

## Temptation Part 1 The Temptation Of Jesus

As our study of these scriptures now takes us into chapter 4 of this Book of Luke, here we are immediately introduced to the most formidable enemy that our souls will ever encounter, that of “temptation”, “temptation”.

And we are also introduced to the “master tempter”, the devil, that “serpent of old”, as he plies his temptations to the Lord Jesus.

And it will do us well to pay close attention to these words, because this greatest enemy of our soul, temptation, is ever and always at work, relentless in its efforts to win our souls over to the wiles and the ways of sin.

And these scriptures are clear as we read through them. In most every instance in which a sin takes place, “temptation” is at the heart of it. And to make this matter of temptation and sin even more difficult for us, you and I already have a nature that is inclined towards sin, born into our souls at birth, a “sin nature”. And because of that, we are almost always being tempted to do a thing that we already have an inclination within us to do.

May I say that in another way so that it is clear! You and I will seldom ever be tempted to do something that we do not want to do. It is almost always a temptation to do something that we already have an inclination, or a desire, within us to do.

In other words, as those temptations take place, there are almost always two forces at work, both at the same time, one coming from the inside, the other coming from the outside, and both working together to draw us along a pathway towards a sin that we already have a desire to do.

That “inside” force is described for us in James chapter 1, where temptation is seen to be a step-by-step enticement down a pathway that leads us to sin, and then eventually on to spiritual death. Listen to those words in James 1.

<sup>14</sup> . . . each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:14-15)

Again, there is a natural desire that was born into each one of us at birth, a desire that inclines our hearts towards sin. And each of us, without exception,

has it. And until we receive the salvation that the Spirit of Christ brings to us and takes away that sinful desire, we are powerless to resist it.

But may I hasten to say, as we consider this encounter that Jesus has here with the devil, such inborn inclinations were not present within the Lord Jesus. He was not like you and me. He was not born with a corrupt sinful nature as we are. He was born, pure and Holy. And though, as these scriptures tell us, "He was tempted in every way as we are", I have no doubt that His temptations were on a whole other level, so much more intense and more powerful than any temptation you and I will ever experience.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 4, beginning in verse 1 and let's read about His temptation.

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days, He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." <sup>4</sup>But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*'" <sup>5</sup>Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." <sup>8</sup>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.*'" <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>For it is written: '*He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,*' <sup>11</sup>and, '*In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*'" <sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, '*You shall not tempt the Lord your God.*'" <sup>13</sup>Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:1-13)

As we read these words about the temptation of the Lord Jesus, many thoughts and questions begin to flow through our minds. As for me, I was first reminded of the experience of Moses as he spent those glorious days on the mountain top with God, only to come down into the valley to find his people taking part in the worst kinds of sin.

Here, Jesus also had just experienced one of His first “mountain top” experiences. And then, almost immediately, He has been led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for forty days.

This was such a difficult combination of events. But we know well that this is, in fact, the way that daily life often manifests itself to all of us, mountain top experiences followed by despairing days in the valley.

Jesus, the God of all creation, had come to earth to be a simple man, a normal human being, able to experience all of the human frailties and weaknesses that each of us faces every day. And as with us, Satan is ever and always at our right hand, ready to wreak his temptations upon us.

Jesus' mountain top experience had begun as He had approached John the Baptist earlier there by the Jordan River. And John had given praise to Him by saying “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world”.

And then, after Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, immediately, the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him, and God the Father's voice had thundered out from the heavens declaring Him to be His own dearly beloved Son. Listen to those words again from Luke 3, verse 21,

<sup>21</sup> . . . it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

<sup>22</sup>And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22)

Wow! What a blessing!

And here also, we begin to see the role that the Holy Spirit will have on the earth, that of filling men's souls with His enabling presence and power.

And here we also see another part of the blessed role of the Holy Spirit, that of guiding and directing the paths God's children will walk. And as we see here with the Lord Jesus, sometimes those paths will be very difficult, but very necessary for our growth and sanctification. Consider these words for a moment,

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>being tempted for forty days by the devil. (Luke 4:1-2)

Over the centuries, these words have been a source of mystery and even confusion for many people who read them, especially as we would consider the words given in James chapter 1 where we read . . .

<sup>13</sup>Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (James 1:13)

How can these words be reconciled with the ones that tell us that the Holy Spirit "led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by satan?"

For me, I personally have no concern that these words might be contradictory with other scriptures. Here, the Holy Spirit is not tempting the Lord Jesus, and neither is He initiating sin in Jesus' heart. This is simply the way of daily life on satan's sin-filled earth, where each person will be confronted at every turn with a temptation to sin.

I am also confident that God is "Good" in everything that He does, that He is Righteous and Holy and trustworthy with my soul. And so again, I have no concern that the Holy Spirit was doing anything wrong as He led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by satan.

Here, in these temptations of Jesus, God is simply revealing to us the Holy and Righteous heart of our Lord Jesus, how yes, He was tempted as we are tempted daily, but He remained, ever and always, without sin.

So then, with that being said, let's look closely at what satan was attempting to do in the life of the Lord Jesus. And let's begin with a question . . . "Could it have been that satan was able to look deeply into Jesus' inmost thoughts and desires, and saw a weakness, and then pandered to that weakness?"

I believe that that would have been so with you and me. But with the Lord Jesus, I am certain that it was not the case. Because as God's only begotten Son, we know that Jesus was born without a sin nature. You might recall that at His birth, the angel Gabriel called Him, "That Holy One of God!"

Jesus was absolutely Holy from birth and had no inmost desire for power and the fulfillment of self and other such things. The scriptures tell us that Jesus was "without sin" of any kind.

So then, if satan could not invade Jesus' mind to determine his inmost desires and then use these temptations to lure Him away from His foreordained mission, why did satan use these particular temptations?

May I suggest that these three temptations represented those lusts that satan himself treasured most. And with that being so, satan probably rationalized that it would be the same with the Lord Jesus.

The first temptation reaches out to the “weakness of the flesh”. Listen, beginning in verse 2,

And in those days, He (Jesus) ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” <sup>4</sup>But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’” (Luke 4:2-4)

While we don't know if satan himself can experience hunger and other such human kinds of suffering, we do know that the ravages of sin produces many forms of suffering. And satan was thoroughly ravaged by sin. And so, he somehow knew that Jesus was vulnerable to the demands of hunger.

But Jesus knew that the need for righteousness was far more important than the need for food. He would later say to His disciples in John chapter 4,

<sup>34</sup> . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. (John 4:34)

Self is a favorite ally of satan. And the need to satisfy self is a formidable force to reckon with. But God Himself is ever and always to be our provision. And for a person to reach out and make their own provision through the strength of their own hand, or through receiving it from some source other than God is sinful and will surely receive the just recompense for that kind of behavior.

And then notice also within this temptation that satan introduces the element of “doubt”. Jesus had just been told by God the Father that He was His Own Beloved Son. And now here, satan begins his questioning with, “If you are the Son of God”, the “If” intended to produce doubt within the heart of Jesus. And real “doubt” is a very serious and powerful sin.

The second temptation, the desire for power, recognition and significance is a strong force within each of our sinful natures. It was very likely a part of the first sinful behavior by Adam and Eve.

And we know from those words in Isaiah 14, that such was so with satan. Listen!

<sup>12</sup> “How you are fallen from heaven,

O Day Star, son of Dawn!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
you who laid the nations low!  
<sup>13</sup> You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven;  
above the stars of God, I will set my throne on high;  
I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the North;  
<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.' (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Satan was filled with the lust for power and position, and he presumed that it would be so with men. Listen beginning in verse 5 of today's text.

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil, taking (Jesus) Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." <sup>8</sup>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)

A question . . . "Did satan have the power and position to give Jesus authority over the kingdoms of the earth"? We don't know the answer to that question for sure. Perhaps he was lying. He is described as the father of lies. But I do believe that satan has been granted power and authority over the earth. He is called the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. So, I can believe that he has the authority to grant position and power to others.

May I also say that I believe that to be so even now, that many of satan's cohort underling demons occupy powerful positions within the power structure of this world, filling and possessing and controlling many of the corrupt leaders of the world.

Folks, the lust for power, position, importance and significance is probably a more strongly demanding desire than is the desire for food. It can drive ordinary men and women like you and me to abandon everything else in life, our wives, our husbands, our children, our friends, even our own health in order to possess it.

Most all men and women give in to the temptation for power and position many, many times over the course of their lives. And they fail miserably because of it. Satan knew exactly what he was doing with this temptation. But thanks be to God, Jesus remained obedient to His Father through it all.

The third temptation, denying God's sovereign position and putting Him to the test by arrogant behavior, takes place in our own souls more often than we imagine. Listen again to these words!

"<sup>9</sup>Then he brought (Jesus) 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. <sup>10</sup>For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' <sup>11</sup>and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" <sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" (Luke 4:9-12)

Note here again, this continuing question of "if you are the Son of God". The clear intention being to produce doubt within Jesus' mind.

And notice also that satan chose the "pinnacle of the temple", the house of God as the place for this particular temptation. And in this temptation, as with the others, the effect of Jesus giving in to satan's beguiling would have had an absolutely devastating effect on all that is good and righteous. If Jesus had surrendered to the schemes of satan, it would have ripped apart the Holy Trinity and would have destroyed all that heaven stands for. And that was satan's hope and desire.

But thankfully, I'm convinced that that could not have possibly taken place. God is the God of all that is. And it was Jesus Himself who created this puny creature named satan. Listen to these words in Colossians chapter 1.

<sup>15</sup> He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:15-16)

These words that tell us that Jesus created "thrones and dominions and rulers and authorities", these are names that describe puny little demonic creatures like satan.

And puny satan, as powerful and as smart and as clever as he may be is still an absolute fool when it comes to his understanding of God. And yes, satan has read and knows all these scriptures, back to front. And he knows that Jesus created him. But still, his arrogant pride blinds him from seeing the real truth of who Jesus is, the Almighty God.

Yes, Jesus was tempted, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was able to quickly and freely say NO to satan's beguiling ways.

And that is the message that you and I must also receive from these words. It is the very same for us. By our repenting of our sins and receiving Christ as our Savior and Lord, we are no longer controlled by the desires of sin and self. We truly can say no, almost as easily as Jesus did, because we have the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

And so, I encourage each of us to never think that some temptation is too strong, whether it be our favorite food, or some tempting immoral behavior, or it be greed or anger or frustration or lust for power or any other sinful temptation. By the power of the Holy Spirit living in us, we can simply say NO!

And I will close with these words from Romans 6, that tell us that exact precious truth! Listen, beginning in verse 12,

<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. <sup>13</sup>And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not have dominion over you. (Romans 6:12-14)

May we pray!