

and strong in the consciousness of the Truth which makes us free.

It is very necessary for one who is inclined to negativeness to keep actively employed on all planes of his being. It is better for such a person to keep busy even though he makes mistakes, and as he comes under the law of Divine love, he will make very few mistakes in his choice of activities.

It is true that we must first purify the subconscious mind in order to attract only thoughts of a pure character, but it is equally necessary that the mind be immediately filled with positive thoughts and our life with constructive activity. A very busy person has no time to be sorry for himself, and having the mind agreeably occupied gives little opportunity for thoughts of an unwelcome character to affect or disturb him. We must strive for stability of character, and for

full power and authority over so-called evil in any of its manifestations. There is no power in evil, there being only one Presence and Power in the universe. A constant realization of this fact quickly places us under the very shadow of the Almighty.

With love the predominating thought, coupled with constant activity of mind and body, very soon a consciousness will be built that will be a safeguard against any disturbing thought or emotion that may be in our environment. A positive state of mind is not manifested in a minute by one who has allowed his negative nature to become uppermost, but persistence will bring rich rewards; in a short time the dominion of the Christ mind will become established, and in place of fear of personality will come a feeling of peace and poise and a consciousness of our oneness with God which nothing may disturb.

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## Esoteric Bible Studies

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### STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST JESUS

#### IV *The Temptation.*

1. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.

6. And saith unto him, If thou be the

Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

11. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

—*Matt. 3:1-11.*

## INTERPRETATION

For the esoteric Christian the devil has two meanings, an inner and an outer. From the external standpoint the devil is Lucifer, who with his angels fell from heaven *through ambition* and were exiled upon the planet Mars. The devil within man is his lower nature as long as it is influenced and controlled by the Luciferian vibrations. For this reason the plan of salvation as adhered to in the churches is to overcome and control the desire body, for only in this way can the power of the devil be overcome. The church works with the desire body of man. Esoteric development, or esoteric Christianity, works with the vital body. Through the great orderly plan of evolution, which is God's handwriting upon the wall of time, the majority of people are brought into contact with the teachings of the church before they come into occult work, which always presupposes a certain amount of work of purification done upon the desire body before the definite training of the vital body can be attempted.

Temptation is one of the most potent factors in soul growth. Each one of us meets with temptation, both great and small, obvious and subtle, every day of our lives. *It is not the fact of the temptation, but it is the way in which we respond to it* which shows how much progress we have made upon the path of spirituality. Christ Jesus came as the great Way-Shower for all humanity, consequently temptations had to beset Him in order that He might leave with us the divine example and inspiration of one who was tempted and yet remained without sin, as St. Paul tells us.

Temptations are threefold in nature. There are temptations of body, of mind, and of soul. And so we find the temptations of the Master divided into three parts. At the time of the step in spiritual progress termed baptism, the neophyte through an ecstasy of feeling touches the realization of the oneness of all life, and with this realization *there*

*is born within him a new and conscious power* which, if he follows the quest of the Holy Grail, he can only use in the service of others, and *never to benefit himself no matter how great is his extremity*. If, however, through *personal ambition*, the temptation which caused the fall of Lucifer and the most subtle of all temptations for mortal man, he succumbs and uses this newborn power for self-aggrandizement, then he becomes a powerful tool for evil in the hands of the Black Brotherhood both on this and on the inner planes. It is particularly this little known phase of temptation which the Master was teaching us to overcome, and which is illustrated in this experience through which He passed.

In this series of temptations the first one had reference to the physical body, while the last two took place outside the limitations of the physical environment.

1. *Temptation of the Body:*

Mark tells us that Christ was tempted with wild beasts, which mean the desires. But they did not harm Him. Christ, the Sun Spirit, had transmuted the power of desire within Himself long aeons before, and the body of Jesus which Christ was using was the purest that could be produced upon the earth. Therefore the Christ does not expect us to overcome temptation as completely as He did, for we are still subject to the frailties of the flesh, with nothing like His great attainment to combat them. His victory is the ideal for our ultimate conquest, even though many times we fail and must begin again. Let us remember, however, that the only failure is in ceasing to try.

There is a basic keynote for the mineral kingdom, and a certain modification will turn the stone into food. Christ Jesus could partake of living bread from the very source of life, therefore He did not yield to this subtle temptation, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

He placed God and His glory first. He bared His sacred heart for all the darts of hatred, malice, and revenge, uncovered His glorious head that it might bear the Crown of Thorns, stretched out His loving hands that had entreated, "Come unto me and I will give you rest," that they might be nailed to the Cross. He renounced Himself completely, utterly, and entirely for the sake of the earth and its humanity.

### 2. *Temptation of the Mind:*

"The devil taketh Him into the holy city," which means the inner planes or the heaven worlds. "Carries Him off," as if he were literally transported through the air, say Bible commentators, and we know this is actually what happened. He was taken out of the body, for the physical body can never enter the holy city, or "Jerusalem." Here He was subjected to the fiercest of temptations, that of vanity. All the thought waves of ambition and pride that have ever dominated the world beat against Him. With the great resources which He possessed and could command He knew that He could focus the attention, admiration, and homage of the entire world upon Himself by giving a demonstration of His ability to use supernatural power. Again the Master triumphed, and rebuked the devil, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

### 3. *Temptation of the Soul:*

"An exceeding high mountain"; this was the Second Heaven, where He saw all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He saw the functionings of heaven and earth through the archetypes, read in the Memory of Nature, and saw the records of past, present, and future. The devil said, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Christ Jesus saw the supremacy that might be His and at the same time the path of sorrow, persecution, and suffering ending in His ignominious death upon the cross. As He

looked even *His* great heart quailing before the awfulness of the picture, the vision of sorrowing and suffering humanity came to Him, and He knew that without His intercession there was no succor for the world. Then the Compassionate One, stretching out His arms while a halo of glory encircled Him, became for all time a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief that the world might find the Way of Peace that passeth all understanding. In triumphant tones He commanded, "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Then the devil left Him and angels came and ministered unto Him, which is true for each one of us when the higher nature overcomes the lower.

Prayer and a spiritualized will power constitute the only impenetrable armor against the temptations which, St. Paul says, so constantly beset us. He tells us to pray without ceasing. Each forward step along the Path brings its own attendant temptations. The most subtle ones always come along the line of our ambitions and fundamental desires. The devil, within and without, knows well how to twist these so that they become snares exactly corresponding to our individual temperaments. Christ Jesus met every phase of His temptations by an utter renunciation of self and a complete surrender of His will in the service of others. Only in this way may we follow in His steps.

Temptation comes to us life after life until the treasure laid up in heaven has been tested and tried by the sorrows of earth. When the spirit of Christ descended into the physical body of Jesus, it was taken into the Wilderness to prove its weakness or its strength. And similarly after each heavenly experience (both between earth lives and in our exalted states of consciousness while in the body) we must expect to be brought back to earth that it may be learned whether we can withstand the burning in the furnace of affliction,