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# Knowing Jesus

## **The Temptation of Christ**

**Luke 4:1-15**

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**1/6/2019**

**Main Idea: As God's people journey with Jesus, they can avoid the schemes of the devil by trusting in Him.**

**Lesson Objective: Seek the Lord in trying times.**

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## Introduction

*As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

**What kind of journey did you expect when you committed your life to Jesus?**

**What unexpected places has your journey with the Master taken you?**

**What have you learned along the way while on your journey with the Master?**

At a wedding ceremony, the bride and groom pledge to cling to each other for better or worse. On the wedding day, the couple can't see fully what such a promise means. They aren't able to see the hardship they will face, the challenges they will need to overcome, or even the joyful times they will have together. Still, the couple commits to one another, no matter where the journey leads. The same is true in following Jesus. We have no way of knowing where life with Him will lead. However, we can be certain that He will be with us, no matter what challenges we face. In today's passage, we will see how Jesus himself faced temptation and the way He recalled the truth of Scripture to remain faithful to God in this testing.

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## Obedience to the Father

### Luke 4:1-4

*<sup>1</sup>And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness <sup>2</sup> for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.](#)

When Jesus returned from being baptized by John, He was full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit to the wilderness. There are a few items that we must pay attention to in this opening verse. The first is that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Being full of the Holy Spirit emphasizes His humanity. Jesus is God, but while on this earth He submitted Himself into the role of a servant and took on flesh. While He was in the flesh, He needed the presence of the Holy Spirit in His life just like we do! Another item that draws our attention is the wilderness. This should cause us to automatically think of Israel’s time in the wilderness, but there is a little more to it than that. The wilderness was considered the domain of the demonic realm. Within the wilderness there is little to no life and great suffering. The people of Jesus’ day would have recognized this, and their attention would have been peaked. The final item that we must consider is that the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness in order to be tested/tempted. Luke gave us this information so that we could know that this showdown between God and Satan was set up by God Himself.

The Greek word translated tempted ( peirazo) is more commonly rendered “tested.” The verb means ‘to test someone’, and it is used in the OT both of God

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testing men in order to assess the reality of their faith and obedience (Gn. 22:1–19) and also of men testing God, usually because they doubt his goodness and power (Ex. 17:2). Especially during the wilderness period God tested the faithfulness of his people (Ex. 16:4; 20:20; Dt. 8:2; 13:2ff.; cf. Jdg. 2:22; 3:4; 2 Ch. 32:31), and the people fell into sin by testing God (Nu. 14:22; Pss. 95:8ff.; 106:14; cf. Is. 7:12).<sup>1</sup>

Satan tried to overcome Jesus at the point of His physical weakness—hunger (“tell this stone to become bread,” v. 2). The phrase, “if you are the Son of God” expresses no doubt that Jesus is God, and is best understood as, “Since you are the Son of God.” The Devil tried to bait Jesus into satisfying His extreme hunger by exercising His divine powers. Jesus’ duty, however was to suffer and patiently endure hardship as a perfectly obedient human who waited for God’s deliverance and empowerment. Jesus answered by citing the written Word of God. Listen to the context of the passage in which Jesus quoted:

*<sup>2</sup> And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. <sup>4</sup> Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. (Deuteronomy 8:2-4)*

God’s provision of manna and quail proves that His power is not limited to providing ordinary bread. God can support his people with extraordinary means. He can even, if he so wishes, make man live by just speaking the word. In essence, by alluding to Deuteronomy Jesus was saying, “I will not complain.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 169.

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Neither will I take matters into my own hands. My Father has not willed to immediately provide bread, but I will trust him and his word.” In doing this Jesus demonstrated that no need would ever drive him to draw back from his humble human existence as a real man who lived by trusting God’s Word. Perhaps Satan visibly recoiled when Jesus slapped him with God’s Word. Clearly, he decided it was not wise to further pursue that line of thought.<sup>2</sup>

We might find it unexpected when our journey with the Master leads us to a point of temptation, thinking only bad people or insincere Christians face temptation. Following Jesus does not make us immune to temptation. Sometimes it makes us subject to more intense temptation as the devil tries to interrupt the journey and get us off course. A journey with the Master means trusting what God provides, when He provides it. There’s nothing wrong with food, of course. Jesus later made a few loaves of bread into enough bread to feed a huge crowd. But when it came to trusting God’s knowledge of what Jesus needed versus the devil’s implications, Jesus trusted God to provide what He needed, when He needed it. This is made clearer in Matthew’s account of the temptation when he added Jesus’ words, “but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (See Deut. 8:3.) He wasn’t as concerned about having His needs met as about maintaining fellowship with the Father.

**Who was responsible for Jesus’ temptations?**

**What would have been wrong with Him turning a stone into bread?**

**What did Jesus mean by His response to the devil?**

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<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [\*Luke: That You May Know the Truth\*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 133.

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**In what area might the devil be tempting you to doubt whether God is adequately providing for you?**

**What kind of “bread” is he tempting you to seek on your own?**

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## Devotion to the Father

### Luke 4:5-8

*<sup>5</sup> And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup> and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” <sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’ ”*

[\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#)

In the second temptation, the devil sought to get Jesus to worship him. The second temptation, though of a different nature, involves similar issues. The devil takes Jesus to a “high place” (v. 5; cf. “mountain” in Matt 4:8). The high places and mountains were considered to be the dwelling places of the gods. People of the biblical age saw these places as sacred places that involved the gods. When the Devil took Jesus to this high place it was for a reason. He proudly boasted that this was “his domain.” In this temptation the devil claimed to possess the world. Jesus does not challenge the claim; neither does he acknowledge it. To worship the devil in order to recapture the world, even for its good, would have meant “casting out devils by Beelzebub” (Morris, *Luke*, p. 103).

Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy again. This time He pulled from Deuteronomy 6, “<sup>13</sup> *It is the Lord your God you shall fear. **Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.*** <sup>14</sup> *You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—* <sup>15</sup> *for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.”*

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Had Jesus accepted the devil's offer, our salvation would have been impossible. Jesus would have sinned by giving worship to the devil and thus could not have offered himself a perfect sacrifice for our sins.<sup>3</sup> There was to be no compromise in Jesus' ministry, no concessions to the power brokers of this world, no seeking improper ease, no idolatry. Again we must cry, "All praise to Christ Jesus!" We must not fall to the common error of supposing that the temptations that came to Jesus were somehow easy. They were excruciating. Jesus met them as a human totally dependent on the Father, not as a quasi-man.<sup>4</sup> The path the Father had laid out for Jesus to acquire what the devil was offering went through the agony of the cross. The devil tried to entice Jesus with a shortcut, a way to get the kingdoms of the world without the suffering of the cross. Jesus wasn't fooled. Heeding the devil never results in good, no matter how much of a shortcut he offers. Giving to the devil what belongs only to God (see Deut. 6:13) is always a poor plan. When we follow the devil's proposal and ignore the Father's roadmap, we have chosen to worship the deceiver.

We do not have to look far to see the application to our own lives. The desire of popular culture is to avoid pain and take the easy way, the path of least resistance. Jesus embraced the cross by refusing the easy way, and as his followers he says we must do the same. If we embrace the logic of Jesus' refusal to take the easy way, we will see that taking the path of least resistance, to follow comfortable expediency, is idolatry—it is worshiping a false God. Our journey with the Master follows God's will rather than seeking shortcuts.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter L., "[Luke](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 864.

<sup>4</sup> Hughes, 136.

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One day the reality of the reign of Christ will rule over all the kingdoms of the world. The Devil tried to offer a shortcut of world-wide authority to Jesus. The Devil seeks to be a disrupter of God's realm.

**What payoff did the devil offer Jesus in exchange for His worship?**

**Don't "splendor," "authority," and "the kingdoms of the world" ultimately belong to Jesus anyway?**

**If Jesus was going to get all this sooner or later, why was this a bad deal?**

**What shortcut has the devil proposed you take on your journey with the Master? What will it cost you if you take that shortcut?**

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## Submission to the Father

### Luke 4:9-15

*<sup>9</sup> And he took him to Jerusalem and 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 will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ <sup>11</sup> and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” <sup>12</sup> And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” <sup>13</sup> And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. <sup>14</sup> And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup> And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.*

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

After two failed tests (vv. 3-8), the Devil attempted to catch Jesus off balance by quoting Scripture. In challenging Jesus to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple (from which the fall may have been over 100 feet), the Devil referred to Ps 91:11-12, claiming that angels would rush to the rescue if Jesus jumped. There is no historical evidence that the Jews understood Psalm 91 to apply to the coming Messiah. Thus, while the devil quoted Scripture, he tried to use it in a situation to which it did not apply—he misused Scripture. Nonetheless, Jesus did not deny the truth of the Scripture the Devil quoted, just the manner of application which he gave it. In clear contrast, He cited Dt 6:16, which recalls the tragedy of Israel’s complaining and testing God at Meribah and Massah (Ex 17:1-7).

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Only three tests are recorded in Luke 4, but the wording “**every temptation**” may imply that there were more. The Devil was thwarted this time, but he departed from Jesus only to wait for the right time (Gk kairos; “time”—as an occasion or opportunity) to try again. Though Jesus had endured and triumphed over this round of the devil’s temptations, there would be more encounters. He was active throughout Jesus’ ministry, as seen in the demonic confrontations Jesus had, the devil’s entering into Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3), and his desire to “sift” Peter (v. 31).

A journey with the master goes to the place of submitting to God rather than trying to dictate when and how one must act. The devil attempted to persuade Jesus to utilize God’s Word to manipulate God into action. But Jesus clearly stated, “Do not test the Lord your God.” God is God and we are not. Even Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity did not attempt by His actions to dictate to God when and how He must work. As followers of Christ, we can be certain that the devil will seek to lead us astray in many ways. We should seek to avoid Him by trusting in God and always being on guard for his next attack.

Kent Hughes listed three truths that we can learn from today’s passage. First, Jesus resisted these great temptations as a real man. “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). We can call upon Christ in times of temptation, for he is at our side. When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the devil, he replied, “Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks ‘Who lives here?’ the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, ‘Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here.’ ” When Christ fills our lives, Satan has no entrance.

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Second, Jesus conquered temptation because he was “full of the Holy Spirit” and “led by the Spirit” (v. 1). The fullness of the Spirit produces the nine fruits of the Spirit, the seventh of which is “faithfulness” (Galatians 5:22, 23). The third factor in fighting temptation involves being filled with God’s Word. In response to each of the three temptations, Christ answered with Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13, 16). He knew the truth of, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). This is so because God’s Word reveals God’s mind, and God’s mind cannot be subject to sin. So if we fill our hearts with his Word, sin and temptation cannot dominate us. We cannot live “on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” if we do not know the Word of God. We must follow Jesus’ example and regularly meditate on God’s Word.<sup>5</sup>

**Do you ever see evidence of people trying to manipulate God or dictate to Him when and how He must work? Explain.**

**Why is it tempting to attempt to dictate to God what His actions will be?**

**What do you make of the fact that the devil quoted Scripture (Ps. 91:11-12)? Why do you think he did?**

**Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 in verse 12. How could Jesus’ quote be understood as a command for the devil to cease? How could it be understood as a reminder of a command for Jesus to follow?**

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<sup>5</sup> Hughes, 138.