

Was Satan afraid of Jesus when he tempted him in the desert?

Satan has been filled with pride for so long that by the time he tempted Jesus in his arrogance he may have believed that he could come out with a win in the situation. In the Book of Revelation God's enemies do not repent; rather, they continue to harden their hearts against him. In the future when the wicked are thrown into the Lake of Fire along with Satan they go with their emotions (Re 19:20). They are not tortured--they are *tormented* (Re 20:10). Those who reject God become more and more evil throughout eternity. It is fitting that their punishment is everlasting (2 Thess. 1:9). They are incapable of repentance after death (Heb 9:27) and will experience a second death (Re 21:8).

For the time being Satan roams free to afflict believers (Luke 13:16). He is the devil but he is God's devil--on a leash--so to speak. Satan cannot act without God's permissive will.

Living in sin and rebellion causes delusion (Is. 14:12–15). Pride (e.g. one believing he can live a life without God) causes an individual to see unclearly (Jer. 49:16) and reject God's word (Jer. 43:2) which is the source of all truth (Ps 119:160). Satan, being seeped in sin for so long, may think unclearly like sinful man, as well. Angels were given no chance to repent like man (2 Pe 2:4). They learn from observing us (1 Pet. 1:12). They are intelligent beings (2 Sam. 14:17, 20) but they are not perfect (Job 4:18). God alone is perfect (Mt 5:48). Satan, being a created being (Col 1:16), can know only what God allows him to know. God uses Satan for his own purposes (Ge 50:20).

God created man soon after the angels fell. Mankind will prove to the angelic world that a redeemed world is better than a world that had never fallen (1 Co 6:3, 2 Ti 2:12). J. Vernon McGee wrote: "The old bromide is not true that says that the bird with the broken wing never flies so high again. Man flies higher. We are going to be above the angels. We are going to judge them and have charge of them."¹ It is unknown if Satan grasped the profundity of his defeat in Jesus' death and resurrection at the time (Is. 53:5, 6); but, he certainly knows now (Mt 26:28, Heb 2:17). Satan is a defeated foe (Matt. 25:41) and mankind is redeemed (Eph. 1:7).

Satan tempted Jesus after his fasting for 40 days and 40 nights² (Mt 4:2). His minions attempt to tempt us (Mark 4:15) in periods of weakness (Matt. 4:1–10, 1 Cor. 7:5) or after triumphs in our lives, as well (Josh. 7:2–5).

Other fallen angels *did* demonstrate fear of Jesus. One demon was a good theologian knowing of his pending doom. He just questioned the timing of the event (Mt 8:29). Jesus said that *men's hearts fear*: Men's *hearts failing them from fear* and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be

¹ McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: The Epistles (1 Corinthians)* (electronic ed., Vol. 44, p. 70). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² 'Forty' was an expression meaning merely *a long time*. Jesus' fast may not have been a literal forty day period.

shaken (Lk 21:25–26, emphasis mine). We know that angels possess emotions (Luke 15:10) so there is no reason to believe that Satan is *fearless*. Fearlessness *has* been exemplified in God's servants [e.g. Abram (Gen. 14:14–16), Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:6–14), David (1 Sam. 17:34–37), Nehemiah (Neh. 4:1–23), Hebrew men (Dan. 3:16–30), Peter and John (Acts 4:13), Paul (Acts 21:10–14)]³. There is much we do not know about Satan but we do know, as Adrian Rogers put it: "Satan is indescribably wicked, brilliantly stupid, and hideously beautiful." If he does not fear now, he most certainly will in the future.

³ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index (p. 226). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.