



Jesus' Temptation and Beginning of Public Ministry Luke 4

Introduction

After the solemnity of baptism, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and hearing His Father's approval, Jesus was prepared to begin His ministry. Only Luke records that He was thirty years old and had waited patiently as a carpenter in Nazareth for this time to come. However, one more thing was needed to complete His preparation: a skirmish with the enemy. How many ventures have faced the full onslaught of opposition as they began? How many marriages and families experience adversity just when all should be well? With countless needs awaiting Him in city and country, Jesus went into the desert to meet Satan.

Outline of Luke 4

- I. Temptation - Luke 4:1-13
- II. Return to Galilee - Luke 4:14-30
- III. First Preaching Tour - Luke 4:31-44

I. Temptation - Luke 4:1-13

A. Led by the Holy Spirit - Luke 4:1

It is no wonder that Jesus taught His followers to pray, "*Do not lead us into temptation*" (Matthew 6:13). He fully knew what temptation was. Spirit-filled, He was led into the wilderness where Satan came and tempted Him. All three synoptic writers mention that He was there by the will of God. *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil* (Matthew 4:1). *The Spirit drove Him into the wilderness* (Mark 1:12). Being filled with the Spirit does not mean an easy life!

B. Tempted by the Devil - Luke 4:2

1. Forty days

Jesus fasted forty days. This is reminiscent of the Israelites' forty years in the wilderness trusting God to supply their every need. Jesus was alone with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13), trusting His Father as He endured temptation for forty days. Temptation is a "trial". It nags and burdens a person, heart and soul. It only grows stronger when ignored.

2. Hunger

After fasting forty days, Jesus was hungry, and Satan had held his greatest weapons for that time. We are most vulnerable to attack when spiritually high or physically low.

C. Three Major Temptations - Luke 4:3-13

1. Stones into bread - 4:3-4

a. The devil a real being

Throughout the Bible the devil is presented as a real being. He is not merely an influence or an imaginary creature. We first meet Satan in Scripture as the subtle serpent (Genesis 3:1), and he exits as the deceiver cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). He is powerful and threatening, *like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8).

b. Attack

"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Satan began with an attack on Jesus' deity. Surely as God's Son He could do whatever He wanted. Could He not command the stones to become bread, as Moses commanded the rock in the desert to give water? Jesus could probably have turned stones into bread as easily as He would later turn water into wine, but it would serve only Himself. This would have been a misuse of His power, showing lack of dependence on God.

c. Counterattack, *it is written*

Jesus did not argue with Satan or attempt to compromise. He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, "*It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God.'*" The temptation to satisfy Himself by acting apart from God's direction was overcome.

2. All the kingdoms of the world - 4:5-8

a. Panorama of history

The devil, taking Jesus up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Matthew puts this temptation last. The devil was able to display all the great world kingdoms: the Roman Empire, the Mongolian kingdom of Genghis Khan, the Spanish, French, and British Empires, the New World, the Third World, and more.

b. Attraction

Jesus knew He could command them perfectly and righteously. Power and riches could be His by bowing to Satan. The devil is a fraud, for by right all the kingdoms of this world belong to Christ (Revelation 11:15).

c. Counterattack

Jesus said, "*Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve'*" (Deuteronomy 6:13). Jesus did not deny that Satan had power over these kingdoms. Satan is the prince of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). But Scripture forbids worshipping anything or anyone but God.

3. Tempting God - Luke 4:9-13

a. Spectacular test of God's care

"If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here." This may not seem a tempting thing to do. However, the devil adopted Jesus' strategy, using Scripture. *"For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone'"* (Psalm 91:11-12).

b. Attack

This temptation was designed to exploit God's promises. This may seem like a silly, obvious temptation, but it may be even more subtle and conniving than the others. For his own purposes, Satan twisted Scripture to imply more than it did. Many people today take promises out of context and twist them to fit their purpose. They presume upon God's grace by being foolhardy with their health and finances. Or they wrongly claim special abilities as gifts of God. Do you get into difficulties due to your own choices and then expect God to rescue you? He is under no obligation to do so, although He may act in answer to repentance and prayer. Many of His promises are conditional upon our actions. For instance, some people expect God's help and blessing on a test for which they have not prepared or they ask God to provide when they refuse to work.

c. Counterattack

"It is written," Jesus answered for the third time, *"You shall not tempt the LORD your God"* (Deuteronomy 6:16). After his third strikeout, Satan left Jesus until an opportune time (4:13).

D. Ministered to by Angels - Matthew 4:11

After His intense confrontation with Satan, angels ministered to our Lord Jesus (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13). He recognized and resisted each assault upon His integrity, faith, and relationship with God. Regarding temptation, Martin Luther said, "You cannot help the birds flying over your head but you need not let them make a nest in your hair."

E. Comparison with Eve's Temptation in the Garden

After Eve's encounter with Satan in the perfect environment of Eden, man fell and sin entered the world. There were three stages to Eve's temptation also. First, she saw that the tree was good for food. Second, that it was pleasant to the eyes. Third, it was desirable to make one wise (Genesis 3:6). These are very similar to the three temptations of the Son of God.

1. Three categories of temptation

In his epistle, the apostle John lists three categories of temptation: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Satan may use these temptations but *each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed* (James 1:14). Each person is responsible for his or her own behavior. We must not try to brush the blame off on Satan.

Let us compare the categories to the temptations of Eve and of Jesus.

Temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:6)

- Lust of the eyes: pleasant to the eyes
- Lust of the flesh: good for food
- Pride of life: to make one wise

Temptation of the Son of God (Luke 4:3-12)

- Lust of the eyes: shown kingdoms of earth
- Lust of the flesh: turn stones into bread
- Pride of life: misuse God's promises to exalt Himself

2. The means of overcoming

God gives us the power to overcome temptation. Ephesians 6:11 gives the exhortation, *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*. God provides that armor in His Word. Ephesians 6:14-18 describes the armor as: the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel boots, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. These are to be donned and used with much prayer so we may stand firm against evil.

F. Purpose of Temptation

Why is there temptation? James answers that we need seasoning and maturing if we are to qualify for reward (James 1:12). Our Lord's temptation demonstrates His perfection and enables Him to identify with us (Hebrews 4:15).

II. Return to Galilee - Luke 4:14-30**A. Spirit-Filled - Luke 4:14 (3:22; 4:1)**

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is one of Luke's major themes, mentioned specifically twelve times. He was active in both John the Baptist and Jesus even before they were born. (Luke 1:15,35,41). Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of conception. His anointing with the Spirit at baptism was for service, and did not mean that He received the Holy Spirit then. He had always had the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is called the spirit of Jesus (Philippians 1:19 and 1 Peter 1:11). Do you have the Holy Spirit of Jesus within you because you have repented of your sins and turned to follow Him as Lord and Savior by the grace of God?

B. Synagogue Attendance - Luke 4:15

Word about Jesus rapidly spread (Luke 4:14). By the time He arrived back in Galilee He had already created quite a stir. He had chosen four disciples and performed His first miracle in Cana of Galilee. He had manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him (John 1:40-2:11). As He taught in the synagogues, He was glorified by all. Jesus enjoyed unreserved popularity for a few weeks while He taught, healed, and gathered His disciples.

C. Sabbath Sermon - Luke 4:16-30**1. Nazareth**

Nazareth is where Jesus had grown up. On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue as was His custom. His lifelong habit was to worship regularly with family and neighbors. Such spiritual discipline contributes to stability and character. It helped to shape our own country in the past. Is your habit to attend worship services regularly?

2. Scripture reading

No worship service is complete without God's Word. The young carpenter, having returned with a growing reputation, was asked to read a portion of the Scripture. The Living Word (John 1:1-4) opened the written word. It was one of the first things He did in His public ministry. It was also one of the last. After His resurrection, He opened the Scriptures to two on the Emmaus road. *Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself* (Luke 24:27). Scripture was the fabric of His life. Is it of yours?

3. The Book of Isaiah

Jesus was handed the Isaiah scroll. He opened to Isaiah 61 and began to read. There were five points:

- a. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor"*
- b. *"He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted"*
- c. *"To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind"*
- d. *"To set at liberty those who are oppressed"*
- e. *"To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD"*

Then He stopped in mid-sentence just before, *and the day of vengeance of our God* (Isaiah 61:2). He read the job description for His first coming but not for His second coming, even though they were in the same verse! His first coming was to proclaim the grace of God. His Second coming will proclaim God's vengeance on the day of wrath. Jesus rightly divided the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). So He closed the book and sat down as every eye was glued to Him and every ear attuned attentively to hear what He would say. Teachers often taught sitting down.

4. Sermon points expounding the text - 4:21-27**a. A prophecy fulfilled**

Jesus said, *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* Prophecy is exciting. All those in the synagogue were eager to know in what way it was fulfilled. They were impressed. They commented to each other on His eloquence and marveled, *"Is this not Joseph's son?"*

b. An understanding of His audience

Jesus said, *"You will surely say...Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your own country."* He knew their hearts were caught up in the miracles. They wanted to be entertained and awed by the spectacular more than they wanted Him.

c. Teaching

"No prophet is accepted in his own country." Doing what they wanted would not cause them to believe in Him. Familiarity breeds contempt, not acceptance.

d. Two illustrations - Elijah and Elisha

Jesus illustrated from Scripture. Elijah and Elisha did not heal everyone. Out of many widows, Elijah was sent to only one. Out of many lepers, Elisha was used to cleanse just one. Jesus would not display His miracles in his hometown.

5. Audience response

His brief but powerful message hit home. The approval of the people turned to wrath. They rose up, pushed Him out of the city and up the hill, planning to throw Him over the cliff. However, He disappeared from their midst, probably by outwitting them, rather than by supernatural power.

III. First Preaching Tour - Luke 4:31-44

A. Capernaum - Luke 4:31-42

1. A disruptive demon in the synagogue

Jesus preached on the Sabbath in Capernaum and everyone was astonished at His authoritative teaching. Then a demon-possessed man cried out, "*Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!*" It was a demon speaking for the many who possessed the poor man. Jesus rebuked the demon forcing it to leave the man.

2. Peter's mother-in-law

Jesus went from the synagogue to Peter's house in Capernaum where they found his mother-in-law sick and feverish. Jesus healed her and she was able to serve them calmly. Archeologists have unearthed and excavated a house in Capernaum that many believe to be Peter's home.

3. The long day

As the sun set, people lined up at the door for a touch from Jesus. All were healed and demons were expelled.

After an exhausting day, Jesus sought a deserted place while the crowd followed and tried to keep Him from leaving. But Jesus knew His mission and set His priorities. He needed to move on and preach God's kingdom in other cities as well. That was the purpose for which God had sent Him.

B. The other cities - Luke 4:43-44

The missionary heart of Jesus longed to reach others yet unreached. His great Galilean ministry had begun.

Applications

1. Which interests you more, opening the Scriptures to discover and understand what God says so that you may obey Him, or having an exciting "spiritual" experience?
2. Are you led astray by the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, or pride of life? If you see something, must you have it, whether or not it is good for you? What worldly pursuit consumes you and causes you to stumble? Some examples may be television, the so-called "social media", coveting "things", pornography, obsession with personal appearance, or popularity. What habit so consumes you that you lack control? What will you do about it? Will you resist temptation in the power of God by putting on the whole armor of God?
3. Do you remember the whole armor of God from this lesson? If you do not, will you memorize it now to help you in time of need? Ephesians 6:13-18.

DAY THREE: Read Luke 5:12-17.

10. a. How bad was the case of leprosy of the man who came to Jesus?

b. What did he ask Jesus to do?

c. How did Jesus answer his request?

d. What was the man told to do? Why?
11. a. In the next days of extreme pressure what did Jesus often do?

b. Why do you think He did this?
12. What group began to follow Jesus?

DAY FOUR: Read Luke 5:18-26.

13. Why was it difficult for the paralyzed man to get to Jesus?
14. a. How did his friends show determination and imagination?

b. How did Jesus greet the man?
15. a. Why were the Pharisees and scribes upset by Jesus' words?

b. In what way were they right?

c. In what way were they wrong?

d. How did Jesus appeal to their reason?

e. What proof of His authority did Jesus give them?

DAY FIVE: Read Luke 5:27-32.

16. a. What was Levi (Matthew) doing when Jesus saw him?

b. What did Jesus say to him? How did he respond?

- c. Is there a time when you were aware of this command from Jesus in your life?
- d. If so, what did you do? Be willing to share your experience with your group.

17. a. What did Levi (Matthew) do to celebrate his new life?

- b. Who did he invite?
- c. Who criticized? What did they say?
- d. How did Jesus answer them?
- e. What did He advise them to do in Matthew 9:13?

DAY SIX: Read Luke 5:33-39.

18. a. What puzzled people about Jesus' disciples?

- b. How did Jesus answer them?
- c. ? (Thought Question) Explain what you think He meant by this.
- d. According to the Scripture references below, why are many Christians not sad and depressed by things that make other people sad and depressed?
Nehemiah 8:10b

John 14:1,27

2 Corinthians 1:4

1 Thessalonians 4:13

19. In the parable, give the two illustrations of something no one does.

20. ? (Thought Questions) For help see Luke 3:7-9.

a. What do you think was meant by the old garment and wineskin?

b. What do you think was meant by the new garment and wineskin?