

## The Temptation of Jesus: Tempted But Not Defeated

Luke 4:1-13

During the Lenten season, we are going to explore the journey of Jesus Christ to the Cross together. So, for the next six Sundays, we will have time to contemplate six crucial scenes of Jesus' teaching and ministries from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Why is Jesus' journey to the Cross so profoundly significant? It is because His life is the ultimate example for us to follow, calling us to take up our own cross and follow him as his disciples. I hope and pray that we may resemble Christ in our lives, becoming better reflections of him in the world.

The first story we are going to delve into is the Temptation of Jesus. Today's Scriptures remind us of Hebrews 4:15. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15 ESV).

Jesus Christ was tempted to empathize with us, and we will face temptations just as he did. Jesus did not sin, and he expects us to overcome our enemy as he did.

So, let us explore lessons on how to prepare for Satan's strategy and frustrate/resist his temptations.

**First and foremost, we must recognize our spiritual Achilles' heel.**

I define the spiritual Achilles' heel as "our deepest spiritual weaknesses—those vulnerable areas that Satan can exploit as footholds to dull our spiritual sensitivity, lead us into moral compromise, and ultimately break our relationship with God."

Let us read the Scriptures on the screen together. "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." (Luke 4:1-3 NRSV)

Please note that the devil and Satan are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Devil comes from the Greek word "diabolos" (διάβολος), which

means “deception” or “slander.” Satan is from the Hebrew word “satan” (שָׂטָן), meaning “adversary” or “accuser.”

Though Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and was guided by the Spirit in the wilderness, he was tested by the devil. The devil knows our needs, our weakest links, our spiritual Achilles’ heel. Jesus fasted for forty days. He was so hungry. The devil used Jesus’ hunger as a point of connection to tempt him into disobedience to God. By doing this, he tried to disrupt/interrupt Jesus’ journey to the Cross.

We must recognize our spiritual Achilles’ heel—the areas where we repeatedly fail to align our hearts and actions with God’s will, leading us into disobedience. These vulnerabilities can manifest in many ways, such as [anger issues](#), [gambling](#), [alcohol and drug addiction](#), or [any form of substance abuse](#). Other spiritual Achilles’ heels include [pride](#), [greed](#), [lust](#), [envy](#), [laziness](#), [gluttony](#), [dishonesty](#), [unforgiveness](#), [fear](#), [doubt](#), [impatience](#), [selfishness](#), [idolatry \(placing anything above God\)](#), [materialism](#), [lack of self-control](#), and [spiritual complacency](#). These are the areas where Satan tries to gain a foothold, dulling our spiritual sensitivity and drawing us away from a faithful walk with God.

What is Jesus’ response to the temptation?

“It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” (Luke 4:4 NRSV quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3). In Matthew 4:4, we can find a full quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3. “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” We must constantly adjust our lives to God’s complete revelation, the Bible. To achieve this, we should establish a consistent routine for reading, studying, and meditating on Scripture.

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12 NIV)

“My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.” (Proverbs 4:20-22 NIV)

**Secondly, pursue a life of truth and authenticity.**

The devil led Jesus up to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in an instant. He said, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” (Luke 4:6-7 NRSV).

After the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, the authority of the world was handed over to the devil. Since that time, the devil has exercised his negative influence over the world.

I believe this test is about choosing between Truth and Falsehood, as well as Authenticity versus Counterfeit. In the Book of Revelation, Satan is repeatedly described as the one who imitates God, God's power and authority, and God's Kingdom. However, all of his imitations are counterfeits or fakes.

**“They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’”** (Revelation 13:4 NRSV)

Here, the dragon is Satan. Satan is mimicking God's authority as he tries to establish his own kingdom, which is a counterfeit Kingdom of God. The beast is generally understood to represent the Antichrist. This Scripture clearly shows us that there are people worshiping Satan, the false imitator. That is what Satan is working on at this time.

What is Jesus' response to this temptation? **“It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”** (Luke 4:8 quoted from Deuteronomy 6:13). Again, Jesus responded to the temptation with the Scripture in Deuteronomy. We are called to live out a genuine, fulfilling, and meaningful life, which is our Kingdom-centered life. We should not pursue the false, counterfeit, and transient authority, power, and splendor of this world. That is our true worship of God. We are the people of God who SHOULD seek, enjoy, and represent the truth and authenticity of God's Kingdom as God's worshiping community in this world. **“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”** (Matthew 6:33 NRSV)

**Finally, we must guard against the temptation of losing our focus on God.**

Then the devil sent Jesus to the highest point of the Temple in Jerusalem. And he said, **“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”** (Luke 4:9-11 NRSV quoted from Psalm 91:11-12)

Now the devil is using the Scripture from Psalm 91:11-12 to deceive Jesus. Psalm 91 is about God as our refuge, fortress, and shelter. God Himself is our protection and security. In times of trials and difficulties, when we read Psalm 23 and Psalm 91, they give us assurance of God's protection for our lives. However, here, the devil is tempting Jesus to shift his focus from God, who is his true source of security, to the angels, which are the means God may use to give him

that security. As the devil distracts Jesus' attention from God, he tries to tempt Jesus to focus on Jesus' own fame and popularity.

By doing so, the devil is trying to disrupt Jesus Christ's journey to the Cross, which is God's redemptive plan for all nations. Let me paraphrase the devil's hidden agenda in the temptation: "If you throw yourself down, God's angels will lift you up in their hands, and you will not be harmed. Create a spectacle for the public, and gain fame and popularity from the people. Avoid the cross. Seek an easy path to exalt yourself."

The reason people tried to build the Tower of Babel was to avoid being scattered, which was against God's command. They also wanted to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). They wanted to exalt themselves, seeking their protection by building a city and a tower that could reach the heavens. Throughout history, humanity has repeated this mistake.

However, Jesus defeated the devil's attack again by using the Scripture from Deuteronomy 6:16: "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Luke 4:12 NRSV quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16)

Whenever we lose our focus on God, who is our protection, and seek our own security away from God, we try to exalt ourselves, putting our God to the test.

At the end of today's Scriptures, we find the following statement: "When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time." (Luke 4:13 NRSV)

The devil repeatedly tested Jesus throughout his public ministry, and his temptation culminated when Jesus was crucified on the cross. Those who passed by ridiculed Jesus: "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matthew 27:40 NRSV)

The religious leaders in Jerusalem also mocked Jesus. "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to, for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" (Matthew 27:42-43 NRSV)

"Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8 NRSV)