



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 4:1-13

To understand Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

“Hangry”

If you’ve ever been in a situation that is high-stress or negatively impacting, and then you become hungry in the middle of it, you quickly learn how real being *hangry* is. If you’ve been living under a rock for the last 15 years and don’t know what hangry means, it’s the clever combination of the words *hungry* and *angry*, and it’s a state in which a person’s negative feelings are amplified due to hunger. Research shows that it’s not just a funny, colloquial term, either. For example, a study from the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at UNC Chapel Hill showed that people who were hungry had more intense negative reactions to negative images than full people. It also concluded that hunger didn’t seem to affect the hungry participant’s reaction to positive or neutral images, which means that hunger only affects the negative experiences.

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness in a fast from food and water, and upon coming out of this experience, the text admits: “he was hungry” (Lk. 4:2). This was immediately following His baptism, as evidenced by the phrase “returned from the Jordan.” Jesus had been baptized and confirmed by the Heavenly Father, and now that step of obedience and confirmation was about to be put to the test. It was in this moment that Jesus began to be tempted or tested by Satan, and yet the perfect Son of God doesn’t respond negatively, but by a series of quotations of Scripture. This passage, then, not only paints a historical picture of Jesus’ contention with Satan, but also demonstrates a practical model for how to combat spiritual warfare.

Forty Days

Of the numerous examples of different types of fasts in both the Old and New Testaments, the fast that Jesus undergoes in the wilderness for forty days is by far the most rigorous. It would be classified as a supernatural fast, in that without the sustaining power of God, it would be impossible to survive this amount of time without food and drink. It is a substantial example of how God's power has the ability to overcome what is otherwise humanly not possible.

However, there is another aspect to this that is equally important and no doubt occurred to the ancient readers, and that is the significance of the number of days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

SPYING OUT THE LAND

The first significant instance of the number 40 occurs in Numbers 13:25-26, when the spies of Israel spy out the land of Canaan for forty days: "When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land."

DISCIPLINE IN THE WILDERNESS

Because of Israel's disobedience, the number of days spent spying out the land became a blue print for the number of years God would discipline them: "According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall bear your guilt a year, even forty years, and you will know My opposition" (Num. 14:34).

MOSES' FAST

Perhaps most similar to Jesus' fast is Moses' fast when he received the Ten Commandments in Exodus 34:28: "So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."

ELIJAH'S FAST

The prophet Elijah also fasted for forty days and forty night in 1 Kings 9:8: "So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God."

The point in recognizing this repeating theme is to understand the bigger picture regarding who Jesus is and what He will accomplish. He is a representative of Israel as the chosen Messiah, and He is not just merely any prophet, but a prophet even greater than Moses and Elijah. Incidentally, Luke will record in chapter 9 at Jesus' transfiguration the presence of both Moses and Elijah, strengthening this connection.

The Temptation and Rebuttals

The bulk of this passage is concerned with Jesus' interaction with the devil. There are three specific ways in which Satan tempts Jesus, and each time Jesus gives a response from Scripture. Below is a breakdown of each of these instances.

STONES TO BREAD

The first temptation comes in verse 3: "The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.'" Satan recognizes that the Son of God had the divine power to turn stones to bread, and he also recognized that after forty days of fasting, He would be quite hungry. The temptation, then, is to disregard His humanity and draw upon His divine power to appease His hunger. However, Jesus "emptied

himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). Instead of falling prey to this temptation, Jesus quoted back Scripture to Satan in verse 4: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, which is incidentally about how though the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years without food, the LORD provided manna for them. (Jesus: 1, Satan: 0)

WORSHIP ME

The second temptation comes in Luke 4:5-7: “And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” It isn’t necessarily untrue that Satan has authority and power on the earth. He is elsewhere called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). However, Jesus, the only perfect Son of God and second person in the Trinity, is only subject to the Heavenly Father. He responds with another quotation of Scripture, this time from Deuteronomy 6:13: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” (Jesus: 2, Satan: 0)

ANGELS WILL COME

The final temptation comes in verse 9: “And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.” From this point, Satan attempts to beat Jesus at His own game by quoting Scripture. First, he quotes Psalm 91:11: “He will command his angels concerning you,” followed by Psalm 91:12: “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” While it is true that no attack will come against Jesus unknowingly, what Jesus came to accomplish by suffering and dying was voluntary (John 10:17-18). Therefore, Jesus responds: “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” This voluntary and sacrificial mission of the God-Son will require faith, which He perfectly demonstrated. (Jesus: 3, Satan: 0)

Three times Satan tried to tempt Jesus, and three times Jesus answered his lies with the truth of God’s word, thus defeating him. Verse 13 concludes: “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

What About Now?

Perhaps the biggest takeaway is the profound importance of not only knowing the Scriptures, but knowing them well enough for them to equip you when you are under spiritual attack. This means that learning the Scripture is necessary, and memorizing Scripture is beneficial. Christians are to learn God’s word as a means of knowing him more deeply and understanding what faith-driven obedience to Him looks like such that Satan, sin, and/or temptation cannot take a foothold. Another takeaway is that there is a right and a wrong way to learn and utilize Scripture. Jesus demonstrates the correct way, but that Satan uses Scripture wrongly presents the reality that it is possible to do damage by wrongly quoting God’s word.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 4:1-2. What was Jesus “full of?” Where was He coming from? What had He been doing and for how long did He do it? What was the result of that?

2. Read Luke 4:3. Who came to speak to Jesus? What did he say? What was he trying to accomplish?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 4:4. How did Jesus respond? What Scripture did He quote? What was the significance of that passage?

2. Read Luke 4:5-7. What did Satan say next? What was he tempting Jesus to do?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 4:8. How did Jesus respond? What Scripture did He quote this time? What is the significance of this passage?

2. Read Luke 4:9. What did Satan tempt Jesus to do this time?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 4:10-11. What passages does Satan quote in order to try and convince Jesus?

2. Read Luke 4:12-13. How did Jesus respond? What Scripture did He quote this time? What was Satan's response?

Week 13 Discussion: Memorize It

In Luke's fourth chapter, we find the Lord Jesus, having just come out of a forty day fast from food and water, being tempted by Satan. Jesus' response to each of the things Satan says to Him comes directly from Scripture, which demonstrates the importance of knowing and memorizing Scripture well enough to weaponize it in the event of a spiritual attack. Talk as a group about the importance of the Bible and Scripture memory.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever memorized Scripture before? If so, what methods did you use? If not, why not?
2. What is the value of having some Scripture memorized?
3. Do you think everyone should attempt to memorize Scripture, or only some people? Why?

4. How else can you weaponize Scripture to aid you in spiritual warfare if you haven't memorized it?
5. How can you help other people with the discipline of Scripture memorization?
6. How can the church help equip the people of God to better know and memorize Scripture?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus supernaturally fasts for forty days without food or drink.
2. Jesus is tempted by Satan, and fights this temptation by rightly quoting Scripture.