

Luke 4:1-13 Jesus' Temptation: Why?

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[0 : 0 0] Well as I said we are going to be turning back to the temptations of Jesus in Luke's Gospel chapter 4 and we'll read a few verses at the beginning of chapter 4 just to remind ourselves as to what took place when Jesus was tempted. Luke chapter 4 from the beginning and Jesus full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by the devil and he ate nothing during those days and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him if you are the Son of God command this stone to become bread and Jesus answered him it is written man shall not live by bread alone. The devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said to him to you I will give all this authority and their glory for it has been delivered to me and I will give it to whom I will. If you then will worship me it will all be yours and Jesus answered him it is written you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve and he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him if you are the Son of God throw yourself down from here for it's written he will command his angels concerning you to guard you and on their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered him it is said you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. When the devil had ended every temptation he departed from him until an opportune time.

We've been looking at the temptation of Jesus and as we've been doing this we have been basically asking two basic questions we've been asking what happened and why did this happen. The temptation of Jesus is a very significant event he was led by the spirit into the wilderness for 40 days being tempted and we spent two weeks looking at what happened and we threw out various practical questions. Today I want us to focus on our second question why did this happen? Now it's important to notice at the very start that the practical lessons don't come under this question. Now what I mean by that is a lot of people think that the reason Jesus was tempted was to give us practical lessons in facing temptation.

Now that's true we do get lessons from Jesus in terms of this temptation but the reason why Jesus was tempted is actually much bigger. It's not just to give us practical lessons it is pointing us to something far greater. And in order to see this we actually have to stand back and to look at the bigger picture because the temptation of Jesus is actually a key moment in the whole message of the Bible. This is not just about the personal experience of Jesus it's about the whole of God's plan for saving sinners like you and me and we know that for two reasons. First of all Luke tells us in this verse that it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus to be tempted and that emphasizes very clearly that this is what God wants to happen. It's part of his plan and it's part of his purpose. So that's the first way whereby we know that this is part of something bigger. But the second reason we know it's part of something bigger is that this event comes immediately after the genealogy of Jesus. If you look at the end of chapter 3 you've got this long, long list of names tracing back the ancestry of Jesus. Now when you read a really long list like that it's sometimes quite hard to read. A lot of the names can be very hard to pronounce and it can also be hard to see why it's important.

Why do we need this huge long list of names mostly of people we've never heard of and know very little about? What is that about? Well this genealogy is crucial for a number of reasons and in particular it's vital because Luke is making a connection between Jesus and Adam. Luke is saying we need to go right back to the very beginning because there is a connection between Adam and Jesus. And this is something that the New Testament brings out in more detail and it does it by describing Jesus as the second Adam. For example 1 Corinthians 15. The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. It is not the spiritual that is first but the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven. Now Paul later is making a comparison between Adam and Jesus and he is saying that Jesus is the last Adam or the second Adam. Now what does that mean? This is really where we have to go in our minds. In what way is Jesus the second Adam? Well Adam was the first

Adam obviously. He was the one who began the human race. He was the head of humanity and in a sense he was the son of God as Luke says at the very end of chapter 3. He was God's creation there.

[5 : 41] But as we know and as we read Adam fell, Adam sinned and the first Adam failed. And for that reason a second Adam, another Adam, the true eternal Son of God has come to put everything right. The second Adam has come to put right what went wrong at the very beginning when the first Adam sinned. And so this first Adam, second Adam comparison is really a really important doctrine in the Bible and it's something I want us to try and understand and I want us to try and think about it even today because they are very similar in many ways.

Adam number one and Adam number two. The first Adam, the second Adam, they are similar in a lot of ways and one of the clearest similarities is that both Adam and Jesus were tempted by the devil. The first Adam was tempted and he failed. The second Adam would have to face a similar challenge.

This is the reason why Jesus was tempted. And so as we look at this together we're going to just ask two very simple questions. What are the similarities between the temptations of Adam and Jesus and what are the differences? Now time has marched on today, we were a bit delayed in getting started but we'll try and get through this as quickly as we can. So first of all what are the similarities?

Well if you compare the two things, compare the Garden of Eden, compare what happened with Jesus, there are some remarkable similarities. In fact I think we can name eight and we'll go through them very quickly. Number one, both Adam and Jesus are confronted by the devil. That's exactly what happens. It is a time of testing. The technical term that we used to describe it is a time of probation. A bit like you think of the word probation, you know what it means. Somebody's almost like on a trial, on a test. Both Adam and Jesus have been appointed by God for specific roles and they are both attacked and confronted by the devil in order for them to fail in fulfilling their God-given destiny. So both are confronted by the devil. Number two, both temptations involve the devil speaking. We said this when we were looking at it earlier that the devil's number one tool is his mouth. He speaks to them both and he tries to persuade them in order to sin.

Serpent spoke to Eve and spoke to Jesus. Now we'll see from Genesis that some of it, a lot of the temptation was directed through Eve but as we read previously Adam and Eve had just become one flesh so really what was done to Eve had a knock-on effect on Adam as we saw. So the devil comes to them to both Jesus and to Adam and Eve and speak. So number two, both temptations are involved around speaking. Number three, both temptations involve food. The devil said are you not going to take the fruit of that tree? He said that to Adam and Eve. He said to Jesus are you not going to turn that stone into bread? And so there's a similarity there. Number four, both temptations involve a promise of status. Adam and Eve are told by the devil that if you eat the fruit it'll make you equal with God. Your eyes will be open, you'll be like God knowing good and evil. And he tries the same thing with Jesus. He says to him to you I will give all this authority and glory. So there's this promise of status. Fifthly, the devil tries to question what God has said. He says to Adam and

[9 : 40] Eve you shall not surely die. And he says to Jesus if you really are the Son of God. And so he's trying to just sow the seeds of doubt, questioning the truth of what God says. So it's similar there.

It's similar sickly in the fact that both temptations are an attempt to wreck the plans that God has made. God has made Adam and Eve in his image. They are already like God. But the devil comes to them with this half-tooth whereby he says well if it's only actually by eating this tree from this tree that you become like God. And so he's trying to wreck the plans that God has.

Same with Jesus. Jesus has come as we saw to be the king and to be the suffering servant. And so Jesus knows that in order for him to get his place as the king of all creation, he is going to have to suffer. But the devil is trying to say to him no, no, no, you can have the kingdom but you can avoid the suffering. You can have the crown without going to the cross.

He tries to twist Jesus away from his God-given destiny. Seventh, in both temptations, the devil tries to get Adam and Eve to question whether God cares about them. To question God's purposes.

To just undermine the idea that God cares. And the devil comes with his own crafty words to just cast doubt on everything that God has said. And I just want to pause with this one to say that isn't that what the devil tries to do to us all the time. The devil tries to get us to doubt God. The devil tries to get us to doubt that God exists. A lot of people doubt that. The devil tries to get us to doubt God's promises. Yet God might have said that but will he really do it? The devil tries to get us to question God's wisdom. How often do people say why is God letting this happen?

[11 : 54] That's questioning God's wisdom. And perhaps most of all the devil tries to get us to question God's love. Does God really love you when you've done all that? Does God really love you when you just don't compare to other people? God, is he really going to look after you? Does God really care for you? Does God really love you? That's the kind of doubts that the devil tries to sow in our minds. And we all battle with these doubts. Never think that Christians never doubt.

Never think that Christians think to themselves, well are my prayers been heard? Is God really there? Is this really true? Everybody doubts these things sometimes. And the devil tries and tries and tries to get us to doubt these things. But do you know why the devil tries to get you to doubt that God exists? And why he gets you to doubt that God's promises are true? And why he gets you to doubt that God's love loves you? Do you know why the devil wants you to doubt all of these things?

It's because they're true. The devil's got no interest in making you doubt something that's false. The devil only wants you to doubt things that are true. And the existence of God and the promises of God and the wisdom of God and the power of God and the love of God are the most glorious and certain realities in all existence. And that's why the devil wants you to doubt them because they're true. So the devil is trying to undermine God's care and his promises.

And last of all, this is perhaps most important in both temptations, the devil has got one goal. Disobedience. The devil wants Adam to disobey. And with his first attempt he succeeded.

And the devil wants Jesus to do the same. And so I hope you can see that the similarities are astonishing. Jesus is experiencing the same test that Adam was submitted to. Jesus is going through the same experience which caused Adam to fall. The second Adam is being tried and probed and tested in the same way that the first Adam was. So these are the similarities. Secondly, the differences. Because although there are similarities, when we look a bit more closely, there are some very important differences between the temptation of the first Adam and the second Adam. In fact, these differences are quite remarkable.

[14 : 58] First of all, there's a difference in location. Adam was tested in paradise where everything was just wonderful.

Jesus was tested in the wilderness, in all the barrenness and all the harshness of that.

Mark tells us that Jesus was with the wild animals. And so the contrast couldn't be greater. Adam is in beautifully comfortable conditions. Jesus is in a harsh and hostile environment. In fact, Jesus is right in the middle of the mess that Adam left behind. So there's a difference in location. It's far worse for Jesus. There's a difference in resource. In Eden, Adam lacked nothing. God had said to him, you may eat of everything in this garden except one. So he had all the food he needed, all the comfort that he needed, all the provision that he needed. He was totally satisfied. Jesus was hungry. Jesus was starving after 40 days of not eating.

And so Adam had a full stomach when the devil said to him, here, take this fruit as well. Whereas when the devil said to Jesus, make that stone bread, every fiber of Jesus' body would have been saying, eat it because he was hungry. So it was far harder in that sense.

In Eden also, Adam had company. God had just made the perfect companion for him. And he had this wonderful fellowship with his wife, with nature, with God. Jesus was alone, isolated, vulnerable.

[16 : 54] And so Adam was tested in comfort, in satisfaction, in abundance. Jesus was tested in weakness, in hostility, and in vulnerability. Thirdly, there's a difference in the level of temptation.

Now this is really interesting to think about. With Adam, the devil only had to tempt him once. There are certain things that I think we could all probably relate to. There are certain things we all need to be tempted with once. Maybe it's chocolate or cake or whatever it may be. One sniff of it and we give in. The devil did not meet much resistance when he came to test Adam and Eve. But with Jesus, the devil has to bring everything to a whole new level because he didn't just try once, he didn't just try twice, but three times. In fact, there's a very interesting question that arises about verse one. So you look at this verse. Look very closely at what it says.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the spirit in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by the devil. Now here's the question. What does the 40 days refer to?

Does it refer to how long he was led? Does it refer to how long he was in the wilderness? Or does it refer to how long he was tempted?

And some people are out of the view that for the whole 40 days the devil was at Jesus. And the three that we have recorded are in many ways just the culmination of that.

[18 : 33] Now, I'll leave that for you to think about. But isn't it interesting that that may well be the case that the intensity of the temptation was immense. And the key point is that Jesus's temptations were far, far more severe than Adam's. And this is a really, really important point. And one I want you to make sure you grasp. It's so easy for us to think that because Jesus was the sinless Son of God, he doesn't know what it's like. Have you ever thought like that? Have you ever thought to yourself, well, yeah, it's different for Jesus. He doesn't really know what it's like.

He doesn't really know what it's like to be tempted. He doesn't really know what it's like for me. Maybe you've thought like that. It's easy to think like that. But do you know, the truth is actually the other way round.

You and I will never know just how severe the temptation of Jesus was.

When we face temptation, we give in long before the devil has reached his maximum level. For Jesus, he had to endure everything that the devil threw at him.

Never think that Jesus doesn't know how it feels. Jesus experienced temptation to its very height. In fact, this is why, you know, the devil was constantly at Jesus. When Jesus was born, the devil tried to obliterate all the children in Bethlehem. When Jesus was baptized, he comes and tempts him. When Jesus goes and begins his ministry, what do we find?

[20 : 19] A legion of evil spirits are inside a man coming to confront him. And again and again and again and again, the devil is at Jesus. And we could say all hell is let loose on Jesus.

And I read an excellent quote from Donald MacLeod who said, against us, a little temptation suffices. Against Jesus, Satan found himself forced to push himself to his limits.

Jesus has faced the worst level of temptation that anyone will ever experience. And that is why when we are tempted, he is the perfect person to go to. And temptation is something that we're always ashamed of. Certainly I am. I would, I think, never tell you the things that I'm tempted with because I am so ashamed of them. And I'm sure you're the same. We think temptation is such a weakness, it's such an embarrassment, it's such a sort of shame. And it's so easy to think that in terms of Jesus, because we fail and struggle with temptation, we're going to just keep away from him. And yet we have been reminded that if we struggle, we must run to Jesus because he will sympathize. He will not criticize. He will sympathize. Now we must remember that.

Don't be discouraged if you're struggling. Don't be discouraged if you've made mistakes. Come to Jesus. He will not criticize. He will sympathize. Because he knows what it's like.

So there's this difference in the level of temptation. But fourthly and most important of all, there is a difference in the response. The first Adam saw the fruit, listened to Satan, disobeyed God and fell. The second Adam was tested with everything that hell could muster against him.

[22 : 41] But he resisted and he was obedient to God. And this is where we see the fact that Jesus, as the second Adam, has come to put right everything that the first Adam got wrong.

He is Adam in reverse. He's putting it everything right. When Adam failed, Jesus succeeds. Where Adam gave in, Jesus resists. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed. And this is beautifully portrayed by Paul in Philippians 2 in the passage we read at the very beginning.

Have this mind amongst yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Now do you see all that Paul is saying here? He is saying that Jesus has taken human form. He is part of Adam's race. He is one of us.

But he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Now do you see the echoes to Genesis 3 there? What did Adam do with the fruit? He grasped it. And in doing so, he thought that he was gaining equality with God. And Paul is saying Jesus did not think that equality with God was a thing to be grasped. Jesus by contrast humbles himself and is obedient, obedient in the face of temptation, obedient to everything that God required, obedient all the way to death. And this is where we see that the contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam goes beyond just the temptations.

In fact, ultimately the destiny of the first Adam and the second Adam comes down to two trees. In many ways, the whole story of the Bible comes down to two trees. The first Adam stood before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And he saw that the fruit of that tree was good to eat.

[25 : 04] And he saw that it was desirable and he was very tempted by it. He knew that God did not want him to take it. But he chose to put himself first. And he went to the tree. He tasted its fruit.

And death came to us all. The second Adam also stood before a tree.

But it wasn't the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the tree that he was about to be nailed to. It was the cross. And it couldn't have been more different to the tree that the first Adam faced. Because this tree has got the bitterest fruit. This tree is hideous to the eyes.

This tree means agony. This tree is a cursed tree. And at a human level, everything in Jesus would be saying run from that tree. And that's why in Gethsemane he prayed that the cup might pass from him. But the great contrast is with by the first Adam, God had said don't take this fruit. For the second Adam, God said I want you to take everything that this tree is bearing. Jesus faced the hideous, horrible, terrifying fruit of the cross. But he obeyed. And he tasted death. And in doing so, Jesus reversed what the first Adam had done. He undid the disobedience of the first Adam. And he released the world from the curse of sin. And he destroyed the works of the devil and left him powerless.

And he abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

[27 : 25] And it's reminding us that the temptation of Jesus are pointing to the fact that Jesus is on this great wonderful mission to restore the damage done by the first Adam. And passages like Romans 5 tell us about that. If because of the one man's disobedience as Adams, death reigned through the one man, much more were those who received the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reigned in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore as one test bus led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners. So by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. Do you see what we have there? The first Adam has made us all sinners.

The second Adam will give us righteousness if we trust in him. And that is the reason why Jesus had to face temptation. And that is what he is doing. He is undoing what Adam had done wrong.

And I hope that you can see that Jesus's work is an amazing work of restoration. And I hope that you can see that the whole Bible fits together perfectly. And I hope that you can see the sufficiency of everything that Jesus has done. We don't need anything more than what Jesus has done.

But I hope most of all that you can see that all of this is for you. Jesus came to undo the failure of Adam in order to save all the children of Adam in order to save us. That's why Jesus became one of us. Hebrews describes this beautifully. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood because you have flesh and blood. He himself partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. That's you. If you are afraid of death that's you. He came to save him. He came to release you. He became one of us to save us from the condition that the first Adam has left us in. As Peter says, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds you have been healed. That is why Jesus was tempted. This great work of the second Adam. That is what the message of the gospel is all about. And that is how much God loves you. First Adam left you and me in a mess.

The second Adam came to put it right because God loves you. And every time you think or learn about the work that Jesus has done you are seeing the love of God for you manifested. That's how much he loves you. And all that just leaves the question.

[31 : 09] Which Adam are you with? The first Adam's left us all in a mess. But if you put your trust in Jesus Christ then you will be united to him. The second Adam, the last Adam, the savior of sinner.

Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let us pray.