

Luke Chapter 4

This chapter has three divisions:

1-15 The temptation in the wilderness

16-30 Events at Nazareth

31-44 Events at Capernaum

1-15 The temptation in the wilderness

It might be profitable just for a moment or two to consider how each of the four gospel writers deals with the temptation of the Lord Jesus.

John is the only one of the four writers not to mention it all. Why would this be? Considering that this is the gospel of the Son of God, perhaps the answer can be found in the epistle of James, chapter 1:

Jas 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

God cannot be tempted of evil, so in John's gospel there is no temptation.

In **Mark's** gospel, there is the very briefest account of the incident – only two verses in total are devoted to the incident :

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

There is no mention of the three great temptations at the end of the forty days, nor would we know solely from Mark whether the Lord triumphed over the devil or not. The first point of distinction is that in Mark, the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. It would seem that the holy soul of the Lord Jesus would shrink from such an encounter with the wicked one. It is not that He was disobedient, but He shrank in anticipation of the event. In Matthew and Luke, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. It is almost reminiscent of the early chapters of Job, where God appears to be inviting the devil to tempt His servant.

Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth?

Mark gives us another detail unique to himself. He "was with the wild beasts". The Lord was in no danger from them for the wild beasts knew their master. Only men who behaved like wild beasts at Calvary dared to defy Him.

Mark like Matthew records the fact that angels came and ministered unto Him. An angel came and strengthened Him in Gethsemane, when He was at His weakest, but the twelve legions of angels who might have been called to rescue Him from Calvary were never requested.

And what about the unresolved question in Mark? Did the Lord triumph over Satan or not? The answer is told, not in words, but in deed, and in chapter 1,

the Lord's first recorded miracle is the casting out of the demon from the man in the synagogue at Capernaum. In the gospel of the servant, actions speak louder than words.

Matthew, on the other hand, gives an account of the event, which is as full as that of Luke, but with some differences as we shall see. Looking at the bigger picture in Matthew, he is taking the Lord on the same journey as that taken by the children of Israel. Only Matthew records the descent of Mary and Joseph with the young child into Egypt, and the subsequent return from Egypt.

Matthew tells us in chapter 2:15 that this was in fulfilment of Hosea 11:1

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

When Israel came out of Egypt, their first obstacle was the Red Sea. Paul in I Corinthians 10 likens the crossing of the Red Sea to baptism.

They were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

In Matthew 3:13, Matthew's next account of the Lord's life is His baptism. Immediately after the Lord's baptism, He was led into the wilderness for forty days to be tempted of the devil. The Lord is again re-tracing the footsteps of Israel, for after they entered the wilderness, they were tried there for forty years. What Matthew is doing is telling us that where Israel had failed, the Lord was now going to triumph.

This brings us now to the account of the temptation in Luke chapter 4.

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Notice that it does not say that He was "filled with the Holy Ghost". A number of great men like John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul were all said to be "filled with the Spirit". But the very idea of being "filled" suggests that there was a possibility that they might have been less than filled with the Spirit previously. The Lord was never filled – He was always "full of the Holy Ghost", and being full of the Spirit, He was able to be led by the Spirit into the wilderness. The Spirit was going to bring Him into this confrontation with the devil. It was not to see if the Lord could resist sin, for we have to insist before we start that the Lord could not sin. The verse quoted earlier shows that, being God, He could not sin. Rather the incident shows the impeccability of the Lord Jesus.

Luke is the gospel of the perfect man. The perfect man will resist all temptation in a wilderness whereas the first man fell at the first hurdle in a garden of fragrance and plenty. There is a distinct similarity between the three temptations here and the three things that so attracted Eve about the forbidden fruit. Genesis 3 tells us:

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Another way of looking at these three things that attracted Eve is to go to John's first epistle, chapter 2:

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The lust of the flesh corresponds to "the tree was good for food". The lust of the eyes corresponds to "pleasant to the eyes". The pride of life corresponds to "a tree to be desired to make one wise".

The Lord's three temptations follow the same pattern. To make the stone into bread corresponds with "good for food" – that which is natural. The kingdoms of this world with all their glory corresponds to "pleasant to the eyes". Finally, cast thyself down corresponds to the "pride of life". He was being asked to do something spectacular in order to prove who He was.

Verse 2 continues:

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

We must not think that the only temptations faced by the Lord were at the end of the forty days. He was tempted by the devil throughout the whole of the forty days. During this time He ate nothing. One might wonder how He could have survived all this time without eating but we have a precedent in the life of Elijah. When the Lord fed him, he went on the strength of that meal for many days. Still, Luke records that the Lord was now "hungered". Humanly speaking, He was at His lowest point. Not surprising then that the devil suggests to Him a way of overcoming His hunger. One thinks of Jacob and Esau in this respect. It was when Esau returned home hungry that Jacob swapped Esau's birthright for a mess of pottage.

The devil's first words are recorded in verse 3:

And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

This would have been an easy temptation for the Lord to meet, when one considers that later on He was able to feed 5,000 people in a wilderness with a few loaves and a few fishes. But the Lord refuses the challenge as He responds with the following:

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

The Lord is here quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 8:

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

The devil was asking the Lord to act independently of His God. The Lord did only the works which the Father gave Him to do, and the Father had not asked Him to make the stone into bread.

It is highly significant that all three replies by the Lord in this incident come from the book of Deuteronomy. This book is the summary given by Moses to the people of Israel, of how they had fared during the forty years in the wilderness. As we shall see, it is a record of failure, but we are about to see

how the Lord triumphed in every sphere in which the people failed.

Deut 8:3 tells us something about the manna. It was given, not just as food to sustain them in the wilderness, but also as a test of their faithfulness. The manna was given to them by God six days a week for 40 years in the wilderness. They had to learn to live by faith. The wilderness could not sustain them but the Lord could. The manna was to teach them a very important lesson:

man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD.

The Lord proved this to be true, and He indeed lived by every word that came from the mouth of God.

The second temptation is given to us in verses 5 to 7:

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

The Lord and the devil now move from the wilderness to a high mountain. Mountains in scripture are often used as symbols of kingdoms. In Daniel chapter 2, the stone cut out without hands became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. In the prophecy of Micah, chapter 4, the mountain of the house of the Lord is also mentioned:

1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

We should note here a major difference between the accounts given by Luke and by Matthew. Luke gives us the temptation on the mountain second followed thirdly by the temptation on the pinnacle of the temple. Luke gives us a moral order in the temptations. He begins with what is natural, followed by what is political, moving on lastly to what is religious. And Luke obviously reckons the religious, or spiritual, temptation to be weightier than the political. We have already seen an example of Luke's moral order of things in chapter 3 when he writes about John the Baptist's imprisonment followed by the Lord's baptism.

Matthew gives us the religious temptation before the political. It fits in with his subject matter as being the gospel of the king, so kingdoms are introduced last. It is also more than likely that Matthew gives us the historical order of events as they actually took place.

The devil offers the Lord the power and glory of all the kingdoms of the earth. "All this will I give Thee, if Thou wilt worship me". The Lord of course will one day inherit the earth with all its kingdoms. Many scriptures speak of the day of His glory, including Psalm number 2:

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the

uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Ephesians chapter 1 also tells us of His universal reign:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

What the devil was offering the Lord Jesus was the glory without the suffering, but it could never be so. On the road to Emmaus, the Lord taught from the scriptures how that He must needs have suffered and to have entered into His glory. In John chapter 12, the Lord had a preview of the Church of God in the house of Bethany, followed by His reception by the Jews in Jerusalem, followed again by the Greeks who desired to see Him – in other words, Jew, Gentile, and Church of God were all brought before Him. But before He could have this “much fruit”, He had to become the corn of wheat that would fall into the ground and die.

Was all this the devil’s to give? Some think that he was being presumptuous but he is described as being the prince of this world and the god of this world. The whole world lieth in the wicked one. Certainly in Revelation chapter 13, the devil gives the beast his throne and his authority.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Satan’s offer to the Lord Jesus has one condition attached to it – “If thou wilt worship me”. Away back in Isaiah 14, we learned of what led to his original fall – I will be like the most high. He wanted to be like God. Worship belongs to God and only God. The devil’s price is far too high.

How does the Lord respond to the devil?

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

The Lord quotes again from Deuteronomy, this time from chapter 6:

13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

When Moses received the ten commandments, the first of them was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me”. There was to be no other god apart from Jehovah. The second commandment forbade them from making any graven image. These however were the first two laws which they broke. After Moses had spent 40 days and nights on the mountain, he was given two tablets of stone upon which the ten commandments had been written. But when Moses returned to the camp, he discovered that Israel had made a golden calf and had given themselves to worship it. Moses broke the tablets before them, just as they had broken the commandments of God.

The devil’s third and final temptation is described in verses 9 to 11:

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

This now is the religious temptation, hence the scene changes again to the pinnacle of the temple. The devil is now giving the Lord a challenge. If you are the Son of God then throw yourself down from here. Satan is even more subtle here. It has been said that there is nothing more dangerous than the devil with a bible in his hand. Many of the cults of our day draw much of their belief from the scriptures but they have distorted them to meet their own ends. The devil is now saying in effect, "You have been quoting me scriptures, well here is one for you. The bible is surely true and God must fulfil His own word that He has written about His Son." The devil has quoted from Psalm number 91:

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Notice that the devil omits one part of Psalm 91:11. "To keep thee in all thy ways" . The ways of the Lord Jesus were marked by perfect obedience to the will of God. So how does the Lord respond to this challenge? He quotes from Deuteronomy chapter 6 again:

16 Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Moses is reminding the people about how they had murmured against the Lord at Massah. The people were thirsty, looking for water, and they strove against Moses. We read of what happened in Exodus 17:7

And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

They were challenging God to prove Himself – to prove that He really was amongst His people. The temptation ends as described in verses 13 to 15:

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

The devil has to retreat a defeated foe. But he will be back for he departed only for a season. He would return to tempt the Lord Jesus but this time he would use religious men like the priests, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees.

They would try to trip Him up in His words:

Mt 22:17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

Mt 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

Mt 12:10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

They asked Him the question about the woman who had had seven husbands.

Matt 22:28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

Little wonder that the scripture says about the Lord Jesus:

He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

The devil was never far away.

2. Events at Nazareth

The scene changes again in verse 14 of Luke 4 – now He is back in Galilee. He returned “in the power of the Spirit”. The Spirit rested upon Him at His baptism, He was full of the Spirit at the beginning of this chapter, and then He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to meet the devil. Now He is moving in the power of the Spirit, and soon He is back in the synagogue at Nazareth, where He will tell the gathering, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me”. The perfect man is one who is moved by the Spirit of God.

As a result of His return to Galilee, there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about, and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. Thus far, everything has gone perfectly. But then He returns to Nazareth where He had been brought up. “As His custom was”, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Being the faithful Jew, the Lord attended this place on the Sabbath day. He had far more to give men than men could ever give Him, but He upheld the law and thus kept the Sabbath day. But this particular day was to be different from all others.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

I am sure that the Lord did not need to read the book, nor did He have to find the place, but He went through the routine that all would have followed in the synagogue. And what scripture did He read?

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

He read the words of Isaiah the prophet from chapter 61, verses 1 and 2.

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

The anointing by the Spirit of God surely took place at His baptism. The anointing had a number of objectives in view.

1. To preach the gospel to the poor

The Lord was not only the Great Physician who healed the sick, He was also the great evangelist, and never more so than when the poor were

His audience. Isaiah called them the meek. The two things usually go hand in hand. The poor have nothing to be proud about; they have nothing to boast about. How different were the rich and the religious, who often stood in defiance before the Lord Jesus.

2. To heal the broken hearted

This went beyond mere physical healing but rather touched the hearts of those who were down. We can think of the dead who were raised by the Lord. Jairus and his wife were devastated by the loss of their daughter. The Lord raised her up. The widow of Nain was broken hearted by the loss of her only son, but the Lord restored him to her. Martha and Mary were broken hearted over the loss of a dear brother, but the Lord stemmed their grief. And think of the weeping of Mary Magdalene at the tomb. "Woman, why weepest thou?" Soon she was weeping tears of joy.

3. To preach deliverance to the captives

One can think now of the many who met the Lord Jesus, and their demons were cast out. We think only of the two worst cases. We think of Legion, so called because the demons that possessed him were many. Think also of Mary Magdalene, out of whom were cast seven demons. We think also of the woman bent double. The Lord knew all about her. "This woman whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years". The Lord released these and many more from the bondage of Satan. It is written of Lucifer in Isaiah 14 that "He openeth not the house of his prisoners", but the Lord did just that in the case of so many.

4. Recovery of sight to them that were blind

This fact is not included by Isaiah in chapter 61 but is included by Luke. The Lord restored the sight of many that were blind. Again, we can think of a few special cases. We think of blind Bartimaeus, the blind beggar who cried out to Him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me". We think of the man born blind in John chapter 9. We think of the blind man whom the Lord met one day. He took him by the hand and led him out of the town. These and many others were healed.

5. To set at liberty them that are bruised

The bruised may speak of those suffering under oppression.

6. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord

We read elsewhere in the scriptures:

2Co 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

This is God's day of grace, when He is ready to accept men for salvation.

Here are some general points regarding the quote from Isaiah. The Lord makes six points in total – that is one less than seven, perceived to be the number of completeness. But of course, there is a seventh work yet to be done – the day of vengeance of our God.

But there is another general point, which is a bit of a mystery. There is no

mention in Isaiah of "recovering of sight to the blind". It is added only here in Luke 4. When I think of it, I cannot recall any example in the Old Testament of any blind person being healed. We do read of people being made blind as in the case of the men of Sodom outside the house of Lot. Equally in the Old Testament, are there any examples of the dumb speaking or of demons being cast out? I do not know the answer. What is clear is that the Lord did many miracles which had never been witnessed by men previously. He did among them the works that had no man had done before.

There is even an incident recorded in the Bible when the Lord met a man who had a demon, who was blind, and dumb. The Lord healed him of all three afflictions at once.

Mt 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

The following quotation from the Psalms shows that opening the eyes of the blind is a work of God alone.

Ps 146:8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

The following two quotes from Isaiah also tell us that these miracles are not only a divine work but are linked with a future day of millennial blessing when God will visit His people:

Isa 29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

Isa 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

The third point to be noticed is that in three of the six points, the Lord speaks about His preaching. We think of Him as the great miracle worker, but He is also the great preacher, and He took every opportunity to preach and teach the multitudes.

Returning to Luke, at this point the Lord closed the book and sat down. Isaiah had gone on to say, "And the day of vengeance of our God". The day of vengeance will surely come but not then. Had He included the day of vengeance in His reading, He could not have said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears". But His ministry of grace was to be fulfilled by these acts of healing. No wonder the congregation wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.

But they were stumbled by the fact that they knew Him so well. "Is not this Joseph's son?" This is how they had known Him for the past 30 years. How could the messiah be the son of the local carpenter? No wonder the Lord said, "No prophet is accepted in his own country". Familiarity breeds contempt and this was true of the men of Nazareth. It is often true of us, and many are the brethren whose ministry is appreciated far more away from home than it is at home. One of my first bosses said to me, "You are always a boy in the place where you serve your time", and sadly this can be true in assembly circles also.

But the Lord continues with some words which they did not wish to hear:

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

He is telling them that not only was the grace of God no new thing, but that it knew no bounds and would still flow out even when the people of Israel would not receive it. Thus there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah but God sent the prophet to Sarepta, a city of the Philistines, and there she was sustained by the grace of God. Grace as we say is the unmerited favour of God, and God sent His prophet to sustain this widow amongst the enemies of God's people.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

So too with Elisha - there were many lepers in his day, but God sent His prophet to Naaman the Syrian, another enemy of God's people, and Naaman was healed. This was all too much for those present, and the people who knew Him the best became the first to reject Him:

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

They were not able to harm Him, for His work on earth had barely begun.

3. Events at Capernaum

The chapter concludes with an account of various events that took place in Capernaum. He evidently remained for some time for He taught on the Sabbath days. They were astonished at His doctrine for His word was with power. But they were soon to learn of the power of His works, for in the synagogue He met a man with an unclean spirit and cast him out. The men of Nazareth did not know Him but the demon did. He knew He was the "holy one of God". He also knew there was a day coming when the Lord would destroy him and all other evil spirits too. This is the first detailed miracle recorded of the Lord Jesus and simply underlines His victory over the devil during and at the end of the forty days in the wilderness.

He then enters the house of Simon Peter and there He finds Peter's mother-in-law lying sick of a fever. Some would talk of Peter being the first pope. If that were true, then the first pope had a wife!! The incident highlights the healing power of the Saviour. Immediately she was healed and was well enough to rise up and serve Him and His disciples. When the Lord healed, He healed 100 per cent. Mark adds the nice little touch, "He took her by the hand and lifted her up." It was power mingled with gentleness.

Verse 45 shows how busy the Lord was that day. The sun was setting but they came to Him bringing all those that were sick with various diseases but Luke records the fact that late though it might be, He laid His hands on every one of

them and healed them. Demons also were cast out but He silenced them for He would not receive the testimony of demons.

Little wonder then that the next day, the people came to Him and asked Him not to go. But though He came to serve men in all their need, He was the servant of Jehovah and did not move or stay at the beck and calling of men.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

He was under the direction of God His Father and moved only in accordance with His will. He preached the kingdom of God. We today preach a different gospel, the gospel of the grace of God. Jehovah's witnesses are today preaching the gospel of the kingdom – they are an anachronism. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached again during the tribulation period. It is one of the signs of His return to earth. Matthew 24 tells us:

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.