

With Morgan

25/01/26  
The temptations of Jesus  
Luke 4: 1 - 13



If we've been following Jesus for any length of time, we'll all know what it is to be tempted to sin! It's something which we will battle with until the day we reach glory. And it's comforting to know that Jesus Christ also knows what it is to be tempted because he was human. Being tempted isn't a sin. It becomes sin when we succumb to it. Jesus' temptation takes place straight after baptism where God declares him to be his beloved Son with whom he is well pleased (3:21-22). Jesus is led into the wilderness where he is tempted. There are two important events from the Old Testament that Luke wants us to have in mind. The first is Adam, the first man who represents us. He is tempted by the serpent and falls so the whole human race falls with him. Israel, the chosen people of God who were elected to be the people who would bless the world, failed, even though God provided for them. Now we have Jesus, the second Adam, and the greater Israel being tested in the wilderness. And the question on our lips must be, 'Will he succeed where the first Adam and Old Israel failed?' If the answer is 'Yes, he will succeed,' we here who trust in him are safe forever. If it's a 'no,' we're all still in big trouble, because it's only if Jesus remained sinless could he be the Saviour of the world. We need a sinless representative because we are by nature united to the first Adam! The devil has been trying to derail and frustrate God's plans for the world. He succeeded in tempting Adam to sin in Genesis 3. If he can get Jesus to succumb, then God's mission to save sinful humanity and restore this broken world to himself fails. Turn back with me to Luke 4:1-13. Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. For forty days he is tempted by the devil. That time-period is deliberate. Remember this is meant to make us think back to Israel and their forty years of wilderness-wandering. During those forty days Jesus ate nothing and was hungry, (v 2) Jesus of course is God, but also man. During his life on earth, he had human needs: sleep, water, food.

**Temptation 1** The Father has just declared 'You are Son...' And the next voice Jesus hears is the devil who says to him, 'If you are the Son of God...' countering the words of God. That's what Adam fell for. The devil says to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread. This is a challenge, not to doubt, but to see how Jesus will use his status! ' It is a challenge to see how he will use his messianic power and just for a moment to stop depending on the Father and use his status to be self-serving. But, "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt 20:28) And Jesus answers the devil, (v 4) by quoting Scripture! "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone'". It's interesting because that is one of the wilderness passages from Deuteronomy 8:3. In quoting this verse he's living how Israel should have lived in the wilderness when Israel received manna from God and still rebelled, Jesus went without and obeyed. Why? For Jesus and so for us, God's word and his will is the most important thing.

**Temptation 2** The devil led him to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. He said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will be yours.' There is nothing wrong with being powerful. The devil is offering power and glory by illegitimate means, by bowing down and worshipping him. Of course, what the devil is saying here is a lie. Remember Satan and his demons are liars. One day Jesus will inherit everything that the devil is offering here in exchange for worship. Jesus, the Messiah, must win the kingdoms and nations of the world to himself God's way, not the world's way. God the Father planned for our redemption through suffering. (Luke:24:26) Jesus tells two friends from Emeus, "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" Jesus must live as a sinless man, then one day he would be lifted up on a high place, that was a cross, where he'd die on behalf of sinners as an atoning sacrifice and then rise again and ascend into glory! Each day as the shadow of the cross grew darker over his life Jesus had to choose to live in obedience to his Father or else all would be Lost! And so again, Jesus responds to the devil's temptation with words from the book of Deuteronomy, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." If only Israel had kept that at the forefront of their minds while in the wilderness.

**Temptation 3** (v. 9-12). The devil led him to Jerusalem, (presumably in another vision) and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw

yourself down from here. "For it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Satan uses the first trick he used phrasing it 'If you are the Son of God.' He twists Psalm 91 in an attempt to force Jesus to sin. In this vision Jesus is standing on the highest point of the Temple in Jerusalem. And the devil is tempting Jesus to prove to everyone who might be watching how much God really loves and cares for him. In other words, he's tempting Jesus to test God as the Israelites did time and time again in the wilderness. If the people were to witness Jesus throwing himself down from the high point of the Temple and God were to step in with his angels and rescue him, there would be no doubt in the minds of the people who Jesus of Nazareth was: King and Messiah. Jesus, however, was not sent to perform such stunts. He was sent to proclaim good news which we see in 4:18-21. And it's true he performed miracles and did wonderful things, but not as a show to win the favour of the people but to validate the truth of his message, that he had indeed come to seek and to save that which was lost. Again, Jesus responds with words from Deuteronomy. 'It is written, Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' And so, he succeeded where Israel failed! Each of these temptations is an attack both on his identity as Son of God and Messiah. It was a temptation to sin by taking the easy route and so derail God's plan for redemption. Messiah.

**Round 1:** Jesus had to choose between obeying his Father or serving and satisfying himself.

**Round 2:** He had to choose between winning the nations the world's way or God's way.

**Round 3:** He had to choose between testing his Father or trusting him. Each day of his life he chose what was right. And praise God that he did.

**Application:** I'm sure we have all been tempted to take the easy route. Sin is easy, obedience is hard. Obedience is impossible without faith in Christ. Maybe there's bad practice in the workplace, and instead of calling it out we opt for the easy route and participate in it. Lying and bluffing our way out of trouble is easy and natural but honesty it is harder. It could be an opportunity to share our faith, but speaking up could potentially lead to relational complications and so it's hard, but staying quiet will potentially be less awkward. But the easy way Satan offers in the end, delivers nothing, and the sin destroys us. Giving into the temptation of lust and adultery so often promises pleasure, but in the end, it brings shame on ourselves and pain to our loved ones. Drinking too much might promise a healthy buzz for an hour or so, but the next morning we regret it. It can lead to a long-term unbreakable addiction. Hating a brother or a sister who has wronged us, might be satisfying, but long term it just leads us to a bitter and twisted spirit and saps the joy of fellowship.

**1) Because Jesus was tempted, he is a sympathiser.** The writer to the Hebrews (4:15), writes "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet did not sin." That's good news. Jesus is there encouraging us and pleading our case, praying for us and giving us the grace we need to resist in our time of need.

**2) Because Jesus resisted, he is our champion.** Jesus triumphs over the devil. We fail every day. He comes as the second Adam and so, by faith, his victory is our victory. Jesus had to rebuke Peter when he tried to convince him not to go to the cross, "Get behind me Satan." Jesus must have had the temptation to take the easy route in Gethsemane, but Jesus in perfect obedience to his Father's will resisted the devil and set his face like flint towards Jerusalem where he was crucified fulfilling what he was sent to do. When we are offered a gift, to receive it, all we need to do is accept it!

**Conclusion** By the Holy Spirit we are given everything that we need to resist the devil and he will flee from us as James says. God does, like he did with Jesus, allow us to be tempted as a test from time to time; see the early chapters of Job as a reference. But when he does permit it, he will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, and we have a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is patient, kind, forgiving and gracious. He has proved it in Jesus so we can say to ourselves: "Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me...When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there, who made an end to all my sin. AMEN!"