

## **“The Temptation”**

### **“A Story of the History of Salvation”**

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news.” Mark 1:15.

#### **I. The First Temptation**

In the Beginning, before the worlds were made, God created the heavens and the earth. Then, at the dawn of time, when the earth was young, when the initial sea creatures swam in the ocean, the first creeping things crawled upon the land and the first birds took to flight, God created and placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as caretakers of all that God had made. God gave them permission to eat of the fruit of every trees, shrub and plant in the garden with one exception-The Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. “The fruit from that tree was the forbidden fruit, the eating of which would bring death,” God said. In that time, humankind was innocent, sinless and unashamed.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was tempted by Satan, as she looked at the forbidden fruit. Satan asked, “Did God tell you that you would die if you ate of the Tree of the knowledge of Good and evil?” You will not die. The fruit will make you wise like God. Here, eat!” “Humm,” Eve thought, “I will not die? Is God hiding something from us? Let me try it!” She plucked some fruit from the tree, took a bite of it and waited. “Ah, that is good,” she said. “Come here quickly Adam! Try this!” Adam did and it was very good. But, from that very moment every conceivable seduction, temptation and sin that humankind is heir to was born. That is how the bad things that happened to us: drugs and other addictions; hatred, envy and strife; cruelty, murder and war; earthquakes, wind and fires that destroy; and the twisted nature of things came to exist in the world. And, Humans and the whole world fell into darkness.

Time rocked on! Humans fell prey to every conceivable temptation and evil there was upon the earth. Eons passed and nothing changed. So God decided to destroy every living thing that existed upon the earth and re-create the earth. God sent a destroying flood to wash away the sins of the world, with the exception of those who were saved by Noah on the ark during the forty-day flood. The winds came, the waters rose and the ark was buffered about on the waters of the great flood. Then, at the end of the forty days, God gave Noah, his seven companions and the living things upon the Ark, the privilege of repopulating and replenishing the earth. That was the first dispensation., but it was not to be the last. Evil exists and Satan fills the crevices of every idle moment and space of every human being. Humans continued to walk away from the protection and guidance of the living God and to sin. Now there was only darkness of the earth but of the soul as well.

#### **II. The Second Temptation of Jesus**

For millennia the Devil, sin and death held sway, again. But then one day a child was born in a tiny village in an obscure part of the world who would reverse the devilish order of things. His name was Jesus. At the age of thirty, he appeared by the Jordan River and

while John was baptizing others, he was baptized and a new way of life began.

Mark tell the story very simply. Upon coming up out of the water, Jesus experienced a revelation of the Spirit of God descending from heaven upon him. He heard the voice of God from heaven, announcing that he was The Special Son of God who would reverse the order of human error forever. God loved him and God was proud of him.

Immediately, Jesus was driven by the Spirit of God into the wilderness on a spiritual retreat and a fast. Like the forty-day salvation journey of Noah during the flood, Jesus retreated for forty days, being tempted by Satan, Adam and Eve's tempter. He lived among the wild beasts like Adam and Eve of Eden at the beginning of creation. And, he was ministered unto and protected by God's angels.

After his baptism and spiritual retreat, the Spirit of God sent him throughout all of Galilee preaching that the time *was* fulfilled, the kingdom of heaven *had* come near, *men and women were to* repent and believe in the good news of liberation and salvation. That was the beginning of the Second Dispensation. It culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus and there was one new thing to guide human in their spiritual journey toward God. Jesus established the church of Christ to be his agent of reconciliation between humans and God. And so, a Third Dispensation began, the culmination of which would bring a final judgement and a new heaven and a new earth-the Second and last Garden of Eden-Paradise Forever.

### III. Jesus' plan through the Church to break the Cycle

Lent is the church's time of repentance and restoration. Repentance may be corporate and individual. It is the church's way of helping Jesus to reconcile the world to God. The prayer book defines it thusly: *"The season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful, were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our savior, and the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith."* PB, page 265. Lent is an essential tool for reconciliation and restoration. It seeks to break the cycle of human action before the flood and human sin that killed the Christ of God at Calvary.

Peter gave us the theological understanding of how reconciliation and restoration work. He wrote, *"Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and (preached to the souls of those who rejected God's offer during the time of Noah and were killed by the flood.) And the baptism at the end of Lent, which this prefigures, now saves you-not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* I Peter 3:18-22.

As we go forth into our forty days of Lent, as hard as it might seem, God is acting with you and me to overcome our rebellion and sin. The price for our reconciliation, restoration and salvation has already been paid through the price Jesus paid for our sins on a cross at Calvary. All we have to do is to walk in the shadow of that cross as we seek to discipline

**ourselves again and again, seeking forgiveness, amending our ways and turning to God. This is what Lent is about and I invite you to a Holy Lent!**

**I leave with you my friend Father Gerry Kleba's formula for a Holy lent. In LENT, L is for Loving Listening; E is for Eating less and Exercising more; N is for Neighborliness and T is for Thanksgiving, meaning Eucharistic living.**

**Let us pray. O God who has set aside for your church times of fasting, prayer, alms giving, inspirational readings and meditation: sustain us in our efforts to become more intentional in our piety and responsive in our charity to others. Help us to have a Holy Lent that we may joyously celebrate with you a blessed Eastertide. This we pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

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March 1, 2009**