

The Temptations of Jesus Christ

Scripture Reading & Text: Luke 4:1-13

Beloved in Christ, in the previous chapter, John the Baptist baptized Jesus. The Holy Spirit came upon Him like a dove. By that Spirit, God's Son is sent into the wilderness to be tempted and tested. The word *tempted* means both *temptation* and *testing*.

This causes us to think of those who had lived before.

- Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, but when they were tempted, they rebelled. Israel was God's son, but he would not submit to the Lord.
- various individuals like Abraham, Moses, David, Hezekiah, were tested but they fell into sin.
- these all failed because of their father and our father, Adam, the first son of God, fell when tempted in the garden, along with his wife.

But there was a man who did not fall--our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke presents these temptations as genuine, as does the writer of Hebrews. And Hebrews presents Jesus as righteous and sinless. Children, young people, are you sometimes tempted to do things wrong? How are you tempted? Jesus Christ has passed through temptations in order to be our high priest who is qualified to atone for us and to intercede for us and by His example lead us through temptation.

1. The Son Tempted to Claim His Rights

For 40 days Jesus was in the wilderness, fasting (eating nothing). During these days Luke says he was being tempted by the devil. But the most intense temptations come after these 40 days are fulfilled.

(3) *And the devil said to him, If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.* Jesus identified with sinful creatures. The Almighty Creator chose to become a man and be dependant upon this creation, upon food. He humiliated Himself.

But why would this be wrong for Jesus? Jesus had the power to turn the stones into bread. It would not be obedient to His Father. This is made clear by Jesus' response. (4) *And Jesus answered him saying, "It is written that not by bread alone shall man live but by every word of God."* (Deut. 8:3) Satan was tempting Jesus to use His rights and powers as the Son of God, to satisfy His hunger by these stones.

But to do so would be to deny His own Sonship. He was the Son of God, in whom the Father was well-pleased. The Father's pleasure was in whom His Son was--one who obeyed His Father. The Father's will for His Son was that Christ fulfil all righteousness. God the Father sent Christ as a man to come in our place, to do what we could not do. This included putting His trust in His Father and enduring the wilderness sufferings. It meant He must not simply live by bread alone, but by the Word of God.

In our place, Jesus went through this temptation without failing to trust His Father's Word. As our perfect substitute, He was able to bear our sin and pay the penalty, so we can be righteous.

Christ also did this in our place to be an example for us. If He the Son of God, sought nourishment for His life by God's Word, how much more we! Yet often since we are the children of God, we should have plenty and be rich. As Satan tempted Jesus the Son of God, so we make our claims. Christ said, *My food is to do the will of My Father!* So, when you are tempted, remember our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Son Tempted to Claim His Rewards

Satan tempted Eve in the garden of Eden, saying, that *God knows that in the day you eat of this tree's*

fruit, you will be like God! Satan was saying, *God is keeping secret an easy way!* It similar to how he tempted Jesus. He took Jesus up a high mountain, where Jesus could see all the kingdoms of the world in a moment. (7) *Therefore, if you will worship before me, all will be yours.* Satan promised immediate dominion--Christ shall rule all the nations!

What Satan promised was the reward the Father promised to Jesus His Son, if He fulfilled His Father's will. But this will was that Christ lay down His life and take it up again. He was to testify of the Father, and His testimony would be rejected, scorned and maligned, eventually He would be arrested and crucified. But God promised He would give His begotten Son, *the nations for His inheritance, and the ends of the earth for His possession* (Ps. 2:7-8). *People would come to Him from the north and the West, from the land of Sinnim* (Is. 49:12).

Up to this point, these lands were under the spell of darkness. Satan says, *All this authority I will give you and its glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish* (6). He is called the *god of this world, the prince of this world.* Having been cast down to this world, he has made it his business to deceive the nations, and nations and kings have willingly followed him. He promises Christ, he will make him his vice-regent, his prime minister, if Christ will only worship Him.

Before Christ lies the path of humiliation and suffering. He the Messiah, as God and man, stands on a road which leads through trial to glory. But look what Satan offers!

We get disillusioned in the path of sanctification. We are so far from holiness. At times we feel like houses crumbling apart. At times, we want to give up, or we simply want an escape. Jesus was severely tempted by this offer--quick rewards! Here is the secret passage!

But Jesus responds: *Get behind Me, Satan.* He does not say, *Get under Me,* because now is not yet the time He will crush Him under His feet. But *Get out of my way, I will go this way to the cross and to my glory!*

Christ also says: (8) *for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve.* He will only worship God. Jesus trust God's Word. It holds authority, it is to be believed and obeyed, and therefore used in temptation. We need to know it, study it, memorize it, hide it in our hearts.

See how Jesus abides by God's commandments. *You shall only worship the Lord your God.* Jesus' heart was bound to the Law. Because of this, He was the One able to come in our place and die for us. He is also our example. Do we love the Law like Jesus? Do we go back to it in temptation? If Christ lived by it, must not we?

3. The Son Tempted to Claim His Road

The devil is not done. He cannot get Christ off this road of salvation by tempting me to openly rebel against God. But what if there was a way that appeared to be connected to all God's promises?

The devil brings him to the city of Jerusalem, the centre of God's purposes! He takes Him to the temple, the building of God's covenant. He takes him to the pinnacle. It is likely the southeast corner of the temple, in which the temple wall descends into the Kidron Valley at a depth of 150 feet.

Satan tempts him, saying again, *If you are the Son of God cast yourself down from here.* He quotes from Ps. 91: *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.* Satan is crafty. He uses the promises in Scripture of the Messiah.

He offers a much easier way. People would see how the Father vindicates His Son. All Christ's sufferings that lie ahead, could be escaped. He could throw Himself down, and yet not shed a drop of blood. What a spectacular display, in place of the lonely suffering in the wilderness. People would see from far and wide that He is the Messiah and the Son of God.

But Christ responds: *(12) It is said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* Jesus quotes from Deut. 6:16, where allusion is made to when Israel tempted God at Massah (Ex. 17), when they rebelled against Moses, threatened to stone him, and put God to the test of whether he could provide water. Israel was tempting God to come down, destroy His people, abandon His gracious purposes.

Christ is not simply telling Satan he is not to tempt Christ. No, Christ must not tempt God. He was in our place, having to go through this test with perfect obedience and humble trust in God. He must not to tempt God by taking God's promises in Ps. 91 and testing them in a way that would bring avoidance of suffering, and no salvation for God's people. Israel tempted God to forget His grace towards His people, and Christ would be tempting God to do forget His grace towards His people as well.

Luke's order of the temptations is different from Matthew's (Matt. 4). Luke ends with this temptation, perhaps to leave us with Christ on the road of suffering in Jerusalem for our salvation. This is the path that takes Him to Gethsemane: *Let this cup pass by Me! Not my will by yours.* It takes Him right to Calvary: to the temptation on the cross: *If you are the Christ, come down!*

But He endured it, He suffered. He was the One who in your place, lived and endured as the perfect, holy, beloved Son of God. You must believe on Him!

He is not a High priest who cannot sympathize with you in your weakness. He was lonely, felt near unto depression and despair. He was tempted to end it all. Hebrews 2:18 says: *For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

When you are tempted, do not simply give in. When the frustration rises, and you could simply for this moment, abandon your spouse to figure it out, think of Christ, and how His people who are His betrothed, betrayed Him constantly. When you could just copy the work of someone else for a part of your school project, no one will know or care, consider Christ and the easy escapes offered to Him. Know that in those moments, Christ is praying, sending you His Spirit. Obey your Lord. Lean on Him in faith and He will carry you through. Amen.