

The Invincibility of the Messiah

Scripture: Luke 4:1-2

Code: 42-49

We find ourselves, this morning, beginning a look at Luke chapter 4. The first thirteen verses of this chapter describe the conflict between Jesus and the devil. This is the final event before Jesus actually begins His public ministry. This conflict is the capstone on His preparation. In many ways, it is His final exam in the process of preparation for His ministry.

By now, having read Luke's gospel, we have no doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. We have no doubt that He is the Savior of the world. We have no doubt that He is the promised Messiah. That has been demonstrated to us in the three chapters that have gone before. It has been demonstrated to us by the announcement of the angel to Zacharias that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child who would be the forerunner to the Messiah, indicating that the Messiah was coming soon. And then a subsequent angelic announcement to Mary that she as a virgin would by the power of the Holy Spirit become pregnant with a child who would be the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the promised Messiah.

So we have had angelic testimony. We've had the confirming testimony of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the confirming testimony of Mary and Joseph, the confirming testimony of Simeon and Anna. We have had a confirming testimony of angels who informed the shepherds out in the fields of Bethlehem about the birth of the Messiah. We have had confirming testimony from God Himself at the baptism of Jesus, the Father out of heaven said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," confirming testimony by the Holy Spirit who at His baptism descended upon Him and rested there, confirming testimony by John the Baptist who said, "Jesus, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And were we to turn to Matthew we would find confirming testimony through the genealogy of Joseph, as well as Luke chapter 3 confirming testimony through the genealogy of Mary that indeed He is born in the royal line of David, and thus has a right to rule as King.

So Luke for three chapters has been massing all the proof to indicate that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, Son of God, Savior of the world. But if one is to be the Savior of the world, there is one rather formidable credential that one must possess. Since the problem in the world is a sin problem, and since it is sin that has damned all humanity, since it is sin that has produced death, since it is sin that brings about the death that catapults sinners into eternal hell, since sin is under the aegis of the prince of this world, the ruler of this world, namely the devil, if one is to come and break the power of sin and conquer evil and defeat Satan, He must be able to combat the devil and come out the victor. And that is precisely what Luke tells us He is able to do in this chapter.

Messiah's credentials would be incomplete without this battle. If Jesus cannot defeat Satan head on, one on one, then He is not adequate to redeem sinners. If He Himself is not impervious to sin, if He is not impeccable, if He is not invulnerable to sin, if He does not come out pure and spotless in the midst of the most violent conflict with the devil, then He cannot be the Savior. If He is to save sinners from their sin, if He is to save them from the devil, if He is to save them from death and hell, then He must conquer sin and Satan himself. That is what this text intends to prove.

This, as I said, is the capstone on messianic credentials. This is what ultimately has to be known. If we are to trust our time and eternity to Christ, if we are to trust Him as our Savior and the forgiver of our sins, if we are to trust Him to overpower sin and overpower death and overpower the devil and overpower hell and set us free and bring us to heaven, then we need to know that He has the ability to conquer Satan in the most intense confrontation.

There once was a man who was perfect. There once was a man who was without sin. There once was a man who was undefiled. There once was a man who lived in a perfect environment, a perfect place, a perfect world. There once was a man who had everything that could possibly be given him by God and that man the first time he was ever assaulted with temptation fell, both he and his wife, and catapulted all of humanity into condemnation. Is Jesus like Adam? Is this another Adam who though perfect at the start, can't sustain that in the battle with the enemy? We need to know that.

And Luke knows we need to know that and the Holy Spirit knows we need to know that. We cannot have a victim for our Savior. We can only have a victor. We cannot have someone who is as susceptible to sin as we are, as susceptible to death and hell and the devil as we are. We have to have someone who can conquer sin, conquer death, conquer Satan, conquer hell.

Now the Jews knew about the devil. In the Old Testament he was called Satan, which means adversary, or enemy. He first appears by name, of course, in Job, then again in Zechariah, then again in 1 Chronicles, but he appears, first of all, as a serpent in the third chapter of Genesis. The Jews knew about the enemy, the adversary. They knew about the personification of evil. They knew Satan as the source of evil. They knew that he had brought down the whole human race in Eden. And the question was, if Jesus is the Messiah, can He overturn this? Can He bring back the paradise lost? Can He conquer the enemy of God and the enemy of our souls?

So Luke records this for us. Look at chapter 4 verse 1. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days and when they had ended He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' And Jesus answered him and said, 'It is written man shall not live on bread alone.' He led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and the devil said to Him, 'I'll give You all this domain and

its glory for it's been handed over to me and I can give it to whomever I wish, therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is written you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.' And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here, for it is written He will give His angels charge concerning to guard You and on their hands they will bear You up lest You strike Your foot against a stone.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is said you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."

Obviously Jesus triumphs over Satan. That is absolutely critical. That is the last...that is the last capstone on the wall of messianic credentials. This is the final exam that Jesus passes to qualify as the Savior of sinners.

As I said earlier, He is not like Adam and yet He is like Adam. He is a son of Adam, but He is far beyond Adam. Though He like Adam is truly human, He unlike Adam cannot sin. Let me kind of help you a little bit to see deeper into that contrast because I think it really elucidates this account.

It is important to know that Jesus was a man. He was an actual son of Adam. He goes back to Adam, all the way back and that is clear from verse 38 of chapter 3. All the way back, son of Adam, Son of God, that is to say Jesus is truly human, He is truly and fully human. He is not like a man. He doesn't look like a man or act like a man, He is a man. He is 100 percent fully human. Hebrews 2:17 puts it this way, "He had to be made like His brethren in all things." There is no area in Jesus' existence that is not fully human. He is fully human. He is truly a Son of Adam. He was born as a human. He was a babe in the womb of His mother. He lived as an infant, as a toddler, as a child, as a young person, as a teen-ager, as a young adult, as a mature adult, and according to chapter 2 verse 40 and verse 52, He grew in wisdom and stature in favor with God and man.

Remember, one of the most important messages I gave you a few weeks ago was on the humanity of Jesus. He is God, but He voluntarily set aside the independent exercise of His deity. He didn't cease to be God, He is fully God and fully man, but He voluntarily set aside the independent exercise of His deity and submitted Himself to the Father's will and the Spirit's power. He did what the Father wanted Him to do and He did it by the power of the Holy Spirit. So He set aside the use of His divine powers and submitted Himself to true humanness and allowed the Spirit of God to work His work through Him.

By the age of twelve, He knew who He was and why He had come. That's why He lingered in Jerusalem, in the temple. And when His parents finally found Him, He said, "I had to be in My Father's place doing My Father's work." He knew He was the Son of God. He knew why He had come. He grew like any person grows, like any human being grows. And as He grew as a real man, the Spirit of God gave to Him more and more of the truth of His personhood. And as He grew He was

exposed to temptation. When the writer of Hebrews said He was in all points tempted like as we are, it means in all points in the chronology of His life. He was tempted as an infant, the way infants are tempted. He was tempted as a child the way children are tempted. He was tempted as a young adult the way young adults were tempted and so forth and so forth. All through His life He was tempted, with one great distinction...and you must understand this...all the temptations, all the solicitations to evil that ever came to Jesus stayed on the outside. This is why it's impossible for us to grasp that because we don't understand temptation in that sense. Why? Because for us temptation takes place predominantly on the inside. But for Jesus, there was nothing in Him that could internalize that temptation and work it toward evil.

James 1 says, "Sin happens when lust conceives and brings forth sin." But there was no lust in Jesus, no lust for those things which He could see...the lust of the eyes, the things He could feel, the lust of the flesh, there was nothing in Him in His perfect, holy person that could internalize the temptation. So it came to Him on the outside. It hammered Him relentlessly on the outside and He was without capacity to conceive that thing by some evil motive or intent in His heart into an actual sin.

So, He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without...what?...without sin. Cause He had no capacity to internalize it. But nonetheless the onslaught came and He heard it and He heard all the cleverness of it and He saw it in the world around Him and in people and the demons that orchestrated it and here Satan himself who orchestrates it. He could see the temptation. He could understand the temptation, but He could not internalize it, mixing it with some evil intent because it didn't exist in Him. He was true humanity, He was holy, He was unfallen and He was perfect, but different than Adam in that Adam apparently did have the capacity to internalize temptation and turn it into sin, Jesus did not. That's why I love the statement Jesus made in John 14:30, He said, "The ruler of the world, Satan, is after Me but he has nothing in Me, he has nothing in Me, he has nothing on Me, he can lay no claim on Me, he can make no justifiable charge of sin." Now the devil, as he is called here in verse 2, is the Greek word diabolos and it means "accuser," and it means "slanderer." And that's what Satan does. That's what he is. He's the accuser of the brethren. He's the slanderer. And, of course, he would love to bring an accusation against God's elect, and the Lord, of course, defends us from that, according to Romans 8, because we belong to Him and Jesus has already paid the penalty for our sins. It is also true that he would want to bring an accusation against Jesus Himself, but he had none he could bring legitimately. He has no claim on Me, he has nothing in Me. There was no justifiable charge of sin that ever could be leveled at the Son of God.

And I will just tell you something as a footnote you need to remember. Some people question the deity of Jesus, lots of people question the deity of Jesus. Mormons deny the deity of Jesus. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Jesus. Liberals deny the deity of Jesus. But I'll tell you one group who don't, demons. Demons do not deny the deity of Jesus and the devil never denies the deity of Jesus, he always assumes it. Repeatedly he says to Him, "If...or since You are the Son of

God..." verse 3. It never was a question...never. They know who they are dealing with and Satan knew exactly who he was dealing with and he knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish and that was somehow to put so much subtle, powerful, clever pressure on Jesus as to overturn His holiness and force Him into sin so that he could literally destroy Jesus' ability to save sinners...and to destroy him, the devil.

Now Jesus obviously was tempted in all points like as we are. Yet when you come to this passage there are specific temptations the likes of which we could never have because they relate particularly and only to Jesus' unique person and work. And we'll see that as it unfolds. But nonetheless...nonetheless, we will learn from Jesus the path of triumph in the midst of temptation.

So, this is a monumental moment. This is the second Adam being confronted with a massive assault like the first Adam. The first Adam was also sinless, like the second Adam. But the first Adam fell, the second Adam did not, cannot and will not. Adam then puts the whole race into sin and damnation, and Jesus lifts sinners to heaven. It all comes down to the issue of defeating sin. He was a true Son of Adam then, truly human, and as a man His Father could say of Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Thirty years He's lived, He's never thought, said, or done anything that didn't please Me. That is His perfection." He is then going to be attacked, as it were, by Satan and where the first Adam fell, He triumphs.

So here is Jesus Christ, the second Adam, the head of a new humanity who will rise to glory rather than fall to hell like the old humanity led by the first Adam. It tells us that He has infinitely greater power in Himself than Adam ever had. Adam was just a man, this is the God/Man and His humanity is protected from sin by His deity.

Think about the circumstances that make the distinction between Jesus and Adam so obvious. Adam was in a garden, the best imaginable place. He was in Eden, he was in paradise. Jesus was in an anti-Eden, the most desolate, forsaken and dangerous place in the Judean desert, barren and empty.

Adam lived in a sinless world, a sinless environment. Jesus lived in a sinful world. Adam never had known any temptation. Adam fell at the first temptation, which means there was no prior assault to try to break down his resistance. Jesus has had 30 years of temptation and then 40 days of temptation before the final three come. All that attempting to break down His resistance.

Adam had perfect human strength...perfect human strength. Adam was delightfully and wonderfully fed by all the lush provisions of the Garden. Jesus was weakened by 40 days with no food.

Adam had all conceivable things to enjoy, never knowing hunger. Jesus was hungry, well He was starving. Adam needed nothing, he needed nothing. He had everything. He ruled everything. Jesus had nothing, no food, no authority, nothing, no kingdom, no sphere of rule. He's all alone.

And Adam certainly had no need to test God to see if God really cared, to see if God really loved him, since he had ample evidence that God loved him and God cared while he was wandering around in the lavishness of Eden. Jesus deprived of all of that and everything else with nothing but a desolate desert and Satan trying to push Him to test God to see if God really does love Him.

So, Jesus with a right to eat as the creator has no food. Jesus with the right to rule as King has no kingdom. Jesus with the right to divine care and divine protection and divine blessing is exposed to the severest dangers. And the point should be clear, Jesus didn't fall, Adam did. And that tells you what a vast difference there is between Jesus and Adam. In the best of circumstances, Adam fell. In the worst imaginable circumstances, Jesus did not. This is our Savior. This is our Messiah. And this is the proof of it. Adam, innocent, perfect, rich, lacking nothing fell under the first assault. Jesus did not...poor, alone, weary, hungry and He is triumphant.

I can't tell you other than to say this is absolutely critical to the issue of salvation. That's why it's here. It's not just an interesting incident, it's the heart and soul of everything. Jesus can't save us from sin and death and hell if He Himself cannot conquer it. So where the first man failed, in Adam we all died, the second man succeeds, in Christ we all live.

Now this brings up the question theologians have always liked to talk about this question, although I've always thought it was kind of silly to do that, the question is...could He have sinned? This is called the debate about the impeccability of Jesus, and you can read all kinds of material on this. Could Jesus have sinned? And there have been theologians through the years who have said yes He could have sinned.

They're wrong clearly, I don't even know why anybody would discuss it, of course He couldn't sin, can God sin? God can't sin, "He's of purer eyes than behold evil, can't look upon iniquity." He has no capacity to sin. Jesus had no capacity within Him to turn anything into a sin, He couldn't conceive anything in such a way, mixing it with lust and evil intent as to produce a sin. It was impossible because there was nothing in His nature to do that...nothing.

In Luke 1 verse 35 when a child was to be born, the child is called "that holy offspring...that holy offspring." This is not a child like any other child. And by the age, as I said, of 30 the Father can say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Thirty years He had never sinned. If He could have, He would have. He didn't because He couldn't. Second Corinthians 5:21, God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us," right? He knew no sin. He knew no sin. He had no capacity to internalize temptation and transport it into sin. He committed no sin, 1 Peter 2:22. Hebrews 7:26, "He is holy...He is undefiled, He is separate from sinners." He did not sin, He could not sin. That is obvious.

Well then, some theologians would say, "Well if He couldn't sin then temptation wasn't real." That's not true. That's not true. You don't always sin when you're tempted which means you could be tempted and not sin. You could be hit with some strong temptation and you can be victorious and walk away and not sin and thank God and praise God and be triumphant. As Christians we do that. That doesn't mean it wasn't a temptation. The fact that Jesus couldn't sin doesn't mean He couldn't be tempted. Look, Satan tempted Him, he tempted Him personally. The devil came and tempted Him personally. Demons came and tempted Him personally. Demons working in the wicked leaders of Israel and others came after Jesus, He was exposed to sin all around Him as the system of Satan worked its way through human depravity. It came at Him on the outside, He saw it all. He understood it in His mind but He had no internal capacity to turn that into a sin. But it doesn't mean that He didn't feel or experience the reality of that temptation.

I can think of times when I've been in a debate with somebody who was wrong, really wrong about something in the Scripture. And this coming at me and somebody is arguing this and arguing this and arguing this...and I see that in my mind as a temptation to leave orthodoxy, to abandon what is true and cave into this. The fact that I don't cave into that because I'm strong in the Word and I know sound doctrine doesn't make it less a temptation, does it? It's still a temptation.

Every temptation that came to Jesus was a temptation from the outside, no solicitation of evil ever came up in the inside because there was nothing there to generate that. Now in that sense He's not like us. He is fully human but you can be fully human and perfect, as Adam was. In the case of Jesus, He's fully human and perfect and His perfection as a man is protected by His deity which is infinitely holy. It doesn't mean the temptations weren't real, what it really means is the temptations were stronger and stronger because He never caved in. I mean, if you're standing there and somebody is trying to push you over and you brace yourself and you keep standing and they keep pushing and keep pushing, at some point you fall over, you're never going to know where their full strength was. But if you never get in...if you never give in, if you stand there you will get the full fury of everything they have to offer until they finally run out of energy and back away. That's exactly what happens in the case of Jesus. He is tempted and the temptation goes to its maximum capacity every time because He never budes. So it isn't that He didn't feel the temptation, it is that He felt it in its fullest.

Westcott(?) says, "Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity," end quote. That's exactly right. Only the sinless one knows how intense the temptation can be, every temptation, because he never gives in and finally the temptation having exhausted itself departs.

Jesus never gave in so at the end He experienced the full force of every temptation to its maximum level, but never internalized sin. So here we find in our text the Son of God being tested and His perfect holy righteousness which the angel said was true, "That holy offspring," which the Father said was true, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is here proven to be true in a battle with sin and the devil. And the conclusion of this is that Jesus is qualified to be our Satan conqueror. Through the temptations He demonstrates His qualification.

Now we're going to look at the specifics of the temptation next time, but let's look at the first point, the preparation. We'll see the preparation for the battle, we'll see the pattern of the battle, how the temptations are designed, and the answers, then we'll see the postmortem on the battle, what happened at the end.

Let's look at the preparation for the battle. This is not just a distant sort of historical look or crystallogical look. There is so much here that is practical and you're going to see by the time we get to the end of this a pattern for triumph in your own life as you battle with temptation. But let's look at the preparation. I find this just so dramatic.

Verses 1 and 2, the stage is set. "And Jesus, the perfect God/Man affirmed by the Father to be sinless, full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days. When they had ended, He became hungry."

Now there's a lot of theology in that statement "full of the Holy Spirit," but I want to confine a large subject to its specific purpose here. "Full" is simply a word that means to be saturated with, or it means to be permeated thoroughly with. This is something that is true of Jesus at all times. When the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, descended as a dove and settled upon Him, that isn't the first time the Holy Spirit arrived in the life of Jesus. It is simply a symbol of the fact that the Spirit of God was resting on Him through His whole life. Jesus in Matthew 12 said, "If you say, as you have...to the Jewish leaders...that what I do I do by the power of Satan, you blaspheme the Holy Spirit." Why? Because if you attribute the work of Jesus to the devil, you blaspheme the Spirit because it's really being done by the Spirit through Him. So it was the Spirit through Him all the way along, from the time that He was born it was the Spirit of God that permeated His being, it was the Spirit of God that dwelt within Him in personal presence and fullness there.

The Spirit of God always there giving Him victory over every situation as He matured and grew up. And here He is in the fullness of manhood now, having had His baptism and His public proclamation, He has been announced, He has been presented by the prophet John, He is on the launch pad for going into His ministry which was planned by the Father before creation. All this time has gone by, all these 30 years of His life on top of that, finally He reaches this moment and He is described as being saturated with the Spirit of God. And this is something Jesus experienced through His entire life.

Now we talk about being filled with the Spirit, we read about it, Ephesians 5, be being filled with the Spirit. That's something we desire, isn't it? We desire to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, we desire to be permeated, to be saturated with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We desire to do only the Spirit's will, only through the Spirit's power, only that which the Spirit of God desires for us. We desire that. We pursue that. We long for that. We hunger for that. And on occasion there are people in the Bible times who experienced it. There was John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb and consequently began to move in the womb of Elizabeth which was a confirmation of the coming of the Messiah. So God filled John the Baptist before he was born with the Holy Spirit in such a way as to manifest indication of the Messiah's coming. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Spirit, chapter 1, I think it's verse 67, and began to speak the very words of God. So totally saturated by the Spirit of God that what he said was not at all human, it wasn't at all his, it was right exactly what God wanted him to say.

On the day of Pentecost, Luke records that the 120 were in the upper room and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other languages the wonderful works of God in a miraculous way. And then the apostles were filled with the Spirit of God in chapter 4. And then in chapter 6 there were some deacons in the church who were filled with the Spirit of God in their ministry. And you find the filling of the Holy Spirit referred to by Luke a number of times in the book of Acts, chapter 7, chapter 9, chapter 11, chapter 13. That's something that happened occasionally in the life of an apostle when the Spirit of God literally saturated, permeated, took over control of an individual for a time. But for fallen people like us, it's not something that is a constant way of life from the cradle to the grave, as it was for Jesus. For us, we desire to be filled with the Spirit, we desire that, we long for that and that's why Paul says, "Be being kept filled with the Spirit, letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," it's the same thing, it's something we pursue, we want to be controlled and saturated by the presence and power of the Spirit. But for Jesus that was a constant reality. That's how He lived His entire life. He as a man setting aside the independent use of His own attributes, submitting Himself to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who through Him does the Father's will.

So He's ready. He's in the fullness of the Spirit. That means to say He hasn't done anything here that's jeopardized Himself. He's not going to be tempted of the devil because somehow He's wandered out of the way of the Father or He's wandered off the path of the Holy Spirit, or He's done something independent of the Spirit and so He's gotten Himself into a difficult situation. No, He's under the full control of the Holy Spirit when He returns from the Jordan. Now the Jordan, that's where He's been because that's where He was baptized in chapter 3, that's where John the Baptized was preaching, that's where John presented Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, as John 1:29 says. So that's all done. He's been baptized. He's been presented. Now it's time to go and do His ministry.

So He leaves the Jordan valley and He starts west and west from the Jordan valley is the steep slope or the plateau on which Jerusalem sits, about a mile up. The Dead Sea, the end of the Jordan River is below sea level, so it's a tremendous climb up that area. And the Spirit of God is leading Him. He is not somehow falling into the devil's clutches, He's not making bad choices and ending up in a vulnerable situation. He is in total control of the Holy Spirit and it says in verse 1 He was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness. So the Spirit takes Him right into the wilderness, right from the Jordan where there was plenty of water and there were plenty of people listening to John preach into absolute isolation. But it's the Spirit of God who is doing everything to bring about the purposes of God. He is thoroughly saturated with the Spirit. Remember John 3:34? God says, "He gives not the Spirit by measure." When God gave Jesus the Spirit, He didn't give it to Him in doses, He didn't give Him little bits of the Holy Spirit, He gave Him the fullness of the Spirit, John 3:34 and 35, not measured out increments. So He is fully led by the Spirit of God, fully empowered by the presence of the Spirit of God and He moves toward the wilderness.

Mark 1:12, Mark also records His temptation in chapter 1, and Matthew does in chapter 4. Mark 1:12, "The Holy Spirit drove Him into the wilderness." And the idea here is that it was the Spirit of God moving Him that way. And this is how it would always be in Jesus life, the Spirit of God would move the God/Man where He wanted to be to do the Father's will. So the Spirit drives Him into the wilderness.

Let me talk about the wilderness a little bit. I've been there. I've stood in that place. Some of you have done it as well. The last time I went to Israel we took a group of people and we gave them an experience, the likes of which they're not likely to forget, and that is we took them into this wilderness on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, not the main road, not the road everybody travels, but the old road that runs along the area called "the devastation." This is a frightening and terrifying kind of experience. And that is where the Holy Spirit leads Jesus.

You know, just as a footnote before I go any further about talking on the wilderness, isn't it interesting how sometimes our highest moments are followed by our deepest trials? Jesus has been waiting since all eternity for this and waiting 30 years in the obscurity of Nazareth for the baptism and the launch of His ministry.

The high point, the Father commends Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Visibly the Spirit of God affirms Him. John the Baptist, the great forerunner, the greatest man who had ever lived up until his time announces Him as the Lamb of God. He is full of the Holy Spirit. He is in full consciousness of His divine nature. He is in full consciousness of His divine mission. His sacred humanity is filled with the Spirit's power. His soul is charged with joy and contemplation of His privilege and purpose. Finally after all this time and eternity and all these 30 years He is ready to begin His ministry and He's reached the peak of this great statement of the Father, "This is My

beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and it's immediately after that that the Spirit of God drives Him from the highest point in His life to the lowest point, into mortal combat with the devil. And it's not as if the devil came looking for Jesus, it's that Jesus came looking under the power of the Holy Spirit for the devil.

And he found him in the wilderness, the area between the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea and Jerusalem. It is an area in the Old Testament called Jeshimon, and it's called...it could be translated "the devastation." It's a really terrifying place. To take a ride in a vehicle up that road is frankly very frightening. Many people have been frightened by that. It is a precipitous area, loose rock, it is rock, rock, rock and more rock, jagged, ragged, craggy peaks with severe ravines that go down hundreds of feet. It is dry. It is barren. It is inhabited by wild animals, snakes, scorpions and all of that. It is barren. It is the worst part of the Judean desert. It is certainly a place where Jesus would be more alone than any other place in Palestine. And the fact of the matter is, the only reason we even know what happened there is because Jesus allowed it to be recorded because He was the only one there. It's about a 35 by 15 mile area, be very hard to move around in that area. I have felt the rocks sliding under my feet. I remember standing on a little knoll and feeling the rocks sliding under my feet as I was trying to get closer to the edge and seeing the sheer drop down to a bottom I couldn't even see. It's that kind of an area. Very difficult area to traverse, almost unthinkable experience to spend 40 days there, six weeks.

Deuteronomy 8:15 says, "The terrible and great wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water." It is not a garden, it is not a place where a garden grows, this place. It's the worst of places. It's not even a place you could hike, you just stay by the safety of the road you're on. He was there 40 days, six weeks, wandering in the dangerous, dry, desolate area. And all the while, it says in verse 2, "being tempted by the devil." All the time the devil's after Him in that environment. He's all alone. And this is very important, there's no one there to aide Him, there's no one there to deflect some of the temptation, there's no one there to offer counsel. It is critically important that Jesus be able all alone, one-to-one to defeat the devil. If He needs help, we're in some trouble.

Now Luke has already made us aware that there's evil in the world. He hasn't really specifically said that in the three chapters we've studied, but he's indicated as much because he said in verse 16 of chapter 1 that John the Baptist would turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God and he would turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous. So we already know there's sin in the world. There's disobedience in the world. And there needs to be repentance in the world. We also know there's darkness. Chapter 1 verse 79, people sit in darkness. We also know there's the shadow of death. Chapter 2 verse 34 we know that the child is appointed for the fall and rise of many and a sign to be opposed and a sword will pierce even your own soul. So we know there's suffering and pain and a heart-piercing experience in the world. Chapter 3 verse 19 there are terribly wicked people like Herod, Herodias, his brother's wife, who

locked up John in prison and then cut his head off. So Luke isn't hiding evil from us. But he gives evil a face here. And for the first time in his gospel we come to meet the devil.

He's a player in the whole story, always has been since Genesis 3, this diabolos, this slanderer, this accuser, this Satan. He's been before God in Job accusing. He's been before God in Zechariah 3, 1 Chronicles 21, accusing, accusing, slandering, slandering. He is the enemy of God. He is the hater of God. But we don't meet him until here.

Who is this devil? Well I won't go over a lot of detail because we've done that in our series in Genesis. But suffice it to say he was originally created by God as a holy angel, right? His name was Lucifer. Jesus said He saw Lucifer fall from heaven like lightning. He was the anointed cherub. If you read Ezekiel 28:11 to 15, Isaiah 14:12 to 14, you read about him. He was the anointed cherub which probably means he was the praise and worship leader of heaven. He was heaven's chief musician. He was the one who led all the angelic praise. He was...he was THE anointed cherub, he was the main, holy angel in charge of praise.

For some incomprehensible reason he decided that wasn't enough, that he wanted to be equal with God. And so the prophets tell us, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, that he said, "I will...I will...I will...I will...I will..." five times he sought to usurp God's throne, dethrone God and take over heaven. He was in Eden in all his beauty. He had everything. But pride was lifted up in his heart and he thought to dethrone God and God threw him out of heaven. Revelation 12 says when He threw him out, He threw a third of the angels with him because they joined in the rebellion. There was mutiny in heaven. One third of the angels were thrown out. They became the demons so now that is the devil and his demons. They are outnumbered by the two thirds of holy angels who still remain and always will.

This...this fallen angel, this adversary, this archenemy of God who once was heaven's praise leader then decided that he wanted to take the whole human race into his rebellion, and he succeeded with Adam and Eve and plunged all humanity into sin. Now he comes after Jesus, the incarnate God/Man Himself. And he must destroy Jesus because Jesus is the second Adam, and He has come to bring life back to the dead. He has come to rescue people from hell. He has come to conquer sin and to destroy the devil. So the devil knows he's fighting for his life here, as well as destroying Jesus as the Savior, he's fighting for his own life because if he loses, then he loses eternally and he's going to end up in the Lake of Fire.

So into the wilderness comes Jesus, all alone, led by the Spirit of God who has filled Him, permeated Him to find the devil for the confrontation. This loneliest of all places, this anti-Eden, this most cursed piece of land where no garden grows and for 40 days the devil throws everything he's got at Him. Interestingly enough, those 40 days pass in silence. Satan came to Eve in Eden and seduced her to distrust God and to think God wasn't really good and to think God really didn't care. She fell. And

that's why Satan is called the liar, John 8:44. He's a liar from the beginning and the father of lies and the murderer or the killer, as 1 John 5:9 says, "The whole world lies in his lap." And 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "He's blinded the minds of the entire human race."

So here comes the blinder, the liar, the murderer, the destroyer who wanted Jesus dead from the time He was born and he's coming after Jesus and he's going to try to get Him to sin. And if he can't get Him to sin, he's going to try to kill Him. And for 40 days the onslaught goes on without success. For 40 days the enemy tries to break the resistance of Jesus to evil. For 40 days Jesus concentrates His mind on the conquest of evil, fully dependent on the Holy Spirit in proving that He is impeccable, invincible, impervious to iniquity. For 40 days Satan gains not one inch of ground and the devil gives up after 40 days, but only for a moment.

"And when they had ended, He became hungry." He had eaten nothing for 40 days. Let's just assume that that means what it says, He has eaten nothing. I read a commentary, he said, "Well, He probably ate some things." Why do people do that? Even I'm smart enough to know what "He ate nothing" means. He ate nothing. He's in a serious condition. The devil has been pushing against this immovable object the whole time, and He's felt the full fury of all of Satan's energies, the maximum power of every temptation until the devil was so exhausted he had to come back and regroup and come with another one. And finally the devil backs away and for the first time in 40 days it tells us, "When they had ended, He became hungry." He wasn't hungry during the 40 days, the thing was too intense, it was too strong.

He feels the hunger for the first time and as Jesus begins to feel that hunger, the devil senses a new opportunity. He smells blood, he senses vulnerability and he moves in for what he hopes will be the kill. And so starting in verse 3 comes the three final temptations, the big guns. Satan pulls out the big guns to fire at what he perceives to be a now vulnerable Jesus. He's found an angle in Jesus' hunger, in Jesus being starved and weak and he's going to exploit that to the max and see if he can't crush the Son of God under the power of his assault. That's when the battle really begins. The pattern of the battle we'll look at next time. You don't want to miss it, it is drama beyond drama. We'll see that next time. Let's pray.

Father, we are so privileged to have been let in to the struggle of our Savior that we might learn how He dealt with the enemy, how He overcame temptation and more than that, that we might be affirmed and assured of His invincibility, that He is, in fact, able to save us to the uttermost, that He is able to be the Lamb without spot and without blemish who can die as our substitute, that He has the power to conquer sin and death and Satan and hell. We see such a triumphant Christ here and we know that this is a time of grave humiliation for Him as He was wandering alone in such a desolate place and as the enemy was hitting Him with everything he could come up with. It was so humiliating for Him to endure that and yet in His greatest humiliation was His greatest victory. He triumphs over Satan in the wilderness and He even triumphs over Satan and death at the cross. No matter how humiliated, it

only gave Him greater opportunity to manifest the glory of His person. We thank You for the triumph of Jesus Christ over the enemy in which triumph we are raised from death to life, from hell to heaven, from sin to righteousness. We thank You that we are in Christ victors, more than conquerors, in that we rejoice and give Him praise. Amen.

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