

The Temptation of Jesus and How Biblical History Rhymes (Matthew 4:1-11)

Judson Road Church of Christ, January 31, 2021

1. “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” When Mark Twain said this, he wasn’t talking about Biblical history in particular, but the quote is just as relevant to the Bible as it is to any type of history. Throughout the Bible, there are a number of stories and events in which history repeats itself or “rhymes.” To give an example: Sarah, Hannah, and Elizabeth are all women who were barren for many years, but in each of their cases, late in life, God miraculously blesses them with sons who will play vital roles in God’s plans. What are other instances of this repetition or rhyming of history in the Bible? Why do these rhymes and repetitions happen? What is the significance?

2. In the wilderness, the devil tempts Jesus three times. Examining each of the temptations, what is sinful about the following requests?
 - A. Turning stones into loaves of bread (4:3-4):

 - B. Jumping from the pinnacle of the temple (4:5-7):

 - C. Bowing down and worshipping the devil (4:8-10):

3. In each of his responses, Jesus quotes scripture (v. 4, 7, 10). What Old Testament book are all three quotes from? What is significant about Jesus drawing all of his rebuttals from one particular moment in Israel’s history? Are there any similarities or differences between Jesus’s 40 days in the wilderness and Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness?

4. Satan plays a big role within the pages of the Bible, but it’s surprisingly rare for him to appear face-to-face with man (or woman), converse with him, and tempt him in this manner. One of these rare instances is here in Matthew 4 with the temptation of Jesus (also Luke 4). How many other instances are there in the Bible where this happens—Satan conversing and tempting man/woman face-to-face? What are the similarities or differences between Satan’s temptation of Jesus here in the wilderness, and a similar temptation story from many centuries earlier?

5. My guess is that none of us will personally stand toe-to-toe with Satan and be tempted in the exact manner as Jesus in the wilderness. But history still continues to repeat itself and rhyme in our lives two thousand years after Christ. What practical lessons can we learn from Jesus’s temptation? Of the three temptations, are there any that have a particularly big draw on us in our present age?