

Part 18

Jesus' Temptation (4:1-13)

• *Three things before beginning public ministry*

• *Overcoming temptation – a time of testing*

1. Jesus was tested immediately after He received the power of the Holy Spirit

2. Three temptations

• *To put His material welfare above the will of God*

• *To get to a position of authority and glory by the worship of Satan*

• *To prove His Messiahship in a sensational manner*

• *Traditional Jewish belief*

• *Satan can twist the Bible*

Before Jesus' ministry began, three things happened in His life. He needed to be baptised, to receive the Spirit, and to prove He could withstand temptation. Luke's next section ^{☐1} shows that Jesus could resist temptation.

Every Christian who wishes to be used by God has to overcome temptation. In the life of any Christian there will come a time when God lets a time of testing come upon us. The same thing happened to Jesus early in His lifetime. He was quite young, in His early thirties. He had three years of intense ministry before Him when He would minister to thousands of people. But He needed to be tested first.

1. **Jesus' experience of being tested came immediately after His receiving the power of the Holy Spirit.** Luke emphasises the result of Jesus' being baptised with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was powerfully working in Jesus' life, such that He was 'full' of the Spirit ^{☐1} and was strongly conscious of the Spirit's direct guidance. He knew that He was being led by the Holy Spirit to spend a period of just under six weeks in fasting. He needed to specially give Himself to seeking God's will, God's power, and God's guidance as His new ministry was about to begin. The greatest blessings might well be followed by the greatest attacks from Satan.

2. **Three temptations were pressed upon Jesus.** Jesus was tempted by the devil for the whole of the period of forty days, but three particular temptations came at the end of His weeks of fasting at a time when He was exceptionally hungry^{☐1}.

There was the temptation to put His material welfare above the will of God ^{☐1}. Jesus did not perform miracles for His own benefit and it certainly was not God's will that the hunger He was experiencing after much fasting should be miraculously ended by the creation of bread! Jesus was learning, right at the beginning of His work, that God would not want Him to perform miracles for His own advantage. No one will be much used by God unless he or she learns to abandon 'ministry' purely for the sake of one's own advantage.

There was the temptation to get to a position of authority and glory by the worship of Satan ^{☐1}. Jesus needed authority and it was God's will that He should get 'glory', but both His authority and His glory were to come from God alone.

There was also the temptation to prove His Messiahship in a sensational manner [☐] Psalm 91 was often thought by the rabbis – the Jewish teachers – to be about the Messiah. There was also a traditional belief that the Messiah would show Himself by standing on the roof of the temple.¹ So Satan invited Jesus to stand on the highest part of the temple which stood out conspicuously so that everyone could see it. He suggested that if Jesus leapt from the temple and expected God to save Him, everyone would know that He was the expected Saviour. It might seem an odd thing to do; but Satan often prompts people to do odd things! He backed up what he had to say with a word from the Scriptures! 'It is written, "He shall give his angels charge over you..."' says the devil ^{☐2}. The devil knows how to use the Bible and can twist it to his own advantage when he wants to!

^{☐1} 4:1-13

^{☐1} 4:1

^{☐1} 4:2

^{☐1} 4:3-4

^{☐1} 4:5-8

^{☐1} 4:9-12

^{☐2} 4:10, quoting Psalm 91

3. Jesus was able to withstand temptation

• Because of His submission to God's written word, Jesus was able to resist temptation

• When Jesus resisted the devil in this way, the devil left him

3. **Jesus was able to withstand temptation.** He defeated Satan partly by His prayerfulness. He had just been praying. He was full of confidence in God. It is important to realise that this spiritual preparedness which we find in Jesus was the result of the way in which He has been living **before** special temptations came upon Him. Strength in temptation depends partly on what spiritual state we are in at the time of the temptation. The degree to which something tempts us depends much upon us.

Because of His submission to God's written word, Jesus was able to resist temptation. He had a clear mind and a firm will because of His dependence on God's written word. Jesus did not have to hold a long discussion with Satan. Nor did He spend a lot of time wondering whether maybe the devil's suggestions were good ideas. He was in a lifelong habit of instant obedience to the will of God revealed in the Old Testament. 'It is written...' was His instant answer to Satan. He knows the answer to these temptations instantly. His life depends not upon bread but upon God ¹. No one can demand His worship except God ². Foolish and sensational methods of getting attention would be disobedience to God's will and so would be 'testing God'. To 'test God' is to act out of the will of God and so is a kind of 'test' since it almost invites God to act in rebuke and chastisement. The Old Testament said 'You shall not test the Lord your God' ³. All three of Jesus' replies to Satan are taken from the book of Deuteronomy. It was presumably the book on which He had been meditating during His forty days in the wilderness.

When Jesus resisted the devil in this way, the devil left him. Satan left 'for a time' ¹. He would tempt Jesus again many times but for the moment he gave up. When we withstand temptation the devil will leave us for a while. God knows how to give us breaks from the devil's attacks. We are not attacked all the time. When Satan seeks to ruin us our ability to stand depends much on our **past** prayerfulness, and our commitment to God's written word.

Note:



1. See the Midrash known as *Pesiqta Rabbati*, 162a.

¹ 4: 4:4; see Deuteronomy 8:3

² 4:8; see 6:3

³ 4:12; see Deuteronomy 6:16

¹ 4:14

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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