

The Temptations of Christ

Luke 4:1-13

Luke 4:1-13: 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.

Background Notes

Near the ruins of Old Testament Jericho, there is a mountainside that is called the "Mount of Temptation." Tradition says that this is the site where the Lord was tempted, but there is no historical proof of the authenticity of this site. We know that the Lord was tested in the wilderness, and most likely He was tempted in the Judean wilderness, because the Judean wilderness is the closest wilderness area to the Jordan River where the Lord was baptized.

It's important to understand that the three specific temptations of Christ recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew were not the only temptations He faced, nor were they the only time that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Verse 2 indicates that the Lord was being tempted the entire forty-day period: "...being tempted for forty days by the devil." The specific temptations described here and in Matthew chapter 4 came at the end of the forty-day period, but there were other tests during that time period. And notice that verse 13 says, "Now when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from Him until an opportune time." Satan's temptations did not end after the three temptations described here. Satan only departed "for a time."

Verse 2 says, "... and in those days He ate nothing, and afterward when they had ended, He was hungry." The fact that the Lord Jesus was hungry after forty days of fasting is an indication of our Lord's true humanity. The Lord Jesus was not

only fully God but fully human as well. He was -- and is -- 100% God and 100% Man. Not 50% God and 50% Man! No! He was -- and is -- 100% God and 100% Man.

The order of the temptations as given in Luke emphasizes our Lord's humanity. Man is body, soul, and spirit, and the three temptations as recorded by Luke emphasize or appeal to those three areas in that order, as we'll see. The fact that Matthew presented the temptations in a different order does not contradict Luke's account. There is no time sequence given in Luke's account.

Doctrinal Points

1. The temptations of Christ were proof that Jesus could not sin.

Verse 1 indicates that the Holy Spirit *purposely* led Jesus into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan. In fact, Mathew 4:1 specifically says that "*Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*"

Question: why would the Holy Spirit do that? Answer: **to prove that Jesus could not sin!**

The temptations of Christ were not to see **if** Jesus would sin, but to prove that, as God, He **could not** sin. Jesus not only **did not sin** but, as God, He **could not sin**. But Jesus was 100% human as well as 100% God – so doesn't the fact that He was Man as well God mean that He could sin? No! To be fully human, you do not **have** to be able to sin. For example, we believers will be fully human in Heaven in our glorified bodies, and not only will we be sinless - we will not be able to sin! We will not be able to sin, and yet we will still be fully human. When believers get to Heaven, they will not become angels, nor will they become some kind of spiritual jellyfish floating around in space. No! We will always be human beings -- but in Heaven we will have sinless, glorified bodies that cannot sin! So that fact that our Lord was (and still is) fully human does not mean that He had to be able to sin. But the fact that He was (and is) fully God means that He could not sin then (and cannot sin now), because God cannot sin.

Jesus was **impeccable** -- that is, He not only **did not** sin, but He **could not** sin. But, you might ask, doesn't that make the temptations of Christ meaningless? No! First of all, they were real temptations, as we'll see, but the temptations came to Him totally from an outside source. In no way did our Lord yield to a temptation that came from within, because to yield to temptation, even in one's thought life, is sin. It's sin, even if you never commit the act.

Furthermore, even though the temptations came to Jesus from an outside source, the Lord felt the strong pressure of these temptations. Here's an illustration: a rigid steel trestle feels the weight of the train just as much -- and even more -- than a wooden trestle that bends and even breaks. (Think about it -- it's true!) So the temptations of Christ were not to see if Jesus would sin, but to show that He could not sin. A good way to show that a rigid steel trestle will not break under pressure is to park a loaded freight train on it for forty days and forty nights!

Hebrews 4:15 says, “*For we do not have high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” The temptations of Christ were proof that Jesus could not sin.

2. The temptations of Christ are proof that only Jesus did not sin.

Because humans are composed of body, soul, and spirit, we can see why Satan specifically chose the three temptations in those three specific areas, and those three temptations were presented to our Lord when Satan thought that Jesus would be in a weakened condition after forty days and nights of fasting.

The Bible teaches that we live in a world that is characterized by sinful values and attitudes. This satanically inspired “world system” surrounds us, and Satan has designed the world system to appeal to our fallen sinful natures. 1 John 2:15-17 says, “*Do not love the world [or, the things in the world]. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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. And the world with its lusts is passing away, but he who does the will of God abides forever.*”

1 John 2:16 indicates that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are areas where we, who have the sinful nature, are vulnerable to attack. The human *body* is especially vulnerable to the lust or *strong desire of the flesh*. The human *soul* is especially vulnerable to the *strong desires of the eyes or gain*. The human *spirit* is especially vulnerable to the *strong desire to be important - of pride or vanity*.

Satan apparently thought that he could get the Lord Jesus to sin in one of three areas:

- The temptation to make stones into bread, and not depend on the Father to meet his needs, would especially appeal to sin in the area of the *body*. The human body is vulnerable to the appeal of a variety of fleshly appetites and desires.

- The temptation to submit to Satan’s authority and receive the kingdoms of this world, but not in God’s timing, was especially an appeal to sin in the area of the *soul*. The human soul is vulnerable to the appeal of the glories and pleasures and riches of this world.

- The temptation to make a sensational leap off the high pinnacle of the Temple down to the pavement or into the Kidron Valley below - and survive - where everyone would notice, was a particular appeal to sin in the area of the *spirit*. The human spirit is vulnerable to an appeal to our pride and vanity.

Our Lord resisted all the temptations, and He refuted Satan by using Scripture, the sword of the Spirit. Three times He said, “It is written.” “It is written.” “It is written.” What a lesson for us! Notice that the Lord quoted three times from the

book of **Deuteronomy**! Could we quote that readily from the Deuteronomy? This should be an incentive for us to be more diligent in memorizing Scripture!

The Lord did not sin in any of these areas -- but we have sinned in all three of these areas: sins of the body, sins of the soul, and sins of the spirit. Ever since the Garden of Eden, where our first parents sinned in all three of these areas, every single person of the human race (with the exception of our Lord Jesus only) has been tempted and has yielded in all three of these areas. Genesis 3:6 says, *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food”* [the lust of the flesh] *“and was pleasant to the eyes”* [the lust of the eyes] *“and a tree desirable to make one wise”* [pride or vanity] *“she took of this fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate.”*

The temptations of Christ proved that Jesus was the only One who never sinned in any of these three critical areas of human temptation.

Practical Application

Expect Satan to use Scripture -- but “out of context”!

In verses 10-11, Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12, *“For it is written, ‘He shall give His angels charge over you to keep and in their hands they shall bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”* Satan was using this promise of God’s protection to try to get the Lord to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple, hoping that He would either be killed, or that He would at least sin in the area of pride. But the Lord answered with Deuteronomy 6:16, which says, *“You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”* In other words: ‘Don’t test the Lord’s promise of protection by jumping off a high building, or by walking blindfolded across an multi-lane highway!’

Satan pulled Scripture verses out of their proper context in Bible times - and he will do it today as well! This satanic strategy worked in those days, and it can work today. Be on guard! Satan will take verses out of their proper biblical context and twist their meaning to promote his evil plans and purposes. For example, I know of a teenaged girl who had an abortion. She said she had based her decision on Matthew 24:19, which says, *“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days.”* Using this verse, someone had told this girl that we are now in the “last days” and thus it would be all right to have an abortion. How tragic! When this verse is read in the context of the entire chapter in which it is given, it clearly has **nothing at all** to do with abortion. Regardless of whether we are in the last days now or not, this completely false interpretation was of **satanic origin**.

Expect Satan to use Scripture – but realize that he’ll use it “out of context”!