

Sunday, January 29, 2023 | Onward

Week 3 | Luke 4:1-13 | "The First Temptations of Jesus"

On January 1, Pastor Bob kicked off the first sermon series of 2023 entitled "Onward." This series will explore the so-called "firsts" of Jesus' life and how he pressed onward into new and unexplored territories. Like the rocket, which took astronauts to the moon in 1969 had a launching point, Jesus' ministry also had a starting part. And just like the Saturn V eventually took humanity to a place it had never been before, Jesus took humanity into a more profound and closer relationship with God than it had ever experienced before. The final spiritual frontier would be conquered by none other than God's only Son, and, amazingly, he would invite us to join him on the journey.

Last week, we moved from Jesus' first words to the first steps of his earthly ministry. And we noticed that the Lord's beginning coincided with John the Baptizer's end. Their meeting not only highlighted John's ministry but it emphasized Jesus' own. Even God showed up to mark that magnanimous moment, declaring to all that Jesus was his Son. And just so that Luke's readers do not miss the importance of that declaration, he immediately moves from the muddy waters of the Jordan to a lineage that proves that Jesus was, in fact, directly descended from not only Adam but God. Through his mother's side, Jesus identifies with the human race. But through his Father's side, Jesus identifies with the divine race. And by being the true heir of God, Jesus can transform sons and daughters of Adam into sons and daughters of God.

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Today, we'll talk about Jesus' first recorded run-in with temptation. And this trial comes about precisely because Jesus has been presented as God's Son. A claim of that magnitude must be tested (i.e., Saturn V Rocket). Other than John the Baptizer's word, God's voice, and Luke's lineage, real-world evidence must display Jesus' divine nature. Otherwise, it would've been an empty claim. And so, we'll read as Jesus will be led by the Spirit to be tempted by none other than the Devil himself. Will this second Adam succeed where the first Adam failed (cf. Gen. 3)? Depending on the outcome, the reader can draw some significant conclusions given the evidence that's been presented so far. And, make no mistake, those conclusions have eternal consequences.

**READ:** Luke 4:1-13 (ESV)

<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.'"

<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.'"

<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.

This passage teaches three things:

**i. Should we live only to satisfy our appetite, we'll end up living an unsatisfied life.**

The Devil's first temptation used one of Christ's own abilities to try and lead him astray. Only Jesus could've been tempted to transform the physical composition of a stone into bread. No other human being could do what Jesus could do. And while, on the surface, we might conclude that Jesus' first temptation is unlike any temptation we face, that conclusion would be wrong. It is true that we can't turn stones into loaves of bread. But, like Christ, we have the power to spend our time, talents, and treasures on selfish endeavors.

One's talents can enable a person to do pretty impressive things. For Jesus, those talents make it so you could turn stone into bread. But no matter how talented one might be, they cannot give meaning to a person's life. **Life, as God intended it, is about more than what we consume.** It is about more than what we can squeeze out of it. To truly live, we must look to a place other than the grocery store, the ball field, or the office. We must look to God's word.

Only the Scriptures can teach us how to live. Too many are trying to fill the void in their life with stuff—i.e., house, car, vacations, education, career, entertainment, a big bank account, a big church, notoriety, comfort, "the good life," etc. We want the sweet things. We want deserts. And how many times have we gone after the bread on the table, leaving the meat of

God's word untouched? This leaves us anemic and malnourished, living a subpar life. God wants our life to be about so much more.

It has often been noted that in all three of his responses to the Devil, Jesus used Scripture. And, in the case of the first temptation, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. But to fully appreciate Jesus' point, we must understand the context from which the Lord quoted.

**READ: Deuteronomy 8:1-10 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>“The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. <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.

<sup>5</sup>Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup>So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. <sup>7</sup>For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, <sup>8</sup>a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, <sup>9</sup>a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. <sup>10</sup>And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

The Israelites had learned a valuable lesson those forty years wandering in the wilderness. Though they had sinned, and even though their wandering was a form of punishment for their unbelief (cf. Num. 32:13), God was still faithful to them even during their discipline. He did not abandon them as they walked year after year. God took care of them. When they were hungry, God fed them with manna. God even kept their clothes from wearing out and their feet from swelling. Why? To give them a real-life demonstration of his provision. And for any Israelite who remembers God's provision, they would rightfully say, as Jesus said to the Devil, "man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Whether it was for the Israelites in Exodus, Jesus in the wilderness, or us in 2023, the

truth is the same: **when we live only for what the world offers, we aren't really living. The more Bible we consume, the better life we will live.**

**ii. Should we ally ourselves with the world, we will have become the enemies of God.**

If there's one thing to be said about the Devil is that he's not easily discouraged. For forty days, he had tempted Jesus without success. He's now tried to use Christ's hunger, which has failed. He was down to the wire and running out of options. So, in what might be a desperate attempt, he tries to give Jesus everything but his throne. And, to be clear, from a certain point of view, this not have been a lie. Theoretically, the Devil was telling the truth. As the ruler of this world, Satan has free reign to do as he wants. If not for God also doing as he wished, we'd be in an even worse state than we are today.

However, when gauging the validity of Satan's promise, we must also ask, "Would he have actually given Jesus the world?" Knowing Satan to be a liar, even when he appears to be telling the truth, it is safe to assume this was a bluff. Truth, for the Devil, is nothing more than a masquerade for lies. Had Jesus worshipped Satan, Satan would've gotten what he wanted. Why would he then relinquish even an inch of the world after that? There would've been nothing to make him do what he said. He is a law unto himself.

But, hypotheticals aside, even if Satan was telling the truth and made right on his promise to give Jesus the world, Jesus bowing down before Satan would still have been wrong. Regardless of whether or not the world gives us want we want, we are in the wrong anytime we worship anything other than God. This is why Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. As before, it is crucial to know the context of Jesus' verse to understand his point.

**READ: Deuteronomy 6:10-15 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> "And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, <sup>11</sup> and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, <sup>12</sup> then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <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.

God did not demand the Jew's obedience until he proved his love for them. Only after the Exodus and only after he had given them the land of Israel did he tell them to avoid other gods and serve Him. Like a godly husband, God is jealous when his bride is attracted to another. Infidelity is not only a breach of contract but also a dismissal of all the good the spouse has done. Though Israel did not deserve God's love and affection, God gave it anyways. The least the Jews could do was be faithful to God.

The Devil tempted Jesus to serve another. This is something the Lord could not do. He was loyal to God, and any worship not given to God would've been considered unfaithfulness. Likewise, for us, there is only one being we ought to be loyal to and that person is God. And any loyalty to any other being makes us enemies of God.

**READ: James 4:4 (ESV)**

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Satan wanted Jesus to become a friend of the world. He thought that was a pretty good deal. But little did the Devil know that even if one owned the world, they would still have nothing.

**READ: Mark 8:36-38 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> For what can a man give in return for his soul? <sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

But what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? "Nothing" is the answer. A man profits *nothing* if he does not save his soul. And the only way to save your soul is to give your life to Christ. The world thinks it is a shameful thing to be a Christian. They call us bigots, homophobic, and moronic. But do not be ashamed to name the name of Christ. Someday, it is the world who will be ashamed, and we who will be validated. God will have the final say, and any who boldly proclaims his Son will be held in high regard. And those who profane the name of God's Son will be given and cast away into everlasting fire.

**iii. Should we presume to test God, we will have revealed our lack of trust in God.**

The irony of ironies is that the Devil's last-ditch effort to trip up Jesus included Scripture. If Jesus could use the Bible, well, so could Satan. The problem is that, unlike the Devil, Jesus interpreted a passage according to its context and then moved to personal application. Satan, on the other hand, knew what he wanted to say and just needed a verse that sounded like it

applied. In other words, the Devil loved cherry-picking verses, whereas Jesus loved the whole tree. We know this because if you were to read those verses in their contexts, you'd realize that the Devil's application of those passages was entirely off base.

In fact, let me show you what I mean.

The Devil quotes back-to-back verses from Psalm 91. This, alone, would've given Jesus pause. Whenever you're studying a passage in the Bible, you should ask yourself, "What type of literature is this?" The Bible may be bound together in one volume but never forget that it is actually a collection of different kinds of books. Some of those books are historical by nature, others are prophetic, and still, others are what we might call poetic. And generally speaking, the book of Psalms is a collection of poetry. There is great truth to be found in the Psalms, but one must come to it knowing that it will be dressed up in metaphorical language. You would not sit down to watch a historical documentary and want there to be fictional elements. You'd expect it to be based on fact. Likewise, you do not open up the Psalms and expect to find literal, straightforward dialogue. You'll come to the Psalms looking for highly stylized and symbolic language.

Thus, if the Devil expected Jesus to accept his literal interpretation of Psalm 91:11-12, he should've also expected Jesus to interpret the rest of the Psalm literally. In that case, God is not spiritual by nature but physical, so much so, he's an actual fortress made of stone with walls and everything (Psa. 91:3). Not only that, God does not have metaphorical wings by which he protects his own; instead, his wings are literal, like that of a bird, possibly a chicken (Psa. 91:4). And because Psalm 91:10 says "no evil shall be allowed to befall you," that means that you'll be able to kick a lion and hug a poisonous snake without anything happening to you (Psa. 91:13).

At some point, interpreting Scripture this way becomes more comical than applicable. But because Jesus knew his Bible well, he knew that Satan's interpretation of Psalm 91 was bogus. How? Because he used a literal passage of Scripture to inform his understanding of a metaphorical passage. Specifically, he quotes from Deut. 6:16.

**READ: Deuteronomy 6:16 (ESV)**

[You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.](#)

Funny enough, Jesus' quoting of Deut. 6:16 is itself a reference to Ex. 17. (It never ceases to amaze me how interconnected the Bible is.) In God telling the Israelites not to put him "to the test" in Deut. 6, he reminds them of the sort of testing he means by mentioning a place called "Massah." And interestingly, "Massah" is a Hebrew word that means trial, test, or temptation.

And though it usually is nothing more than a noun, it became a proper noun when the Children of Israel tested God in Ex. 17. In that passage, the children of Israel were thirsty and needed water. But rather than respectfully and lovingly asking God to provide water, they started complaining. And more than that, the Bible says they even became quarrelsome (cf. Ex. 17:2).

They were so combative, in fact, that the Jews asked a foolish question: "Is the Lord among us or not?" (cf. Ex. 17:7) Now, why was that a stupid question? Because, by Exodus 17, God had used ten plagues to set the Israelites free from the Egyptians. And since leaving Egypt, the Jews had a physical representation of God's presence in both a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Not only that, God had parted a literal sea whereby they escaped the hands of Pharaoh. Finally, the pièce de résistance, God had even fed them with bread from heaven one chapter before! In light of this context, the question "is the Lord among us or not" wasn't a question; it was a demand. Like a child who says to their parent, "if you love me, you'll give me \_\_\_\_\_," the Jews were saying to God, "If you're really with us, you'll give us water." They were testing a God who had more than proven himself at this point.

And just as God taught them in Exodus 17 and reminded them of this lesson again in Deut. 6, Jesus was telling the Devil in Luke 4 we must always trust God and never test him. "**You shall not put the Lord your God to the test**" is really, "You shall always trust the Lord your God." And because Jesus did not need proof that God would take care of him, he would not cast himself down from the Temple pinnacle.

### **So, what's the takeaway?**

When the Son of God overcame temptation, he made temptation something to be overcome.

**READ:** Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> 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 had been tempted for forty days and after failing miserably, Luke tells us that the Devil "departed from him until an opportune time." Be aware and alert, my fellow brothers and sisters; you're either coming out of temptation or heading into one. But rest assured, we have a Great High Priest who will deliver us from temptation, provided we do not give up. He knows our frail nature. After all, being a human himself, he can "sympathize with our weaknesses." There was no temptation he did not overcome. He is a champion and can teach us to be

champions too. We must merely draw near to the throne of grace, and there, in that special place, we will find the help we need.



## Video Description

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: