

Jesus began his ministry of preaching and teaching, healing and forgiving sins at the age of 30. But before he began this work he went into the desert for 40 days to fast and pray. But he was not alone. The devil was with Jesus in the desert, and he tempted the Lord. But Jesus won. That's what we're going to talk about this morning and what it has to do with our walk with God and with one another.

## PRAYER

**READ Luke 4:1-13: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness<sup>2</sup> for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.<sup>3</sup> The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"<sup>5</sup> And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,<sup>6</sup> and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.<sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."<sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"<sup>9</sup> 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,<sup>10</sup> for it is written, "' He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,"<sup>11</sup> and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."<sup>12</sup> And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"<sup>13</sup> And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.**

When we read about what Jesus said and did, it's always helpful to consider what was said and done before him. The Old Testament is filled with stories which he alluded to and even referenced as he went about his work of redemption.

Understanding what happened here between Jesus and the devil is no different. The Scripture Jesus quoted came from the last sermons Moses preached to Israel before the people entered the Promised Land.

You might be thinking this makes everything so much more complicated, cross-referencing the Old Testament and all. It does and it doesn't. It does in the sense that in order to understanding Christ's teachings fully we need to understand Moses' teachings. Thus we should read the Old Testament. But it doesn't make things more complicated in the sense that what Moses said does not threaten the Good News of your salvation from sin, death, and the devil because of Jesus' work on the Cross.

Have you ever quoted to yourself a Bible passage in order to encourage your heart or to defend yourself from the devil? Romans 8:1 is one of my favorites: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Whenever I'm feeling like I'm not worth the price of a Big Mac, I say that to myself.

Well, here in this passage Jesus quoted Moses, which gave him the power to overcome the devil. We'll talk more about his in a moment. But there's one other thing I want to add to our study. Jesus was in the desert for 40 days.

40 is a Bible number which is used in specific kinds of situations. For example, Noah and his family were in the ark when it rained for 40 days and nights. This was a time of trial for them. Moses himself lived for 40 years in Pharaoh's house where he resisted the temptation to live the heathen lifestyle of Pharaoh and his family. Then he lived for another 40 years in the wilderness in humility where he herded his father-in-law's sheep. And finally for his last 40 years he labored under the hand of God to bring Israel into the Promised Land. There are many other examples of the use of the number 40, but I've made my point. 40 is a number of trial, tribulation, humility, and temptation.

So when we read about how Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, we immediately know what we're reading is very important, and indeed, it has to do with trials, tribulations, humility, and temptations.

So on to Jesus' temptations. We read, **Luke 4:3-4, The devil said to (Jesus), "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"**

Jesus quoted Moses from Deuteronomy. Here's the context of the quote. Moses said, **Deuteronomy 8:2-3, "you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

Moses reminded Israel that when they had been hungry, God fed them with bread from heaven, manna, by the power of his Word. Indeed, he fulfilled their every need with his Word. Even so, they were never faithful to him.

But Jesus was faithful. He knew his Father in Heaven would give him food to eat and everything else he needed according to his will in due time. And that was enough.

About Jesus' second temptation, we read, **Luke 4:5-8, the devil took (Jesus) up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup> and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup> If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."<sup>8</sup> And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.""**

Again Jesus quoted Moses. Here's the context of the quote. Moses said, **Deuteronomy 6:10-13 (LXX), "It shall come to pass when the Lord your God shall have brought you into the land which he swore to your fathers,... he will give you great and beautiful cities which you did not build, <sup>11</sup> houses full of all good things which you did not fill, wells dug in the rock which you did not dig, vineyards and olive orchards which you did not plant, then having eaten and been filled, <sup>12</sup> beware lest you forget the Lord your God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. <sup>13</sup> You shall fear the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.**

God did give Israel authority and glory when he lead them into the Promised Land just as Moses predicted. But the people did not give heed to Moses' words. They

were filled with pride and they worshipped and served the idols of the new land they had inherited.

But Jesus resisted the devil and his empty promises. For where is the joy in earthly glory and authority when we have to sell our soul to the devil to get it? That's the message here.

Concerning Jesus' third temptation we read, **Luke 4:9-12**, **“(The devil) took (Jesus) 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,<sup>10</sup> for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’<sup>11</sup> and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’<sup>12</sup> And Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**

This temptation includes an interesting wrinkle. The devil actually quoted from the Bible! You've heard people say, “You can prove anything with the Bible!” That is true. So keep this in mind. Just because someone quotes Scripture doesn't mean that he is speaking for God. In fact, the reverse may be true. Always confirm Bible quotes for yourself.

The devil had quoted Psalm 91. Verses 11-12 read, **“(God) will command His angels concerning you, to guard you.<sup>11</sup> On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”**

If you were to read this entire psalm you'd quickly see that it is a Messianic Psalm, that is, a psalm fulfilled by the Messiah, Jesus. The psalm even includes an allusion to the final judgment.

Jesus responded to the devil again with the words of Moses. He said, **Deuteronomy 6:16,18 (ESV), “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.... you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers....”**

Moses warned the people not to go back to the old ways, testing God's temper, tempting God's wrath. He promised them the world if they would only obey him.

But as we know, they did not. They fell into idolatry and disbelief, and they abandoned their relationship with the Lord.

When the devil tempted Jesus with a reminder of his power as the Messiah, he was trying to force his hand, persuading him to fulfill it. He taunted him with the words, "If you are the Son of God," and he showed him what the power and authority and personal glory he could enjoy, and he even validated his words with Scripture. And all Jesus had to do was say yes.

Indeed, Jesus could've said, "Okay, you're getting on my nerves! The gig is up!" And then he could've brought fire out of heaven and judge the devil and all evil.

But what would've happened to us? We would've been condemned even before we were born. For Jesus had not yet died for the sins of the world, for you and me.

Jesus did what Israel could not do. He humbled himself before God, waiting for him to fulfill his Word in his life. He did not lose himself in the promises of the world, promises of glory and authority, false promises by a false god. But he chose to wait. First, he would die for our sins and restore our relationship to our God and Father in Heaven, and then, and only then, he would claim his throne and come again to judge the world.

Lent is our 40 days in the wilderness. It is our time to reflect on the love of God in the heart of our Lord Jesus. It's a time to give thanks for every good thing that the Lord has given us by the power of his Word. It's a time to resist the temptations we experience daily, calling on the Lord when we are in trouble. And it's a time to pray that the Lord would come again soon to finally fulfill his promise to crush the devil once for all.

Friends in Christ, this week let us give thanks to the Lord for his Word, for therein is our hope, our confidence, our strength.

This week let us call on the Lord to increase our will to know and love his Word, that the devil would have no power over us.

And this week let us find opportunity to share this good news with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.