

Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 4:1-11

NIV Harmony 46-48; Compassionate 50-54; Loyal 38-41

Introduction

1. Temptation is a part of life. We never get over being tempted only through it.
2. Mark's account of Jesus' temptation is brief.
 - a. "At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him (Mk 1:12-13).
 - b. Mark gave only a two-verse account, while Luke gave thirteen verses and Matthew eleven.
3. Luke and Matthew provide fuller accounts with more detail regarding Jesus' temptation.
4. Like each of us, Jesus was tempted to satisfy the flesh, obtain great wealth, and receive the acclamation of others, but unlike us, He overcame every temptation.
5. **Read Luke 4:1-13.**

A. The Setting for Temptation (Lk 4:1-2a; Mt 4:1)

Lk 4:1-2a: "1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2a where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

Mt 4:1: "1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

1. Both Luke and Matthew indicated that Jesus' temptation followed His baptism by John in the Jordan.
2. Luke added the detail that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit."
 - a. Luke earlier recorded that "the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove" (Lk 3:22).
 - b. The accounts of Mark and Matthew agree with Luke regarding the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus as/like a dove.
3. According to Luke and Matthew, Jesus was "led (Lk - Gk., *egeto*; Mt - Gk., *anechthe*) by the Spirit into the wilderness."
 - a. Mark used a different, strong, almost violent word, "sent (Gk., *exballein* - cast out; drove)."
 - b. Jesus' temptation wasn't optional, and He did not receive special treatment as the Son of God. He received the best the devil could muster against Him. His ability to resist temptation and to not sin was a necessary part of God's plan of redemption.
4. The wilderness most likely was the barren wasteland southeast of Jerusalem and west of the Dead Sea.
5. Luke and Mark agreed that Jesus was tempted for "forty days," and all three accounts agree that His tempter was the "devil" (Luke and Matthew used Gk., *diabolou* and Mark used Gk., *Satana*).
6. Charles Erdman writes, "The temptation of Jesus was the last stop in the preparation for his public ministry, and for many of his followers the final discipline for service consists in such a trial as results in a new determination to live not for self but for God. The time of temptation was significant. It was just after Jesus had been filled with the Holy Spirit and had been assured anew of his divine sonship. Under the influence of the Spirit he was brought to the place of trial, and the temptation consisted, in large part, of the suggestion to use for selfish ends the divine powers of which he was conscious, and to forget his filial relation to his Father" (Charles Erdman, *Gospel of Luke*, 47).
7. Craig Blomberg adds, "Interesting parallels emerge between Jesus' three temptations and those of Eve and Adam in the garden (Gen 3:6-'good for food,' 'pleasing to the eye,' 'desirable for gaining wisdom'). Both of these triads seem to parallel John's epitome of human temptation: 'the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life' (1 John 2:16, RSV). Jesus' temptations therefore illustrate the precious truth that he was indeed tempted in very way common to human experience (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15)" (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* in NAC, 86).

B. The First Temptation: Lust of the Flesh (Lk 4:2b-4; Mt 4:2-4)

Lk 4:2b-4: “2b He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ 4 Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

Mt 4:2-4: “2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ 4 Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

1. **Context:** Jesus “. . . ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.” (Lk 4:2b)
 - a. The human body can go about three days without water but can last forty or more days without food.
 - b. Jesus was not just hungry, He was likely near the point of starvation and needed food to live.
 - c. Matthew made clear that the “devil” (Lk 4:3) was to be Jesus’ “tempter” (Gk., *ho peirazon* – a word used of both external and internal temptations but here of external temptation by the devil).
2. **Temptation:** The devil suggested something that seemed to make sense in Jesus’ weakened state.
 - a. “If you are the son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” (Lk 4:3)
 - b. The devil mocked the truth just declared by the Father—“This is my beloved son.”
 - c. Even something that seems good for us can in fact be evil if we satisfy ourselves in a selfish way or misuse our power or position for personal gain.
3. **Response:** Jesus said, “Man shall not live on bread alone.” (Lk 4:4)
 - a. Luke gave a short version of the scripture quotation that Jesus used as a reply, which is Dt 8:3. Matthew gave the full quotation.
 - b. All of Jesus’ replies to the devil in this passage are scripture quotations from Deuteronomy and are related to Israel’s experience with God in the wilderness after the Exodus.
 - c. In context, Dt 8:3 is a word from Moses reminding Israel how the Lord had fed them with manna as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years.
 - d. Jesus trusted the Father to provide what He needed, when He needed it. The devil tempted Jesus to not trust His Father but to take His needs into His own hands.
4. Erdman notes, “The first temptation, then, was in the sphere of bodily appetite; Jesus was urged by Satan to transform a stone into bread. Why not? His appetite was innocent; he possessed the ability to gratify it. The sin, however, would lie in his using divine power to satisfy his human needs. If this should have been his way of life, there would have been for him no hunger, no pain, no sorrow, no cross. He would have defeated the very purpose for which he came into the world. . . . The essence of the temptation, however, was to doubt the goodness of God . . . Jesus would not be driven into a panic of fear. He believed that God would supply his need and that, however strong the demand of appetite might be, the way and the will of God are certain to secure satisfaction and the truest enjoyment in life” (Erdman, 49).
5. After the time of temptation, the Father sent angels to minister to the needs of His son (cf., Mt 4:11).

C. The Second Temptation: Lust of the Eyes (Lk 4:5-8; Mt 4:8-10)

Lk 4:5-8: “5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours.’ 8 Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

Mt 4:8-10: “8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’ 10 Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

NOTE: Matthew and Luke place this temptation at a different point in the order of temptations. In Luke it is the second temptation, and in Matthew it is the third temptation. However, their accounts of this temptation are almost identical. We follow the order given by Luke. Matthew may have placed this temptation last since in his gospel Jesus is presented as king, and this temptation was a fitting final test for a king—to have sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the world.

1. **Context:** “The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, ‘I will give you all the kingdoms of the world.’ And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority (Gk., *eksousian*) and splendor (Gk., *doksan*); it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.” (Lk 4:5-7)

- a. This is a temptation of the eyes, a lust of the eyes—to see and to have what is not ours and to obtain it by any means necessary.
 - b. Luke added the braggadocious nature of Satan’s temptation: “. . . it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.”
 - 1) Satan claimed ultimate sovereignty, which he desired but did not have. He is a deluded deceiver.
 - 2) His authority was only temporary and only for the time allowed by God the Father.
2. **Temptation:** “If you worship me (Gk., *proskuneses enopion emou*), it will all be yours.” (Lk 4:7)
- a. Satan has always desired to be worshiped as God.
 - 1) He will not give up that desire even to the end of time (cf., Rev 13:12).
 - 2) Wiersbe notes, “One day [Satan] will share this authority with the Antichrist, the man of sin, who will rule the world for a brief time (Rev. 13). Satan’s offer to Christ was valid, but his terms were unacceptable, and the Savior refused” (Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 52).
 - 3) Satan’s greatest satisfaction would be to have the Son of God worship him as God.
 - b. Jesus, as God, already had ultimate sovereignty over these kingdoms.
 - 1) However, He had set aside that equality with God when He came in flesh (cf., Ph 2:6-8).
 - 2) Ultimately, Jesus received sovereignty over these and all the kingdoms of the earth as He followed God’s plan. Because of His submission and sacrifice, the Father raised Him to be “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rv 19:16) and “. . . exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Ph 2:9-11).
 - c. Matthew added Jesus’ command to Satan: “Away from me, Satan!” which logically would come at the end of the period of temptation. This statement coupled with the “then” of Mt 4:5 may indicate that Matthew gave the actual order of the temptations.
3. **Response:** “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” (Lk 4:8)
- a. Both Luke and Matthew agree on the response of Jesus with scripture from Dt 6:13.
 - b. Again, the context for Jesus’ scriptural reply is the wilderness wanderings of Israel who tested God with her grumbling at the spring of Massah when the water was bitter (cf., Ex 17:1-7). The Lord made the water sweet. Israel was commanded to be faithful and trust the power of God to supply her needs.
4. Erdman writes, “The second temptation was in the sphere of earthly ambition. It consisted in an offer of unlimited human power. . . . The force of the temptation consisted in the fact that Jesus expected some day to rule the world. The Tempter suggested that he himself possessed such power, and that if Jesus would submit to him he would attain the desired goal of universal rule. It was a temptation to doubt the power of God and to be disloyal to him . . .” (Erdman 49).

D. The Third Temptation: Pride of Life (Lk 4:9-12; Mt 4:5-7)

Lk 4:9-12: “9 The devil led him to Jerusalem 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. 10 For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” 12 Jesus answered, ‘It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Mt 4:5-7: “5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” 7 Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

NOTE: The accounts of Luke and Matthew are again almost identical except for the difference in their order of presentation. For Luke this is the third temptation and for Matthew it is the second. Perhaps Luke placed this temptation last in his account since his gospel focuses on Jesus as the ideal man, and this temptation focuses attention on the special status of Jesus’ humanity as the Son of God.

1. **Context:** “The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.” (Lk 4:9a)
 - a. The location of the temptation may be the southeast corner of the temple mount above the Kidron Valley.
 - b. It was a great height, and a fall from that height by a normal man would have been fatal.

2. **Temptation:** “‘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.’” (Lk 4:9b-11)
 - a. Again, the devil mocked and tempted Jesus by saying, “If you are the Son of God”
 - b. The devil implied that if Jesus really was the son of God, then He must verify that fact by doing something only God’s son could do.
 - c. Satan uses similar temptations against us when he says such things as “Just try it once. God won’t let anything bad happen to you. It won’t hurt you. You won’t get caught. You can do it. You deserve it. You can afford it.”
 - d. Jesus had deftly responded to Satan’s prior temptations by quoting scripture. So, Satan tried to deceive/trick Jesus by using scripture against Him as Satan quoted Ps 91:11-12.
 - 1) Psalm 91 calls Israel to trust in the providence, provision, and protection of God.
 - 2) Satan misused it by twisting a scripture focused on trusting God into one testing God.
 - e. Erdman writes, “The last temptation was in the sphere of intellectual curiosity. It suggested to Jesus that he should see for himself what would be the experience of one who would cast himself from a great height and then, by angel hands, be kept from harm. This is the temptation to place oneself needlessly in a situation of moral peril and then to expect to be delivered by God’s miraculous power. This is not faith, but presumption” (Erdman, 49-50).
3. **Response:** “Jesus answered, ‘It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your god to the test (*ekpeiraseis*).’” (Lk 4:12)
 - a. Jesus rightly responded to Satan’s misuse of scripture with an appropriate response from the full counsel of scripture.
 - b. Wiersbe notes, “*Jesus balanced Scripture with Scripture to get the total expression of God’s will.* If you isolate verses from their contexts, or passages from the total revelation of Scripture, you can prove almost anything from the Bible” (Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 53)
 - c. Jesus quoted Dt 6:16 which comes from the same context as His response from Dt 6:13 to the previous temptation.
 - d. We must never do something to test God by forcing Him to act on His promises to us. We must simply trust God to keep His promises to us. God is trustworthy, and we do not need to test Him.
4. Wiersbe concludes concerning this triad of temptation, “Satan questioned the Father’s love when he tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread. He questioned His hope when he offered Jesus the world’s kingdoms this side of the cross (see Heb. 12:1-3a). Satan questioned the Father’s faithfulness when he asked Jesus to jump from the temple and prove that the Father would keep His promise (Ps. 91:11-12). Thus the enemy attacked the three basic virtues of the Christian life—faith, hope, and love” (Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 53)..

E. The Aftermath of Temptation (Lk 4:13; Mt 4:11)

Lk 4:13: “13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”

Mt 4:11: “11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.”

1. Matthew’s account accords well with the end of Mark’s account that “angels attended him” (Mk 1:13).
2. However, Luke recorded the important aspect that this was not the only time in which the devil tempted Jesus: “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time (Gk., *kairou*).”
3. In which opportune times/seasons during Jesus’ ministry might Satan have returned to tempt Jesus?
 - a. Perhaps Jesus was tempted as Peter, His own disciple, tempted Him to avoid the cross (cf. Mk 8:33),
 - b. as the people that He miraculously fed sought to make Him king (cf., Jn 6:15),
 - c. as He faced the false charges and tricks of the Pharisees, scribes, and teachers of the law (cf., Mk 14:53-15:15), and
 - d. certainly, as He felt a final time of temptation in Gethsemane to avoid the pain and suffering that lay ahead on the cross. (Mt 16:21-23).
4. How did Jesus do as He faced temptation?
 - a. He passed with a perfect score.
 - b. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Hb 4:15).
 - c. Jesus is here to help us as we face our own times of temptation.

F. Reflections

1. Many times we fall into temptation just after a time of spiritual affirmation or commitment. Be on guard!
2. Wiersbe notes, “We have at our disposal the same spiritual resources that Jesus used when He faced and defeated Satan: prayer (Luke 3:21-22), the Father’s love (Luke 3:22), the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:1), and the Word of God (‘It is written’). Plus, we have in heaven the interceding Savior who has defeated the enemy completely. Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but God can use these difficult experiences to put the best into us. Temptation is Satan’s weapon to defeat us, but it can become God’s tool to build us (see James 1:1-8, 13-17)” (Wiersbe, 50-51).
3. In what areas of life are you most tempted: Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes, or Pride of Life?
4. How do you deal with temptation when it comes?
 - a. Pray to the Lord who has overcome all temptation for help.
 - b. Don’t doubt God’s love for you and His desire for your best in all things.
 - c. Rely on the power of God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within you. Seek a refilling of God’s Spirit.
 - d. Use scripture appropriately to guide your response.
 - e. Seek accountability and support from trusted Christian friends.
 - f. Trust God and never test Him.
5. We must not take shortcuts but always follow God’s plan. Our rewards come naturally as we follow God’s plan and don’t yield to tempting shortcuts.