

O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High

attr. to Thomas á Kempis (1380–1471); tr. Benjamin Webb (1819–1885)

O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
how passing thought and fantasy,
that God, the Son of God, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake!

He sent no angel to our race,
of higher or of lower place,
but wore the robe of human frame,
and He Himself to this world came.

For us baptized, for us He bore
His holy fast, and hungered sore;
for us temptations sharp He knew,
for us the tempter overthrew.

For us to wicked men betrayed,
scourged, mocked, in crown of thorns arrayed,
He bore the shameful cross and death
for us at length gave up His breath.

For us He rose from death again,
for us He went on high to reign,
for us He sent His Spirit here
to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

All glory to our Lord and God
for love so deep, so high, so broad—
the Trinity whom we adore
forever and forevermore.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Jesus and the Bible: His Temptation

Kevin T. Bauder

How should we view the Bible? How should we use it? One of the ways we can answer these questions is to see how Jesus viewed and employed the Bible. When we do, we discover that Jesus both saw and used the Bible as the authoritative word of God.

The first glimpse that the Gospels give of Jesus using the Bible is during His temptation. The story is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Mark's version of the story is very brief, but each of the three includes details that the others leave out.

The story opens when the Holy Spirit leads (Matthew and Luke) or drives (Mark) Jesus into the wilderness. There He fasts for forty days and nights, after which He experiences hunger. This would not have been the hunger that comes from missing a meal or two, but the pangs a starving person feels when the body begins to consume itself.

At this point, the devil tempts Jesus by suggesting that He command or tell stones to become bread. Why would this action have been wrong? The reason is that during His self-emptying, Jesus took the form of a slave (Phil 2:7), subjecting Himself to the will of the Father and the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit had led Jesus into the wilderness for a purpose. If Jesus were simply to act on His own initiative to satisfy His hunger, He would be defeating the purpose to which the Spirit had led Him. Jesus was not free to exercise His powers simply to gratify His appetite.

Jesus' reply is precisely to the point. Stating, "It is written," He quotes a fragment of Deuteronomy 8:3. The point of the verse is that God led the Israelites into hunger such that they had no choice but to trust Him for provision, and then He provided manna. God put Israel in this position so that He "might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." Jesus, who now occupied an analogous position, applied these words directly to His situation. As Israel trusted God for manna in the wilderness, Jesus would trust God for food in the present.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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After the first temptation, Matthew and Luke diverge in their presentations of the order of the temptations. The exact order of the events is not the main point for either writer. Luke in particular will make a point about Jesus' use of Scripture, and his ordering of events is necessary to that point.

In Luke's account, the devil next leads Jesus up into a high mountain and shows Him the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The devil claims that he has been given these kingdoms, and he offers to give them to Jesus in exchange for His worship. Interestingly, Jesus does not challenge the devil's claim to authority, and Scripture elsewhere teaches that the devil does exercise some level of authority within this world. He is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2). He is the god of this age (2 Cor 4:4). He is the one who held the power of death (Heb 2:14). If the devil had spoken falsely, Jesus would surely have pointed out the lie. Apparently, however, the devil's offer was genuine.

It was also poisoned. By offering Jesus direct access to earthly rule, the devil was attempting to subvert the whole work of redemption. Had Jesus accepted the devil's offer, He would have found Himself a king over people who could never be saved from condemnation. Indeed, Jesus Himself would have fallen under condemnation for worshipping the devil.

Once again Jesus' reply is exactly to the point. "It is written," He says, and then paraphrases a pair of texts from Deuteronomy (6:13; 10:20). Both these texts teach that only Jehovah deserves to be treated as God, so the worship of all other gods is forbidden. The point of Jesus citing these verses is that He is submitting Himself to them. Jesus placed Himself under the authority of God's word, and that submission silenced the tempter.

Twice Jesus has ended a temptation with the words, "It is written." In the remaining temptation, however, the devil himself parrots these words. He takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and urges Him to cast Himself down, citing Psalm 91:11–12. The devil knows the Bible, and in this case he selects a text that appears superficially to be relevant. What he is doing, however, is quoting Scripture in a misleading way.

In His reply, Jesus goes to the heart of the issue. Rather than responding with, "It is written," which would merely have pitted Scripture against Scripture, Jesus states, "It is *said*." Jesus means that, to be used authoritatively, the words of Scripture must be understood and applied correctly. For Jesus to obey the devil and cast Himself down from the temple would be to claim God's promise in a way that God never intended. It would put God to the test and trivialize His word. As Jesus points out, "You shall not tempt [*put to the test*] the Lord thy God."

This saying is a citation from Deuteronomy 6:16. By quoting this text, Jesus makes it clear that He is submitting Himself to God's word. Rather than

presuming upon God's promise, misapplying it, and thereby trivializing it, Jesus places Himself under its authority as rightly understood.

In every case, Jesus faces temptation by quoting Scripture—but that is not the only point. The main point is that Jesus' quotation of Scripture exhibits His submission to it, not merely as read but as rightly understood. This episode provides a clear glimpse into Jesus' attitude toward Scripture. He knew the Scriptures. He understood them. He used them. He submitted to them. This is a model that we should do well to follow.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
