

Luke 4.1-15 The Lord, the Spirit and the devil.

v.1 Jesus, full of the HS, led by the Spirit *in* (not 'into') the wilderness

- Clear link to Jesus' baptism (where HS descends and declared God's beloved Son with whom he is well pleased): "full of the HS, returned from the Jordan", and it is his sonship that is tested. Will the Father still be "well-pleased" with him once his time in the wilderness is over??
- But his humanity has also been stressed in the genealogy in ch 3. Jesus has emptied himself of his glory and taken on human flesh. He is God's Son, but in human form. He will be tested *as a man* – "in every way as we are" (Hebrews 4.15)
- NB. Jesus is not exempt from temptation, even though he is "full of the Holy Spirit" On the contrary, he faces far harder tests than anyone else. The three crowning ones end "every temptation" (v. 13). The number 3 signifies completeness/fullness/finality.
- No possible doubt about his sonship, => sense is 'since you are...' rather than 'if you are...'
- It is not the reality/fact of Jesus' sonship which the devil seeks to test but his *understanding* of it, and his relationship with the Father
Cf. Adam and Eve in the garden. The devil likewise sought to test their understanding of their relationship to their Creator, to God: is he truly good, and should they listen to/obey him or Satan?
- The temptations are aimed at getting him to defect from his divine commission...
- The devil does not make the earth ugly or bad, but more agreeable. The enticements are deceptive, however, for by nature the devil is and can only be the adversary of God... (Edwards)

v.2 For 40 days tempted by the devil – though not till after 40 days of fasting and famished that the 3 specific temptations which Luke records commence.

First temptation: - stones to bread. Physical.

v.3

- Not an action one would normally associate with sin. “Surely it is the right of God’s Son to have the provision of all his needs; he needs food, he has the power to make it – let him do so.” (Wilcock)
- Cf. Deut 8.3 “And 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 everything that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (“anything that the LORD decrees” TaNaKh)

Second temptation: glory and all authority over the kingdoms of the known world. Political.

vv.5-8

- No “If/since you are the Son of God...” – would be too ridiculous for the devil to say this and then “worship me”.
- cf. 2.1 same word *oikoumene*, signifying the known world. The devil’s offer = that which tempts all earthly rulers, and was expected to be the Messianic ruler’s lot:
“Surely it is his right to receive power over all nations, and to become King of kings; and since the world is in Satan’s hands, it is from him that Jesus can receive it?” (Wilcock)
- cf. God with Moses on Mt Nebo Deut 34.1-4
- but the devil has only delegated authority
- he proposes to displace God as Jesus’ benefactor, to be his ‘father’, as though he is co-equal with God and an alternative father to him. It is “a delusion and a lie” (Bock) Yet even he admits his power and authority have been given him by God. What he offers is a parody of God’s fatherhood and “a shabby substitute for the divine sonship that is Jesus’ by birth (conception).
- For Jesus to accept the devil’s offer would be to deny his identity as God’s Son => quotes Deut 6.4-5, 13-15

Third temptation: to throw himself off the parapet of the temple trusting God to send angels to protect him. Presumption (religious: God will do whatever we ask/want).

vv.9-12

- “Surely it is his right to claim protection against all dangers; and his Father has actually promised it (Ps 91.11-12), so let him put the promise to the test (4.9-11).” (Wilcock)
- a test of Jesus but intended also to draw God in and test him – to test the relationship between Father and Son
- Jesus counters with Deut 6.16

Jesus’ responses to Satan:

- Jesus is asked to perform two signs (bread and jumping off temple), but performs neither of those, but another: perfect fidelity to the will of the Father
- “He does not exert his superior power or expose the devil’s deception. Cf. Matt 26.53 “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”

RATHER

- He invokes the word of God, the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6.17), thus obliging the devil to face his ultimate adversary.
 - The word of God is to Jesus what bread is to a human being (cf. Jn 4.34 (Edwards))

The result/outcome is that Jesus’ triumph over Satan and his temptations affirm his sonship and the nature of it - obedience to his Father (cf. Phil 2.8)

Jesus is confirmed as:

1. The New Adam. Parallels with testing in the Garden:

- “The temptation is presented as a conversation, as in Genesis 3” (Craddock)
- But, whereas Adam and Eve were in a garden, Jesus is in the wilderness. A much tougher test.
- Jesus as the New Adam, the perfectly obedient man

2. The true Israel. Parallels with the testing of Israel in the wilderness:

- Both share the elements of being led by God, hunger, bread, the number 40 and water (Red Sea/Jordan) in common (Edwards)

- Israel was similarly tested, particularly in the wilderness, “but they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (Isa 63.10)

Behind all opposition to Jesus (cf. 2.34; 3.19-20) is the devil. But behind Jesus stands the HS!

The devil has been defeated but not yet vanquished.

The final temptation = to come down from the cross – 23.35.

BUT, “Jesus’ performative competence prior to his actual assumption of public ministry in the service of God’s salvific aim” has been finally established. In 3.21-28 was demonstrated his “competence, indicating his possession of the requisite credentials, power and authority to set forth on his mission. But these are not enough. They must be matched with Jesus’ positive response to God’s purpose. Hence, here Jesus signals his alignment with God’s will in a way that surpasses the evidence already provided by his display of submission to God at his baptism.” (Green)

No surprise that Jesus leaves the wilderness and returns to Galilee to begin his ministry “filled with the power of the Spirit”, and goes on to release the devil’s captives.

What we learn about Satan

His word is never to be trusted!

Satan not only tests and oppresses from without, like the HS, he can enter in and fill – see 22.3.

What this teaches about temptation and testing in general:

1. If Jesus as the beloved Son and full of the HS is not exempt from testing and temptation, neither should we expect to be!

“A real temptation beckons us to do that about which much good can be said. Stones to bread – the hungry hope so; take political control – the oppressed hope so; leap from the temple – those longing for proof of God’s power among us hope so. All this is to say that a real temptation is an offer not to fall but to rise. The tempter in Eden did not ask, “Do you wish to be the devil?” but, “Do you wish to be as God?” ... Temptation is so deceptively attractive. It was not to a malicious opponent but to a very close friend that Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan!”” (Craddock)

2. Testing is usually ‘of the heart’ – Deut 8.2 “And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these 40 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.”

3. Quoting scripture:

Whenever you hear quotations from the Scriptures, be careful of trusting the speaker immediately. Consider the person: what sort of a life he leads, what sort of opinions he holds, what sort of intention he has. Otherwise, he might pretend that he is holy and not be holy. (Origen, quoted by Edwards).

“There is no error so gross but that some sober brow will bless it with a proper text.” Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

“In Luke’s theology, Scripture is adequate to generate and to sustain faith. If scripture is set aside, not even miracles will help (16.27-31).” (Craddock)

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What do you understand by Jesus being ‘full of the Holy Spirit’? How do you think this is related to his baptism? (NB. Be careful not to fall into the heresy of adoptionism, which holds that Jesus only became ‘the Son of God’ at his baptism). Can we be “full” of the holy Spirit in the same/a similar way?
2. What do you think it means that Jesus was *led* by the Spirit in the wilderness?
3. Do you agree with Origen re determining whether scripture I quoted aright or not? Why? If not, what other criteria would you use?
4. How do we ensure that we/WHCC are people of both word and Spirit?
5. Consider each of the three tests individually. Which one do you find yourself most vulnerable to? How do you, or might you resist Satan in that area?
6. Consider 1 Cor 10.12-13. How does Paul both warn and encourage the Corinthians? How does this warn and encourage us?