

# Jesus Christ's Temptation

John E. McKinley

“**A**nd he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan” (Mark 1:13).

Like many topics in theology, the temptation of Jesus Christ requires that we think about several doctrines simultaneously. In this case, our thinking about Jesus' temptation involves us in the doctrines of *God* (can God be tempted or commit sin?), *humanity* (what is temptation to sin for humans? how much was Jesus like us in his human life?), *sanctification* (how is Jesus a model

for withstanding temptation to sin and obeying God as a man?), and, of course, the complicated reality of *the Incarnation*. This inter-doctrinal situation makes matters messy when we seek for easy answers. Unfortunately, the theological tradition is little help to resolve the issues on this question, having supplied us with many different explanations and not provided us with the broad consensus we might wish for.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was tempted, Scripture says, “in all ways as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). This declaration marks the closeness of Jesus' experiences to ours. The reminder is given to encourage us that he truly understands our situation from the inside. Having endured temptations firsthand, as a true man, Jesus knows temptations that we suffer. That he is God the Son did not protect him from feeling the strain of the pull to commit sin, or from any of the suffering he endured. Instead, these sufferings were his training to learn obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8-9) and to become perfected to function as a sympathetic priest who reconciles us to God (Heb 2:17-18).

Jesus was tempted for our sakes. This means both that he withstood the pressure by his triumph over sin for us (where we have all failed), and that he was credibly tempted so that we would believe he is truly a fellow sufferer with us in temptation. We are told that he is compassionate and ready to lend us the help we need when we are caught in temptation's thrall. Hebrews 4:16 urges us to approach Jesus for the help that he is

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uniquely qualified to offer as the only one who has been tempted as we are, has succeeded against it, and possesses the ability to assist us in our battle. This is good for us, since the temptation to sin is the battle of the human condition. God the Son made this human fight his own when he invaded his hostile creation to rescue it from sin. Accordingly, I will address the topic of Jesus' temptations by laying out two questions of practical relevance: What was temptation for Jesus (as compared with us); and, how did he succeed against temptation (as compared with how we can succeed against it, with him as our example)? I will argue that Jesus was tempted for us in a variety of ways that equipped him to be our reasonable human model in resisting temptation, and our sympathetic ally in the fight.

### **WHAT WAS TEMPTATION FOR JESUS (AS COMPARED WITH US)?**

Jesus was tempted as a *man*, in his human nature. The humanness of his temptation experiences warrants the truth of Hebrews 4:15 and the similarity to our temptations. This is in contrast to the false notion that he was tempted as *God*, according to his deity, since, as James 1:13 affirms, God cannot be tempted by evil. This divine immunity to temptation follows from God's transcendence, omnipotence, and omniscience (among other attributes) by which God cannot be threatened with harm (he cannot be harmed), lured to obtain something that he lacks (he owns everything), or deceived by evil as a means to accomplishing some good (he knows the truth). For Jesus, then, temptation must come through his humanity. The Chalcedonian definition helps here to remind us that the divine and human natures are not mixed with each other ("inconfusedly, unchangeably"), and the properties of each nature are preserved in their union to the person, God the Word.<sup>2</sup> This distinction and conservation of each nature means that his human nature is not divinized in any sense. As a man, the Son became fully vulnerable to the pains and strains of human

life, including temptation to sin. Thus, Jesus was tempted as a man, that is, he could not be tempted apart from the Incarnation, and he was tempted for us as an example and true model of the ideal human life. The many exhortations that Jesus is the pattern for us to imitate only make sense if his experience corresponds closely to ours.<sup>3</sup>

One difference of Jesus' temptation experiences is that he is God Incarnate, which means that, since God cannot sin, he cannot sin.<sup>4</sup> The early church condemned one prominent theologian, Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428), for claiming that Jesus was not impeccable until *after* the resurrection.<sup>5</sup> More recently, some scholars have argued that Jesus could sin (peccability), whether because of his true humanity, or because the reality of a true temptation requires that he was able to commit evil (but he never did so).<sup>6</sup> This *peccability* proposal assumes definitions of humanity and temptation that are unwarranted; we would do better to start with Jesus' experience and define from there the meaning of temptation (see below). By contrast with peccability, most teachers throughout the tradition have held tightly to the unity of the Incarnation and denied that Jesus could have sinned because of his deity (impeccability). The hypostatic union of the Son of God to his deity and humanity requires that being eternal God, Jesus could not sin even as a man. According to Chalcedonian Christology, the natures cannot be separated in a way to allow such contradiction of his deity at the level of his moral action.<sup>7</sup> Thus, everything that Jesus does as a man must be consistent with his impeccability as God. Were this not so, if *Jesus* ever sinned, this would mean that *God* had sinned, a self-violation and failure of his omnipotence, goodness, and immutability (among other attributes).

Another way of understanding Jesus' impeccability (because he is fully God) and temptation as a man is by considering the virtual impeccability that many people experience with reference to a particular action. The ability to do something, abstractly considered, is not possible in some cases

because of the agent who possesses the capacity for action. For example, to illustrate the difference between potential capacities and actual powers, consider how I possess the physical capacities to strangle my dog, Lilly, a five-pound Chihuahua. Being who I am, with strong commitments to the well being of my dog, and my relationships with my wife, my children, and God, I will never use my capacities to strangle the dog. Indeed, I cannot do so because of who I am.<sup>8</sup> Thus, I am functionally impeccable with regard to this evil act. Even so, I can be tempted to strangle the dog in a weak moment, though I remain never fully able to carry through with it. Similarly, Jesus is impeccable with regard to every act because, while he possesses the created capacities to commit evil as a man, so long as these capacities belong to *him*, the eternal Son, *he* will never use his human abilities to commit sin.<sup>9</sup> Being who he is, with the strong commitments he maintains to his Father and the program of salvation, he will never sin (despite our ability to consider his abilities in abstraction from who he is as the agent of the Incarnation). Being God the Son, he is impeccable even in his life as a true man.

That Jesus cannot sin need not dismay us in view of the report that he was truly tempted. We need only to see that the possibility of failure (sin) is not a necessary condition for a true experience of struggle and the praiseworthy accomplishment of sinlessness. Indeed, Jesus clearly struggled in the reported temptations, and his sympathy with us is based on the severity of his combat with temptation to sin. But the apparent problem of his impeccability and temptation remains. It is still legitimate to ask: How can Jesus be tempted without the ability to sin?

I want to address this important question in a bit more depth in four steps. First, I want to consider recent proposals of several theologians who suggest that Jesus could be truly tempted to sin if we link his temptation to his knowledge. Second, I want to discuss how we should best understand how Jesus was tempted in “all ways” like us. Third, I want to consider two features of all temptations

which were true of Jesus and ourselves. Fourth, I want to think through five basic kinds of temptations that we all have which will help us explain how Jesus was truly tempted in all ways as we are. Let us now turn to these four areas.

### **JESUS' TEMPTATIONS AND HIS KNOWLEDGE**

When we consider the reality of Jesus' temptations, several proposals have been offered to make sense of this difficulty. Scripture does not explain an answer for us, so we are left to formulate the options and ponder how to understand it all (which may make us feel dizzy). Several theologians have agreed in recent years that Jesus could be truly tempted to sin while remaining impeccable just so long as he was uncertain or unaware of his impeccability.<sup>10</sup> That is, he was uncertain in his human mind, just as he learns things as a developing creature (Luke 2:40, 52), and he claims not to know the time of his return (Mark 13:32). While affirming the absolute impossibility of sin, *uncertainty* at the level of Jesus' beliefs about his capacities as a man would be sufficient for him to suffer the strain of temptation alongside the rest of us.

A thought experiment can help us to see Jesus' situation.<sup>11</sup> Consider that you are told there will be a cash prize for you if you can remain in your house for a full day, a voluntary house arrest. There may be many reasons why you are tempted to leave the house, but you consider the prize to be more worthwhile, so you resolve to stay indoors. At the end of the time you are duly rewarded. Then, to your surprise, you are told that the doors and windows had all been sealed shut—your departure during the test had been impossible! Does this impossibility of leaving the house invalidate your struggle and the accomplishment of choosing to remain inside? No, you should be rewarded, since you truly weighed the options and you freely chose to fulfill the test. Likewise, the temptation remained valid for Jesus to consider that, being God the Son, he was most likely unable to sin

while he felt the strong pull of his temptations. He could not be so certain in his human mind about the inference to his impeccability from knowing his identity as the Son of God that the temptations made no appeal to him.<sup>12</sup> Certainty in human knowledge normally requires a test of the theory (or divine revelation). Without such an experimental test of his ability to sin, Jesus had probabilistic knowledge about himself, but no more. This uncertainty, because untested, provides for the temptation to pull at Jesus as a real option *just as we are tempted*.

He cannot have brushed off the temptations as nonsense for him simply because they were impossible. He was not play-acting (indeed, hypocrisy deeply angered him whenever he saw it in others!). Instead, Jesus truly and painfully felt the pull to flee the cross and he prayed desperately for a way out while praying in Gethsemane (*with loud sobs and tears*, Heb 5:7). When contemplating the imminent betrayal and the pain of hell that would follow, he was intensely distressed to the point of feeling that he was going to die (John 13:21). A short time later, Jesus needed an angel to strengthen him while he prayed to surrender his human will to God's will (Luke 22:41-44).<sup>13</sup> The reality of his true human mind and human will means he did not know all things and wrestled with his conflicting creaturely desire for self-protection (in Gethsemane, he wanted to flee the cross) and the desire for self-surrender to God's purposes (he also wanted to obey his Father). This real experience in struggle was plausibly preserved by his human cognitive uncertainty, and the uncertainty seems to fulfill what we can propose as the necessary and sufficient condition for Jesus to be tempted as a man: he must be uncertain about sin as an impossibility for himself, and by his imagination he must be able to perceive the desirable state of affairs should he follow through and commit the sin (he evades the punishment of hell in the cross).<sup>14</sup> Like the rest of us, Jesus suffered the temptation in the fierce battle of the moment and fought against it as a man with God's

help (as provided through the angel's appearance to strengthen him). I think it is implausible to consider that theological reflection about his deity would have shielded him against the devil's allures and the attraction to take the easy way presented in the temptation. He was not experiencing his humanity in the abstract, but in the concrete of feeling pulled by the attraction of sin (the goods offered by sinful means of attainment). He was not sure that he cannot sin, but he focused on the strain and met it within the frame of his human life (as helped by the Holy Spirit, just as he was filled with the Spirit when he entered and returned from the wilderness temptations). Thus, Jesus was truly tempted for us as a man, despite his being unchangeably impeccable as God the Son.

#### **THE MEANING OF JESUS BEING TEMPTED IN "ALL WAYS"**

In order to grasp how Jesus could be tempted like us, we must pause for a moment and reflect on what it means for the Scripture to declare that Jesus was tempted *in all ways* as we are (Heb 4:15), leaving us to discover the explanations for how a God-man can be tempted as the reasonable pattern for others who are sinners saved by grace. At first glance, the claim that he was tempted "in all ways as we are" seems impossible because of the historical particularity of Jesus' life. "All ways" need not mean that Jesus was tempted to rob banks, use performance-enhancing drugs as an athlete, or plagiarize a research paper. The main idea is that, somehow, as a true man, God the Son experienced the pull of temptation in ways that compare closely with the ways we feel tempted. His experiences are a real basis for empathy with our experiences. What he lived by to fight against his temptations are the transferable methods that we may live by, following his example and receiving special help from him.

#### **FEATURES COMMON TO ALL TEMPTATION**

Let us now consider two features that are com-

mon to all temptation before we turn to think through basic kinds of temptations all human beings, including Jesus, experience thus providing a more grounded explanation on how Jesus was truly tempted in all ways as we are. The first feature that is common to all temptation is the fact that all temptation is subject to *person-variability*, which is just to say that the ways we experience temptation partly depends on us—temptation varies from one person to the next.<sup>15</sup> The person-variability of temptations implies that no one can feel another person's temptation in the sense of an identity of experience ("I feel your pain"). But Jesus, because he experienced hundreds (or hundreds of thousands?) of enticements to sin that come naturally with a human life, can say, "I have felt temptation that is like your temptation." He knows firsthand the temptations that come with poverty, social and political oppression, betrayal, physical suffering, ridicule and public shame, danger, want of food and physical comforts, the sense of abandonment by God and close friends—a whole range of things that come to people in the normal settings of life common to all. Therefore, when Hebrews 4:15 affirms that Jesus was tempted *in all ways as we are*, I take this to mean that he has been tempted in all the ways that are common to humanity. That he was male and unmarried does not count against his abilities to empathize and offer real help to women and men who experience particular varieties of temptations that are based on their person-variability. For example, Jesus did not need to become a heroin user and feel those particular temptations for him to be able to empathize with heroin users. Jesus has his own intense temptations to draw from for relating to other people. Christ's particularity (even his being the God-man and sinless) does not count against his ability to empathize with any other human being suffering temptations. What matters most is that Jesus was thoroughly tempted in the variety of occurrences in the setting of his human life. These are sufficient to constitute him empathetic and a reasonable pattern for all others in their tempta-

tions. His empathy is not a function of his omniscience, but is from his human experiences of a variety of temptations throughout his life.

A second feature common to all temptation can be approached by rejecting what some have tried to say marked Jesus' unique temptation. Let me explain. Some have tried to mark Jesus' uniqueness in ways that are not helpful by arguing that normal temptations should be distinguished into internal and external kinds, and Jesus only experienced the external sort.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, if *internal temptation* means sinful desires, then Jesus cannot have experienced internal temptation (usually, *external temptation* means the circumstances, whether by threat of pain or loss, or by the possible gain of some needed thing such as bread).<sup>17</sup> I doubt this distinction is an accurate account of temptation, since it seems that all temptation involves a combination of external circumstances that appeal to one's internal beliefs, desires, and imagination.<sup>18</sup> We can deny that Jesus was plagued by sinful desires (such as lust or greed) while affirming that he *internally* believed he was the Messiah, desired strongly to flee from the pain of the cross, and imagined the possibilities of avoiding pain through disobeying his Father. In this way, we can see that he truly was tempted just as the rest of us are, by struggling with internal desires that relate to external circumstances. Like us, he was not shielded by his deity or sinlessness from suffering the deeply internal pull of temptation as an attack to be resisted from the inside.

### **BASIC TEMPTATIONS JESUS AND ALL HUMANS FACE**

In thinking through how Jesus was truly tempted in all ways as we are, it is important to consider that Jesus' experience in temptation closely corresponds to ours in that he was tempted naturally and normally as a function of his human life. Being a true human being, Jesus was vulnerable to temptation in at least five dimensions or spheres of human life. What are these spheres? They are his relationships to God, the created

world, other people, the self, and suffering. In contrast to God, who cannot be tempted (Jas 1:13), human beings are temptable because of their creaturely weakness, finitude, contingency, and liability to suffering. People want to meet their needs, aggrandize themselves, and avoid pain by sinful avenues of escape. Normally, sin is corruptive in a way that weakens the sinner to be more susceptible to further sins, and sometimes through corrupt desires (not simply innocent desires for things met through sinful means). Jesus' difference in this respect is that, being sinless (he possessed no guilt or corruption from original or personal sin) he was not subject to the original depravity (no corrupt desires) common to the rest of us. The point is that human temptability is not from sinfulness (just as Adam, Eve, and Jesus were each tempted without prior sin), but from the factors explained here in relation to being a human, which Jesus fully shared. This share in human life includes the normal matrix of a person's real and imagined needs and desires that correspond to real and imagined satisfaction in relationships with God, the external world, other people, and the self. These areas of an individual's relationships are spheres of human existence that allow different sorts of temptations to afflict people. Even for the monk in seclusion, temptation is intrinsically relational because the mechanics of temptation are an interaction of relational factors (or, one's relatedness to life). In addition, another avenue of temptation is opened when suffering touches us. Let us look at each of these five areas in turn.

First, with respect to God, every temptation to sin is an enticement to be torn away from God. Moreover, every sin has an ultimate setting within a person's creaturely relationship to God as Creator and Judge. The prospect of turning against God by following a temptation to sin arises from the human condition as finite beings with freedom and imagination (but this is no excuse for sin).<sup>19</sup> We may guess that human beings can be tempted because creaturely finitude and freedom seem to form a tension within the person's

heart. Without the combination of freedom and imagination that allows individuals to consider and be tempted by attractive possibilities, people would not see the opportunity to turn away from God. However, being endowed with freedom and imagination to transcend their divinely ordained limitations, people may consider the untested prospect of another way of life apart from God (that is, their independence from the Creator). They are tempted to add to themselves and seek to enlarge themselves beyond the constraints of finitude. Thus, finite human beings can imagine their personal transcendence as the temptation to become great and move beyond their divinely ordered status (which is a departure from God to self-destruction). As contingent creatures with an acute sense of their dependence on God, the temptation to turn away from the Creator by a rebellious grasp at independence appeals to the desire for autonomy.<sup>20</sup> The desire may be inexplicable as the dream for life apart from God, the *source* of all goodness and life. At least we can say the desire for autonomy is irrational, just as all sin is fundamentally irrational and self-destructive. These temptations to independence from God may take both the direct form of forsaking God for independence and autonomy through idolatry, and the indirect form of violating the limits that God has established for his creatures' relationships within the natural order.

The human condition, then, includes a paradox of glory and temptation because of our special, image-bearing relationship to God. If this is right, we should remember that, as a true human being, Jesus shared in this human situation and was tempted as a man in relationship with God. The wilderness temptations seem to have highlighted this relationship and would not have worked otherwise (i.e., he only felt tempted because he had certain obligations to obey God). He had to struggle to surrender to God's will instead of depart from it (Matt 26:39). Thus, if we are right to think that some of our temptations occur with reference to our special relatedness to God, then we can see

that Christ's exemplifying this sort of temptation may be one aspect of the meaning of Hebrews 4:15 (i.e., relationship to God is *one* of the ways in which he was tempted in all ways as we are).

A second sphere of human relatedness is that people are created with needs for material support in the created world. All people are inescapably frail creatures requiring the perpetual, externally supplied life support of food, drink, oxygen, clothing, shelter, sunlight, and more. The temptations that correspond to bodily needs and desires in relationship to the external world afflict humanity constantly, despite the original goodness of both the created world and the human creatures inhabiting it. The severe lack of some needed thing, such as food, brings about suffering and pain for the individual (e.g., weakness, starvation, death). This need for life-support corresponds to the promise of relief, comfort, and well-being that is possible only when eating food, clothing the body, or whatever, satisfies the needs.

The temptations in this relationship to stuff in the world can be divided in two sorts. *Legitimate desires* are an internal touch point for the temptation to satisfy a legitimate desire in the wrong way (e.g., hunger satisfied by stolen bread). These desires are sinless and natural just as part of being a human. They are the desires that God created humans to experience. By contrast, *corrupt desires* are an internal touch point for the temptation to satisfy a corrupt, sinful, and self-destructive desire (e.g., *greed* satisfied by excessive wealth, or *gluttony*, the desire for more food than what one needs). Corrupt desires are the result of sin that disorders the body and heart because the person is alienated from God.<sup>21</sup> Both the corrupt and legitimate desires in temptation seem to occur as internal experiences of a struggle in relation things in the world environment. Notice that these two sorts of desires form the normative temptations for fallen humanity. We can affirm that Jesus was only susceptible to legitimate or innocent desires because he did not possess the corrupt desires of fallen humanity (i.e., he was not fallen or sinful, so

he did not possess *lust*).<sup>22</sup>

As noted above, the variety of temptations in this relationship exists because God has set bounds and prescriptions for human conduct in relation to the natural world of stuff (animals, plants, trees, land, etc.). For example, bestiality, gluttony, and greed are prohibited (even the exploitation of the animals is limited in Exod 23:12, as part of Sabbath regulations). While the world is a habitation designed for humans in a way that corresponds perfectly to their embodiment, the divinely ordered relationship for the ways human beings use the world is also the setting for a multitude of temptations to violate that order. Being a real man, Jesus was also tempted as an embodied being in relationship to the created world, just as others are. Satan's urging that Jesus provide food for himself after fasting for forty days depends upon Christ's basic need for nutritional sustenance of his body. The category of temptations in relation to the created world is another way of temptation that Jesus experienced in likeness to us.

In addition to the relationships to God and the created world, a third area of temptation involves the social setting of person-to-person relationships which constitute an array of human temptations. People have the relational needs for the interpersonal realities of love, affection, respect, honor, friendship, companionship, nurture, protection, encouragement, and more. People are tempted to sin in the sphere of their relationships with others both by seeking the *wrong means* of satisfying legitimate, appropriate interpersonal desires (e.g., the desire for respect by lying about one's experiences), and by trying to get satisfaction for their corrupt interpersonal desires (e.g., the desire for revenge satisfied by attacking an enemy through gossip or violence). Much of the social, interpersonal evil to which people are tempted combines both relationships of human-to-things and of humans-to-humans. Examples include coveting, greed, theft, slander, deception, property damage, sexual misconduct, persecution, extortion, and assault. These combinations make for misus-

ing things of the natural world in harmful ways against other people. Thus, the needs that people have for other people draw them into interdependent relationships with others by God's design, but this social setting is also the arena for many temptations to sin against that design in relationship to others. People are inescapably oriented towards one another, and yet it is in these relationships that so many virulent temptations arise because of interpersonal needs.

Jesus experienced many temptations in his relationships with people. For example, he understands the distrust, rejection, slander, betrayal, assault, and malice by others that may have tempted him to revenge. Jesus knows the temptation to do and say the things that could make him well liked by others. He understands the temptation of a growing boy to disobey his parents when they wrongly blamed him for negligence and pulled him away from enjoying the presence of his Father and theological discourse in the Temple courts (Luke 2:41-52). Jesus experienced close relationships with men, women, and children from among the powerful, weak, disgraceful outcasts, and the most highly honored of society. They responded to him with the full range of emotions: adoration, honor, open and concealed disdain, skepticism, insistence, and malicious provocation. Whatever temptations we experience in relation to other people, Hebrews 4:15 seems abundantly truthful that Jesus authentically experienced this third way of temptations just as we do. These societal temptations were as inescapable for him as for us.

Fourth, in one's relationship to oneself, people have the habitual dynamics of character, moods, emotions, self-concept, and self-awareness. There is opportunity for temptations to pride, distorted body image, despair, happiness, safety, power, achievement, comfort, worth, various illusions, and more. Many of these reflexive, self-oriented temptations are simply the appeals to repeat the first human sin of clamoring for one's independence from God (as in Eden). Often these self-

referential temptations are based on the problem of seeking to satisfy appropriate desires using the wrong means (e.g., the desire for happiness satisfied through manipulating others to meet one's needs). Other self-referential temptations arise from sinful desires (e.g., the desire to feel superior to others satisfied by manipulating others to make one feel powerful). The issue of temptation in relationship to the self is to see oneself wrongly, according to some false image that is other than God's making, order, and specific call.<sup>23</sup> Human beings face multiform temptations to autonomy for the self, sinful pride, and delusions of power and self-importance by which they violate the proper order of their relationships to God, the world, and other people. While this relationship of the outer self and inner self or self-consciousness always has a setting in another of the three relationships above, the questions of personal identity and significance make for powerful temptations at this relational level because these have to do with a person's self-awareness.

Was Jesus tempted in this way? Satan's suggestions in the wilderness pressed especially at this point of Jesus' desire for confirmation of his special identity. Jesus, just having been publicly declared from heaven as God's Son (at the Jordan baptism), quickly found himself in the peril of starvation. This situation possibly made him susceptible to the wonder if his dawning consciousness of being the Son of God and Messiah was mistaken.<sup>24</sup> Satan suggested that Jesus should force God's hand to confirm his identity as God's Son ("If you are the Son of God"). Even if Jesus had no other temptations in relation to himself, these two alone are sufficient to constitute his firsthand empathy for others who face temptations that have to do with one's self-understanding.

Thus, in every sphere of human life, for Jesus as for us, temptation is that pull on people to act against God and his order for human existence. Hebrews 4:15 tells that there is a comprehensive correspondence between the ways that we are tempted and the ways Jesus was tempted. I do not

mean that the writer of Hebrews had these four ways in mind, but that these four categories help us to see comprehensiveness of the temptations that we suffer and that Jesus experienced for us (to empathize with us and give help to us in following his pattern of obedience). George Painter's observation is apt: "The realm of possible temptation, therefore, is almost infinite, and the impulse to anything whatever, outside the sphere of the right, may lead to evil."<sup>25</sup>

Alongside these four aspects of human life is a fifth and more general category of human temptability: the susceptibility to suffer pain that ranges from moderate discomfort and deprivation to intense, excruciating pain. The prospect of suffering in a fallen world creates this avenue of temptation for the promise of relief from pain (or the possible evasion of suffering).<sup>26</sup> Human beings are vulnerable to suffering of many sorts (emotional and physical pain) because of their creaturely contingency and frailty. People are thus open to being tempted to sin by avoiding pain through the wrong means of satisfying their desire for comfort or self-preservation (e.g. stealing bread to escape the pain of hunger; turning away from Christ to escape persecution).<sup>27</sup>

The temptations occasioned by present or imminent suffering are really the pull to sin as a means of relief, which seems truly good to the sufferer (e.g., the legitimate desire to avoid punishment by telling a lie). The one who is tempted only resists sin by renouncing the reasonable, natural desire to escape from suffering. Thus, trials of all kinds strain people specifically because of embodiment and the relational contingency upon life-support and other needs.

As a true human being who suffered emotionally and physically (e.g., Heb 5:7-8), Jesus was also temptable because of his vulnerability to pain. This is most clear when he was tempted to avoid his drinking the cup of God's wrath (Mark 14:36). Christ's achievement against temptation is supreme in this event; he overcame his desire to avoid pain and chose instead the desire to obey

God, come what may.

In summary of these five ways or settings for temptation, we have seen that Jesus experienced all the sorts of temptation that we do. I suggest that these are a helpful picture of the meaning in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are. His differences from the rest of humanity (being an eternal person, fully God, and sinless) did not protect him from experiencing the basic modes of temptation. The authentic correspondence of his experience of temptation to ours cannot be denied. His experience is properly the basis of his empathy and his example for us, and the ground of his encouragement to us that he is able and ready to help us when we are tempted (Heb 4:16).

### SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Some conclusions follow at this point in answer to our question of what was temptation for Jesus as compared with ours. First, to experience temptation is not itself a sin (since Jesus was tempted sinlessly) and sometimes these afflict us because God is testing us to advance us in salvation (but some temptations are truly our fault, as in a boy who feels tempted to lie because he stole something and wants to avoid getting caught). On the contrary, to feel tempted can be the backside of the positive opportunity to respond to God's work of sanctification through difficulties that provoke the believer to cling all the more closely to God and to repudiate sinful ways of thinking or living.

I propose that *all* temptation (for Jesus and for all others) is intensely internal and external to bring about this basic inward conflict among the opposing desires in the heart, some leading to sin and some leading to righteousness. *Temptation is the internal struggle among a person's beliefs and desires, within a particular setting of attractive external circumstances, and it pulls the person to sin as its target.* The advantage of this comprehensive definition allows us to draw direct lines of correspondence between Jesus' temptations and the temptation experiences of all people, according

to the claim of Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus' empathy is based on the direct similarity of his experience. This advantage also allows us to draw a direct line between Jesus' resistance to temptation and the possibilities for believers to follow Christ's pattern, according to the claims of Hebrews 12:1-3 and 1 Peter 2:21-25 that Jesus is a reasonable model for human sinlessness. Thus, the definition allows a reasonable explanation of the biblical data for Jesus' relevance in terms of the commonality of human temptation.

According to the definition of temptation given above, we can trace one experience of Jesus imaginatively as follows: in Gethsemane, Jesus desires to avoid the punishment for sin (which is a desire that leads to sin) and he desires to obey God (a desire leading to righteousness). Despite his high priority for self-preservation and the belief that evading pain may be possible, he chooses to obey God according to his highest value and desires to please his Father and accomplish redemption. Jesus wants to obey God more than he wants to dodge the pain of being cursed by God in the cross. This internal choice occurred dynamically in relation to specific external factors. Jesus' circumstances—with the imminent prospect of suffering the cup of wrath (hell)—are countered by the imaginable state of affairs in which he does not drink the cup of wrath. The temptation with its sinful prospect of disobeying God out of a justifiable desire to avoid pain is uniquely fitted (his person-variability) to his particular experience and beliefs. No one else could have felt this temptation, or experienced the intensity the way he did because the factors that constituted a temptation for him were both internal and external, and particular to his relationship to God, his special role as the Messiah, and his special awareness of the prospect of his substitutionary suffering of the punishment of hell (cf. Mark 10:45). He suffers the pull of temptation and the fear internally as he pleads again and again for a way out (three times). His struggle to obey truly is a fierce fight that involves his deepest beliefs and desires. When his

request for a non-sinful escape is not granted, he chooses the only remaining desire that still leads to righteousness (through suffering). His refusal to choose a sinful path of self-preservation is the difficult model for all of us.<sup>28</sup>

Scripture is clear that Jesus' temptations were real in the full range of experiences that were sufficient for him to empathize with all others who are tempted, and he is the reasonable human template of sinlessness for Christians to resist sin as he did. Jesus experienced legitimate desires and sinless temptations in relation to desires for sinful satisfactions. Jesus had to respond by overcoming his desires without intending or choosing to sin. Jesus' differences of having no corrupt desires or a fallen will do not preclude him from sharing in the common temptation experience of humanity. Temptations related to corrupt desires are person-variable, and do not constitute a distinct set or category of temptations in which Jesus could not share (e.g., the aforementioned internal temptations). Thus, Jesus was tempted for us, in all ways as we are.

#### **HOW DID JESUS SUCCEED AGAINST TEMPTATION?**

Now to the second question, how did Jesus resist temptation and achieve a perfect, sinless human life? In answering this question, as with the first, we must keep near to the biblical exhortations that Jesus is an example for us. Whatever answers we consider must be weighed for how they work as transferable from Jesus' experience to ours, that is, the question of his practical relevance as the model for our victory over temptation, since that is the emphasis of the most important temptation passages. The basic idea is that Jesus was tempted for us to *demonstrate* how we can succeed as he did (in addition to living a perfect human life in our place, Romans 10:4).

We have two options for answering the question of how Jesus resisted sin. The first option is that Jesus relied on his divine powers to achieve his sinless, perfect obedience to God. The second option is

that Jesus, a divine person incarnate, did not live his human existence by his deity, but he took up his life as a man fully within the frame of our limitations (Heb 2:14-18), helped only by the same empowering grace that God provides for his people.

The first option has at least two problems. First, to say Jesus resisted sin by his deity cuts off Jesus' relevance for the rest of us who are not God as he is. Second, the appeal to divine powers as the means of his success against sin cuts him off from experiencing any temptation, since God cannot be tempted (Jas 1:13). Once the divine nature was involved as causal in his human experience, temptation cannot pull at him in any sense. Moreover, Scripture never hints that Jesus responded to temptations with divine power. The emphasis is always on his resistance through human means of reliance on God's word, praying for aid, and seeking the support of his friends.

Instead of explaining his sinlessness by an escape through his divine power, the second option seems to fit much better with the relevance of Jesus as tempted for us, and the pervasive role of the Holy Spirit in his life.<sup>29</sup> Scripture emphasizes a strong continuity of the Holy Spirit's active presence in the life and work of Israel's prophets, Jesus, and disciples who followed him. Without detracting from Jesus' eternal deity as the Son of God, we may read Scripture as highlighting his promised human life as the Messiah, the man of the Spirit who lived by and provides the Holy Spirit so that many would be like him in a new relationship to God that manifested in the new operation of righteous human life in the world. The Spirit is not an add-on to God the Son, but a necessary ally to Jesus in his humanity. He never faced temptation alone, and he proved the way of success for us that neither should we face temptation alone. The indwelling presence of God to us by the Spirit is the same help offered as the "grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16) that Jesus relied upon in his battles. Were this not so, then all the relevance of his human life as an example and basis for his empathy with others who are merely human

would be void. I will argue that Scripture reveals that Jesus relied upon the very same provisions of empowering grace that are repeatedly commended throughout the Bible for the rest of us.

First, the evidence for the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life and ministry are best explained as fulfilling a real need to him in his weak humanity, and this includes assisting him to repel sin when he was tempted. We are told that Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2), after which test he returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). This report suggests that the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life is relevant to his success against temptation. Luke's emphasis on the Spirit's closeness to Jesus should not surprise us since the prophecies of the Spirit's involvement in the Messiah's life and ministry predicted a spectacular kingship and prophetic ministry for Israel and the nations. In the tradition of the judges, kings, and prophets of Israel, Old Testament prophecies tell that the Messiah would be closely assisted by the Spirit of God to fulfill his tasks. The primary emphasis is on the job of ruling Israel and the world, as in Isaiah 11:1-10, 42:1-9, 50:4-11, 59:16-21, and 61:1-11. Within these prophecies is the repeated dependence of the Messiah upon the Spirit's support for his ethical development as a wise and righteous king under God. This righteousness resembles David as the man after God's own heart, and sharply contrasts with moral failures of Moses, Saul, David, Solomon, and the many subsequent kings of Israel and Judah. The Messiah to come would be equipped by the Spirit as to his "knowledge and fear of Yahweh" (Isa 11:2) so that his delight would be in the fear of Yahweh (Isa 11:3), resulting in the total righteousness and faithfulness of his reign (Isa 11:5) that extends for establishing shalom for the entire creation (Isa 11:6-10). He would be strengthened by God through the Spirit upon him (Isa 42:1), experienced as Yahweh's promise to hold him by the hand (Isa 42:6). Moreover, the Servant-Messiah

tells that Yahweh opened his ear to instruct him (Isa 50:4-5) and helped him in his mission (Isa 50:7, 9). These details are selected for how they relate to the ethical formation of the Messiah and his active faithfulness as a man, which is necessary to his jobs as the prophet, priest, and king accomplishing divine salvation.

Jesus applied these prophecies to himself by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 as fulfilled in his life and ministry.<sup>30</sup> He also attributed his exorcisms to the Spirit's empowerment (Matt 12:28, cf. Luke 11:20), which Matthew has preceded with the quotation of Isaiah 42:1-4 to show the messianic fulfillment in Jesus (Matt 12:9-21) as the one empowered to bring release from sin's thrall. Similar is Luke's later summary of Jesus' entire ministry through Peter's statement in Acts 10:38. The entire range of Jesus' works of power to do good and deliver from the devil is under the enablement of the Holy Spirit's anointing, alternately described by Peter that God was with Jesus. This statement is odd if we are thinking merely of the Father and the Spirit being "with" God the Son, but the fit is natural when we consider that the Son is the Messiah according to his human life, for which he needed divine empowerment to support his perfect accomplishments.

We are also told that the Holy Spirit was constantly involved in Jesus' development from his miraculous conception (Luke 1:35), to his boyhood development with increasing wisdom and relationship with God (Luke 2:40, 52), throughout his ministry (Luke 4:1-14), and culminating in the cross (Heb 9:14) and resurrection (Rom 1:4; 8:11).<sup>31</sup> We may conclude from this evidence that the best explanation for the emphasis on the prediction, fulfillment, and continuity of the Spirit's work in Jesus and Christians is that just as he was aided by the Spirit, so would they be. His example as a man of the Spirit to faithfully resist sin and courageously pursue righteousness is reasonable for Christians who follow him. Since he worked within the limitations they (we) have to work with, and he provided the same operative power of the

Holy Spirit to them as the Spirit helped him, Jesus is a realistic model to imitate. Obviously, this is not to say that Christians ever succeed in the full way of sinless perfection as Jesus did, but that he is so near to us in having to fight through temptation as we do, that we can be truly inspired by his example, employ the same means that helped him, and be encouraged to persevere even though we still sin daily.

Second, in addition to the basic provision of the Holy Spirit to indwell Christians and aid us in the mission of righteousness by following Jesus, Scripture specifies that Jesus actively relied upon several modes of the empowering grace of God to help him as a man. These reports are Jesus' demonstration of how to fight temptation that we may repeat, and by such means of grace we may find the help that he promises to provide when we are tempted (Heb 4:16). Briefly recounted, these are ways Jesus' received help from God when he was tempted, and we find that the same are commended to us abundantly as the basic support for triumph as a Christian.

Jesus was a man of prayer at all times (e.g., Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:32, 41), with a focused appeal for help when he struggled with temptation in Gethsemane. Prayer was for Jesus a real grasp of God to receive strength in his time of need, when he felt weak in the face of a terribly fierce temptation. We can only guess, but it makes good sense to assume that Jesus normally reached for help through prayer when temptations assaulted him. Likewise, Christians are urged to pray constantly about everything (1 Thess 5:17), being assured that God can rescue them especially from temptation (2 Pet 2:9), about which they should pray to God for deliverance (Matt 6:13). Jesus urged his friends to pray for aid in Gethsemane, where resistance to temptation is specifically in view (Luke 22:40, 46). The reminder to pray for help when suffering temptation is also the single exhortation of Hebrews 4:16, with the assurance that Jesus' sympathy from having been tempted himself should encourage us that he will be ready and able

to help us directly in our time of need.

Jesus also rebuffed some of his temptations by reliance upon the word of God. When in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, Jesus routed the lies with truth as his guard from sin. This is what Eve should have done, and constant trust in God's word is the basic method for all believers to parry deception-laden temptations. God's revelation is the antidote that dismantles the lie that otherwise makes sin seem attractive in temptations (cf. Ps 119:9-11).

Finally, Jesus not only fought through his temptations by living close to God through receptiveness to the Spirit, prayer to his Father, and reliance upon his Father's word of truth, but he also called his closest friends alongside to support him when he knew the battle was upon him. Too often, Christians withdraw, but true friendship is a real support that Jesus leaned upon in Gethsemane, even though they failed him. Like Jesus, Christians have divine and human help available to them, even the help of the Spirit present through other believers. Because Jesus was tempted for us, when we rely on all he has provided, he will bring us to triumph with him.<sup>32</sup>

In reflecting on the temptations of Jesus and its relationship to our temptation, we are reminded of our glorious Redeemer and all that he has done for us. In every way he is utterly unique, but in becoming one with us, he has also set the pattern to how we are to deal with temptation in our lives as we seek to trust, follow, and obey our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For the story of the church's reflection on the temptation and impeccability of Jesus, see chapters 4-9 of John E. McKinley, *Tempted for Us: Theological Models and the Practical Relevance of Christ's Impeccability and Temptation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2009). I summarize the evidence in nine models that have been formulated to explain Jesus' temptation.

<sup>2</sup>The patristic theological idea of the hypostatic union explains the union in this way as a personal union of

the two natures, not as of union to each other, but as each united to the person. Each nature is fully possessed by the person, God the Son, and so the two natures remain unmixed and distinct from each other while they are inseparable in the incarnational union.

<sup>3</sup>Jesus is presented as the example for people to follow in many ways throughout the Gospels (e.g., we are to take up our cross and follow his cross-bearing steps, Luke 9:23), and his model life is specifically urged upon us in Heb 12:1-3, 1 Pet 2:21-25, Phil 2:5-11, 1 Cor 11:1, and Rom 8:17 and 15:1-7.

<sup>4</sup>Divine impeccability is sometimes disputed by a few philosophers of religion, such as Nelson Pike, Vincent Brümmer, Bruce Reichenbach, and Stephen T. Davis. For a recent defense of the doctrine, see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 288-92.

<sup>5</sup>The Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II, 553). The council anathematizes anyone who defends Theodore's doctrine that Jesus progressed by means of the grace of the Holy Spirit to become impeccable after the resurrection, which means Theodore taught that Jesus was peccable before that point.

<sup>6</sup>For example, those who argue for peccability as a conjunct of Jesus' true humanity: Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ: His Perfect Humanity a Proof of His Divinity* (New York: Doran, 1913), 35-36; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 2:457. For those who argue for peccability as a necessary condition of true temptation, see T. A. Hart, "Sinlessness and Moral Responsibility: A Problem in Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48 (1995): 38; Robert H. Stein, *Jesus the Messiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 110-111; Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 562-64.

<sup>7</sup>Here we can distinguish between *paradox* and *contradiction*. Certainly there are paradoxical experiences by which the Son of God *knows all things* as God, and simultaneously he is *limited in his knowledge* as man (or, he is simultaneously immortal and able to die, omnipotent and weak, eternal and temporal, uncreated and created, etc.). These paradoxes are pos-

sible by virtue of his possession of two natures. All the paradoxes are proper as part of being human or the greater purpose of accomplishing redemption; the ability to commit sin is not proper and uniquely would involve the Son rebelling as a man from himself as God. Unlike these paradoxes, sin (moral evil) is a contradiction. The Son of God's moral actions are personal actions whether he commits them as God or as man, so the doer of the action, even in his human nature, would be a sinner. Since Jesus is impeccable as God, he must be impeccable as man. This may be understood also because morality is a dimension of reality that is common to God and humanity, so a simply paradox cannot allow sin; any evil act is a direct self-violation. God the Son cannot act in his humanity that is inconsistent with his moral nature as God.

<sup>8</sup>By comparison, many people own guns and will never be able to use their guns to harm the people they love. Guns, like physical or spiritual capacities, do not kill other people; people do, that is, the agent who wickedly uses a gun to kill another human being. If an agent is not wicked, or if he is sufficiently committed to the well being of other people, then he will never misuse a gun to harm those other people; indeed, he is unable to do so, being who he is with the commitments that he lives by.

<sup>9</sup>It is important to remember that *natures* (whether divine or human) do not do anything, but only persons do. So we would be wrong to say that Jesus' human nature could sin. Instead, we are saying that Jesus will not act according to his human nature in any way that is evil.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas V. Morris seems to be the first to formulate this proposal in *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), chapter 6. Donald Macleod, Gerald O'Collins, Richard Swinburne, and William Lane Craig echo similar ideas. I prefer the formulations by Macleod and O'Collins to specify that Jesus would not have believed a lie that he could sin (as Morris argues), only that Jesus need be unsure whether he was impeccable or not. See *Tempted For Us*, 227-43.

<sup>11</sup>I have adapted the locked room account from Morris,

*Logic of God Incarnate*, 146-52.

<sup>12</sup>Some have objected at this point about epistemic uncertainty as a necessary and sufficient condition for temptation. For example, John S. Feinberg, "The Incarnation," in *In Defense of Miracles* (ed. Gary R. Habermas and R. Douglas Geivett; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 241-44. Feinberg argues that Jesus would have known he was impeccable, but this would not have prevented him from experiencing temptation.

<sup>13</sup>Luke's mention of the sweat as like great drops of blood, however interpreted as metaphorical for profuse sweating or actual blood coming from the capillaries and through the pores of his skin, shows extremely intense physical and spiritual exertion of his wrestling with the temptation that is upon him. This cannot be an act

<sup>14</sup>Again, Morris and others formulate this as the belief that there may be a possibility of committing the sin, which I do not think is helpful or necessary for explaining temptation. I think it opens further problems to suggest that Jesus believed lies about himself (that he could sin, when he was impeccable). Were this true, what else was he mistaken about that we should not trust?

<sup>15</sup>This concept of person-variability is my adaptation from George I. Mavrodes, *Belief in God* (New York: Random House, 1970), 40, where he uses the concept of person variability for the subjective value of arguments for the existence of God. He notes (rightly) that certain arguments may function as *proofs* for some people (they are convinced the argument is true) but not for others. An argument is only a proof if it works to convince the person of the truth. Likewise, a circumstance can only be a temptation if a person feels pulled to sin.

<sup>16</sup>E.g., Donald G. Bloesch writes in *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 1:96, that internal temptation presupposes sin, indicating that temptation has roots within the man himself. Bloesch represents a common view that was also voiced by John Calvin based on an interpretation of *without sin* in Heb 4:15 to mean that Jesus' temptations did not originate from internal sin (see *Tempted for Us*, 21, n.23).

<sup>17</sup>While the devil appears in some temptation accounts in the Bible, it would be wrong to say the devil's involvement is a necessary condition for temptation. He is just a factor in some temptations, since surely most temptations occur without the devil or another demon's involvement. That Jesus had to contend with the devil increases the intensity of his struggle, and the consequent worthiness of his example for us as one who knows our suffering.

<sup>18</sup>For example, a state of affairs can only be experienced as a temptation for someone if she *believes* the act may be possible for her, if she can *imagine* how the state of affairs would change if she pursued the temptation (such as to avoid pain), and if she *desires* the imagined state of affairs for herself in the sense that she wants it. By contrast, Jane cannot be tempted if she does not want the outcome proposed to her, or does not believe it is possible for her to attain. In this way, no one is tempted to fly to the moon or spontaneously combust because such states of affairs are not desirable or credible as possible realities to choose.

<sup>19</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 1:180-81.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. the emphasis on the desire for autonomy in the description of temptation given by Wayne E. Oates, *Temptation: A Biblical and Psychological Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 103: "Temptation is the testing ground between the strivings of the image of God in us and the strivings of our desires to be the masters of our fate, the captains of our souls."

<sup>21</sup>By comparison, we can think of *affection* as a legitimate desire for another's care for or attention to oneself, the corruption of affection is *lust*. Lust is the self-focused desire for gratification of oneself as an *impersonal object* by the use of another person as an impersonal object of illicit desire. Lust rises as a self-destructive desire for the use of other people as *objects*, which degrades both their personhood and the order that sexual affection is ordered within the committed love of marriage.

<sup>22</sup>On the question of whether Jesus took up a sinless or sinful humanity, see my discussion in *Tempted*

*for Us*, 10, 202-205. I think Rom 8:3 is clear that his *likeness* to sinful flesh marks the similarity, not the identity that he was sinful.

<sup>23</sup>Rom 12:3 warns Christians not to think of themselves more highly; some people are excessively self-abasing and face the temptation to think too lowly of themselves, forgetting to count the all-sufficiency of God's power, such as Barak in Judges 4:8.

<sup>24</sup>I do not here claim that Jesus only became aware of his divine identity at the Jordan baptism, but that there was some advance and public acknowledgment by God to be challenged by the devil in the wilderness. Jesus seems to have had knowledge of his divine identity as early as age twelve, when he claimed to have a unique relationship with God as his Father (Luke 2:41-52).

<sup>25</sup>George S. Painter, *The Philosophy of Christ's Temptation* (Boston: Sherman, French, and Co., 1914), 136.

<sup>26</sup>The conjunction of suffering and temptation is also noted by Marguerite Shuster, "The Temptation, Sinlessness, and Sympathy of Jesus: Another Look at the Dilemma of Hebrews 4:15", in *Perspectives on Christology: Essays in Honor of Paul K. Jewett* (ed. Marguerite Shuster and Richard A. Muller; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 205: "Temptation comes when the possibility presents itself of escaping or avoiding suffering (albeit temporarily) *in the wrong way* and with the knowledge that refusing evil will often lead to the increase of earthly suffering."

<sup>27</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: Temptation* (trans. Kathleen Downham; ed. Eberhard Bethge; New York: Touchstone, 1997), 134. Bonhoeffer, well-acquainted with suffering under the Nazi regime, writes that the temptation that is precipitated by suffering (whether serious sickness, poverty, pain, or various deprivations and tortures) is the temptation by a desire for relief from suffering, albeit relief by sinful means of abandoning God or committing some other crime to alleviate one's troubles.

<sup>28</sup>Bolstered by his example, the apostles Peter, James, and John willingly turned down the same path of suffering and martyrdom, having been preceded by the boldness of Stephen, who even prays for the forgiveness of his assailants as Jesus did from the cross.

<sup>29</sup>The argument in this section is a condensed form of chapters 3 and 12 in *Tempted for Us*. I am indebted to Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991). The attribution of miraculous power in Jesus' ministry to the Holy Spirit is not detraction from the deity of God the Son (as in Adoptionism). The claim is that while God the Son remained fully God (divine), as a man he could only do divine works by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, in parallel with the prophets and kings before him, and the apostles and other Christians who followed him. With the exception of forgiving sin and making atonement (both of which are works tied to his divine authority and not power per se), all of Jesus' works were repeated by others through the power of the Spirit, including healings, provision of food, raising the dead, knowing others' thoughts, knowing special revelation from God, casting out demons, and walking on water. The difference is that others did these things in Jesus' name, but he did them as the Son of God, from his own authority, though as a man of the Spirit nonetheless. In this way, Jesus truly functions within the limitations of a human life, transcending the bounds only by the Spirit's enablement that are now extended to Christians who follow in Jesus' steps.

<sup>30</sup>Isa 61:1-10 is important for the way the foregoing servant songs and messiah testimonies are brought together to say that the Servant is the Messiah. By defining himself according to this passage, Jesus (and Luke) identifies himself with then entire pneumatological pattern of servant-messiah prophecies in Isaiah.

<sup>31</sup>Luke's presentation of Jesus' conception and development alongside John the Baptizer suggests to several interpreters that we should assume Jesus was filled with the Spirit while in the womb, just as John was (Luke 1:15, 41).

<sup>32</sup>One additional mode of divine aid that is evident in Jesus' temptations is unusual so I have left it out. In Mark's account of the wilderness temptations, angels appeared immediately after the devil departed. Perhaps this means that the visible manifestation of divine help was needed for Jesus, since the mere

departure of the devil did not mean the temptations instigated by him had ended. More clearly is Luke's account of Gethsemane, where, in response to Jesus' prayer, an angel appeared to strengthen him (Luke 22:43-44). After the angel comes, Jesus seems to have found his resolve. Some copyists have omitted verses 43-44, but I am persuaded that the account is authentic. This extreme provision for an extreme need compares to the angelic appearances in Daniel and Acts, where men who were imprisoned or being tortured receive angelic visitations as a visible manifestation of divine presence and aid.