

Sunday, March 18, 2012

The victorious Christ in the temptation (3)

We talked about our Lord Jesus the victorious leader in spiritual warfare and that there is victory awaiting us at the end of the journey of fasting. We also talked about the deceptive schemes that our enemy always uses. Now, we will talk about the temptations that the Lord faced for our sake.

* The first temptation:

The enemy started this temptation in a precise time, when the Lord was hungry by the flesh at the end of the forty days. He also used a provoking approach when he said *"If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."* (Matthew 4: 3). Here, Satan's venomous arrow carries at least three types of poisons.

1- He, the devil, wants the Lord Jesus to intervene with His divine nature to help His human nature, to ease His burden, and satisfy his hunger. So what is the problem with this concept? This is certainly a serious matter because it would make His human nature different from ours. He would be supported by an extraordinary power and consequently He would not experience suffering like us. Even the suffering of His human nature on the cross can be lifted up by His divinity, in which case Christ would have not truly suffered. This would have made Christ unfit for our redemption. In fact, the Lord does not want us to use our spiritual strength to ease the burden of our flesh, but to the contrary, He wants us to use our physical strength to serve our spiritual growth.

2- Satan also wants the Lord to have pity on Himself and to be occupied by the needs of the flesh although the needs of the spirit are far more important than that of the flesh. Therefore, our first priority should be nourishing our spirits with the life-giving word of God, His praise, and partaking of His Body and Blood over the priorities of nourishing the flesh, this is how the Lord answered: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4). This is also confirmed by the Holy Spirit on the mouth of St. Paul : *"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"* (Romans 8: 6,13).

3- The most dangerous poison of the enemy is that he wants Christ to deviate from the law that God gave to mankind: *"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."* (Genesis 3:19). If Christ had obeyed him, He would have given us an example in getting our materialistic needs using unlawful ways. Thus, we would seek many things in life in unnatural or twisted ways without exerting any effort to gain them, and this is a clear violation of the commandment of God.

The response of Jesus was strong and deterring with a verse from the Book of Deuteronomy. He emphasized that He is not eager to eat, and that man doesn't live by bread alone, but rather the source of life is the life-giving word of God. He is indeed the Son of God, but he doesn't use His divine nature to serve the needs of his human nature.

*The second temptation:

The enemy saw that the Jesus answered him with verses from the scriptures, so now he tries to use a verse after twisting its meaning hoping to deceive Him. He asked Him to fly off the pinnacle of the temple with a pretense that God promised in the Psalm that He would send His Angels to carry Him. Nonetheless, the verse talks about when a man takes shelter in God, He would send His Angels to protect him in all his ways lest his feet stumble in a rock. The verse has nothing to do with anyone flaying off tall buildings.

Thus, the devil always twists the meanings of verses in order to make us follow him in the wrong direction. So one time he comes to us with a verse that justifies anger and revenge, and another he brings a verse that justifies drinking Alcohol, although none of these verse carry any of these meaning. Nonetheless, he is a wicked enemy, he always tries to twist meanings to make man drift away from the true path.

Jesus' reply was simple and clear, It is written again, *"You shall not tempt the Lord your God."* (Matthew 4: 7) i.e. do not challenge God or test Him, to clarify the meaning of the verse, the Lord Jesus put next to it another verse. Hence, He provides to us a beautiful and easy way to understand scriptures, i.e. placing in front of ourselves all the verses that speak to a particular subject to comprehensively understand it and not to be deceived by deviant teachings.

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To be continued with the grace of Christ.