

# CAPITOL STUDIES

APRIL 21, 2021 • WEEK 15



SEVEN DEADLY  
SINS AND CIVIL  
SERVANTS:  
SPECIAL TOPICS

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## *Verse of the Week*

Luke 4:8

*Jesus answered him,  
"What was written  
now stands, 'You  
shall fearfully wor-  
ship the Lord your  
God and serve Him  
only.'"*

## Temptations: A Triple Test



THE GERMAN THEOLOGIAN MARTIN LUTHER wrote a battle hymn in 1527 that stirs the hearts of Christian soldiers centuries later. In "A Mighty Fortress," Luther spoke of God's promise of protection for His children in the constant moral battle and flood of mortal ills prevailing. In life's wild warfare, Luther sang of Almighty God as a bulwark for His sons and a castle for His daughters. He explained why we need this mighty berg:

"...For still our ancient foe / Doth seek to work us woe; / His craft and power are great, / And armed with cruel hate, / On earth is not his equal. / Did we in our own strength confide, / Our striving would be losing, / Were not the right Man on our side, / The Man of God's own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? / Christ Jesus, it is He / ...And He must win the battle. / And though this world, with devils filled, / Should threaten to undo us, / We will not fear, for God hath willed / His truth to triumph through us. / The Prince of Darkness grim, / We tremble not for him; / His rage we can endure, / For lo, his doom is sure; / One little Word shall fell him."

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V. D. M.

*(This study is adapted from an earlier series by Rev. Gauthier, 1960–2020.)*



## INTRODUCTION

Today we will study how Christ Jesus fought the Prince of Darkness grim and how we too can fight like Him. In Luke 1:46-55, Mary prophetically sang a hymn about the magnificence of her great Son not yet born. He would do what God always did in His good time. He would fill the hungry with good things, dethrone prideful political rulers, and give help to His servants as He remembers not to forget the mercies He has promised them. Watch as Satan wages a wild wilderness war.

### 1. THE BACKGROUND

*Luke 4:1-2*

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, withdrew from the Jordan (after His baptism as a Son) and was being led around by the Spirit in the desolate wilderness <sup>2</sup>for forty days, while being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He was constantly sensing His hunger.”<sup>1</sup>*

Luke had described for Governor Theophilus Jesus’ public baptism in Luke 3. The Trinity was at the Jordan that day. As John the Baptist lifted the very Son of God from the baptismal waters, the Spirit anointed Him for service and rested on Him like a dove, since Jesus submitted to baptism like an obedient son. His Father proclaimed Jesus’ Sonship as very well pleasing. Jesus was ready to lead. He was a submissive son, the way a son should be. He was humble, and God did for Jesus what God always does—exalts the humble in His own good time. Jesus was ready to represent Israel as their Messiah. Jesus could now lead.

Israel, God’s nation (personified as God’s son in the Old Testament), went through the wilderness for forty years and failed God’s tests for them. God hoped Israel would walk by faith in dependence upon Him like an obedient son; He hoped they would worship Him in reverent fear in the wilderness.

Jesus came as a second Adam and as a new Israel. Anointed with God’s Spirit and proclaimed as the Father’s Son, Jesus had followed the Spirit’s lead into a wilderness for a final testing time of 40 days. Would Jesus, like Israel, fail and fall and complain about the hardships and hunger, filled with doubts of God’s goodness and His ability to provide and protect? Would Jesus, the second Adam, fail when tempted by the ancient foe, the Prince of Darkness grim?

There is much legislative leaders can learn from the Christ (as Lord and leader) in His triple time of testing. God has for senators, as He had for His divine Son, tests of His own choosing. Let us now look to Jesus, for “He must win the battle.” For almost six weeks, the Spirit led Jesus on a spiritual hunger strike in which He ate nothing of real sustenance except what a seemingly God-forsaken wilderness would yield. Not a wilderness of sand, this Judean wasteland was home to untold millions of limestones and small rocks that look like small loaves of bread. There, the Spirit constantly led Christ, challenging His body and soul. Satan had been an unseen spectator at Jesus’ baptism; now all this while, God’s



invisible ancient foe and implacable enemy was allowed to batter Christ so that “Jesus gained no breathing spell whatever these forty days.”<sup>2</sup>

But then, as he does in our lives, the devil appeared unannounced in verse 3. The enemy of souls had come to engage in a climactic clash, a colossal spiritual battle with the Son of God who was led for forty foodless days by the Spirit of God. The lowest lord of hell’s kingdom came out in the open to break this divine champion with a final blitzkrieg to test this tall new son of Israel. This tough testing time in the wild had nearly led to Jesus’ starvation. Unlike the married Adam in Eden’s lush and cool garden, cornucopious with succulent fruit, Jesus was alone under a baking desert sun. He was most vulnerable.

**THE H.A.L.T PRINCIPLE:  
YOU ARE MOST VULNERABLE WHEN YOU ARE  
HUNGRY, ALONE, LONELY, OR TIRED.**

## 2. THE TEMPTATION OF BAD BREAD (SIN’S SELF-SATISFACTION)

*Luke 4:3-4*

*And the devil said to Him, “If You are a Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf.”<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered him, “What was written now stands, ‘Man does not live by mere bread.’”*

Like a brutal warrior, Satan struck without mercy at his enemy’s weakest point. The tempter knew Jesus was **the** Son of God, but would He live like **a** son of God in humble dependence even though that very God had led Him to the brink of starvation? Will Jesus the Son of God be humanity’s new leader—the Son of Man—and live in humble dependence upon God? Satan *wanted* Jesus to make bread. He *knew* He could; he *hoped* He would.

A year later, Jesus fed over 5,000 men. He made, ate, and enjoyed bread of His own miraculous making. The essence of the Luke 4:3 temptation is to **use** His divine powers to satisfy Himself like a son independent from His Father. For Christ to win this battle, He must have indefatigable trust that His God and Father was a mighty fortress who could be trusted as One never failing.

Like His mother Mary, Jesus soaked His mind with Scripture. Pulling the sword of the Spirit from the sheath of His memory, He would ignore the demands of hunger. He would do battle with and borrow from the pages of Deuteronomy 6-8. He had been taught in those three chapters that old Israel had been hungry in the wilderness and complained against God, doubting His goodness because of their hunger. This new Son of Man, hungry in the wilderness, reminded Himself and his rival what Israel forgot—God alone gives men life. Men do not live merely by bread but by trusting God in the hard times. Even as Mary sang thirty years before while Jesus was in her womb, God will do what God has always done—He fills the hungry with good things in His time. Bread is bad when it is eaten without faith.<sup>3</sup>





AS HE DID WITH EVE IN THE GARDEN, SATAN USED FOOD TO TRY TO RAISE A DUSTY CLOUD OF DOUBT IN THE SINLESS MIND OF CHRIST.

### 3. THE TEMPTATION OF CRAZY KINGSHIP (AND SHAMEFUL SHORTCUTS)

In Luke 23:3, we see the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate questioning a bleeding, bludgeoned Christ whether He was King of the Jews. Jesus answered, “You said it.” Jesus came as a king, and for that He was born, and He knew it. However, Christ’s path to His crown entailed a cross, and He knew it. To Christ, shortcuts to kingship are crazy.

*Luke 4:5-8*

*And the devil led Jesus upward and showed Him all the kingdoms of the inhabited world in a micron of time. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, right in front of me, if You just bend the knee once, it shall all be Yours.” <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, “What was written now stands, ‘You shall fearfully worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”*

This temptation involves the demonic elevation, transportation, and levitation of Christ’s hungry body to hover *high up* into an unknown realm where Satan enabled Him to instantly grasp the glorious authority of all the inhabited earth. This was probably every seat of power in the Roman Empire, which canvassed the globe and ruled the world. Like a persuasive salesman, Satan pointed out the goods and made Jesus an offer that at best was a demonically delusional oversell and at worst a flat-out lie. The king of devils offered Jesus a shortcut to His destiny—recapturing the world for good in supreme political power—Kingship of all the earth.

The price tag attached was a mere genuflect, high in the sky, where no human eye could spy Jesus humbly bowing to the idea that the devil had superior worth to His Father. The fallen angel Lucifer, now the dark lord and “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), is filled with cancerously egomaniacal pride. “I can sell Jesus on this,” his malignant mind mused, “I’ve used my diabolical raptures to sell this to untold thousands of political leaders through time. I tell them, ‘Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things will be added to you.’”

### 4. THE TEMPTATION OF PRESUMING ON GOD’S PROMISES (BIBLE BUNGLING)

*Luke 4:9-12*

*And the devil transported Jesus to Jerusalem and had Him stand on that topmost wing of the Temple, and said to Him, “If You are a Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; <sup>10</sup>for what was written now stands, ‘He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,’ <sup>11</sup>and, ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’” <sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered and said to*





him, “*What was said still stands, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’*”

The devil transported Jesus’ body away from hot, dust-heaped hills and high, craggy wilderness cliffs to the tiptop of the Temple in Jerusalem—the religious capital city of the world. Satan had become more than annoyed with Jesus’ recitation of memorized Scripture. Planting the feet of the great Galilean at a dizzying 450 feet above the Kidron Valley, they stood in the open air at a terrifying height on the Temple’s southeast perimeter wall. Satan wanted Jesus to put His money where His mouth was. “Since You insist on quoting the Bible like some backwoods fundamentalist, *prove* You believe it Jesus—*JUMP!*”

Jesus knew that God put Him in the wilderness to test His faithful obedience as a leader of men and as His beloved Son. He was not about to test the very God who sent Him on that 40-day mission. Jesus also realized that the devil did not *misquote* the Scripture, but he did *misapply* it. He tempted Jesus to a flashy show in the capital at “the Capitol,” and Jesus would not have it. God keeps His promises. He always has and always will. “The devil’s way of citing Scripture has been taught far and wide in the devil’s school.”<sup>4</sup>

**JESUS SHOWED THE DEVIL THAT TESTING GOD IS NOT TRUSTING GOD. “ONE LITTLE WORD DID FELL HIM.”**

## CONCLUSION

*Luke 4:13*

*When the devil exhausted and culminated all these temptations, he left Jesus but only until an opportune time.*

Dear Senator: Leaders’ temptations will come and go, as does our ancient foe. Your spiritual victory and welfare are ever my concern.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Perry M. Gauthier".

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier

## FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations are from my own translational paraphrase, based on the *New American Standard Bible 1995 Update*, made carefully, reverently, and respectfully after diligent study work in the original Greek Scriptures.
2. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, Augsburg Publishing House, 1946, pg. 224.
3. [Romans 14:23](#) – “But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.”
4. R. C H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, pg. 239.



