

How Do You Stop The Devil? (Part 3)

How did Jesus stop the devil and overcome temptation?

Three specific temptations are recorded in the gospel accounts. The first temptation:

And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” (Matthew 4:3)

The bread idea generally receives a lot of attention because Jesus was really hungry. (You remember, forty days of fasting.) So, the devil used the natural physical hunger of Jesus as a smoke screen to tempt Jesus.

Now, was the temptation all about food, or was there something more?

Look at the ‘if’ statement: “If you are the Son of God...” The ‘if’ statement draws into question the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. The ‘if’ statement suggests the *possibility* that Jesus was not the Son of God. The devil posed the question and *tried to get Jesus to question his identity*.

With one miracle Jesus would be able to satisfy his physical hunger AND he would be able to *prove* that he was indeed the Son of God.

Think again.... Turning stones into bread proves nothing. Other people did miracles, but were not the Son of God. There was no prophecy in the Old Testament that connected a stone-to-bread miracle with the Son of God.

Jesus saw the disconnect and did not fall for the devil’s deception. In fact, He **KNEW** with absolute certainty that he **WAS** the Son of God. God declared, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17). So, Jesus had the testimony of God that he was God’s Son.

The devil simply used the physical longing for food to plant the seed of doubt in Jesus’ mind.

The food miracle was a temptation, but a deeper temptation was that of proving his identity.

So, how did Jesus overcome this temptation?

He addressed both levels of temptation saying:

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4)

Jesus was basically saying, I don’t need to eat right now...and I am confident in my identity because of what came out of the mouth of God; I don’t have to prove anything.”

Jesus demonstrated *contentment* by refusing to personally satisfy his physical appetite. He was committed to *wait on the Lord* for strength. In addition, he did not allow the devil to create doubt about his identity. He knew that he was the Son of God by declaration of the Father (and also by the Holy Spirit), so there was nothing to prove.

The devil cleverly appeals to our appetites making us think that only we can satisfy our needs. In reality the human being can go without food for days; can survive without a big house, the latest fashion in clothing, cutting edge technology, entertainment, sex, etc. Jesus trusted God and chose *contentment over indulgence*.

The devil also challenges our identity by making us doubt that we are God’s children. Yet we, like Jesus, have nothing to prove. God has declared:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. —Galatians 3:26

So, when temptation knocks at your door...
Remember, who you are in Christ: *Sons of God*.
Wait on the Lord; *choose* contentment.