

# THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS: VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

## LUKE 04:01–15

### ***Introduction***

Victory over temptation is essential before we can live and minister for God. No temptation has ever confronted man that Jesus Christ has not confronted. This is seen in this passage. In His confrontation, Jesus reveals what lies behind each temptation and how to conquer it. Once it has been conquered, we can then live a victorious life and serve God effectively.

- I. Being prepared to serve God (vv. 1-2).
- II. Temptation 1: to meet the necessities of life by His own power (vv. 3-4).
- III. Temptation 2: to seek His ambition through compromise (vv. 5-8).
- IV. Temptation 3: to prove Himself through sensationalism (vv. 9-12).
- V. Conclusion: Satan left Jesus for a while (vv. 13-15).

### ***I. Luke 04:01–02 Ministry, Preparation for Service***

Jesus was being prepared to serve God. He was about to launch the most important work ever performed by man. His work was to determine the eternal fate of the world and of every man in the world. Jesus had to be strengthened and prepared perfectly, without flaw. Two things were involved in His preparation.

First, there was God's plan. Jesus had to be totally committed to carry out God's plan no matter what happened. God's plan was the cross, the way of sacrifice and suffering in order to help others. Jesus would always be tempted to choose the easier course of self, power, and glory. He needed to gain the victory *once-for-all*. Not that He would not be tempted again; He would. But He needed a strong moment of victory to show that He could conquer the temptation.

Second, Jesus' preparation involved a personal need for strength and assurance. The only way Jesus could be strengthened and gain assurance was to be tempted. He had to struggle against temptation to become tough and strong, and to be assured that He could conquer and be victorious over the trials of life.

Now, note the first two verses. They give the four essentials necessary for preparation. Jesus had to be prepared to serve God. (How much more do we!)

1. Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit." Note the emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. He is mentioned twice.
    - a. Jesus had a dramatic experience with the Spirit at His baptism (Lk. 3:21-22).
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- b. Jesus was “led by the Spirit” (*egeto en toi pneumati*). Note the Greek word “en.” It means *in*, which means that Jesus was not only “led by the Spirit” He was led “in the Spirit,” step by step and day by day. A man must be *in the Spirit* to be led by the Spirit.
2. Jesus was led to spend time alone with God. He was led to get all alone in the wilderness. Time alone with God is necessary for preparation.
3. Jesus was led to be tried and tested. Trials toughen us, make us stronger, and give us greater assurance so that we can face whatever lies ahead.
4. Jesus was led to fast and pray, two absolute essentials in one’s preparation to do a great work for God.

### LUKE 04:01–02 TEMPTATION (PERIRAZO)

The word temptation is used here in both a good and a bad sense. In the good sense it means to test, to try, to prove. It does not mean to seduce into sin. Its purpose is not to defeat or to destroy. The idea is not that one is tempted, seduced, enticed and pulled into sin by the Holy Spirit (see Jas. 1:13); but one is tested, proved, strengthened, reinforced and purified through the trials of temptation.

In the bad sense, it means to tempt, to seduce, to entice, and to pull someone away from God into the way of sin, of self, and of Satan (Mt. 4:1; 1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Th. 3:5; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 1:13-14).

Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit *to be tested*. The Spirit did not seduce or entice Jesus to do evil, but He led Jesus into circumstances whereby He could learn obedience and discipline. Through such trials, Jesus was to be perfected and enabled to succour all those who suffer trials (Heb. 4:15-16; 5:8).

Six things need to be said about overcoming temptation.

1. Temptation has its bottom root in passion and appetite (Mk. 7:20-23; Jas. 1:14). It comes directly from within, from man’s heart, not from without. And it does not come from God. “For God cannot be tempted by evil; nor does he tempt anyone” (Jas. 1:13). God does not tempt any man in a bad sense. What He does is look upon His people as they endure temptation, and He strengthens them to bear the temptation. By such He teaches them discipline and obedience for a greater work (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Heb. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).
2. No man confronts any temptation that is not common to all men (1 Cor. 10:13).
3. God does not allow the believer to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear. There is always a way to escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

4. Jesus Christ understands temptation. He was tempted in all points just as all men are tempted, yet He never sinned (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).
5. Jesus Christ is a sympathetic High Priest in helping the believer through temptation (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15).
6. Temptation is overcome (a) by submitting to God and resisting the devil (Jas. 4:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:8-9), and (b) by using and obeying Scripture to combat temptation (Lk. 4:4; see Deu. 4:8; 4:12; 6:13, 16; 8:3; 10:20). □

## II. *Luke 04:03–04 Temptation to be Self-Sufficient*

The first temptation was for Jesus to meet the necessities of life by His own power. Note two things.

1. Satan’s temptation was for Jesus to misuse His power and His ability. (See Mt. 4:2-4.) Jesus was very hungry. He had the power to create food and to meet His need, and the tempter tempted Him to use His power upon Himself. But note the wrong in this temptation. Jesus would have been misusing His power by using it in an illegitimate way. His power had not been given to use upon Himself, but to demonstrate His deity by showing men that He was the Son of God. Never once did He use His power upon Himself nor for His own ends — not even when He was hanging upon the cross (see Mt. 26:42; Lk. 23:35). He always used His power to help men, thereby demonstrating and giving evidence that what He was claiming was true: He is the Son of God sent to save the world.

The point is just this: Satan wanted Jesus to prove His Messiahship by *centring* His attention and power upon Himself. If Jesus had used His power upon Himself...

- He would be trusting Himself and not the Father, acting completely independent of the Father and the Father’s will.
  - He would be saying that men could use their abilities to centre upon themselves instead of helping a world lost in need.
  - He would be teaching that men could use their abilities to build themselves up (pride) instead of honouring God and His will.
2. Jesus’ answer was that something more than physical food was needed. Man needs to be fed spiritually. He needs his spiritual needs met. The point is that Jesus alone can meet man’s spiritual needs; therefore He, the Son of God, must use His power only as God wills. He was tempted to trust Himself, not God, and to choose a way other than God’s way. God’s way was the way of faith which included both time — time to suffer the trials of life — and the cross. The devil was saying “trust yourself, take a shorter route. Feed yourself and the world. Your needs can be met, and you can have the loyalty of men immediately.”

**Thought 1.** A man has needs, the very necessities of life. There are the necessities of...

- food
- clothing
- shelter
- friends
- recognition
- self-esteem
- acceptance
- work
- rest and recreation

The necessities are legitimate. However, the problem arises when we are tempted...

- to use our ability independent of God, forgetting His will and doing our own thing.
- to focus our ability upon ourselves, getting and banking more and more instead of meeting the needs of a desperate world.
- to use our abilities to build ourselves up instead of acknowledging God as the Source of our abilities. Too many seek fame, honour and praise for selfish ends. Too many want to be recognized as superior and better, as having more position, authority, clothes, houses, cars, lands and looks.

The great wrong with this is twofold.

- 1) We misuse our ability. Forgetting God and His will, we focus upon self.
- 2) We live for the physical and not for the spiritual, for receiving and not for giving. There is a spiritual hunger that just is not met by bread, that is, the physical and material. (See Eph. 1:3.)

**Isa 55:1-3** *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.*”

**John 6:35** *Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

**John 6:50-51** *“But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

**John 5:24** *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

**Job 23:12** *I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.*

**Jer 15:16** *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.*

### III. *Luke 04: 05–08 Temptation to Compromise and Seek His Ambition*

The second temptation was for Jesus to seek His ambition (God’s kingdom) through compromise. Christ was tempted to compromise His ministry and His mission. He was tempted to secure the world without the cross, without paying the price. He was tempted to choose another way instead of God’s way – to achieve His purpose by another route. Christ was tempted to compromise His life and His loyalty. He was tempted to switch loyalties. He was offered the world and the sovereign leadership of the world if He would just do one thing: worship the devil.

Jesus had come to earth to seek and to save men *eternally*, to secure their loyalty for God, and to set up the Kingdom of God forever. This was the ambition of Jesus. The only way to fulfil His ambition was by the cross (freeing men from sin, death, and judgment). Note what happened in this temptation.

1. Satan enticed Jesus in a moment of time. Satan *flashed* across Jesus’ mind all the kingdoms of the world in their enormous glory.
2. Satan claimed that he controlled the possessions and glory of the world. Sometime later, Jesus substantiated Satan’s claim. Jesus said that Satan is “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30). Other Scriptures say that he is “the prince...the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:2) and the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4).
3. Satan offered Jesus all the possessions and glory of the world. The world was under His influence and control; therefore, he could give it to anyone whom he wished.
4. Satan, however, had one condition. Jesus had to worship Satan, that is, follow and obey the way of Satan’s world. Jesus had to compromise Himself...
  - by compromising His standards and behaviour.
  - by compromising His loyalty and faithfulness to God.
  - by compromising His ministry and mission.

Note Jesus’ answer: He was quick and decisive, totally dependent upon Scripture to conquer the temptation. “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only” (v. 8). He must worship, follow, and serve God alone, not the way and standards and evil of the world. He would follow God even if it meant not realizing His ambition. There is a right way and a wrong way to achieve one’s end and purpose; and He, the Son of God, would choose the right way.

**Thought 1.** The *power* and the *glory* of the world comes from many things. *Worldly power and glory* come from...

- |             |               |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| • houses    | • cars        | • lands     | • possessions |
| • wealth    | • stimulation | • authority | • excitement  |
| • influence | • fame        | • success   | • position    |

A man is often taken up to a mountain by Satan and shown the power and glory of the world. The man is offered whatever he wants if he will do but one thing: worship Satan, that is, follow the path of *worldliness*. Man feels that if he compromises and goes along with the world (everyone else), he will get what he wants and move ahead much faster.

**Thought 2.** Note a significant point. There is nothing wrong with ambition and desiring to fulfil one's calling in life. There is nothing wrong with experiencing the power and the glory of whatever one's calling is. The wrong is found in following Satan (evil) when tempted to satisfy one's desires and ambitions instead of following God.

**Mat 16:26** *“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

**Rom 12:2** *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**2 Tim 2:3-4** *Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.*

**1 John 2:15-16** *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

**Titus 2:11-12** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

#### **IV. Luke 04:09–12 Temptation: Sensationalism**

This particular temptation was for Jesus to be sensational. The thought flashed across Jesus' mind that if He jumped off the pinnacle of the temple, God would cause angels to catch Him. God would never let Him be dashed to bits. Therefore, when the people saw the angels float Him to the ground, they would be stunned into belief and become His followers immediately. (Remember Jesus had not yet done a miracle. Satan had no idea of the miracles to come, nor that men would be slow to believe even with all the evidence of signs and wonders.) Note that Satan's temptation was threefold.

1. Satan tempted Jesus to choose some way other than God's way (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23). God's way was the way of the cross and of identifying with man in his trials and sufferings (see Heb. 4:15-16. Then see Heb. 2:14-18 with Jn. 3:16. See also Heb. 5:7-9.)

2. Satan tempted Jesus to misuse Scripture by twisting it to suit His purposes. Scripture did say that God would take care of His Son no matter what. The heavenly angels were given charge to help Him in everything.
3. Satan tempted Jesus to give people sensations, a religion of feelings. People do not want a life of self-denial and sacrifice, of too much discipline and control. They want the spectacular, something that will be a quick fix, something...

=> to stir their emotions and flesh.

=> to stimulate their feelings and give gratification.

=> to meet their needs with less and less effort.

=> to feed their body and soul without cost.

Jesus' answer was straightforward and decisive: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." There is no way other than God's way; God's way alone is to be pursued and followed. And God's Word is not to be stretched or twisted (presumed upon) trying to make another way. Men must be taught the truth. The way to God is the way of the cross.

**Thought 1.** All men are tempted to by-pass God, to choose another way. The way of the cross is hard and difficult, yet it is the only way to God (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23). Trying to devise another way to God only spells doom. (See Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5-6; Tit. 3:4-7).

**Rom 5:9** *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

**Col 1:20** *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

**1 Cor 1:18-19** *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

**Heb 9:14** *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

**1 Pet 1:18** *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.*

**Thought 2.** Some try to twist or stretch Scripture...

1) To allow them to do what they want (sin).

2) To devise some way to God other than the cross.

## V. *Luke 04:13–15* Ministry

The conclusion to Jesus' temptations was striking. Satan left him until an opportune time. He left Jesus alone for a while. The victory was won; the temptation was conquered, and Satan was routed for a while. He would be back, but for now there was peace and freedom to carry on the ministry. Note the immediate result of the Lord's victory.

1. Jesus' great power was demonstrated.
2. Jesus' great fame was spread abroad.
3. Jesus' great ministry in the synagogue was admired.

**Thought 1.** Victory over temptation does not mean a person is freed forever from temptation. In this life temptation will always return. It did for Jesus; it will for us (See *Temptation of Jesus and God's Way: Faith, not Proof*, Mt. 4:1-11).

**Luke 17:1** Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come."

**Thought 2.** Victory over temptation will lead to great results in a person's life. It will give more power, a greater testimony, and a greater ministry.

**James 1:12** Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

**Rev 3:21** To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

**Rev 3:10** Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. ■

### LUKE 09:23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

*Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 09:23*

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill



his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up* one's cross, to *follow* Christ. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

**Rom 6:11-13** *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (see Rom. 6:2-10)*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

**Rom 6:11a** *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

**Rom 6:6** *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

**Gal 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

**Gal 5:24** *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

**Rom 6:11** *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

**1 Pet 4:2** *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

**Rom 6:12** *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

**Col 3:5** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

**Rom 6:13a** *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

**Rom 8:13** *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

**Rom 6:13b** *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

**Rom 12:1** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

**Rom 13:14** *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

**Rom 6:13c** *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

**Gal 5:16** *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). □

### MATHEW 04:01–11 GOD'S WAY: FAITH, NOT PROOF

Jesus Christ was tempted three times by the devil. He was tempted to prove that He was the Son of God. What was wrong with proving His deity?

Proof is not God's way; faith is God's way. Proof is not what God wants; faith *is* what God wants. God wants to be trusted and loved. He wants to be freely loved, not loved because of force — because some persons are constrained by irrefutable proof. There are facts, plenty of proofs that He is the Son of God; but in the final analysis, an act of faith has to be taken. No one has seen God. God cannot be known by the physical senses. To know God, a person has to leap by faith, reach out for God in an act of belief, believing that God will reward his faith.

**Heb 11:6** *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Jesus Christ had come to establish and construct the way of faith. Therefore, Jesus Christ had to reject anything that led men away from the life of faith. Note that all three temptations had to do with man's senses and the physical world. If Christ had given in and secured the loyalty of men by feeding bread to the whole world, or by performing a spectacular miracle, or by taking over the kingdoms of this world, life would end and end soon. Why? Because all die. All waste away. The world is physical and material, corruptible and dying, deteriorating and decaying. It does not last. That is just the way of the physical world and all within it. This is the very reason Jesus Christ has come – to conquer the physical world of decay and death and to usher in the eternal world of the spirit – by the way of faith.

Therefore, Jesus Christ had to live the life of faith Himself. He had to walk the way of faith, of trusting and believing God Himself. He had to reject the devil's *proofs* and show and lead men by faith. □

### MATHEW 04:01–11 THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST

This was not the only time Jesus was tempted.

1. Satan tempted Jesus through Peter when Peter tried to divert Him from the cross. Jesus revealed what really was behind Peter's apparent concern: "Get behind me, Satan" (Mt. 16:23).
2. Jesus commended His disciples by saying: "You are those who have stood by *me* in my trials" (Lk. 22:28).
3. Jesus faced the severest temptation of His life in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there that Satan made a last-ditch effort to divert Christ from the cross.

In referring to Christ's experience in Gethsemane, Scripture says to all believers: "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Heb. 12:4; see Lk. 22:44).

**Thought 1.** The devil knows just where to tempt a person.

- 1) *In the wilderness or desert:* when a person is without bread, when he really has need. This is the temptation that appeals to the sinful nature, the lust of the flesh.
- 2) *On the pinnacle, the highest point of the temple:* when a person is before multitudes. This is the temptation that appeals to pride – the pride of life (fame).
- 3) *On a high mountain,* when a person sees what is available – sometimes rightfully his, sometimes just desired.

This is the temptation that appeals to the lust of the eyes. □