

The Temptation of Jesus

JCV Integrated Text: Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13

Jesus now full of Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and so was led up into the wilderness, sent out by the Spirit to be tested by the blamer. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tested by the blamer, the adversary. And He ate nothing during those days and, after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.

And the tempter-blamer came to Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." But Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of God's mouth.'"

Another time, the blamer took Him to a very high mountain and having led Him up, he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory in a moment of time. And the blamer said to Him, "I will give to You all of these things, this authority and its glory; seeing as it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want. So if you will fall down and worship before me, it will all be yours!" Then Jesus says to him, "Leave you adversary! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall serve him only.'"

So then the blamer took Him to Jerusalem, the holy city and set Him on the extreme wing of the temple, and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. After all, it has been written, 'He will give orders concerning you to put his angels in charge of you, to guard you; and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you don't dash your foot against a stone.'" And answering him, Jesus said, "It has been said, it is also written, 'You shall not over-test the Lord your God.'"

Then, having finished every provocation, the blamer left Him and withdrew until an opportune time, and see this, He was together-with the wild animals, yet the angels came and were ministering to Him.

NB. Matthew and Luke put the second two incidents in a different order but both the wording of Matthew 4:5 and Luke 4:9 allow the incidents to be out of sequence. I have taken Luke's sequence for the chronological order as it looks more likely in terms of a flow from one answer of Jesus to the next temptation. Matthew's order looks more thematic (as is his usual style) with a growing crescendo from personal leadership, through spiritual/national leadership to secular/global leadership.

Introduction

We will see in this passage that when Jesus is in the wilderness:

- He encounters the devil (the blamer-adversary-tempter), wild animals and Angels.
- The commission over Him is deliberately challenged point by point.
- Three layers of anointing are challenged (Prophet, Priest, King)

Only the 3 synoptic Gospels mention the temptations of Jesus. We get the detail of the events from **Matthew** and **Luke** whereas **Mark** just gives a very brief summary:

“And so the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tested by the adversary. He was together-with the wild animals, yet the Angels were ministering to Him.”

Mark 1:12-13

He concludes with statements about Jesus showing Him coming through events in a way which is contrasted with Adam.

Jesus' Victory over the Adversary	Adam's Failure against the Serpent
In a barren wilderness	In a fruitful garden
Over 40 days	The first time
Animals come to Him	Animals stop coming to him
Angels minister to Him	Angels force him from the garden

Remember in LTL2: 1.03 The Baptism of Jesus by John, we saw how the three aspects of the declaration of the Father over Jesus brought a huge amount of Old Testament context with them: -

- ‘This is my son’ - a Messianic title from **Psalm 2**
- ‘the beloved’ - hints at David (which means beloved) and is the title of the Bridegroom in Song of Songs
- ‘in whom I am well pleased’ - used of the Suffering Servant in **Isaiah 42**

and we will see in the temptations how each aspect of this declaration is specifically attacked by the devil.

Notes:

1. **Mark** tells us Jesus went ‘εὐθὺς’/euthus (Strong’s #G2117) into the Wilderness. This is often translated ‘immediately’ but **Luke** says Jesus ‘returned from the Jordan’ and was then ‘led under the influence of the Spirit’ into the wilderness. While ‘immediately’ is a legitimate translation it does also suggest to our modern mindset that it must have happened instantly - an impression not necessarily intended by its use for an ancient world reader for whom it meant ‘and so’ or ‘in consequence’. (See the associated text notes - LTL2: 1.04 Text notes for more detail). As we integrate the Gospel texts we get a sense of process and pacing.
2. In this passage there are three different words used for the devil, and in order to draw out the particular function in view at the time, I have translated each one differently:
 - Διαβόλου/diabolou - the ‘blamer’. (See associated text notes - LTL2: 1.04 Text notes for more detail)
 - Σατανᾶ /satanas - the ‘adversary’
 - Πειράζων / ὁ peirázon - the ‘tester/tempter’
3. **Matthew** and **Luke** give a different order for the 2nd/3rd temptations:-
 - **Matthew** tends to write thematically so the context of the temptations goes from personal, to Judea to the world
 - **Luke** tends to write chronologically which seems to fit more logically with the locations and flow of questions/responses

I followed the temptations by Matthew’s themes in the video but the notes here follow the chronological flow of Luke.

An Overview of the Three Temptations

After Jesus has passed through the water of the Jordan at His Baptism and comes into the wilderness, a spiritual battle takes place. This parallels the events of **Exodus-Deuteronomy** when the Children of Israel go through the Dead Sea into the wilderness and a struggle takes place. Here:-

- They complain they are hungry and receive bread (manna) through **Moses (prophet)**.
- They build the Tabernacle (the prototype Temple) and **Aaron (priest)** is consecrated.
- YHWH promises them the land of Canaan and says one day He will choose a **King** for them!

Straight away, the tempter-blamer's opening statement, 'If you are the Son of God' challenges the first of the Father's declarations over Jesus at His Baptism, 'You are My Son' (**Mark 1:11**). Each temptation challenges an aspect of Jesus' Messianic anointing as **Prophet**, **Priest** and **King**.

Role	Old Testament	Temptation	Challenge to Jesus	Jesus' Response
Prophet	Moses provides bread in the wilderness	Turn stone to bread	Be a prophet like Moses	Deuteronomy 8:3
Great High-Priest	Tabernacle built and Aaron is consecrated.	Throw yourself from the Temple	Be the Great High-Priest in charge of the dwelling place (Temple)	Deuteronomy 6:16
King	YHWH promises Canaan and King	I will give you the nations...	Be the King to lead and compete with the nations	Deuteronomy 6:13

Jesus counters these challenges to the true meaning of His commission with words from **Deuteronomy 6** and **8** - which itself was given just before Israel crossed the Jordan at the into the promises of God!

Let's look at each one in more detail.

The first temptation – challenge to Jesus as Prophet

The blamer asks Jesus to prove His Sonship and demonstrate that He is adequate to be the Anointed Prophet by changing the stones to bread. Jesus' response is a direct quote from **Deuteronomy 8:3**. Let's look at the whole passage where this is taken from.

“You shall observe to do all the commandment which I command you this day, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers.” **Deuteronomy 8:1**

This gives a sense that Jesus has already been meditating on this whole passage of Scripture.

“You shall remember all the way which YHWH your God has led you these **forty years** in the wilderness, that he might humble you, to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not. “ **Deuteronomy 8:2**

Jesus has been in the wilderness for **forty days** (symbolic of forty years).

“He humbled you, and allowed you to be hungry, and fed you with manna, which you didn’t know, neither did your fathers know; that he might make you know that **man does not live by bread only, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of YHWH** “ **Deuteronomy 8:3**

We are told Jesus has had nothing to eat. His Father has let Him grow hungry and supernaturally sustained Him ‘with manna which you didn’t know’. (Remember the ‘secret manna’ in **Revelation 2:17**).

“Your clothing didn’t wear out on you, nor did your foot swell, these forty years. So you shall know in your heart that YHWH your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his **son**.”

Deuteronomy 8:4-5

These are promises of practical provision to Jesus for His ministry years and of His growing maturity as He overcomes the challenges.

“So you shall keep the commandments of YHWH your God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For YHWH your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs flowing into valleys and hills;” **Deuteronomy 8:6-7**

As Jesus has been in the wilderness hungry, without food, He has been communing with the Father whose words will shape and sustain His ministry going forward.

The second temptation - challenge to Jesus as King

This time the blamer’s challenge is to worship him in order to obtain all the kingdoms of the world and their authority and glory. Jesus responds again by drawing on words of Scripture.

“You shall fear only YHWH your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you;” **Deuteronomy 6:13,14**

Notice that **Psalm 2**, which brings the title 'My Son, also provides a context of Kingship:

Psalmist inspired by the Holy Spirit

Why do the nations mob together, and the peoples contemplate vanity? The kings of the earth promote themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against YHWH, and against his Anointed-Messiah, saying, "Let's pull away from their restraints and throw off their ties from us."

He who sits in the heavens will laugh. My Lord will hold them in contempt.

Then he will speak to them in his anger, (and disturb them in his hot temper):

The Father

"But still I have consecrated My King on My holy hill, Zion."

The Son

"I will tell of the decree, YHWH said to me,

...quoting The Father

'You are My Son. Today I have confirmed you'. **Ask of me**, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the ends of the earth for your possession. You will waste them! With an iron club you will smash them to pieces as if they were a piece of pottery.'

Psalmist inspired by the Holy Spirit

So now be wise, you kings. Take heed, you earthly leaders. Serve YHWH in awe, and celebrate *Him* with trembling. Honour-kiss the Son, so that he is not angry and you don't wander from the way, for his temper will soon be stoked. Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.

Psalm 2:1-12

Here there is antagonism between nations. God is clear, 'Ask of Me' for the nations (**v8**) but the adversary says to Jesus, 'Ask of me... and I will make it easy for you to receive the nations.' Jesus is to look to the relationship with His Father for His inheritance.

The third temptation - challenge to Jesus as Priest

The tempter-blamer uses words directly from **Psalm 91** to entice Jesus to throw Himself off the Temple in Jerusalem for a spectacular miracle of protection. It begins...

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High..."

Psalm 91:1

At His Baptism, Jesus saw **v4** acted out as the Holy Spirit descended on Him in physical form as a dove.

'He will cover you with his pinions. Under his wings you may seek refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark...'

Psalm 91:4

"For he will put his angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, so that you won't dash your foot against a stone."

Psalm 91:11,12



When the tempter-blamer takes Jesus to the Temple suggesting He goes up to the highest pinnacle and uses these words ,he is challenging Jesus’ anointing as a Priest and tempting Him to ‘sit back’ and presume upon the promises of **verses 11,12** without fully growing into them.

Note: The Hebrew for ‘wing’/kanaph (#H3671) in **verse 4** also means the extreme edges of the wing or ‘pinnacle’ when used of a building.

But Jesus responds with an Old Testament quote

“You shall not put Yahweh your God to the test....” **Deuteronomy 6:16a**

This verse continues ‘...as you tested him in Massah.’ Massah means ‘testing’. In **Exodus 17:1-7** we read that this was the place where the Israelites moaned about a lack of water and were reprimanded by Moses for testing God. God promises and provides water when Moses takes his staff and **struck a rock**.

Outworking in Jesus’ Ministry

It is important to note that all three of the promises with which the blamer-adversary tempts Jesus are actually fulfilled very specifically in Jesus’ ministry:-

The Temptation	The Fruit
To create bread in the wilderness	Feeding of the 5000 and 4000. This is not for Jesus’ own benefit but a true sign of being a prophet
To throw Himself off the Temple	Early in His ministry, Jesus is in His home town in the synagogue and the crowds jostle Him towards the edge of a cliff to throw Him off - but somehow Jesus just walks through the crowd. The angels keep Him safe! (Luke 4:28-30)
To have the nations in return for worship	In the final week of Jesus’ ministry the Greeks come to Him. (John 12:20-50) Jesus is becoming the ‘Desire of Nations’

This demonstrates that, although the devil misuses the Old Testament promises in the temptations, Jesus can still draw upon them having the right heart attitude.

Conclusion

In the final paragraph we are told that after Jesus comes through His test, the blamer leaves and the wild animals and angels come to Him. Jesus has succeeded here in the wilderness where Adam failed in the Garden of Eden (see table in the Introduction).

Adam succumbed to the temptation of the serpent but Jesus has not. In **Psalm 91:13** God promises that: ‘You will tread on the lion and cobra. You will trample the young lion and the serpent underfoot.’ Jesus is already reversing the curse of the Fall to release Blessing.

And a final note... in the last verse, “I will satisfy him with long life, and show him my salvation,” notice that the very last Hebrew words ‘my salvation’ are identical to the words ‘my Jesus’!

Note: For detailed notes on the biblical text translation and integration please download the associated text translation file.