

**Story #3: Your Deliverance,
Pt. 3
*Our Priest***

The Three Stories of the Bible

Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:14-18

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How many of you have eye glasses? Have you ever traded them with a person? When there is a different prescription, the world can look pretty funny. Many years ago, I put on my daughter's glasses, and I actually saw better. I was alarmed. I wondered, "Do I need glasses?" When I finally got a checkup, my vision wasn't perfect; but I didn't require glasses yet.

That experience, however, reminds me of a truth. We don't see things exactly as they are. We see things as we are! What we are affects what we see. All of us need the aid of light to see; and the Bible is a spiritual lamp that helps us see. It helps us see the world and even ourselves in ways we could never discern otherwise.

The Bible sheds light by telling three stories about us. It speaks of our design. It tells of our death, and it talks of our deliverance. We were designed by God for companionship with God, but death came because of a vision, a wisdom, a perspective, eye glasses that ended that our companionship. The third story of the Bible, our deliverance is powerfully seen in the events of Jesus' life. Through his birth, anointing and testing, he became something very important to us. Today we'll especially examine his testing.

Have you ever considered what a priest is? Have you ever thought about what makes a priest? In the Bible a priest helps people connect with God. A priest frees people from their guilt. Guilt is a sense of dread that overtakes us when we sin. Most people dread pain and fear death. They fear because they are afraid that God somehow won't love them when they die. A recent survey revealed that a majority of Americans are plagued with this fear. They're afraid God won't accept them when they die. A priest frees people from that dread and breaks the separation they experience with God because of their sins. The Bible tells us that Jesus made atonement for us so that our sins would no longer be an issue with God. He also destroyed the devil's hold on death.

However, in order to help us connect with God, a priest must be like us. A common bond is critical. The writer of Hebrews noted:

It is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God (Heb 2:16, 17).

Jesus served God by connecting God's Jewish children to God. He came as a Jew with a common bond to Jews. The Bible also tells us that "***Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity***" (Heb 2:14). God sent Jesus in our likeness as human beings because we all came from Adam and Eve and are the children God wanted to free and recover. Therefore, Jesus came as a human being; yet, a priesthood requires more than a common bond. A common experience is important.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Heb 2:18).

Jesus knows what it is like to be attacked and harassed by the evil one, and there are lessons in the temptations Jesus suffered. Let's consider them.

Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights. It was as Jesus felt hunger that the devil attacked. He preyed on human need. Similarly, Satan goes after us when we are tired, hungry, hurting, disappointed or discouraged. He preys on need, on vulnerabilities. He then challenges our identity. Satan questioned Jesus' personal identity. "Are you really the Son of God? If you are so special to God, act like it. Prove it. Turn these stones to bread." Satan assaulted Jesus' trust in God. He tried to incite Jesus to act on doubt. The temptation was doubled-edged! Satan tried to confuse Jesus. If Jesus said, "No, I won't do it," wasn't he admitting that he didn't believe God? If Jesus tried to turn the stones into bread, wasn't he acting on doubt and now a pawn of the devil's? It was a trap. The devil had Jesus either way. Jesus was damned if he did, and damned if he didn't. Either way, he was condemned. What would Jesus do?

In the second temptation, the devil used religion.

the devil took (Jesus) to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple (Matthew 4:5).

That location wasn't accidental. The devil wasn't just looking for a high place. He was going use religion against.. Again, he challenged Jesus' identity, ***"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down."*** Satan went further. He misused God's word. "You used Scripture against me; I'll use it against you," the devil thought; and then he hissed:

it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6).

"Don't you believe that? Don't you believe that Jesus?" taunted the devil. Satan again tempted Jesus to act in doubt, and the temptation cut both ways. Refuse to jump and you're admitting unbelief. Jump and you've become Satan's pawn. Another confusing trap.

When setting traps by preying upon need and using religion didn't work, Satan changed tactics. He directed Jesus's focus elsewhere.

the devil took (Jesus) to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor" (Matthew 4:8).

He made a hollow promise. ***"All this I will give you if you bow down and worship me."*** The allure of the promise required betrayal. The temptation was bold and brazen. The subtle traps hadn't worked, so Satan went up-front. "It's all mine, and you can have it. Dream about it, ponder it, taste it. Don't you want it? It's mine to give."

The temptations were alluring and difficult. The Bible says that Jesus "suffered" temptation. These were painful and exhausting moments. It was so much so, that following Jesus' decisions, God sent angels to attend to him.

Jesus' strategy, his path to victory was to focus on his Father's word and will. Each time he suffered the confusion and allurement of the devil, he sought his Father's will and quoted what God had revealed to him in the Bible. Jesus overcame temptation because he walked in partnership with his Father. His vision was not on what is good and what is evil. That would have betrayed him. His vision was on his Father. He was not seeing things from the vantage of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He was looking to his Father as Adam had done in the beginning.

When you are freed from guilt, when God breaks the separation you experience from sin, then you become a priest who can free others. You especially can connect people to God who share a common bond and common experience with you. You become God's agent for deliverance. In Christ you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood. He has made us to be a kingdom and priests. Have you experienced freedom from guilt? Do you know intimacy with God? Then recognize your common bonds and experiences, and use them to help others. Have you embrace your gift and will you rise to your call?