, superior being. He offered to give Jesus everything (as if he really owned it!) in exchange. (See Luke 4:6 and Psalm 2:7-8.)
17. After the third temptation, Jesus summarily dismissed the Devil. There is no way Satan could resist His command. Thus, Christ actually proved His divinity!

Satan had asked Christ to give him evidence that he was the Son of God, and he had, in this instance, the proof he asked. He had no power to withstand his peremptory dismissal, and was compelled to obey the divine command. Writhing with baffled hate and rage, the rebel chief retired from the presence of the world's Redeemer. The contest was ended. Christ's victory was as complete as had been the failure of Adam.—Ellen G. White, *2 Spirit of Prophecy* 96.2.

18. In each of His defenses, Jesus quoted Scripture. What does that tell us about how we should meet temptation?
19. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have been presented with the correct picture of the great controversy between God and Satan. No one else has come even close. Atheists and poets such as T. S. Eliot and Friedrich Nietzsche have talked about the conflict between good and evil. But, no one has spelled it out as has Ellen White as she revealed the truth from Scripture.
20. Would you have been tempted by any of the temptations that Jesus faced at that point? What are the major classes of sins that tempt us? Are the Ten Commandments a clue?
21. We need to ask ourselves repeatedly: “Why did Jesus come to this world? Was it just to die to pay the price for sin? Why did He have to die? Can we explain what the purpose of His life and His death was?” (See Item #6, part 4 above.)
22. Jesus came to this earth to answer the questions that had been raised right in the Garden of Eden: Has God told us the truth that sin leads directly to death? Or, was Satan correct when he claimed God was lying? By His life and His death, Jesus demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt for those who are willing to take an unbiased look Who won in the great controversy, Who can be trusted, and Who is telling us the truth.
23. Whether we recognize it or not, the great controversy is being played out in each of our lives! Our minds are the battlefields of the great controversy. Some have suggested that we have to “rely on Christ's strength” in order to overcome and withstand temptation. How do we do that?
24. Temptations come at us frequently and from every direction. What is the secret to overcoming temptation as Jesus did?
 1. In order to conquer sin, we must try to stop it as soon as we recognize it as a temptation. It is deadly to play with temptation.
 2. We must learn to crowd sin out of our lives by filling our lives with God's ideas and God's thoughts so the Devil's ideas and thoughts have no room.
25. Do we really believe that everything that God has told us is for our best good? Each time we sin—if we are aware of what we are doing—we are saying that we are choosing to do our will instead of God's will and to live selfish lives instead of loving lives.

While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast

will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. **The character is revealed, not [58] by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 57.2. [Bold type is added.]

26. The Hebrew word *hosanna* comes from a Hebrew expression meaning, “Save, please!” This is actually the same root word which brings us the name of Jesus or *Yeshua* in Hebrew. When Jesus came to this earth to save us from our sins, He was launching a direct cosmic offensive against the author of sin and death—the Devil himself.
27. But, the good news is not primarily that God can save you and me! That is a selfish attitude. The real good news is that God can be trusted. Would you even want to be saved if God were the kind of Person that Satan has made Him out to be—arbitrary, vengeful, exacting, tyrannical, unforgiving, and severe? It would never be safe to be in His presence if those accusations were true!
28. A number of Pharisees and Sadducees approached John the Baptist to be baptized in the Jordan. What are the implications of that? Sometimes, we picture the Sadducees and the Pharisees as the bad guys while Jesus was the Good Guy. But, there were many of the Pharisees and Sadducees who actually later became followers of Jesus. What about Nicodemus? Joseph of Arimathea? Barnabas? And Paul? See also Acts 6:7 and 15:5.
29. Have you ever been tempted by temptations like those which Jesus faced? Why were His temptations so different from ours? Or, were they? Some people have suggested that Jesus overcame His temptations only because He was God. Read Hebrews 2:14,17-18; and Hebrews 4:15.

And Christ was not to exercise divine power for His own benefit. He had come to bear trial as we must do, leaving us an example of faith and submission. **Neither here nor at any subsequent time in His earthly life did He work a miracle in His own behalf.** His wonderful works were all for the good of others.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* 119.3. [Bold type is added]

30. When we pray the Lord’s prayer and say, “Lead us not into temptation,” what are we suggesting? Does this week’s lesson give you any new perspectives on that question?

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