

When Satan Tempted the Lord Jesus

Luke 4:1-13; Psalm 91:1-12

Sunday, March 6, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction:

The root of temptation is, I believe, that notion that we can be our own gods. We don't need the real God and we can hold that God accountable to meet our needs without us being accountable ourselves. This seems to be the mindset of a particular group of scientists, at least according to a joke I found online:

"One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. They picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and get lost." God listened patiently and kindly to the man and after the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well! How about this? Let's have a man making contest." To which the man replied, "OK, great!" But God added, "Now we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God just looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You go get your own dirt!"* God didn't just make Adam, He made the dirt from which Adam was made, and He made that out of nothing. In this passage about the temptations of Jesus, we see Satan try to convince even the Son of God to take matters into his own hands and play God over His own life. These temptations came over and again to Jesus, and also to His many followers through the ages.

- Set the stage: The temptations of Luke 4, especially the one involving Psalm 91

One of the traditional sites of the Baptism of Jesus is on the southern end of the Jordan River, shortly before it enters the Dead Sea. Across the river from that site are a Syrian Orthodox Church and Monastery in Jordan. Back on the Israeli side is Jericho, a small town with a big archeological dig and a modern casino with armed guards on the edge of town. Jericho is at a very low elevation and the road leaving town winds up the mountains for miles before reaching Jerusalem. On a plateau overlooking Jericho is a very old Greek Orthodox Monastery and that is a traditional location for the temptation of Jesus, who fasted for 40 days, tempted, I believe, by Satan over and again throughout the ordeal. We can categorize the temptations in three ways; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. 1 John 2:16 lists them. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve met the lust of the flesh when they noticed that the forbidden fruit was good for food. They met the lust of the eyes when they saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes, and they met the pride of life when they noticed that the tree was desirable to make one wise. Here in Luke, Jesus meets the lust of the flesh when Satan tells Him to command this stone to become bread. He met the lust of the eyes when Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and offered them to Him, for a price. Finally, Jesus met the pride of life when Satan took Him to the pinnacle of the temple and challenged Him to throw Himself down to the Kidron Valley below. In every category of temptation Satan failed the test and Jesus left the encounter victorious. Let's look at the last event more closely.

- Main Point: We are not to tempt the Lord God, that is, to put God to the test. That is attempting to put the Almighty at our disposal. It is the other way around. Deuteronomy 6:16

I do not know how He got there, but at the end of our passage in Luke, Jesus finds Himself with Satan at the top of a pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem. If it had been the southeast portico the

drop would have been several hundred feet to the Kidron Valley below. There Satan appeals to the pride of life and challenges Jesus to leap off the ledge. And he then quotes Scripture, from Psalm 91:11-12 which invokes the protection of God. He implies that if Jesus truly trusts God He should be willing to leap. Besides, His survival of the fall would gain much attention and make an impressive introduction of His ministry. Jesus replies, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

- Amplify

He is quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, which in turn alludes to an episode during the Exodus. It's found in Exodus 7:12-17. The people are camping somewhere in the Sinai, and they almost stone Moses because there is no source of water anywhere. God tells Moses to strike the ground where instructed and God will cause to spring to flow and provide water. It is remembered as an episode in which the people put God to the test and was one of the low points of the long march for 40 years. None of that first generation of free Israelis ever saw the Promised Land, save Caleb and Joshua. This episode was one of the reasons why. Putting God to the test is an attempt to assert our authority over the Almighty, an authority that we do not have.

- Apply

One way to apply this is to embrace Proverbs 3:5-6 and make major life decisions only after seeking the Lord in prayer. We follow the Lord's plans, not the other way around and we are expected to trust Him even if we don't really see the way forward. That involves being willing to live with the feeling that we are not in control, because we are not. Covid is fading but has yet to completely disappear and we live, currently with the threat of a third World War on the horizon. We have to be willing to let the Lord be in control and live with the uncertainty of the days. He knows all things.

- Conclusion:

There is always the temptation to place ourselves in charge and then put the Lord to the test. The people in Exodus did so when they were thirsty, and Satan tempted Jesus to do the same; be in charge of your own life, be the God of your own soul. The Lord Jesus didn't buy it and neither should we. We don't test the Lord; we choose to trust even when that leaves us with a feeling that we are not in control. It's better that way, for in these troubled times feeling not in control reminds us that the Lord is in control. When Satan tempted Jesus, he attacked that faith and failed.