

Ministers:
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley
217.493.8905

Sunday:
8:00 AM: WGCY
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:
7:00 PM: Bible Study

[gibsoncitychurchof
Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofChrist.com)

This Past Week:
Worship—33
Wednesday—13
Contribution—\$1580

For meditation:
Proverbs 29.1–4
Government is a
divine institution,
but it has been
used very undi-
vinely, and the
blessing has been
turned into a
curse. Name two
things that will
cause a ruler to go
misuse his office.

Radio program:
WGCY FM, 106.3
Sundays at 8 AM

Where the devil will turn up, 1

Early in His ministry, Christ had three encounters with the devil known by the singular heading, *the Temptation*. No other incident in the Gospels more exhaustively addresses the subject of temptation, and I'd like to use the three venues mentioned—the wilderness, the Temple, and a mountaintop—to talk about some of Satan's strategies.

The wilderness temptation tells us the devil will turn up when we're alone. One of the oddities in the history of Christianity is the notion of many that the best way to achieve spirituality is through solitude. Edward Gibbon, for instance, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, wrote that the deserts of Thebais (a district in southern Egypt) "swarmed with hermits." The painting, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (Anthony has white whiskers and is seen reclining), shows a man surrounded by a horde of devils who make his solitary life intolerable.

Charles Reade's 1861 novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, tells about a husband, who, to escape temptation, abandons his wife and becomes a hermit living in a cave. When his wife tracks him down, she asks, "Tell me, have you escaped temptation here? I ask because when I am alone, my thoughts are more wild and foolish than in company."

"I must needs own," confesses her husband, "that I have been more fiercely tempted here than in the world."

The reason solitude offers no sanctuary from Satan is that wherever we go, we take our devils—our vices—with us. The isolated tree feels the full force of the wind every time it blows. And the devil can stalk and get at us when no one else is around.

kenny

Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

The Temptation of St. Anthony

Matthias Grünewald, 1512–1516



Sermon: 1 Peter 5.12–14

Summing up...

4 February 2024

“The abomination of desolation”

Mark presents a stark contrast: whereas Christ noticed a widow’s mites (12.43), the disciples called attention to the Temple’s magnificence (13.1). “Do you see these great buildings?” asked Jesus, “not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (13.2). “This building will be destroyed.”

The questions the disciples asked were the natural ones, the ones we would have asked. “*When* will these things be? And *what* will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?” (v 4). A better question might have been, “*Why* will this happen?” but that one they didn’t ask.

Christ answered them. To the *when* question He said, “of that day and hour no one knows” (v 32). To the *what* question, His answer was, “when you see the ‘abomination of desolation’ . . . standing where it ought not . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (v 14).”

The *abomination of desolation* is an interesting phrase, first used by Daniel (9.27), that is variously translated as “the horrible thing that causes destruction” (CEV), “a desecrating obscenity” (PATTERSON), “an abomination that causes desolation” (NIV).

Abomination refers to something disgusting or repugnant, such as the horrific practices of idolators. Ahaz “made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel” (2 Kgs. 16.3). The word also included the sexual perversity associated with idol worship. Paganism was utterly degenerate, brutal, dehumanizing, twisted, and sick.

But God used pagans to punish His people. When He told Habakkuk He was going to use the Chaldeans to punish Judah, the prophet said, “You can’t be serious. You’d never do something like that—you can’t use a more wicked nation to punish a more righteous one” (Hab. 1.13). And to this God said, “You don’t think so? Watch Me.”

When God pours out His wrath upon an unjust people, He will not be limited in the instruments He uses to do the job. At such times, the morality of an instrument may be secondary to the ability of the instrument. Jehu was a sledgehammer, not a saint; when Ahab would not listen to the saints (Elijah, Elisha), God used a sledgehammer to rid the land of him and Baalism.

We best be careful in telling God what He can and cannot do.

kenny

Herodian Masada, 12

When dawn came, the Romans advanced up the ramp. Smoke was rising from behind the walls of the Jewish citadel and flames were visible. Soldiers quickly squeezed through the opening in Herod’s wall, climbed over the Jews’ earthen wall, and formed their ranks atop Masada.

Expecting to be attacked at any moment, the soldiers saw no one and heard nothing. Every building within the citadel seemed to be on fire and smoke obscured everything. Fearing a ruse, thinking the Zealots were hiding and that an assault was imminent, the Romans stood in formation. But then was heard the sound of what seemed to be the voice of an old woman. A party of soldiers went forward and found a lady standing at the entrance to one of the underground water systems. Hiding in the cistern behind her was another woman, along with five children.

The women and children were taken to an officer who questioned them. What they told him made him angry; he was sure they were lying. He gave orders and troops fanned out, swords drawn. As they moved through the smoke, they came upon the first bodies.

Much later, stunned and shaken by what they had discovered, the Romans again asked the two women to tell them what happened. The story they told was this.

The night before, when the wooden wall had been set afire, the Jewish leader, Eleazar Ben Yair (Josephus says he was a descendant of the Judas mentioned in Acts 5.37), called everyone together. Knowing the Jews would be unable to keep the Romans off Masada, he summoned the defenders and said something along these lines. “Long ago, we vowed never to serve the Romans, nor any master but God. He alone is the true and just lord of mankind. We were the first to rebel against the Romans, and now we are the last to continue the fight. I believe God has granted us a favor. He has given us a chance to die in freedom . . . Our hands are still free to hold our swords—let us use them now to give ourselves honorable deaths” (*Wars* VII.8.6).

kenny

News about us

- It’s been a disquieting week. Larry has spent over a week in the hospital, but his prognosis is good. Little Sadie is suffering from an upper respiratory virus and spent Friday night in Carle Hospital. Keep everyone in your prayers.