

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Luke 4:1-13

Key Verse: 4:4

"Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone."'"

After introducing John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, Luke described the baptism and genealogy of Jesus. Next Luke reveals to us the temptation of Jesus. How nice it would be for all humankind if there were no devil's temptation. But there is the devil's temptation to make us stumble. The devil's temptation looks sweet, but it is very dangerous. It is necessary for us to study this passage about Jesus' victory over temptation.

First, man does not live on bread alone (1-4).

Look at verse 1. "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert...." It was because ever since Adam yielded to the devil's temptation, man has been under the devil's control. The devil has defeated all mankind through temptations. The devil was like a soldier with a machine gun on higher ground strafing enemies scattered in disorder at the foot of the mountain. Men have been helpless before the devil's temptations. Therefore, Jesus had to stand in the very place where Adam had failed in order to defeat the devil. The desert where Jesus was tempted was not a vacation spot or a place of picturesque beauty; it was a dust heap of hills and limestone rocks which were blistered and peeling. It glowed with heat like a furnace, and precipices rose 1,200 feet high and swooped down to the Dead Sea. The place where he was tempted was very gruesome and chilling. There Jesus had to undergo the devil's temptations all by himself.

How did the devil tempt Jesus? Look at verse 2. "...where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry." Jesus fasted forty days to prepare himself to confront the devil's temptation. So at the end of the forty days, Jesus became totally dehydrated and exhausted. At that moment, the devil came and tempted him. What did the devil say to Jesus? Look at verse 3. "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." The devil knew that he could offend Jesus' pride if the Son of God did not make bread out of stones.

It was a totally preposterous effort for the devil to tempt Jesus with the bread problem. Anyway, the devil said, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus said, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" Here, the devil tempted Jesus to show himself as the Son of God and to be realistic. But the devil's real temptation was, "You should not have to die because of hunger. You have to earn bread by using any available means." In this way, the devil tempted Jesus with the bread problem. In this way, the devil tempted Jesus to disobey the command of God. But Jesus defeated the devil's temptation with a word, "It is written." In the first round, the devil was completely defeated.

But the devil's temptation of the bread problem is not easy at all for all mankind. In time past and present, the devil's temptation to man to get bread by any available means has been most persuasive. The devil says continuously, "You have to eat, don't you? You have to feed your kids, don't you? You have to work hard to establish your future security for you and your family, don't you?" When the devil's temptation about the bread problem comes, most people, both young and old, become anxious until they become slaves of anxiety and men and women of intermittent sighing. Mostly, they are anxious because of their future security problem. It is not because they have no bread to eat, but because they are tempted by the devil and become fearful and restless.

Not long ago, schools adopted a job-oriented education. Ironically, so many beautiful girl students have been studying engineering instead of home economics. Those who want to get a proper job have to study nearly twenty years. Even if they get a Ph.D., there is no guarantee that they will get a proper job. So they despair. Most young men do not study for the pure purpose of becoming educated. Instead, they study to get skills and a better job to solve their future security problems. As a result, most people become materialistic. If a man becomes materialistic, there is a great danger for him that he will be an ungodly person. If he becomes an ungodly man he has to undergo all the punishments that ungodly people have to undergo. It is because man cannot serve God and money (Mt 6:24b). The job-oriented educational system heavily imposes on most people to be selfish. Job-oriented education makes people like Esau in Genesis, who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. Esau said, "What good is the birthright to me when I am famished?" (Ge 25:29-32) He is a most despised person in the Bible because of his

ignoble desire. Likewise, those who have no sense of honor are not normal people. In truth, a sense of honor makes man a noble person. But those who do not have a sense of honor, overburdened by the bread problem, are ignoble people. The Bible calls Esau an immoral, godless person (Heb 12:16). In short, Esau had no morality. One with no morality is like a piece of dried fruit. These days, most people see that computer geeks, who can make \$1,000 per day, are better than those who have attained a Ph.D., who possibly get \$30,000 per year, by luck, if they get a job. What was Jesus' answer? Look at verse 4. "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" What does it mean when Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone"? It teaches us a basic truth that a man is both body and a soul. Jesus knew that man is flesh, made out of the dust of the ground. At the same time, man is made in the image of God (Ge 1:27). So he is a soul. Man needs physical bread to satisfy his physical needs. But man also needs spiritual food to satisfy his soul. It is easy for anyone to ignore his spiritual body. In short, man must eat to satisfy his body, which is mortal, and at the same time, he must feed his spiritual body, which is immortal.

To the phrase, "Man does not live on bread alone," Matthew 4:4 adds, "...but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Most people try in their own ways to satisfy their souls. Many think that if they have a lot of money, they can be happy. One boy from a rich family enjoyed a lot of fun in the world. People around him thought that he was happy. But he was not. He was indeed an unhappy young man. By God's providence, he met a one-to-one Bible teacher and began to study the Bible. Then Jesus came into his heart. He experienced inexpressible joy and deep rest in his soul. So he said to his father, "I want to grow spiritually and go to Japan as a missionary." His father was sad to hear his son say this. After a few minutes, the father said, "I will go to Japan with you." One young man lost his father early. He studied hard and became a chief surgeon to please his widowed mother. But he was not happy, even though he was handsome and he had a beautiful wife. One day, he was introduced to a godly professor who taught him John's gospel. He saw the true light in Jesus. Then the surgeon gave up his career and decided to go to Russia as a missionary. He went to Moscow with his wife and two children and worked hard until he and his wife were completely exhausted. But he said, "I feel God's peace in my soul." The word of God is the bread of life which gives man eternal life (Jn 6:35). The word of God is living water welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:14).

In this materialistic society, it is not easy to overcome the devil's temptation about the bread problem. But there is a way: we must hold firmly to the words of God's promise. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." This is God's truth and promise which saves us from the devil's temptation. When we read U.S. history, we see that our great American forefathers became rich and happy when they first sought God's kingdom and righteousness. On all of our currency and coins, "In God we trust" is imprinted. Our forefathers enjoyed true freedom in God (Jn 8:31,32; 1Pe 2:16). When our forefathers trusted in God, they had the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God made them free indeed (2Co 3:17). Americans were free to give. Americans were free to go out as missionaries. The number of missionaries amounted to 1,000,000.

But one scholar, who was greatly influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, framed the American educational system with pragmatism. Because of his influence many students seem to have believed Darwin's theory as if it were a religion. What is worse, pragmatism, which seemed to give immediate benefit, fascinated the American psyche. To us, pragmatism looked optimistic. Soon, pragmatism became our American mentality. The damage which has come from this idea is greater than we can imagine. Mostly Americans were joyful. They were sacrificial. But these days, we Americans are not joyful; instead many are angry. So the people of other nations call us, "angry Americans." We are no longer sacrificial. Instead, we are selfish. Here we learn that sometimes theory and result do not match. We must hear Jesus' words, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." When the devil tempted him, Jesus was weak and helpless after fasting for forty days. But he did not yield to the devil's temptation. Instead, he defeated the temptations of the devil with the word of God. "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Second, worship the Lord your God (5-8).

This time the devil tempted Jesus on the human level. The devil knew that all human beings are the incarnation of political ambition. One beautiful girl who attended a prestigious school wanted to be president of the United States. Before election, presidential candidates bow their heads to the voters probably more than 10,000 times. This shows how people want to get political power and honor. Look at verses 5-7. "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.'" The devil's temptation was to not worship God, but to worship the devil instead. In the Bible, the devil is

called "the prince of this world" (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In one sense, what the devil says is right. But actually, he is a liar. He cannot give all the authority and splendor of the kingdoms of the world. This liar wanted to tempt Jesus by arousing his political ambition to rule the world with authority and splendor. The devil's strategy was a compromise, and at the same time it was a threat and pressure on Jesus, suggesting that unless he compromised with the devil, Jesus could do nothing in this world. The principle of democracy is "Compromise for the sake of mutual benefit." Living in this land, what can we do if we do not compromise? We need faith that God will enable us to worship God, not the devil.

What was Jesus' answer to this? Look at verse 8. "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" Jesus' answer is right because it is the way to true happiness for all mankind. What does it mean to worship God? Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Man must love God because if he doesn't love God, he loves nobody, including himself. This is the reason God tested Abraham to offer his one and only son Isaac as a burnt offering—to see if Abraham loved Isaac more than God himself. Abraham was ready to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. Then God said, "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Ge 22:12). When we worship God and love God we can love our family and our neighbor, as well as God's sheep. Therefore, we must worship God only.

Third, do not put the Lord your God to the test (9-13).

In short, this part is the devil's temptation of Jesus concerning an easy-going way. At this point, the devil tempted Jesus on the spiritual level. This time the devil used Scripture to tempt Jesus. He quoted Psalm 91:11,12, and tempted Jesus to prove himself to be the Son of God by throwing himself down from the top of the temple and landing on the ground unhurt. The purpose of God's promise in Psalm 91:11,12 is to assure his people that God will protect those who absolutely depend on God in doing his work; it is not at all to be used to "test" God. The devil's real intention in tempting Jesus to perform an acrobatics show was to persuade Jesus to fulfill his Messianic work in an easy way, or to take a "shortcut." Behind the devil's words was the implication: "You are the Son of God Almighty. So you don't have to deny yourself. You don't have to take up your cross. You don't have to die to obey the will of God for world salvation." The devil's intention was to stop Jesus from taking up his cross of salvation so as to disobey God's will for world salvation. The devil is a liar. The easy way sounds good. But there is no easy way in this world. There is a saying which goes, "No cross, no crown. No pain, no gain." It is because God made man to work hard for the glory of God, as well as for his own happiness. God made man to go through the way of the cross.

Jesus came to this world to die on the cross, but the devil tempted him, saying, "No, no, don't take up your cross!" Jesus answered, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." To Jesus, who came to this world as the Lamb of God to die on the cross and shed his blood, this was a difficult temptation to resist. But Jesus did not yield to the devil's temptation. The devil tried to fool Jesus with his skill, with which he had fooled all mankind after the Fall. Jesus said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." We should struggle hard not to test God for an easy way.

Jesus defeated Satan's temptations by quoting the words of the book of Deuteronomy. Jesus used the word of God as his unique weapon in defeating the devil's temptations. When we want to defeat the devil's temptations, we must also use the word of God as our weapon. Thank God for his Son, that he opened the way for us to defeat the devil's temptation (1Co 10:13), especially from anxiety about future security.