

Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ

Lecture 4

Jesus Face to Face with the Adversary

Introduction

- Jesus is ready to begin His earthly ministry. John the Baptist has finished his work as God's prophet and forerunner. Jesus has been anointed with the Spirit of the LORD. Now God the Father has one other preparatory experience for His Son, Jesus, to pass through before He goes out to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God.
- This experience is coming face to face with the adversary, Satan, in the barren desert. Jesus returns from the Jordan River "full of the Holy Spirit" – see Luke 4:1 – He is now led by the Spirit ("by the Spirit" means "under the influence of the Spirit"; literally "*in*" *the Spirit* = instrumental use of preposition "in"), away from the crowds where He will show from the very beginning His real mission.
- Note the significance of the number 40 in the Scriptures – often refers to "testing", eg 40 years of testing in the desert for the people of God before they were allowed to enter and take possession of the Promised Land.

1) Jesus, the Head of a new humanity, our Representative

- a) Jesus the Son of God, the promised Messiah, has entered the devil's territory. In the Garden of Eden, the enemy had usurped man's right to have possession of this world by deceiving Adam and Eve. Now the Second Adam (see 1 Cor.15:45) has come to earth to take back or repossess the kingdoms of this world for His Father and also for redeemed man.
- b) In everything that Jesus does on earth throughout His life and ministry, He does, *not* for His own sake but for our sakes. This has special significance regarding His going out to face the devil. He is led out into the desert to be tempted by the

devil, not just to give us a good example how to fight the devil – though this is certainly one part of Jesus’ victory – but rather “on our behalf,” as the New Man, the First-born from among the dead in God’s new humanity. There He is acting on their behalf so that “through Him,” those who by faith become members of His redeemed family (“new creatures in Christ”) might also live/walk in power against the enemy.

- c) All these centuries (millennia), Satan had been reigning over the nations and the peoples of this world – both over kingdoms, clans, families and individuals – as “the prince of this world”. But now his day is quickly drawing to a close – see John 12:31;14:30-31. The coming of Jesus in the spiritual realm was a direct confrontation between “light” (God) and “darkness” (Satan) from start to finish. See John 3:19-21.
- d) Jesus goes out to the desert against Satan as our Representative, the One who has come into this world in order to defeat the devil “in our place” = “for us” – so that His victory might become our victory. He fought and defeated Satan for our sakes. See 1 John 3:8; Heb.2:14.
- e) From the very outset of this testing time, Jesus is on the offensive. He is the Aggressor against the powers of darkness, never on the back foot. Nor does He go out into the desert as if dragged there by the Spirit against His will. Through the Spirit of God, Jesus not Satan who is in full control of all that is happening.
- f) According to the Father’s will, the Spirit leads Jesus out there so that certain things could be clearly established from the very beginning, especially that it might be revealed to Satan and the powers of darkness Who is the true Master. God’s Servant, Jesus, has come to bind the strongman so that He can release those held captive by the powers of darkness (cf. Luke 4:18; 11:14-26), and to reveal His glory as God’s own Son to His followers and also to the enemy.

2) The Temptation of Jesus by the Adversary

- a) The three temptations (Luke 4:3-12) are directed towards three different aspects of Jesus’ nature and ministry (note the slightly different order in Matt.4):

- i) His power: make the stones into bread – use His divine power to satisfy His own personal needs and desires instead of trusting God to meet His needs and satisfy His desires
 - ii) His rule: Satan’s offer of the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would bow down and worship him – God has already appointed Jesus to reign as King over His eternal kingdom – but the Father’s way is via the cross – so that He might enter the strongman’s house and snatch away the keys of death – Jesus must bear in our place the just punishment for our sin – see Rom.6:23 – the wages of sin is death – there is only one way to provide salvation for man and that was for Jesus to bear the sting of death for us – consequently, Satan will try in every way possible to prevent Jesus from going the way of the cross
 - iii) His nature: Satan’s challenge to prove that He is God by performing a miraculous sign (stunt) so that He can win the approval of man, get a name for Himself as a great hero.
- b) These three temptations can also be viewed as Jesus, the Second Adam, reversing what the first Adam lost.

From Defeat to Victory: Adam and Jesus Confront Temptation

1 John 2:16	First Adam Genesis 3:6	Second Adam—Christ Luke 4:1-13
"the lust of the flesh"	"the tree was good for food"	"command this stone to become bread"
"the lust of the eyes"	"it was pleasant to the eyes"	"the devil . . . showed Him all the kingdoms"
"the pride of life"	"a tree desirable to make one wise"	"throw Yourself down from here"

(Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary)

- c) In the face of each temptation, Jesus gives a clear Scripture. (N.B. This certainly shows that in those silent years of preparation before Jesus steps out into ministry, He had been studying the OT Scriptures faithfully as a Jewish child.) The enemy could not stand against the Word of God. Jesus was now ready to step out on to the stage of ministry – with perfect courage. Nothing would or could stop Him in His onward march towards Jerusalem and the cross.

- d) Jesus would go out on the attack against evil spirits in order to set the captives free. See Luke 7:21. Cf. Mark 1:23-28. All through His earthly ministry, Jesus was casting out evil and unclean spirits from people as a demonstration of God's greater power at work through Him. Indeed this was a vital part of the Good News (Gospel) of the Kingdom of God – the tyrannical rule of Satan was now being confronted by and about to be overcome by the true and righteous King.
- e) After the temptation was over, the devil left Jesus “for an opportune time” – see Luke 4:13. This means that Satan wasn't going to give up the fight, that there would be many different encounters between Jesus, the Light of the world, and the powers of darkness right to the end.
- f) In what ways did the devil seek tempt Jesus throughout His three years prior to the cross? (N.B. From the very beginning of Jesus' coming to earth, such as soon after His birth, Satan was attempting to destroy God's Son such as he tried to accomplish through Herod's edict to kill all boy babies under 2 years of age in Bethlehem and environs – see Matt.2:16-18.)
- i) People's desire to make Jesus “king” – John 6:13-15
 - ii) Peter's objection to His going to the cross – Matt.16:13-23
 - iii) The challenges and threats of the Jewish spiritual leaders – their attempt to trap Him in His words – Luke 20:20-26
 - iv) Crossing the Sea of Galilee when the powers of the storm sought to engulf Him and His disciples – Luke 8:22-25
 - v) Satan's plan through Judas' betrayal – to force Jesus' hand to bring in God's kingdom by force
 - vi) Jesus tested in the Garden with the thought of commanding 12 legions of angels to come to His aid, to rescue Him – Matt.26:53
 - vii) The challenge by the passers-by and religious leaders mocking Jesus on the cross to save Himself – Luke 23:36-37

Conclusion

- Jesus returned from the desert and His confrontation with the prince of the air, the prince of all demons – victorious, strong, ready for ministry.

- His first assignment of ministry is in the synagogue – announcing on the basis of the OT Scriptures His true mission. See Luke 4:16-18.

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