

Luke

Jesus...Being Tempted
Luke 4:1-13

With Study Questions

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Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and

was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,² being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.³ And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

⁴ But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*’ ”⁵ Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

⁶ And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.*’ ”⁹ Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.¹⁰ For it is written:

‘*He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,*’¹¹ and, ‘*In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*’ ”¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, ‘*You shall not tempt the Lord your God.*’ ”¹³ Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time (Luke 4:1-13).

Introduction

I asked my sons if they would ever be interested in the ministry. One responded, “Maybe as a second career.” When I asked why, he said that young ministers haven’t experienced enough life to do that job well. Though Paul encouraged Timothy not to be discouraged because of his youth (1 Timothy 4:12), I think there is something to be said for a bit of life prior to ministry. For me, personally, the Lord walked me through a crucible prior to shuffling me into this job, and it was very preparational, but that’s a story for another day.

Jesus had just been baptized and consecrated to begin His ministry (Luke 3:23). The Holy Spirit had descended upon Him and a voice from heaven declared

that He was beloved of the Father and pleasing in His sight (Luke 3:22). But before teaching in the synagogues **“in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14)**, He is put through temptations, **“led by the Spirit”** as it were. One might ask why?

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,² being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry (Luke 4:1, 2).

It is certainly my prayer that we all learn to better overcome temptation by following the example of Christ, but I would argue that is of secondary importance in this passage. That which is of primary import is the overcoming of Christ. Before we seek to follow His example, let us be still and meditate upon, and take comfort in, His unique and magnificent success.

For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

If you recall, chapter three (the genealogy) ends with Adam. And in Christ we have the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45; Romans 5:12-21). In the first Adam **“death spread to all men” (Romans 5:12) but in the last Adam is the “grace... [the] gift of righteousness [and] life” (Romans 5:17).**

The focus here is where Adam failed, leading us into death, Jesus triumphed, leading us into life. Notice the similarities in the temptations. It is as if the devil has a proven routine for our failure. John sums it up,

For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world (1 John 2:16).

The serpent found great success in this method. The forbidden tree/fruit was **“good for food...pleasant to the eyes [and] desirable to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6)**. This is the order Luke presents in the devil’s temptation of Christ—flesh (good for food—stone to bread); eyes (show Him the kingdoms); pride (since you’re the Son, prove it by testing your Father).

In answer to the cavilers who insist that Luke is contradicting Matthew, (the

order of the temptations being different), there is an easy answer. Matthew uses the adverb “**then**” *tote*, (a more chronological word) while Luke uses the conjunction “**and**” *kai* which simply allows for priority over chronology. Luke’s order mirrors Eden.

Briefly, a few things prior to engaging the temptations: first, we must avoid diminishing the power (the suffering) of the temptation because Jesus is truly God. Jesus is also truly man (without conversion, composition, or confusion). All to say Jesus was a man of affection, sympathy, compassion, anger, gratitude, fatigue, hunger, yearnings, and more. It was a man who was tempted.

Also, do not suppose that His sinlessness made the temptation less powerful. Adam too was sinless and seemed to last but a moment. As C. S. Lewis aptly explained, only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is.

...and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means.

Finally, Adam encountered Satan in paradise with a full stomach and access to all the trees but one. Jesus was led into the wilderness, where He was hungry and vulnerable. He had yielded His position of glory. Let us not think He had some advantage.

First Temptation-Stone to Bread

And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”⁴ But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*’ (Luke 4:3, 4).

Similar to the forbidden fruit, there is nothing inherently wrong with this temptation. Jesus is hungry, the devil bids Him to turn a certain stone into bread to satisfy the hunger. It is relatively innocent and easy. But the devil is crafty (Genesis 3:1). He prefaces his temptation with “**If you are the Son of God.**” Perhaps the devil is appealing to pride. They had all heard the Father’s commendation, “**You are my beloved Son**” (Luke 3:22). Utilize your privileged status to nourish yourself! But hidden beneath the suggesting lies a subtle, *follow my advice*.

Jesus would not be so easily manipulated. You may have heard people seek

to control your behavior with a similar preface. “You call yourself a Christian!?! If so, do this or that.” I do hope none of you are so easily manipulated. I do say, it appears we live in a culture where Christians, seeking to take the high road, have mistaken meek for feeble.

It is true that Jesus came to serve and not be served (Matthew 20:28). He became, as it were, the scapegoat for humanity (Leviticus 16:22). But never forget, it was Jesus who determined how He would serve. It might be said, He came to serve but that doesn’t make Him our servant.

Of note here is that Jesus, unlike Adam and Eve, would not enter into any type of legitimate conversation with the devil. There was no negotiating with terrorists. The camel’s nose was not allowed in the tent. Instead, what does Jesus do?

In all three temptations, Jesus’ first response is the word of God. Truly, it can be said of Jesus,

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You (Psalm 119:11).

I recall an interaction with a man with whom I was in ministry. He was not warm to the idea of the importance of doctrine and voiced it publicly. In our discussion I presented a passage I was challenged to adhere to as a minister.

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17).

His only response was, “Well I have a verse for you.” As I waited to hear it, it dawned on me that he was merely mocking me. Perhaps I was too aggressive or unloving. I don’t know. And certainly, mere memorizing verses does not complete the hiding of it in your heart. As the first Psalm teaches, we are to “**delight**” in it and “**meditate**” on. The strength Christ found in the word of God was not mere rhetoric or the ability to argue well. If you have not immersed yourself in the word of God, you are fighting without a weapon.

The statutes of the Lord *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord *is* pure, enlightening the eyes (Psalm

19:8).

The devil wanted the crosshairs on bread. Jesus, as He so often did, highlights that which is eternal, the **“word of God.”**

Second Temptation-The Kingdoms

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve*’ (Luke 4:5-8).

Moving from His stomach to His eyes, the devil continues his barrage. It is very likely a vision that is shown to Jesus; a vision of **“all the kingdoms of the world.”** There is some disagreement regarding the legitimacy of the devil’s claim to have the authority over all these kingdoms and that they have been **“delivered”** to him.

Be it said, the devil was not, is not and never will be God. Even prior to Christ,

The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein (Psalm 24:1).

At the same time, the power and influence of the devil prior to Christ’s accomplished work of redemption should not be understated.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one* (1 John 5:19).

Certainly, in some sense, the devil was considered **“the ruler [or god] of this world”** (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; etc.). But that was coming to an end.

Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out (John 12:31).

In a glorious proclamation of His own victory, Jesus speaks of the crippling effects the cross will have upon the adversary.

And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you (Luke 10:18, 19).

Of course, this victory was purchased by Jesus undertaking His own distressing baptism (Luke 12:50). What the devil appears to be offering here is all the nations without all the pain. The devil is offering an easier way. I must say, I like easy ways. I look for them. But the easy way and the right way are often nowhere close to each other on your GPS.

We must remember, Jesus was truly man. And being truly man, He was not omnipotent. Why else would He ask,

O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will* (Matthew 26:39).

At what level Jesus was unsure about another option for the cup to pass from Him is difficult to tell. What was not remotely confusing to Jesus was succumbing to the means by which the devil was proposing another option; that He should worship before him. There may be times when we're unsure of the right course, but we should never be willing to take the wrong course. Sometimes a quick evaluation of who you are worshiping or serving in any given activity is a health inventory to take.

Third Temptation-Jumping From the Temple

Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.

10 For it is written: *‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’*
11 and, *‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a*
*stone.’ ”***12** And Jesus answered and said to him, *“It has been said, ‘You shall*
not tempt the Lord your God’ (Luke 4:9-12).

In a way, this seems like a ridiculous temptation. The devil again uttering, **“if you are the Son of God,”** tempts Jesus to jump off the top of the temple. But notice the subtlety, it is here that the devil begins to quote Scripture. Maybe the devil thought, ‘Jesus keeps using Scripture, maybe I’ll try that. Questioning the word of God worked with Adam and Eve.’

In a world where we are surrounded by sin, lies, corruption, greed and all things profane, there may be nothing darker than an evil man with a Bible in his hand. You never see greater infuriation from Christ than His denunciation of the Pharisees. A whole chapter is dedicated to it (Matthew 23).

Perhaps some have seen the post of Jesse Duplantis (a hideously false preacher, catering to a hideously deceived constituency) seeking to utilize Psalm 49 to justify the purchase of his fourth jet and his 35,000 square foot house. He boasts that he has a Bible verse that aids him in ignoring the criticisms. Then he reads Psalm 49:16, which says, **“Be not thou afraid when one is made rich.”** He then asks his wife to read it in the Amplified version.

His wife very uncomfortably reads the Amplified Version which states, **“Be not afraid when [an ungodly] man becomes rich.”** Just a couple of verses later we read of the same man, **“A man [who is held] in honor, Yet who lacks [spiritual] understanding and a teachable heart, is like the beasts that perish.”** All to say, as Peter called them, the **“spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you” (2 Peter 2:13)** are still about.

The actual deception, as we see in Jesus’ response, amounts to tempting God. Jesus’ answer comes from Deuteronomy 6 where the Israelites rebelled against Moses because things were difficult in the wilderness. The quote itself is found in Deuteronomy 6:16 but describes how the people rebelled in Exodus 17:1-7.

People like to test God. It is not uncommon for a person to neglect all the means of grace (the study of Scripture, church attendance, the sacraments, service, etc.) and then complain that God is not blessing them. People like to test other people. The reference is to what happened to Moses, but to this day we see this

kind of testing in the church.

Our elders meet and seek to pray, love and serve the church (most are volunteers). Our staff does the same. We do our best. But from time to time someone will just fail to attend church and not inform us that they are in a difficult season or out of town. Sadly, sometimes people fall off the radar. But instead of developing relationships or communicating a need or the reason for absence, they will conclude that the church has failed the test. To be sure, the church, unlike Jesus, will fail tests. But we would ask you to help us succeed. Jesus would not throw Himself into the air to see if His Father in heaven would pass the test.

Conclusion

Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time (Luke 4:13).

The devil's efforts proved fruitless. Jesus was the supreme example of that which we read in James.

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

But that does not mean that the devil is gone for good. He will look for “**an opportune time.**” I realize we live in a world which feels too sophisticated to believe in a devil. Convincing people he does not exist is one of his greatest tricks. Yet evil is a very personal thing and personal things come from persons. And this personal devil is looking for an opportunity. And, according to Paul, we give him an opportunity (a foothold, or literally a place-*topos*) when we cater to our own flesh (Ephesians 4:25-29).

As Christians we have successes and failure in these matters. But in all the efforts of the devil, Christ would never fail. And because of His great victory, He has able to heal, liberate and deliver the oppressed (Luke 4:18). All to say, when we place our trust in Him, His victory becomes our victory.

Questions for Study

- Can you think of various ways God might prepare someone for ministry (pages 2, 3)?
- What, do you suppose, was the primary reason Jesus was tempted (pages 3, 4)?
- Does the devil appear to have a routine in his tempting? Explain (pages 3, 4)?
- Discuss various ways people might think the temptation of Christ was not quite like the temptation of Adam or us (page 4).
- Why do you suppose the devil tempted Jesus with food? How did Jesus respond (pages 4-6)?
- What do you suppose the devil was seeking to tempt Jesus with by offering Him the kingdoms of the world (pages 6, 7)?
- What new tactic did the devil use in the third temptation (pages 7-9)?
- How does a person give the devil a place (page 9)?
- How does the victory of Christ become our victory (page 9)?