

The Temptations of Jesus Christ (Part I)

Luke 4:1-2

1. Introduction.

- a. We come to the third and final part of Jesus' preparation for ministry.
 - i. We saw the baptism, revealing Jesus' divinity (3:21-22).
 - ii. We saw the genealogy, revealing Jesus' humanity (3:23-38).
 - iii. Now we come to the wilderness temptations (4:1-13).

2. The Setting.

- a. Chapter 4 picks up the story immediately after the baptism (3:21-22). The genealogy is structurally inserted to drive home the humanity of Jesus.
 - i. Luke is driving home Jesus' humanity, and if we're to understand the temptations of Jesus rightly, we must come to grips with the reality that He was fully human—subjected to weakness and finitude.
 - ii. He wasn't made simply to look like a man, talk like a man, and act like a man, but rather He was a man. This is the mystery of the hypostatic union.
- b. Jesus' humanity.
 - i. Hebrews 2:17 – notice the writer states Jesus was made like His brethren in “all things.” And that's the key phrase. He was physically, mentally, emotionally a human in every sense.
 - ii. Hebrews 5:8 – He had to learn obedience.
 - iii. The point to understand is that there was no aspect of what it means to be human that Jesus didn't fully experience. So when it comes to the temptations of Jesus, Hebrews 4:15 is clear that He was also tempted in every way (at every single point) *just as we are*.
 - iv. C.f., Luke 2: 40, 52.
 - v. Various passages speaking of his humanity and weakness.

- vi. So He wasn't made to be similar to a man, but He was a man. Again, vital to understand, if you're going to rightly understand the gravity of Jesus' wilderness temptations.
- c. On the possibility of Jesus' temptations.
- i. Many debate if Jesus could truly be tempted. After all, if He was God (and unable to sin), were these truly temptations?
 - ii. The answer is bound up in rightly understanding that while Jesus was 100% divine, He was still 100% man—and here's where the mystery lies. But we must work hard at not mixing His divinity with His humanity. Luke goes to great pains with the genealogy to stress the fullness of Jesus' humanity.
 - iii. The answer is also bound up in a clear reading of the text (Matt. 4:1; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:2). The Gospel writers are unambiguous that Jesus was being truly tempted.
 - iv. Philippians 2:6-7 – “The Kenosis.”
 - 1. Paul's not saying that Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity, but rather, that He set the rightful use of His divinity aside. He was still 100% divine, but never invoked His right to use His divinity to bring some kind of benefit to His humanity.
 - 2. He only used His power to serve others, and fulfill the will of the Father. Never was it used to take the edge off of His humanity.
 - 3. As such, in His humanity, Jesus did all that He did (namely, the Father's will), but by the power of the Holy Spirit—very Trinitarian. The Spirit would empower the human nature of Jesus, as He carried out the will of the Father.
 - 4. As a result, when it comes to Jesus' temptations, it was very much His humanity that was being tempted. Yet in His humanity, there was no sin.
 - a. John 14:10 – there was nothing *in Him*.
 - b. Luke 1:35 – He's a “holy offspring.”
- d. The background of the passage.

i. Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.

1. Literally, He was cast with authority into the desert (Mk. 1:12 ἐκβάλλω). He's driven into the wilderness.
2. We don't know why Jesus goes into the wilderness. Perhaps He simply wanted a time of isolation to commune with the Father before He launched His public ministry. However, we simply don't know. None of the Gospel writers make comment as to the reason Jesus (in His humanity) would have done this.
3. The divine purpose of the temptations is very clear, however. It was "to be tested" (c.f., Matt. 4:1). And not merely tested, but tested by the Devil Himself.
4. The point to understand is that this was far more than a mere internal struggle for Jesus. His flesh wasn't being assaulted by the neutral things of the world, but rather, the Devil himself—and all by the leading of God.

ii. The Desert (i.e., the Jeshimon).

1. A frightening wasteland, filled with rocky, craggy stone.
2. The Jeshimon means "The Devastation."
3. C.f., Deut. 8:15.
4. This was not an idyllic retreat, but an anti-Eden.
5. Jesus is here for 40 days, being tempted the entire time (present tense participle).

iii. The Devil (διάβολος).

1. The nameless adversary in the Bible.
2. He's never given a name, but is attributed many descriptions to reveal His character.
3. He was created with tremendous power in glory—perhaps the lead worshiper in heaven.

4. At some point, he decided to revolt. We don't know when, but perhaps it was even when he chose to tempt Eve in the garden.
5. Regardless, he exists to bring death and destruction by means of his deceptive activity.
 - a. He is incredibly crafty.
 - b. He never deceives with an open lie, but always by twisting the truth ever so slightly.
 - c. In fact, he always attacks at the point of truth—that's his game.

3. Conclusion.

- a. As Jesus prepares for ministry, He's led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. As He is, the stage is set for the greatest temptations, in all of Scripture, to begin.
- b. Next time, we'll see the anatomy of how temptation works.
- c. Before we get to application for how to battle temptation, which is what many are quick to do with this passage, we're first going to see an immense portrait of Jesus Christ – the actual point of the narrative. He is our vicarious Victor over sin, Satan, and temptation. He perfectly obeys the Father, and therefore, proves Himself to be the unblemished sacrifice for sinners.