

Sermon Discussion

6 March 2022

Read Luke 4:1-13

Dig Deeper

The traditional site of Jesus' temptation is a barren area **northwest of the Dead Sea**. The "40 days" motif is prominent in the Old Testament (*see Gen. 7:4; Ex. 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8; Jonah 3:4*).

There seems to be a deliberate comparison between Israel as God's Son (*see Exod. 4:22-23; Hos. 11:1*) and Jesus as the Son of God in this story. Both sons experienced temptation in the wilderness for **40 periods of time**, Israel for 40 years and Jesus for 40 days. Perhaps God regarded a period of days as the appropriate counterpart for a man compared to years for a nation. Israel failed, but Jesus succeeded. God led Israel into the wilderness, and God's Spirit led Jesus there. God tested Israel there, and God allowed the devil to tempt Jesus there.

Jesus' responses to Satan's temptations by quoting from **Deuteronomy 6 and 8** confirm that He was thinking about the experience of the nation in the wilderness. And yet, though the Israelites were miraculously fed in the desert, Jesus ate nothing.

All three of the tests recorded enticed Jesus to abandon His dependence on God. The first one was a temptation **to gratify self**. Jesus, knowing God's Word, knew of the plan which was before Him and was trusting in the Father and His Word for sustenance.

What Matthew recorded as the second and third temptations were reversed by Luke. This may indicate that there were continual temptations in these areas. The second temptation Luke recorded was an appeal to Jesus **to be in control** of all the world. The condition was that Jesus must worship ("*bend the knee to*") the devil. Though Jesus would have world rulership, He would be depending on Satan...rather than on God the Father and His plan.

By the third temptation, the devil tried to get Jesus **to change the timing and structure** of His ministry. Jesus knew He must go to the cross and die for the sins of the world. To receive any acceptance without going to the cross would be to question whether God was really in the plan at all. That was exactly the situation Moses wrote about in *Deuteronomy 6:16*, which Jesus quoted. Moses referred back to a time when the people wondered whether God was really with them (*Ex. 17:7*). But Jesus was confident of the fact that God was with Him, and that the Father's plan and timing were perfect.

1. As Jesus began His ministry, He encountered many barriers and spiritual opposition. Think about a long-term project you've undertaken (i.e., home renovation, diet or exercise program, pursuing a degree). What challenges/difficulties did you encounter and what qualities did it take to see the task to its end?

2. Read 1 Peter 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 11:14. What does Satan look for, and disguise himself as in order to tempt us?
3. What was Jesus' spiritual condition when he faced the temptation of Satan? Is a person free from temptation when he is full of the Spirit? What was Jesus' physical condition before the temptation? Do you think that Satan waits until we are weak to attack us? Discuss this.
4. Let's try to use our sanctified imagination with this next one: If the devil wanted to tempt you in the wilderness after 40 days, what would he have used to increase his chance of success? The point of this question is realizing our vulnerabilities and where we need to increase our trust and reliance in the Lord.
5. As you consider your Lenten fasting, are there particular areas in your life that you hope the Lord moves you forward in? What do you feel comfortable sharing and how we can we pray and support each other?

Application & Prayer

Each week of our Lenten series, there will be a weekly fast to consider. In Week 1, we are invited to give up a food, a drink, or a meal. It could be fasting from meals for a day or fasting from coffee or chocolate or salty snacks for the week. On Sunday, we will break the fast and consider the coming week's invitation. Again, it's recommended that you contextualize this with your life, not comparing to others, and most importantly, invite God to draw you closer to Him and forward in His will this Lent.

A Prayer for this week of Lent:

Lord God Almighty, shaper and ruler of all creatures, we pray for your great mercy, that you guide us towards you, for we cannot find our way.

And guide us to your will, to the need of our soul, for we cannot do it ourselves. And make our mind steadfast in your will and aware of our soul's need.

Strengthen us against the temptations of the devil, and remove from us all lust and every unrighteousness, and shield us against our foes, seen and unseen.

Teach us to do your will, that we may inwardly love you before all things with a pure mind. For you are our maker and our redeemer, our help, our comfort, our trust, our hope; praise and glory be to you now and forever. Amen