



uncommon
THE HOLY ONE OF GOD IS COMING

LESSONS:

1. Was Jesus just Common? (12/7)
2. He would be Compassionate and Holy (12/14)
3. His Birth would Announce His Kingdom (12/21)
4. His Childhood Among the Religious (12/28)
5. His Life Growing Up Among the Gentiles (1/4)
6. The Challenges of the Jewish Religion (1/11)
7. The Challenges of Gentile Religions (1/18)
8. The Creator Among the Created (1/25)
- 9. The Lord Against the Deceiver (2/1)**
10. The Priest Among the Worshippers (2/15)
11. The King Among the Citizens (2/22)
12. The Hope of the Nations (3/1)

Lesson 9 | **The Lord Against the Deceiver** (2/1)

Matthew 4:1-11; 23-25; Luke 4:1-13.

Objective | If it was “**at the right time**, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 6:6) and “**when the fulness of time came**, [that] God sent His Son.” (4:4), there is something helpful for us to understand the culture and the climate of the times in which Jesus lived. Of course, the most significant was the religious climate in which Jesus was born.

Jesus Christ is our notable example on resisting temptation. He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). If we want to be like Jesus, we will be eager to learn how He resisted the devil. Because this was a personal encounter between Jesus and Satan, the account is relayed because Jesus Himself shared it. Luke (4:1-13) uses the incident both to confirm Jesus as the righteous Son of God at the outset of His public ministry and to teach us how to follow Him in obedience to the Father. And Matthew (4:1-11) will do the same. But the key element to remember is that as Creator, Jesus was facing the one who had been the nemesis of Deity since the beginning when Satan tempted Eve and Adam (c.f. Romans 5, 1Timothy 2:14).

You might want to make a list of comparisons and contrasts to think this through further. In Genesis, Adam and Eve were in a lush garden with all the food that they could eat; in Matthew, Jesus is in a wilderness where he has been fasting for forty days. In Genesis, the temptation was to eat; and in the wilderness, the temptations of Jesus began with eating. In Genesis, the temptation was to be like God; in Matthew, the appeal to Jesus was to be the king. In Genesis, Adam and Eve sinned because Eve was deceived and Adam disobeyed what he knew; in Matthew, Jesus knew Scripture better than Satan and obeyed what He knew. In Genesis, after the pair sinned, angels barred them from the tree of life; in Matthew, after Jesus drove the devil away, angels came and ministered to Him.

I want to add that Hebrews reminds us that he was tempted in *all points* as we are – and while we can argue that John’s words, “everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father” (1John 2:16) describe the sources of temptations Jesus faced – that is not all, per se, of His temptations or trials. One trial or testing was the even of His death in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three gospels include the same request which Jesus asks of the Father: “*If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as you will*” (Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42). These show His emotional and mental state. Jesus says, “*My soul is very sorrowful, even to death*” (Matthew 26:38, Mark 14:34). Luke portrays him as being “*in agony*” (22:44). Mark additionally describes him as “*greatly distressed and troubled*” (14:34) and that “he fell on the ground and prayed,” which, in Jewish prayer, was a sign of great distress and suffering. Jesus even asks for his closest disciples to pray and watch with him during this time of trial (Mark 14:33-34, 37-38).

Before we examine the accounts, there are two things to address between Luke and Matthew’s testimony. In the KJV and NKJV, your text reads with additional phrases not included in the NASB, ESV and CSB. In Luke 4:4, Jesus’ quote from Deuteronomy 8:3 adds, “but by every word of God” (c.f. Matthew 4:4 & Deuteronomy 8:3). In verse 5, it adds “*on a high mountain*” (c.f. Matthew 4:8). And in verse 8, it adds, “*Get behind Me, Satan!*” (c.f. Matthew 4:10, or “*Be gone, Satan!*”). In each case, most believe that Luke’s gospel did not originally contain these phrases found in Matthew because, primarily, earlier manuscripts do not contain them. There is no harm or error, of course, but rather this is an explanation why it would be understandable why later scribes later added the phrases to Luke rather than how earlier scribes allegedly dropped them. They were never there. Second, the order of the temptations are different. While critics accuse the accounts of being in error, they would only be in error if they claimed that each part was chronological. Our Western mindset seems to demand that everything be given in chronological order but writers of that age did not think that way, and there is no inherent reason that their way of thinking was wrong. It is probably true that Matthew gives the order as it happened, whereas Luke rearranges things in line with his purpose. As Darrell Bock explains, “Luke presents this temptation last, because it places the climax in the city where ultimately the drama surrounding Jesus’ life will be resolved. Luke makes much of

Jerusalem (Luke 9:53; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11)” (Luke [Baker], 1:379). If Luke did reorder it with the Gentile world in mind (although you will find a lot of scholarship that spends a lot of time deciding who was first), it makes sense that he would show how the tempter placed before Jesus the kingdoms of the world – something of which they would have had greater interest.

And lastly, many commentators believe it is improper to refer to this section as the *temptation* of Jesus, because the word *peirazo* is more often translated *testing* instead of *temptation*. “Peirazein has a quite different element in its meaning. It means to test far more than it means to tempt in our sense of the word” (Barclay). Yet, the real point is that if we still make it “test” versus “tempt” the difference is only found in *the tester’s* motivations and expectations. God “tempts” no-one but when the Devil “tests” someone – he is tempting them to disobey God in sin (see Mt. 16:1; 22:35; Acts 16:7; 24:6; 1 Cor. 10:13). The Devil was tempting Jesus.

Notice the setting the gospels make: 1) Jesus was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness *to be tempted* by the devil. What it indicates is that it was the plan of God for Jesus to begin His ministry with this challenge. The devil was willing to tempt Jesus, to be sure; but it was the Spirit of God leading Jesus to it. The temptation episode was God’s way of showing that Jesus was the perfect man, that He could resist sin, that he could defeat Satan. 2) This is the first introduction to Satan in the Gospels. Elsewhere he is called by Jesus Satan (Luke 10:17-19), a murderer and liar (John 8), the prince of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). John calls him the old Serpent (Revelation 12:9) who had been in the Garden. He was successful in getting Adam and Eve to sin and plunge the world into darkness; but he was not able here to defeat the Son of God. 3) Jesus had been fasting for forty days and forty nights, and was hungry. There is no reason to doubt that it was forty days and forty nights as the text says; but “*forty*” is a common number in the Bible for a period of difficulty, hardship, or suffering. One thinks immediately of the Israelites’ wandering for forty years in the wilderness--one whole generation. And last, In the aftermath, the devil left Jesus “for a time” (Luke 4:13) and angels came and ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11).

What was Jesus tempted to do? Broadly, of course, Jesus was tempted by the Devil to circumvent His Father’s will to do to the wishes of the Devil. It may not sound as significant to us – but it was.

1. Turn stones into bread. The first temptation picks up immediately on the fact that Jesus was hungry, that he had not eaten for forty days. The tempter said, “*If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.*” Note, the Devil wanted Him to prove His Deity by refusing the trial of His humanity. Now then, we must ask what was wrong with that. Was there anything wrong with making something to eat? He had the power to do it. He multiplied food later for people who were hungry. So why was this a temptation? The temptation was to turn His spiritual nature into a means of satisfying His material need without yielding to the will of God. In fact, Satan chose a little thing for the test; but it would have destroyed the work God had given the Christ. Hunger was not wrong, especially in fasting (fasting was designed to focus attention on the spiritual and away from the comforts of life). Jesus response to Satan, and to all of us, that *it is better to be hungry while living in the will of His God than to be fed without the will of God in it.* Jesus’ Sonship is contingent on His obedience to the will of His Father. Jesus knew that the Spirit had led Him into a place that necessitated hunger, and so He would fulfill that task.

In response Jesus quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy: “*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” If you go back and read Deuteronomy 8 you will see that the topic there is about **the Israelites hungering in the wilderness for forty years.** They were *tested* in the wilderness to learn that they must obey God. He gave them Manna; but to receive it, they had to listen and to obey God’s instructions. God provided food to those who followed His words. Adam and Eve listened to another voice in their eating and were cursed; Israel was fed when they listened to His voice. And the Son of Man would obey.

2. Throw yourself down from the temple. If the first test was physical, this second is spiritual. In fact, this test strikes at the heart of the previous victory. Jesus escaped the temptation by showing that He would not be carnal – but spiritual – and listen to the words of God by obeying God. To challenge that,

Satan presents a spectacular stunt to demonstrate His spiritual confidence. We don't know how, but in some way the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem (Matthew 4:5) and set him on the pinnacle of the temple; probably the southeast corner of the temple area, the top of which was some 300 feet above the floor of the Kidron Valley. This, no doubt, was to be in full view of all the assembled people; they could witness that God was with Jesus in a very special way. Satan quotes from a psalm that says that God will give the angels charge over him so that he will not dash his foot against a stone (Psalm 91:11,12). The psalm of trust affirms God protects his people. The response to this temptation is a little more involved. Jesus' response is also from Scripture: *"It is also written, 'You shall not put the LORD your God to the test.'" This also comes from Deuteronomy, 6:16, the same wilderness event for Israel where they were called to trust God as they entered the promised Land. It had the creedal statement in it, "Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone." The chapter then exhorts the people to obey His commands, and to do what is good and right before Him--but warns them not to test God. The context of Deuteronomy 6:16 refers to Massa and Meribah in the wilderness where the people murmured against God and tested Him--because they did not believe He could or would give them water. A trust that is weak or wavering seeks a sign or a dramatic intervention to make it steady. So Jesus said, "No, my trust is perfect; I do not need to do anything heroic to prove it. And I will not test God's word by doing something foolish--at your prompting."*

3. Fall down and worship me. The last temptation is amazing in its boldness. It is almost as if the devil realized he was not winning, and so with nothing to lose calls for Jesus to worship him. Its purpose was to tantalize the king with a gift the Devil could not give to accomplish the Messiah's work in the world. He took Jesus to a high mountain and showed him *all the kingdoms of the earth*. There is no mountain in Israel high enough to see that but on a high mountain, the devil provided some vision of these kingdoms. And the promise was that he would give them to Jesus if only Jesus would fall down and worship him. Luke adds that Satan claimed he had been given these kingdoms and it was his right to give them to whomever he wished. Satan was saying to Jesus, "Look, you came as the king to inherit the nations. Here they are. Why go through the trouble of being the suffering servant to get to the crown. Give me one moment's homage and I will abdicate." The devil is a liar – and here He lies. And the devil is a deceiver and here he attempted to deceive Jesus that the offer of these kingdoms could be anything like the promise of His Father to be the King over many nations. All Satan could offer were the "kingdoms," warring, divided, conflicting powers and races in the world. The Father had promised the Son a Kingdom, united in peace and righteousness and harmony. Of course, we will learn, there was no way to inherit such a kingdom apart from redemption, apart from changing human nature to make it fit for the kingdom, for without it there would never be peace and harmony in the world. Jesus knew His Father's plan. So, Jesus' response was, "Away from me Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the LORD your God and serve Him only.'" This too comes from Deuteronomy (6:13). It is the cardinal truth of Scripture: worship God only. For the righteous there would not even be a thought of bowing down and worshiping the prince of darkness. Jesus would hold to that principle; He would never worship Satan. And so, He would receive the kingdom in God's time, and in God's way--by defeating Satan, first here in the temptation, and later at the cross. And His will be a far better kingdom than this world could ever offer.

What did this mean for us? It was a foretaste of His victory at the cross. Here Jesus defeated the tempter who tried to ruin His mission. But here Christ demonstrated that He would not be deterred from His mission. It was a very significant spiritual victory over the devil. Here are five Lessons for us:

- (1) No one is exempt from temptation.
- (2) Temptation is different from sin.
- (3) Respond to temptation with God's word.
- (4) You can resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- (5) Pursue God's will in everything – and you can.

Next Lesson: 10. The Priest Among the Worshipers (2/15).

Read ahead: Matthew 4:1-11; 23-25; Luke 4:1-13

Compassionate Creator: Becoming Human For Me by Bruce Morton; Chapter 10
Sold on Amazon and 21st Century Christian or other Christian Bookstores.