

Temptation  
Luke 4:1-13

We are going to Luke 4 today.

Let's start by reading the passage and then we will walk through it:

**Luke 4** And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness **2** for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. **3** The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." **4** And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" **5** And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, **6** and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. **7** If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." **8** And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" **9** And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, **10** for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' **11** and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" **12** And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" **13** And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time."

As we work through this passage, there will be three main themes we'll talk about, but we won't be going in order, we will weave in and out of these themes all through the message this morning and you probably won't see the seams between them.

But at any given time, we will be talking about:

- 1) The Triumph of Jesus
- 2) The Tactics of Satan
- 3) Tools for the Tempted

Because all three are in this passage and all three are helpful to us.

But first we have to set the stage.

Luke 4:1-2 “ **And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.**”

So in chapter 3, Jesus went down into the Jordan river to be baptized by John. When he was baptized, the Spirit of God descended on Him like a dove and voice from above said, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.” And now, that same Spirit, leads Jesus into the wilderness for a time of testing. The son of God will show what He’s made of. This is a test before He begins His ministry, the exam that will prove whether He is worthy for the task ahead of Him.

There are a few things we’re supposed to notice about the storyline here.

### **Jesus the True and Better Israel**

If you remember the storyline of the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was tested for 40 years as God led them in the wilderness. They had been rescued by God from Egypt, they passed through the waters of the sea, and then were led into the wilderness to be tested. Israel, which was called the son of God (Hosea 11:1), failed the test by turning from faith, turning to other gods, and sinning in all kinds of ways.

But God had staked his honor and reputation on that nation. In Genesis 12:3, God said He would make them a blessing to all nations. But they failed. So will God get His glory through Israel?

And now Jesus is here. He has just come through the waters of baptism. And now He wanders in the wilderness, led by God, to be tested for 40 days. Jesus, called the son of God at his baptism, is now in the wilderness to see if He will pass the test that Israel failed.

The question being answered is, “Is this the true Israelite?” So this is round 2 of the testing in the wilderness, and Jesus throughout this passage quotes from Deuteronomy, where the wilderness testing was first described.

## Jesus the True and Better Adam

We are also supposed to see this as a round 2 of what happened in the garden of Eden. In Genesis, God speaks everything into existence and before he forms it, the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters at the beginning of creation. Jesus just came out of the water where the Spirit of God was hovering over Him. This is the beginning of the re-creation.

Remember, in Eden, Adam, who had the same kind of unfallen human nature as Jesus, went toe to toe with Satan and lost big time. Adam was the first son of God, he faced Satan, and fell. And now we have the second Adam, who was just declared the son of God, heading off to face Satan.

And we skipped over a section in Luke 3:

**Luke 3:23-24 “23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,…”**

And we keep following the genealogy and it brings us to

**Luke 3:37-38 “the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”**

We can all trace our genealogies through different pathways and to different family members, and we will strategically highlight some who were in the family tree, and probably steer clear of others. And in Luke’s genealogy, he wants us to see that Jesus is descended from Adam. Which is true for everyone, but he wants us to see Jesus as true man, the second Adam. And he wants us to be thinking that Jesus is the son of God, a direct descendant of God, just like Adam was. Jesus is in some ways Adam all over again.

And they are tested in some similar ways. But Adam had an advantage over Jesus.

If you remember Adam’s temptation, he was in the garden, surrounded by potential and opportunity. He was in a perfect paradise God had made, in a lush green garden. He could eat to his heart’s content, it was the place everyone wants to live, and in that context he was tempted.

But here goes Jesus, the second Adam, to be tempted. And Jesus is hungry - he has fasted for 40 days. And he is in the Judean wilderness, or the Judean desert. It's what comes to mind when you think of a desert - its rocky and sandy and dry, home to scorpions and snakes. The Judean wilderness is not the kind of place where people want to live.

Adam and Jesus both had the same unfallen human nature. But Adam "had it all" in paradise. Jesus, the second Adam, had nothing in the desert. Adam was full, Jesus was hungry. So Jesus has worse odds of winning this show-down than Adam did. He's hungry and in the wilderness, it is like He has one arm tied behind his back for this fight.

But they were both tempted by the devil.

The devil is called by a number of names in scripture: Beelzebul, Satan, Lucifer, and just the devil here.

Devil means literally "accuser"<sup>1</sup>, but we know from the biblical story that he was the chief of the fallen angels. He rebelled against his creatureliness and wanted to ascend to the place of God, but was cast down in judgment along with a number of other fallen angels who participated in his mutiny with him.<sup>2</sup>

And we can be tempted to make too much or too little of the devil.

### **Making Too Much of the Devil**

We make too much of him when we treat him like he's the equal opposite of God. We think God is very strong and righteous, the devil is equally strong and evil, and the two do eternal battle in a yin/yang set-up, there is eternal cosmic dualism at play. But that's Taoism, that's not the Christian world-view. God has no match, God has no equal. God has no opposite. God and the devil aren't fighting it out to see who the winner will be, this isn't an arm-wrestling match that could go either way. The devil is a creature, God is Creator, they're not equal and opposite.

Sometimes we will make too much of the devil by thinking the devil is personally attacking and tempting me all the time. We will say, "Satan is really attacking me today."

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2015), 127.

<sup>2</sup> Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). 407.

And there is some truth to that, but it is similar to the way we would say that Osama Bin Laden attacked us on 9/11. It's true, he did, but he didn't personally attack us, his forces did. He didn't personally do that attacking.

Or if in World War II, a soldier were to say, "I'm heading off to battle Hitler," that is true in that he was fighting Hitler's forces. But the soldiers never actually saw or interacted directly with Hitler.

The devil is not the opposite of God. So he is limited, he can be in one place at one time, he isn't everywhere. So there's a strong chance that none of us have ever even encountered the devil himself. We do fight his forces, and in that sense we are always being opposed by Satan. And in that sense we do wrestle with the devil. But what we mean by that is that we wrestle with his forces.

### **Making Too Little of the Devil**

And the other error is to make too little of him. Some have done so by saying that Satan in the bible is just a metaphor for evil, he's just a character that was invented to embody evil, but that he doesn't actually exist. But this story and many others show a real devil, with real fallen angels under his command. He, often through his demonic legions, does tempt, and accuse, and try to divide, and lie.

Satan is said to be active in snatching the word of God out of peoples' hearts before it can take root (Mark 4:14). He does the opposite work of the angels in scripture. They praise God before the throne day and night, Satan accuses God's people day and night (Revelation 12:10).<sup>3</sup> He is a real being, as are his demons, and we often wrestle against them without knowing it.

**Ephesians 6:12 "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."**

The enemies of Christians are not primarily human. There is a real enemy, there are real unseen beings, tempting, accusing, dividing, stirring up trouble and temptation, opposing the spread of God's word, bringing pain and suffering into lives. We don't see them, and our secular age mocks the idea of their existence, but almost everybody else in history knew that there are evil spirit beings behind much of the evil we see.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

And while we may not warrant special attention from the devil himself (he has bigger fish to fry), Jesus got some special attention from him.

### **Temptation #1 - Turn the Stones into Bread**

**3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”**

Now at first, this doesn't look like a huge sin Jesus is being tempted with. There's no commandment against turning stones into bread. Granted, the issue never came up before. But Jesus does, on other occasions, miraculously make bread to feed 5000.<sup>4</sup> So there's no command against making miracle bread.

*So Jesus, do your “bibbidy bobbidy bread” trick and you won't be hungry anymore! You'll even be stronger to resist the other temptations!*

But remember who Jesus is. He is true God and true man. And if, in this moment, He uses His deity to cheat at being human, He will fail at a core part of His mission.

**Hebrews 4:15-16 “15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

If Jesus uses his deity to cheat at being human, Christians throughout all the ages will say that even Jesus couldn't withstand temptation without using his God-powers, and that isn't a luxury I have. He wasn't really tempted, He wasn't truly human, we'd say, because when it got hard to be human He just did some God magic and got out of it. We could say He doesn't really understand.

But Jesus is truly man. He was tempted just like we are, with no “out” that we don't have. He must be a sympathetic high priest for us, He can't fail here. This is a temptation to not live as a true man.

And look at Satan's tactic here. He starts in verse 3 by saying **“If you are the Son of God”**...

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<sup>4</sup> Darrell L. Bock, Luke 1:1- 9:50, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1994). 372.

Remember what the Father just said at Jesus's baptism. "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."<sup>5</sup>

The devil comes along and says, "If you are the Son..." That snake! He is trying to create some doubt in Jesus's mind about whether He is really the Son of God!

*"The Father calls you His son, and then has the Spirit lead you into the wilderness to starve you for 40 days? God calls you His son and then abandons you in the desert without any food? You can care for you better than your Father in heaven cares for you.*

Now remember how Israel failed here. Way back in Exodus 16, God had rescued them, they were clearly being treated like the unique son of God, but they were in the wilderness of Zin, they were hungry, and they grumbled. They even say, "I wish we had stayed in Egypt, I wish we hadn't followed God out here!" God treated them like sons in singling them out for a rescue, but now their faith is tested because they don't have food, and they grumble and fail the test. So much for being a nation that God would get honor from and that the nations would be blessed through.

And Satan is whispering in Jesus's ear to try to get him to fail, too. "This is how God treats his son? Maybe you're not really His son."

Jesus now has two competing voices in His head. The Father's voice which says, "You are my son," and Satan says "If you are the son..." The two voices are in his head, he's worn down from fasting, He's hungry, He's in the hot desert sun, who knows whether He got disoriented from it all. And he is really tempted - so He has to decide which is the voice of truth? Which voice do you believe?

#### **4 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"**

Jesus triumphs, because he believes the voice that lines up with the Bible! The voice of the Bible is the voice of God. What doesn't agree with the Bible doesn't come from God.<sup>6</sup>

Which is the tool for us to use when we are tempted as well. We live in a world with so many subtle lies. Our appetites and desires lie to us. Guides and leaders lie to us to get something out of us. Our culture embodies lies about what is good and what is evil. We're lied to about right and wrong, what's good and bad. We're lied to about what God

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 3:22

<sup>6</sup> Leon Morris, Luke, (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity, 1988). 121.

does and doesn't say. There are competing voices about what we should and shouldn't do, how we should and shouldn't feel. All of the voices can sound good. They can seem right. They can feel right.

There are many competing voices. Which do we believe?

The ones that come from the Bible. The scriptures speak to us the very words of God. That's where we hear the voice of the Father.

When you're tempted, you can know that the words of scripture are the words of God.

So Jesus quotes the scripture that says "**Man shall not live by bread alone**"

All of the scriptures Jesus quotes in this passage come from Deuteronomy chapters 6 through 8. That's where Moses is talking to Israel right before they go into the promised land, and he is reminding them of all that God had done for them in the wilderness. There, God had educated them. He had put them through a number of hardships so they could learn what it means to live by faith, a life of trusting God.<sup>7</sup>

God allowed them to be hungry for a time, and then fed them with manna. And the hunger was to show them that their life didn't come first and foremost from bread. Our life is sustained by more than just the physical things we need. Our life comes from the word of the Lord. People are not animals - people don't live by physical appetites and physical needs alone, but are even more dependent on the words of God.

So when Jesus is tested - *which voice will I listen to?*, He listens to the voice of God in scripture. God said He was His son, the hunger didn't prove otherwise, because in the Bible God allowed his son, Israel, to hunger for a time. So Jesus will trust God rather than undermine His true humanity to get some food.

So point Jesus.

## **Test #2 - Bow to Satan and Receive the Kingdoms of the World**

So the next test:

**Luke 4:5 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 6 and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory,**

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<sup>7</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 128.

**for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”**

So the devil takes him up, to a place that Matthew calls a very high mountain. But there is no mountain peak where all the kingdoms of the world can be seen, so this is some kind of vision that Jesus is given. He sees the glory of all of the kingdoms of the world. And the test here is that Jesus is made an offer: if Jesus will worship, He can rule over the kingdoms.

Satan offers Jesus rule over the whole world.

Which is an exaggerated offer (another one of his tactics.) Satan does have tremendous power and authority that he has seized. He has huge influence. But he is on a leash, he doesn't have unlimited reign. Throughout the ministry of Jesus you see demons being cast out, you see Satan sent away by Jesus. Jesus already has more authority than Satan. But Satan does hold the hearts of men and women throughout the world and in that sense he has something to offer Jesus. But ultimately he is offering something that isn't his.

But when we are tempted, our temptation always over-promises and under-delivers. The affair promises a thrill but delivers a momentary thrill followed by what could be a lifetime of sorrow. The lie promises to get you out of a situation, but delivers a sense that now I'm looking out for me by my own means and so I can't count on God to look out for me. Isolating myself and not experiencing real Christian relationships can offer peace and a life without drama, but I find a loneliness and disconnectedness that comes with the freer schedule.

Temptations exaggerate what they really have to offer.

Now Jesus was really tempted. And I would imagine the temptation here came from the good He could do for the world if He took Satan up on his offer. Because think of all the good he could do if he ruled the world. Think of all the suffering those wicked kings are bringing on innocent victims, think of the injustices that corrupt judges were inflicting, think of all the ways the rich win and the poor lose - Jesus could rule and fix all of that.<sup>8</sup>

And, ruling isn't wrong! Jesus does have rightful rule and reign over everything. He wouldn't be receiving from Satan anything that Satan hadn't stolen from him. If someone

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<sup>8</sup> Leon Morris, Luke, (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity, 1988). 122.

steals your car and then returns it, you've done nothing wrong in taking it back. And the plan all along has been that Jesus will receive power and will rule over the world! The angels announced at his birth that he would bring peace on earth.

So what's the temptation here?

This is a test of what kind of Savior He would be. Would He be the kind that is faithful to his Father, goes to the cross, and ends up receiving power in the end? Or would he short-circuit the whole plan and seize power?

Think what this would mean if Jesus takes the bait. He gets the throne. Let's say Satan delivers and Jesus rules over the world. But Jesus gets the throne without going through the cross.

Which is good for Him, but terrible for everyone he would rule over. The cross was the only remedy for sin. It was the only solution! He would rule from a throne over subjects who had no way to have hearts that were conformed to Him, over subjects that would wither and die and perish in hell. Sure, Jesus would have comfort and power and an easy life. But He would not accomplish redemption.

He would have His rightful crown. But it would be a crown without a cross. It would be power seized, not power received. It was the easy way to the top.

And for us, power, and leadership, and being a boss is not a bad thing. Hierarchies are not innately evil. If you devote your life to working in a field, it makes sense that as you increase in knowledge and skill and are known for dependability, that you would move up and have more people under your leadership, more money at your disposal, more big decisions on your desk. Power like that can be a good thing that can be wielded for the good of a lot of people.

**Proverbs 29:2 “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.”**

Power that comes to us because of service can be used well and can cause many to rejoice, so we shouldn't be suspicious of all powerful people, all rich people. But the temptation is to seize power for our own sake. To say, “I want that for me - so I can be in charge, so I can be in control, so I can tell people what to do, so I can be in the know, so I can be the master of my own destiny.” It's very different from serving faithfully and being entrusted with more to serve faithfully with.

Christians who follow in the footsteps of Jesus don't try to be powerful for power's sake, they try to be helpful. And when power or leadership roles come their way, they use them to serve.

They don't try to be rich, they try to be productive. And when money comes their way they use it wisely for good.

They don't try to be famous and don't try to be seen and known, they try to be good. And if that somehow results in fame, they hold to that loosely and use even that for good.

We'll often talk to people who say "I want to be a teacher!" but they don't know what they want to teach. They know they want to see themselves on a platform, but don't yet know what to say. The goal is the stage and the lights. They seek platform first and helpfulness second. We believe the lies of celebrity culture that says being famous is its own good.

Seek to be good, seek to serve, seek to love, and if someday you receive power or money or platform, you can receive it with an abundance of caution, hold to it loosely, use it only for good. Don't take a short-cut there.

And Jesus's mission has been determined ahead of time. He is going to be faithful to the point of death, even death on a cross, and only then does He sit on a throne. It will be power received and earned and deserved, not power seized with short cuts and false worship.

So once again, Jesus quotes scripture, Deuteronomy 6:13 -

**8 And Jesus answered him, "It is written," "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."**

Jesus 2, Satan 0.

**Test #3: Throw Yourself Off The Temple and Test God's Care**

**9 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written," "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you," 11 and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."**

Look at the new tactic the devil uses here. It's like he recognized he was losing at half-time and went into the locker-room and decided to change the game plan to do what the other team was doing. So Satan comes out quoting the bible now too - that was working for Jesus!

So he does what people do all the time, he makes the Bible say whatever he wants it to say.

Some today would say, "You can make the bible say whatever you want, therefore we can't trust what the Bible says." But we don't apply that way of thinking to anyone else.

The fact that I can get all kinds of answers wrong on a math test doesn't mean that math is unreliable. It means I got it wrong.

Yes, a tactic of the devil is to make the bible say whatever he wants it to say, and people often do the same thing. But that doesn't mean there isn't a right use and a right interpretation.

The existence of a wrong use doesn't mean there isn't a right use.

The existence of twisted scriptures doesn't mean there is no such thing as rightly applying scriptures.

So when a Christian friend confronts you and says, "I believe you should do this according to this passage," don't say, "You can make the Bible say whatever you want so I won't listen to someone quoting the Bible to me." That would be like having a bill collector call you and saying, "You can make numbers say anything you want." There are right uses of scripture even though the enemy uses it wrongly.

But this does warn us that a tactic of the enemy is to make the scriptures seem to say what they don't say. Scripture says that the devil masquerades as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14). He would love to make you believe false things by taking the scripture out of context.

He does evil things with good things. He lies with the truth.

And he knows and quotes the bible. Which means it is necessary for us to know, not just a lot of out of context phrases and sayings from the Bible, but to know the story. To know how it all fits together, to know theology, to know biblical doctrine, to know what verses

mean and don't mean. So let's all be students of the Bible. I'd encourage you to take advantage of classes and studies, read the bible, read theology. Know the right uses of the Bible.

So Satan sets up the test. He brings Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple - this was probably the royal porch on the southeast corner of the temple, which was a porch over a cliff that created a drop-off of 450 feet. This was the place where, according to a few historical accounts, James the brother of Jesus (James the Just) was thrown down and then beaten to death as a martyr.<sup>9</sup>

And the test is: throw yourself down, and if you're God's son, surely He will keep you safe. Jesus, just let go and let God!

But this would be a pointless miracle. It would be unbelief masquerading as faith. It would be, not really going to God for help, but saying, "Oh yeah God, you say I'm your son? Prove it!"

So Jesus, again, rightly quotes scripture:

**Luke 4:12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"**

This time he quotes

**Deuteronomy 6:16 16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.**

Massah was the place where the people asked, "Is the Lord among us or not" when they had no water.<sup>10</sup> So this is the test: will God really protect you, is God really with you? Prove it with a pointless miracle.

And Jesus doesn't put God to the test like Israel did. He knew God was testing Him, and He passed.

And then...

**Luke 4: 13 And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him**

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<sup>9</sup> Darrell L. Bock, Luke 1:1- 9:50, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1994). 379.

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 17:7

until an opportune time.”

So that was as far as Satan went. That was all he could do to tempt Christ. And he went away defeated. He couldn't make Jesus do things, and he doesn't make us do things.

Augustine said Satan can do no more than suggest. Only the tempted person could do the wrong - throw *yourself* down.<sup>11</sup>

But Satan will persist - he will keep trying, and verse 13 makes clear we haven't seen the last of Satan.<sup>12</sup> The battle between Jesus and Satan will run through gospel.

But here we're supposed to see a fundamental victory where all others had failed. Adam failed the test, Israel failed the test, you and I fail our tests, but Jesus passed the tests. He was tempted just like we are, but didn't sin.

And on the cross, it was all credited to our account.

Jesus is the true and better Adam, Jesus is the true Israelite, who triumphed over sin for us.

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Scriptures Referenced:

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<sup>11</sup> Leon Morris, Luke, (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity, 1988). 122.

<sup>12</sup> Leon Morris, Luke, (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity, 1988). 123.

Luke 4:1-13  
Luke 4:1-2  
Luke 3:23-24  
Luke 3:37-38  
Ephesians 6:12  
Luke 4:3  
Hebrews 4:15-16  
Luke 4:3  
Luke 4:4  
Luke 4:5-7  
Proverbs 29:2  
Luke 4:8  
Luke 4:9-11  
Luke 4:12  
Deuteronomy 6:16  
Luke 4:13

Sermon Notes:

Luke 4:1-13

Main Themes in this passage:

- I. The Triumph of Jesus
  - II. The Tactics of Satan
  - III. Tools for the Tempted
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Questions For Discussion in Small Groups:

- 1) How does Christ's victory here fuel our faith and worship?
- 2) How does Christ's victory here serve as an example for us in our temptation?
- 3) What specific tactics does Satan use to tempt?
- 4) What specific tactics are used to resist?
- 5) How does the fact that the devil can quote scripture affect our lives?
- 6) How can we minimize the risk of being deceived by scripture taken out of context?