

CONTRASTING CHARACTERS JESUS VS. THE DEVIL

Matthew 4:1-11, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' 4 But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you.' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.' 7 Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship Me.' 10 Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

The temptation of Jesus provides a classic contrast within the Bible's pages. What happens when you put the holy, righteous Son of God in the same setting as Satan, the father of lies? Matthew 4 spills the details and from it we learn...

Both have incredible will power. Jesus is at His weakest—lonely, suffering and hungry. Yet, despite His weakened state He does not act upon the devil's enticing offers. His flesh may be weak, but His will was strong. Likewise, the devil is a persistent salesman. He does not quit after one rejection—he goes right back to tempting Jesus again and again. We must be aware of the constant attacks of Satan and, in

any condition, we must stand strong like Jesus, not bending our will.



Both have a mission. The "Beloved Son" had just left Jordan's waters with the voice of God echoing in his ears and His mission on the forefront of His mind. God's Son had come to earth and it was His job to live and die as the sinless Savior of the world. Yet, Satan has a mission too. His ultimate goal is to destroy men's souls. Indeed, he is a murderer (John 8:44). What better way to conquer the human race than to thwart the mission of its Savior? If we teach and live the Great Commission, Satan will find his Mission: Impossible!

Both use Scripture to accomplish their goals. Jesus overcame temptation by relying upon the message of God through Scripture. The three times He was tempted, He replied with verses of Scripture to explain His refusal to do Satan's bidding. Yet, Satan was able to quote Scripture too (Matthew 4:6). The only difference was that Satan used Scripture in a false, deceitful manner. Jesus was able to see through the deceit and use Scripture for its intended purpose. False, religious teachers of our day often use Scripture to try and defend their beliefs. Yet, Scripture can be twisted and we must be careful (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:16).

Both have a vision. Satan is a goal-oriented creature. Through this series of temptations, Satan appeals to Jesus in three ways—lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. Yet, everything the devil could offer was only temporary. The thrill of being rescued by angels would be short-lived. Power over the world's kingdoms could only be temporary (besides, Jesus is in power of a greater kingdom). Satisfying a growling stomach would last a few hours. Jesus kept His focus on the long-term promises. After a short time of suffering, He would be back in the eternal glories of heaven from whence he came. If He could endure the temptations of life He could rescue mankind, whom He loved and voluntarily gave His life to save. Both had vision, but Jesus had a long-term vision—He was thinking of you and Him in heaven together.

Is your focus on the short-sighted pleasures of this life or the long-term glories of heaven? One ends in the lonely isolation of a fiery pit, the other ends in the arms of a chorus of angels.

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