

# **“JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS”**

## **LUKE 4:1-13**

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

Introduction-Summary of Luke’s Gospel and the Holy Spirit

### **I. “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...” (4:1a)- The Holy Spirit’s Ministry in Luke’s Gospel**

- a. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, Covenant Representative on behalf of his people is empowered, endued, or endowed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism in the Jordan (3:20-21).

*<sup>ESV</sup> Luke 3:21-22: Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*

- b. Jesus Christ, as our covenant representative immediately begins his public Messianic ministry “full of the Holy Spirit” on behalf of his people by being tempted by the devil (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12):

*<sup>ESV</sup> Mark 1:12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.*

- c. The Holy Spirit’s ministry throughout Jesus’ life until his glorification.

- Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:35).
- Elisabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit when Mary arrives pregnant with Jesus (1:41).
- Revealed as the Messiah “Immanuel” by the Holy Spirit (2:25ff-Simeon and Anna).
- Growing spiritually and intellectually in favor with God and man (2:40, 52).
- John the Baptist, Forerunner of Messiah, proclaims that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (3:16; see last week’s sermon).
- Jesus is Baptized by the Holy Spirit for public works as Messiah to bring in the Kingdom of God (3:21-22).

*<sup>ESV</sup> Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed..."*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 10:21** In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

- Full reception of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' glorification-ascension-enthronement at God's right hand (Acts 1:4-5; 2:32-33; cf. John 7:37-39).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 1:4-5:** And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 2:32-33:** This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

## II. "Jesus...tempted by the devil." (4:2)- Jesus' Temptation as Second Adam and True Israel in the Wilderness

a. "First Things" in Interpreting this Passage:

- ***Historia Salutis and Ordo Salutis***- When interpreting passages like this in Luke 4, where Jesus is performing his Divine Messianic Mission on behalf of his elect, we must remember that his mission and ministry is unique. It is important therefore, to keep in mind "What Jesus has already done" for us (*historia salutis*- that is, what he has accomplished once and for all in redemptive-history) and "What would Jesus do?" (*ordo salutis*- that is, how do we live in Christ from his example, live by the Spirit, and overcome the temptations of the evil one.
- This passage is primarily about Messiah's work as Son of God on behalf of his people (indicative/*historia salutis*)- -this is more than merely ***how to resist temptation and testing in the Christian life***, it is more about ***why we are able to resist temptation and grow in grace***. This passage is first and primarily about Christ's victory over the temptations of the devil on our behalf and how because we are united to Jesus Christ we can wrestle and struggle against sin and the devil. This is ultimately Luke's portrait of Jesus "binding the strong man" and overcoming the devil's kingdom. As the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 6:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 6:10-12:** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- As the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 6, we can stand strong in the Lord *because Jesus overcame death, hell, and the devil on our behalf, and Jesus successfully accomplished his Divine Messianic Mission without giving in to sin and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High!*
- If Jesus had failed in any of these temptations (and he was continually tempted with them for forty days! cf. Luke 4:13), his Messianic Divine Mission would be over, and God's plan of redemption would have been a disastrous failure.

b. **Importance of Setting:** The Wilderness- A Biblical-Theology of the Wilderness in Scripture

- **Wilderness in Scripture:** (1) Contrast with Adam and (2) Continuity-Fulfillment with Israel.
- **Contrast to Adam in Paradise:** Jesus the "Second Adam" (cf. Rom. 5:12-21)

*This Scripture is teaching us how Jesus is standing in the place of Adam and Israel as the True, Trusting and Faithful Son of God where they failed. Christ is the True Son of God who Trusts and Obeys the Word of God.*

- Adam in Paradisiacal Garden; Jesus in the Wilderness.

Adam- He was the first created Son of God- tempted in paradise-given dominion as vice-ruler or prince over creation- - he failed to trust God ultimately. He believed Satan's lies because he did not trust God and stand firmly by faith on God's Word resisting temptation.

*Where Adam failed, Jesus overcomes victoriously!*

- ***Wilderness in Scripture is a setting of the fall;*** the wilderness is always "East of Eden"- -outside the Garden of Eden where God's special presence is with his people.

Pastor Kent Hughes accurately describes the wilderness where Jesus was hungry after forty days: "The inhabited part of Judea perched on the backbone of Southern Palestine. Between this inhabited hill country and the Dead Sea stretched a terrible wilderness called Jeshimon, which means 'The Devastation.' Thus the backdrop for the temptation was a desolate, monotonous wasteland like that in the forlorn surrealism of a Dali painting- -and anti-Eden."- Luke, pg. 132.

- **Exodus Echoes and Exodus Continuity and Fulfillment:** Israel was redeemed from Egypt in order to be brought into the wilderness to worship and serve God:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 5:1** Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'"

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 7:16** And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far, you have not obeyed.'"

- **Forty Years and Forty Days-Parallel between Israel and Christ:** Israel was led through the wilderness for forty years with the fire by night and the cloud by day which was the way at this point in redemptive-history, the Holy Spirit revealed himself; here in Luke 4:1-15 we have the True Israelite, Jesus Christ being led by the Spirit through the wilderness successfully in order to accomplish the mission that Israel failed to accomplish.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 16:10** And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

- Israel in the Wilderness for Forty Years- Jesus as the True Israelite, not succumbing to temptation for all who believe.
  - Israel was given the Law in the Wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 19-23).
  - Israel was tempted for forty years and fails continually.
  - Jesus keeps Law, in fact quotes specifically from Deuteronomy and overcomes the temptations.
  - *Where Israel had failed, Jesus overcomes!*

### III. Jesus' Three Temptations: Provision, Powerful Position, and Protection

- *How can Jesus be truly tempted if he is not sinful?*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 4:14-16:** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> *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.* <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Jesus is truly human; Jesus Christ is the God-Man, 100% God and 100% man. He is one person with two natures, human and divine.
- Some ask: Was it Jesus' divine nature that helped Jesus' human nature to overcome temptation? Here we can get into speculative trouble, and must walk carefully. It seems that the biblical writers are interested in pointing our attention to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the one Christ's ministry. The emphasis does not seem to be on how Jesus' divine nature helped his human nature (this can be a kind of dividing Jesus into two persons if not careful!), but how the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus and it was his endowment of power that gave Jesus the ability to trust and obey God.
- Some ask: For Jesus truly to be tempted, it must have been possible for him to succumb to temptation.
- False assumption: That humanity as humanity is somehow sinful. Jesus is truly human, but humanity is not created sinful (contrary to Shakespeare's 'To err is human...'), therefore Jesus can be fully and truly human (and is!!), truly tempted, even though he does not have a sinful nature.
- Adam did not possess a sinful nature in the garden when he was tempted and sinned against God (he was able NOT to sin, and he was able to sin, and he did sin against God, even though he had the Spirit's presence with him to overcome).
- As the Second Adam, Jesus was not tainted by sin and the fall as part of Adam's race, although he was truly human- -

a “son of Adam” (see Luke 3:38), and Son of God- - and he did overcome temptation on behalf of his people.

*Jesus was truly tempted by the devil, and overcame victoriously on our behalf where Adam and Israel did not!*

***The Devil’s Strategy in these temptations:***

- **Twisting Scripture**: Quoting Scripture in order to cause Jesus to stumble.
- **Tricky Tempting**: Not tempting Jesus with sinful things in and of themselves!
- Jesus has been given great power and he is full of the Holy Spirit; the questions we should ask at this point in the narrative is: *“What kind of Messiah will Jesus be? How will he use these great and fantastic powers that have been entrusted to him? Will he use them merely to feed himself physically even when he is starving, to have an earthly kingdom greater than the Roman Empire, to do amazing feats that will astound all who see him?”*
- We will consider each of the three temptations, but the summary truths that Luke communicates here is that (1) Jesus was tempted in three ways to trust his inheritance from his Heavenly Father from someone else. The devil is seeking to divert Jesus’ attention from faith in his Father’s promises to faith in him; (2) Jesus is being tempted to receive his inheritance without going the way of the cross.

All of these three things provision, powerful position, and protection rightly belonged to God's Son. Jesus Christ was the only human being who ever deserved to have provision, powerful position and protection from God. However, Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness and willingly took upon himself human flesh in order to trust and obey where man failed.

***Therefore, Jesus had to earn these by his perfect obedience and righteousness; these three things could not be given to him except by the Father for his completed work in his Divine Messianic Mission on behalf of his elect.***

- **“Pitiful” Provision**- “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” (4:3)

- ***Any other man would have thought: “I ‘am’ hungry after all this time and there really is nothing wrong with using my Messianic powers to make bread out of stones...In fact, I will prove to the devil and to others just who I am!”***

***What was the temptation?***

- The devil wants invite Jesus to “pitiful provision”. The devil seeks to make Jesus want too little from God, apart from his will. As C. S. Lewis said one time: “It’s not that man wants too much, he wants too little” (because he cannot understand the unfathomable goodness of God).
- We must not forget the fact that Jesus was truly human, and therefore after forty days ***he was extremely hungry and weak***. This temptation would be different for us. We are not able to turn stones to bread- -but he could have done this, if he had willed it.

***Jesus was extremely hungry, weak and famished, and in this state the mouth of hell opened to tempt him!***

- Jesus has just been publicly proclaimed as the Divine Son in Luke 3:22 at his baptism, here the devil questions this Sonship: ***“If you are the Son of God...”*** God had said: “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased.”
- Jesus’ biblical response to the temptation: “Thus says the LORD” from Deuteronomy 8- “IT IS WRITTEN...” (Luke 4:4)

***“Man shall not live by bread alone” (but every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, cf. Matthew 4:4).***

- <sup>ESV</sup> **John 4:34** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.
- God is allowing His Son to be tempted so that Jesus will trust only in God His Father and not use his Messianic powers selfishly merely for his own physical good.
- Jesus’ Divine Mission was to accomplish the will of the Father; the devil is tempting Jesus to trust in his own powers that were given for the sake of fulfilling his mission on behalf of his people; he is being tempted to oppose God’s will and not to trust his heavenly Father in this situation.

- In contrast to Jesus' temptation here, Israel had failed in their experience in the wilderness: grumbling and complaining for food in disbelief and doubt-

**Exodus 16:3-** "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 2:7** For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing."

- Jesus would have reflected on these Old Testament Scriptures in his fasting for forty days. He had been taught these stories of Israel's God as he grew up (cf. Luke 2:40, 52), he had remembered Israel's constant disobedience and grumbling, and he realizes that God could provide for him—even miraculously with manna if God was pleased to do so.
- **Application:** What is our response as the people of God united to Jesus Christ in our times of temptation? Jesus was uniquely gifted as Messiah, and so his temptations are unique to him- -but we are still tempted to sin against God in not trusting him and insisting on doing things "our way"!
- **Remember that all temptations to our flesh are essentially "Has God said?"**

All of the temptations and tests from Satan (that God allows) are different ways of saying the same thing: "Has God truly said?" (Gen. 3:1). This is the way the devil coerced Adam and Israel to sin against God, and the very way he tests us today.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 3:1** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "***Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?***"

- Has God really said he would forgive that sin?
- Has God really said he loves you as a child, like he loves Christ?



- Has God really said he would take care of your needs, since you have made a mess of the good things he has done already?
- Has God really said he would be a comfort to you and your strength in suffering and times of trouble?

***Remember: All the devil really wants from you is a little undivided attention to make you question God's love, grace, and mercy towards you. He doesn't necessarily desire, or need for you to quit church, or go the way of the apostate, or to join a cult or a witch's coven- -nothing that drastic; he just wants you to question God and his Word.***

- **"Prideful" Powerful Position:** "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...worship me and it is yours!" (4:6-7)
  - ***Any other man would have thought: "With all my Messianic powers, I could have an Empire much greater than Rome, without going the way of the cross. I could live in great glory and pomp, and God would forgive me if I just worshipped someone else this one time."***

***What was the temptation?***

- The devil wants Jesus to seek his position in the Kingdom through pride and idolatry. The temptation is for Jesus to get his inheritance proudly, not through the humility he has been called to.
- Jesus' biblical response to the temptation: "IT IS WRITTEN..." (Luke 4:8)

***"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" from Deuteronomy 6:13.***

- Jesus will worship and serve only God (opposite of worship- idolatry/ opposite of service- self-sufficient pride, trusting in one's self). Unlike Adam and Eve who worshipped and serve the created things (cf. Rom. 1:18ff) and caused all mankind to become fallen and sinful idolaters, Jesus will worship and serve God alone.
- As Israel worshipped idols and made a golden calf even though God had shown them favor and love, Jesus would trust in His heavenly Father and would worship God alone,

knowing that he is truly worthy of all of his worship and praise.

- Jesus will not go the easy way, the way of the worldly pomp and temporal crown. He knows that in order to fulfill his Divine Messianic Mission, and to secure the salvation of his people, ***he must go not the way of the crown, but the way of the cross***: laying down his life humbly for those whom he loves; trusting his Father throughout his life, and especially in his death.

***Remember: All the devil really wants from you is for you to rely on your own self to get to heaven apart from repentance and full dependence upon God; all he really wants from you is for you to trust in yourself and your gifts, riches, or personality to get what you want in life.***

***The devil doesn't necessarily desire or need you to reject Christ (although he wouldn't mind this!) as the way to God and fulfillment in life altogether, he just wants you to promote yourself, seek comfort and ease, and avoid humility, suffering, carrying your cross, or anything else that God may command you to do, that is hard.***

- Yet in contrast to these temptations that come our way, Jesus says: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." (Matt. 16:24, 25).
- **"Presumptious" Protection**: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written..." (Luke 4:9-11)
  - ***Any other man would have thought: "I do indeed want to be recognized for who I am, and I want others to fear me with my great Messianic powers and abilities; I do know that God would not abandon me according to his Scriptures, so if God is so good, what's wrong with a little fun in order to amaze and astound- -especially from the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem- -imagine how many would be in awe of me?"***

***What is the temptation?***

- The devil wants Jesus to presume upon God's goodness and test the Lord.
- The devil commands Jesus to make a jump from the pinnacle of the Temple which is the roof of the Royal Portico that would be about a 450 foot drop into the Kidron

Valley. This would have been an astounding feat for Jesus to perform for all!

- In this time period, the Israelites expected good prophets to perform great feats and miracles to amaze and astound. In fact, in one Rabbinical writing *Pesiqta rabbati*, it was taught: “Our teachers have taught, when the King, the Messiah, reveals himself, he will come and stand on the roof of the Temple.” (Kind of strange that it seems the devil may have actually been behind the deceptive writing of this false tradition- -and he is seeking to get it fulfilled?!)
- The devil quotes scripture (twists scripture) from the Psalms (Psalm 91:11-12); particularly Psalm 91 on God’s protection of his people. The devil realizes that Jesus is quoting Scripture and has put his full trust in the LORD- -so, here he decides to get Jesus to obey scripture in an unscriptural manner.

Now the devil says: “IT IS WRITTEN...”:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 91:11-12** For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. <sup>12</sup> On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

- Jesus’ biblical response to the temptation:

***“It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test”  
from Deuteronomy 6:16. (Luke 4:12)***

**Application:** The LORD is a Strong Tower, the righteous run into him and are safe! The LORD is our PROTECTION! Psalm 91:11-12, when understood in its context, and with correct application, *is true* (contrary to the devil's incorrect hermeneutics)!

There is much presumption in the Church today however. For instance, many television and radio preachers are twisting scripture rather than preaching scripture for their own gain. In pulpits today, the people of God will hear scripture quoted, then twisted so that they are supposed to believe that if one is a Christian he will always be fat and happy, rich, and without any cares because he carries God’s “blessing” in the so-called “health and wealth gospel” which is no gospel at all.

***“No cross- - but a crown NOW!!”***

- **How do you presume upon God?** We will probably not be tempted by the devil to jump 450 feet in order to show our amazing Messianic powers- -because we have none. We can however be assaulted by temptation to presume upon God.

***You may have been tempted in these ways:***

“It is just a small sin, no one will ever know; the Bible says that God forgives us.”

“I know that I am marrying someone who is not a Christian, but I’m in love, and I know that the Bible says that “all things work out for the good of those who are called to his purpose” so I have nothing to worry about- -it can’t be that difficult being married to an unbeliever.”

“I know this investment will put my family at risk financially, but doesn’t God always provide for his people?”

“I am going to have such a strong faith that I will never suffer, and if anyone I know suffers, I will encourage them to stronger faith- -because God would not allow such suffering because the Bible says that God will “heal all of our diseases.”

***What we must learn as Christians in this passage is to trust God for his faithfulness to us, without presuming and testing God. We too can be good at twisting scripture and making it fit our own selfish agendas!***

The truth is that the LORD will cover you under the shadow of his wings as Psalm 91 says! He will covenantally gather you as a hen gathers her chicks. Remember, he has gone out as the Great Shepherd, sought you out, and tenderly carried you back to the fold- -but he has done this out of grace, and we dare not presume upon his grace!

The many times you have strayed and listened to the taunts of wolves and "strangers" outside the sheep pen. He is your protection and will watch over to guide you to your true resting place - -the place that even now Christ is preparing just for you! Why? Because he loves you.

Remember, even when chastisement and suffering comes your way- -it was because God wisely orchestrated it to make you more like Christ.

In a similar way that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested, so he leads us in this way at times. In fact, the author of the Book of Hebrews teaches us to view the whole Christian life as a “wilderness life” being led by the Holy Spirit to God’s ultimate provision in the New Heavens and the New Earth, his ultimate position for his people to rule with Jesus Christ, and his ultimate protection of his people in his own special covenantal presence for eternity.

But for now, we must be strong in the Lord and the power of his might so that we may stand, as we persevere through our wilderness led by the Spirit and united to Jesus Christ.

Submit yourselves to God- - be not anxious- - God will protect you from all the storms of this life- - you must trust him and resist the temptations of the Devil that say that "God is unfaithful" - -"God has dealt you a bad hand" - - "God is weak and unconcerned with your trouble"- - these are lies of the devil.

The Word of God says that God is faithful and will provide for his own not what they deserve, but what they do not deserve. How rich is his grace to us in Christ!

***Remember: All the devil wants from you here is to disobey God “just a little”. He doesn’t necessarily need or want for you to sell to him your soul; he just wants you to start compromising with regard to God’s commands, doing what you know to be wrong, because you know that God will forgive you and you can presume upon his grace, and so test the Lord.***

## **Conclusion**

The Author of Hebrews describes Jesus as:

***“The One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”***

Jesus quotes the Word of God from Deuteronomy from chapters 6-8, as he stands on behalf of all those who believe and resist the devil until he flees. It is significant that the Scriptures that Jesus quotes are during the time of Israel’s wilderness experience. Jesus the Messiah, in the wilderness, full of the Holy Spirit, stands up and overcomes the temptations of the devil on behalf of all of God’s people.

His wilderness victory is our wilderness victory “in Him”. His way of standing firm and resisting the devil is our way of standing firm and resisting the devil: through the power of the Word of God, relying upon God’s Spirit and grace.

***Be not deceived- - the Lord's Word is true; the Lord's Word is sure. The grass it withers, the flowers they fade, but the Word of the Lord endures forever!***

### **Lord’s Supper**

We like Christ have been led by the Spirit in the wilderness of “carrying our cross” until he returns. In this wilderness, united to Jesus Christ and full of the Holy Spirit, God provides us all that we need to persevere and grow in him.

***God provides for us Word, Sacrament and prayer as the primary means of overcoming temptation, resisting the devil, growing in grace, and persevering to the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev. 21-22). We are pilgrims, and so God has provided all that we need for our journey! He is faithful.***