

“ABBA, FATHER”: WHAT IS HE REALLY LIKE?

All verses are from the New American Standard Bible (NAS) unless otherwise noted.

Underlined portion of verses are my emphasis, to draw attention to the point that is being made.
The following are synonymous with “Abba, Father”: “God”, “God the Father”, and “heavenly Father”
The words of Jesus are in red.

“Abba, Father” Tested Jesus Lesson 7B

Abba, Father Used Joseph to Test Jesus

Jesus learned as a youth, while working in Joseph’s carpenter’s shop, that whatever job he was given to do would always be tested. In Lesson 3 we considered an imaginary event that might have occurred when Jesus was about 12 years old. Joseph gave Jesus the job of repairing a split yoke that Jonadad had brought in to be repaired. During the time that Jesus worked on the yoke, only once did Joseph’s close eye of scrutiny cause him to correct Jesus. When Jesus finished repairing the yoke he took it to Joseph to be examined, knowing that Joseph’s trained eye would catch the smallest mistake. Jesus waited patiently, although a little apprehensive, as Joseph turned the yoke every direction as he examined it. After several minutes Jesus was thrilled when he saw a smile begin to form on Joseph’s face as he turned his eyes away from the yoke, looked directly into Jesus’ eyes, and said, “Well done, son”. Jesus had grown to understand that although Joseph could be hard to please at times, that he always wanted Jesus to succeed, to pass each test he was given. That was the heart of Jesus’ earthly father, and it’s also the heart of his heavenly Father.



As Jesus matured he grew in understanding that his heavenly Father was a tester, so rather than resisting being tested he ran towards it and drew upon the training and resources his heavenly Father provided. Consequently he passed every test that was placed in his path. After Jesus was baptized in water and with the Holy Spirit, his knowledge of this truth would be tested to the ultimate. However, something else was also developing. Satan was going to use the situation as an opportunity to tempt Jesus. Before proceeding let's be certain we understand a very important distinction.

The Distinction Between “Test” and “Tempt”

What is the difference between “test” and “temptation” in the way the words are used in translating the Bible? It’s interesting that the word “test” does not appear in the King James Version (KJV) because the translators always chose to use other words. In the New Testament the Greek word is “peirazo” and is translated by the KJV as “tempt”, “try”, “tempter”, “prove”, “assay”, and “examine”. The New American Standard(NAS) translates “peirazo” as “put to the test”, “tempt”, “tempted”, “tempter”, “test”, “tested”, “testing”, “tried”, and “trying”. Peirazo is used in two ways, one positive and one negative in relationship to a person being tested or tempted. When its meaning is positive, it indicates that it is a test from God the Father whose desire is that the person being tested will succeed and pass the test. When its meaning is negative, it indicates that it’s a temptation to sin that originates from Satan who wants the person to fail by accepting and believing his suggestions. It is essential that we clearly understand this distinction as we continue.

Jesus Was Tested By His Heavenly Father But Tempted By Satan

Abba, Father knew that it was absolutely essential that Jesus be tested since over 600 years earlier He had led the prophet Isaiah to write of Jesus in Isa 28:16:

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone...”

The heavenly Father understood that Jesus could not successfully bring about on earth his Father’s kingdom will and purposes if he could not be victorious over Satan’s temptations. So God the Father sets up a test that

would also allow Satan multiple opportunities to tempt Jesus. Let's observe how this played out following Jesus' baptism.

Mark 1:12 "And immediately the Spirit impelled Him {to go} out into the wilderness."

The word "immediately" means that as soon as Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters that he sensed there was something he had to do and instantly set himself to obey the Spirit's leading knowing this was his heavenly Father's test. Jesus didn't just casually begin to walk toward his destination, "the wilderness" or desert, but was "impelled" which means to "drive out with force" due to the influence of the Holy Spirit. **Abba, Father** used the Holy Spirit to direct Jesus to the place where he would be tempted by Satan continuously during 40 days as indicated in the Amplified translation of Mark 1:13a:



"And He stayed in the wilderness (desert) forty days, being tempted [all the while] by Satan..." (AMP)

Sometimes God the Father and Satan are both involved in the same situation, which is the way it was with Jesus in the wilderness. God the Father told the Holy Spirit to drive Jesus out into the wilderness specifically for the purpose of allowing Satan to tempt Jesus. The purpose was for Jesus to come through the test victorious by trusting **Abba, Father** by relying upon the training and resources He'd made available to Jesus. But now it was up to Jesus to choose what he would do and who he would listen to and obey.

The First Temptation – Part 1 - The Satanic "If"

Satan begins the first temptation the same way he did with Adam and Eve, by trying to plant a seed of doubt into Jesus' mind by saying: "If You are the Son of God" (Matt 4:3). Satan then repeats the same suggestion in the second temptation (Matt 4:6).

During the 3½ years of Jesus' public ministry he would often make this claim of being the "Son of God" (John 3:18, 5:25, 10:36, & 11:4), so Satan was trying to create uncertainty in Jesus' mind if this was totally true. Jesus paid no attention to Satan's "If" and chose not to respond to the comment. This type of satanic "If" is one of the most common tactics Satan uses to attack Abba's children, by trying to plant a seed of doubt if they are truly a child of God. If a believer depends on his mind or behavior to answer that question then he or she is in serious trouble; they must rely only on who their heavenly Father says they are and the witness of the Holy Spirit in their hearts (Rom 8:16). Every believer must come to the place of absolute assurance in knowing who they are as a beloved child of **Abba, Father**, just as Jesus had. Failure to be fully assured of this truth means a person will not only be unable to fight off temptations successfully but will also be very insecure spiritually.

The First Temptation – Part 2 – Stones Into Bread

There may have been a struggle going on inside of Jesus, primarily due to the timing of Satan's temptation. Satan is an opportunist that seizes the exact right moment to set his trap. It shouldn't surprise us that the item that Satan used to bait Jesus with was food. Satan had used this bait previously with great success in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life after being told they could eat the fruit of all of the trees in the Garden except that one tree. Desire for food, especially when a person's physical appetite lacks the Holy Spirit's self-control (Gal 5:22-23), had always worked effectively for Satan to bring destruction and death to believers as seen in the following examples:

- Esau traded his birthright (a double portion of his father's inheritance due him as the first born son) for a bowl of red lentil stew. Why? Because he wanted some food that would quickly satisfy his extreme hunger rather than taking the time to fix his own meal. Thus he didn't value or cherish his inheritance, but despised it. Later, when he realized what he'd lost he wasn't able to recover it, although he sought it diligently with tears. (Gen 25:29-34 & Heb 12:16)
- Israel, after being brought out of slavery in Egypt, was provided with manna (the bread of angels– Psa 78:24-25) by God the Father. But they began to complain and craved meat and all the delicacies they had enjoyed for free in Egypt, which resulted in many of them dying. (Num 11:1-35)
- Some of the people in the church at Corinth had difficulty restraining their appetites while celebrating the Lord's Supper. This caused them to take of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner and therefore many got sick and some even died. (1 Cor 11:17-34)

Solomon speaks of an unrestrained appetite in Eccl 6:7, “All a man's labor is for his mouth and yet the appetite is not satisfied”. Hunger is natural, normal, God given, and serves many good purposes (Prov 16:26 mentions one), but without the Holy Spirit's fruit of self-control ruling a believer's appetite it becomes an opportunity for Satan's temptation. Satan was absolutely certain he would defeat Jesus by appealing to his hunger at just the right time, but Satan failed to understand the resources Jesus had available to him.

As Jesus journeyed into the wilderness, he sensed his heavenly Father's leading to begin a fast of 40 days and nights where he ate no food (Matt 4:2 & Luke 4:2). Neither gospel writer tells if he drank water, so he may have, or possibly like Elijah he was supernaturally empowered to go without water (Ex 34:28). Our bodies, being made up of 70% water, can go only three days without water before dying, but from 4 to 25 weeks (dependent upon body weight) without food before starving to death. The first three or four days of not eating food are generally very painful as a person's body proclaims with loud growls and aches that its needs aren't being met. After day three or four the growls and pains begin to lessen as the body focuses entirely on cleansing itself. Those that have studied fasting have discovered that after 40 days a person's natural appetite returns and his body once again begins to cry out, “Feed me”. At this time if the person doesn't begin to eat again the body begins to eat itself and starts the slow agonizing death of starvation.



It was at this exact moment when Jesus once again “became hungry” (Mt 4:2), meaning that Jesus' natural hunger pains returned, that the devil initiates the first temptation. The devil seeks to take advantage of Jesus' hunger by suggesting that Jesus use his power to turn stones into bread and thus provide for his own need. This was an easy solution to an immediate urgent need. It placed Jesus in the same position that Adam and Eve were in; would Jesus listen to and follow Satan's suggestion or not? However there is one major difference between Adam and Eve's situation and Jesus. Adam and Eve had all

the food available in the Garden that they could want, but Jesus had not eaten anything in 40 days and at the moment his hunger pains were intense. Many of us Christians have accepted the lie that if we had everything we need that we could live the Christian life successfully. That is exactly what Adam and Eve had, but they failed the test miserably. Jesus had no food available, but passed the test and came out victorious because he used the spiritual resources **Abba, Father** provided.

There are several truths we can learn and appropriate for our own lives from what Jesus experienced during and after being tempted:

- The devil continued to tempt Jesus until he was commanded by Jesus to leave (Matt 4:10-11a). If we fail to resist the devil then he is free to continue to bring temptations into our lives. But resisting him once doesn't mean he won't come back later at other opportune times. We must also remember that the devil and physical appetites aren't the only source of temptations; our flesh or sin nature (Matt 26:41), the world (1 John 2:15-17), and personal wants (James 1:14-16) also play a part.
- Only after Jesus rejected Satan's suggestion were angels dispatched to minister to Jesus (Matt 4:11b), probably bringing the food that Jesus desperately needed. Therefore many of the provisions of our heavenly Father may not be released until we have said “no”, in such a way that leaves no doubt that we really mean it, to the devil's suggested ways of getting our needs met. Satan's suggestions will always precede the Father's planned provision.
- Jesus returned from the wilderness experience “in the power of the Spirit”, ready and able to bring the Kingdom of God down from heaven to earth and overcome all human and demonic forces working against the Father's will. We will not come forth in that same power of the Holy Spirit until we've learned like Jesus to:
 1. Draw upon all the training and resources provided by our heavenly Father, which sometimes comes through people, childhood and teen responsibilities, schooling, and/or jobs.
 2. Master our physical appetites.
 3. Resist the temptation to use God's power to meet our needs.
 4. Wait upon our heavenly Father's provisions for personal needs.

Did Jesus Struggle About Using His Power?

At this point I believe there may have been a momentary internal struggle that went on inside of Jesus concerning if this was the right time to use his power. As far as scripture records, up until this point in Jesus' life there is no record of his using his power to work any miracle. But was using his power to provide for his own need for food the way **Abba, Father** would want this urgent need to be met? Jesus quickly decides and responds by telling Satan he will not use his power to meet his need. He goes on to explain that real living requires more than just physical bread, it requires the bread of hearing every word that **Abba, Father** has said, is saying in the present moment, or will say in the future:

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" (Matt 4:4)

Scripture makes it clear that one reason that Jesus came to earth was to fulfill the words that his heavenly Father had spoken through Moses and the prophets (Matt 5:17). But when it came to daily living and doing his heavenly Father's will (John 6:38), work (John 4:34), and works (John 5:36), the only bread that Jesus could rely upon was what his Father was saying in the present moment.

Abba's Smile?

The scriptures don't say this, but it wouldn't surprise me if after Jesus spoke those words recorded in Matt 4:4 to the devil that he may have had a flash vision of Abba smiling and heard Him say, "Well done, Son". From this point on in life Jesus was guided constantly according to this one principle of doing only what He saw and heard His Heavenly Father say or do in the present moment (John 5:19-20, 8:28-29, & 12:49-50). In so doing Jesus set the pattern that every believer is to follow; simply hear the Father and then step out in faith and obedience.

Abba's Training And Resources

On this particular day Satan had two more temptations (Matt 4:5-10) that Jesus would handle in much the same way as he had the first one. At other opportune times the devil would come again with additional temptations (Luke 4:13b), often working through individuals with a religious spirit or even close friends of Jesus. One example is when Satan worked through the Apostle Peter in suggesting that Jesus not go to Jerusalem (Matt 16:21- 23). Yet in every temptation (Heb 2:18 & 4:15) Jesus always came out victorious. Why was Jesus always able to successfully reject every enticement Satan presented to him and pass every test his heavenly Father sent? The answers fall into two basic areas:

1. Family circumstances that Jesus was trained by:
 - Parental training Jesus received from childhood through the teenage years that Jesus received from Joseph, who functioned as Jesus earthly father, and Mary.
 - After Joseph's death, the hard lessons Jesus learned in running a family business, meeting the needs and expectation of customers, plus the heavy responsibilities of providing for his mother and younger siblings financial, physical and emotional needs.
 - Jesus' learned to sense what Joseph and Mary wanted from him without asking, which taught him to sense correctly Abba's leading and guidance.
2. Resources and tools that Abba, Father made available to Jesus
 - Knowledge of Abba's constant presence – John 16:32
 - Awareness and trust in Abba's power to work through him – John 14:11
 - The baptism and empowerment of the Holy Spirit – Acts 10:38
 - Grace to stand, and having done all, to stand strong in Abba's strength – John 14:10
 - Discernment and strength to resist evil by saying "No" to the devil and all the sources he used to tempt a person to do wrong, even when it came through one of Jesus' closest disciples.

Summary

Abba, Father's character is to test his children, which allows us the opportunity to apply the training and use the tools He has provided. With all of His heart our heavenly Father wants us to pass every test He sends and come out victorious over every temptation that the devil puts in our way. However, the choice lies with us to draw upon what the Father has provided. Maybe you're like me in that you didn't receive the training from

your parents that **Abba, Father** wanted them to provide you with, or maybe you chose not to receive their training. Whatever the case, no matter how old you are it's not too late to submit to your heavenly Father's training through the father type individuals He will bring into your life to train you. But if we failed to get the training we needed as a child or teenager, **Abba, Father** has made the same resources and tools available to us that he gave to Jesus. So let's get busy using those resources. Then, like Jesus, we will run confidently into every test or temptation knowing that we will be victorious.

In the Father's service,

Jim and Susan McCorkle

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