

## Shortcuts

This morning I would like to spend a few minutes thinking about *shortcuts*.

Now that might seem like a rather unusual subject, but, in my opinion, the major appeal of two out of the three temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness was that they were *shortcuts*.

Yes, whether Satan realized it or not, his suggestions were simply an easier way to obtain what the Heavenly Father had already promised.

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Now today, as we contemplate travel by automobile, there are several advantages and disadvantages to *shortcuts*.

The shorter journey will save time, and, in this day of high gas prices, will save money.

However, a shortcut could include rough roads, and the possibility of getting lost.

And, when all is said and done, both choices lead to the same destination.

So, with this in mind, let's turn to Matthew 4:1-10.

**"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 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.'" Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 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.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 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.'"

Let's return to temptation number two where Satan told Jesus to cast Himself down

from a pinnacle of the temple to prove He was the Son of God.

Now, considering Satan's agenda, why would he be trying to assist Jesus in proving that He was the Son of God, and consequently Israel's Messiah?

After all, it was his suggestion that this feat be performed not in the desert, but in the temple.

All the religious leaders and devout in Israel would be there.

Such a scheme would seem to assure instant recognition.

Obviously, there must have been a hidden agenda here.

And you will notice that Satan was quoting scripture, in this case Psalm 91:11-12, to back up his advice.

However, that's not too surprising, is it?

In fact, every false cult that Satan has ever devised to lead men astray has been backed up by an incorrect application of scripture.

But why would Satan be interested in providing such a shortcut?

Well, it's because the regular route, the God ordained route, would spell disaster for all of his ambitions, and, indeed, for Satan himself.

Of course, unlike God, Satan cannot foresee the future, but he was clever enough to realize that God's way would never be in his best interests.

And I'm sure, that from the beginning of creation, he had been haunted by the words---"**He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.**"

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However, unlike Satan, Jesus was very much aware of the future.

He realized that God's way would involve denial, prolonged hardship, and unimaginable suffering.

So whether Satan realized it or not, his *shortcut* would seem to provide a convenient detour around a very long and painful journey.

In fact, in Hebrews 12:3, we are admonished to **"consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."**

And Isaiah 53:3, referring to that long journey ahead, described Jesus as **"despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."**

Yes, for anyone else, except Jesus, Satan's shortcut would have had tremendous appeal.

However, even if Satan's attention-grabbing method would have worked, which I very much doubt, it would have eliminated the possibility of Jesus ever becoming **"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."**

No, there would have been no bride for Christ, and there would have been no hope for us.

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Well, we need not consider such possibilities, for Satan's temptation didn't even make a dent in Jesus' armour. Without a moment's hesitation, He replied---

**"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"**

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And now, in Matthew 4:8-9, we come to Satan's *third* temptation.

**"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You--" and we'll stop right there.**

Whether Satan realized it or not, he was offering Jesus something that already belonged to Him.

In Psalm 2:8, God had said--**"Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession."**

Yes, in the millennium, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run."

But God's route, the long route, would take over 2000 years to complete, and Jesus knew that.

On the other hand, Satan was offering Him instant success.

And not only that, but Satan was gambling everything he possessed in an attempt to win Jesus over.

And for once in his life, he was *telling the truth*.

So, why would he be willing to lay it all on the line?

Truly, these were high stakes indeed.

Well, the answer is found in V 9--"**All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.**"

Only Satan's diabolical mind could have conceived such an idea.

Yes, He was actually asking Jesus to worship him as if he were God.

Well, Jesus' reaction was instant and very explosive, as that would-be god made his hasty retreat.

**"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"**

No, there would be no *shortcuts* for Jesus.

He would make **"Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."**

Yes, **"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."**

And not only that, but He would patiently wait for His kingdom.

And when that day comes, when He will rule over **"all the kingdoms of the world,"** He will be subject to His Heavenly Father, not Satan.

1 Corinthians 15: 28 "Now when all things  
are made subject to Him, then the Son  
Himself will also be subject to Him who  
put all things under Him, that God may be  
all in all."