

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 7

Into the Wilderness

Luke 4:1-2

Luke 4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.

The Lord does not begin His ministry immediately after His baptism. He leaves the Jordan River and enters the wilderness for 40 days of preparation. We see the number 40 throughout the Scripture.

- Israel wanders in the desert for 40 years.
- The Scripture divides the life of Moses into three 40 year segments – 40 years trying to be somebody, 40 years as a nobody, and 40 years learning that God is all in all.
- Moses spends 40 days on the mountain while Israel turns to idolatry.
- The Lord gives Saul 40 years to prove himself to be king. He fails!
- Jonah preaches that in 40 days God will destroy Nineveh.
- The Lord spends 40 days in the desert before the devil tempts Him three times.
- The Lord stays on the earth 40 days after His resurrection to prove to everyone that He is alive.

Notice that the passage indicates that the Lord does not eat during His time in the wilderness. It states that He does not become hungry until after the 40 days have passed. Notice also that when the LORD becomes hungry, the devil begins his temptation.

Temptation One

Luke 4:3-4

Luke 4:3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'"

All sins fall into one of three categories which Bible scholars call the three prime evil sins. They appear throughout the Scripture and every sin committed falls under one of these three sins. In the Old Testament and the New Testament they are called the "way of Cain," the "error of Balaam" and the "way of Korah." In the book of Jude they are called the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. The Bible is extremely consistent in presenting sins in the same order as listed in the book of Jude and verse three follows the same pattern.

The Lust of the Flesh

The Lord's first temptation by the devil deals with the needs of the flesh. The devil desires to cause the Lord to lust after the need for food because he knows that Jesus has finally become hungry. However, Jesus does not yield to the temptation involving the earthly needs of the flesh.

Temptation Two

Luke 4:5-8

Luke 4:5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ 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.

Lust of the Eye

The Lord's second temptation involves all that the Lord can see. The devil shows the Lord all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. He offers the Lord something that he cannot give but the Lord does not fall for that temptation.

Temptation Three

Luke 4:9-12

Luke 4:9 And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,' ¹¹ and, 'ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" ¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

The Pride of Life

The Lord's third temptation deals with life. Leaving the wilderness, the devil takes Jesus to the top of the Temple in the city of Jerusalem. There, the devil tempts Jesus to jump off the Temple and let God save His life by sending angels to catch Him. The Lord does not yield to this temptation. He will not test His Father by doing so! The Lord knows the plan and the devil cannot keep Him from fulfilling His purpose in life here on earth.

Satan Leaves

Luke 4:13

Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

Not finished with his efforts to tempt the Lord, the devil will try again later.

Temptation to Galilee

Luke 4:14-15

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And He *began* teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

The Spirit of God empowers Jesus to begin His life's mission in His home district of Galilee. Each day He attends the various synagogues where He teaches. His lessons mesmerize the people and the news of His ministry and message spreads. All the Jews want to hear Him speak.

To Nazareth

Luke 4:16

Luke 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

The people in His home town of Nazareth know Him. One Saturday He enters the synagogue in Nazareth and stands to read the Scriptures. Every Saturday, the priests of the synagogue perform a ritual service and then offer the floor to anyone who wants to speak or read a Scripture. The New Testament confirms this process with others such as Paul, James and John.

Jesus' Reads the Scripture

Luke 4:17-19

Luke 4:17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

The reputation of the Lord precedes Him to His home city. In the synagogue that He has visited every Saturday for His entire life, someone hands Him a copy of the Old Testament scroll of Isaiah. The Lord reads a Scripture that refers to Himself.

Jesus Teaches

Luke 4:20-22

Luke 4:20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

After reading from Isaiah, Jesus proclaims that He has fulfilled that passage. Until now, His hometown people have felt good about Jesus. Notice that they love the “gracious words which were falling from His lips.” He has enthralled them even to the point of wondering if He is truly the son of Joseph Eli. Evidently, they wonder why He has not spoken like this before; after all, He has spent the last 30 years in their town.

In an instant, things can change, and so, too, things change for Jesus. They love His reading from Isaiah; they accept His words concerning the fulfillment of the Scripture; yet, the next thing Jesus says ends His ministry in Nazareth.

Nazareth Ministry Ends

Luke 4:23

Luke 4:23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'"



Map 6: Nazareth and Capernaum

Notice that after leaving the wilderness near the Jordan River, Jesus travels through the countryside and visits many synagogues before arriving at Nazareth. Apparently, based on verse 23, Jesus has ministered in Capernaum before traveling to His home in Nazareth. Capernaum sits far from the well-worn path to Nazareth on the northern side of the Sea of Galilee. Yet, Jesus visits Capernaum first and the news of what He does there spreads quickly ahead of Him to Nazareth. Jesus reads their hearts on that Saturday. The Nazarenes are expecting what occurred in Capernaum to occur in Nazareth.

Rejection in Nazareth

Luke 4:24-30

Luke 4:24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵ "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶ and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, *in the land* of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ And all *the people* in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; ²⁹ and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, He went His way.

Jesus knows their unspoken desires and answers with the truth! He reveals the truth about the ministry of Elijah and Elisha and it appalls the people. They become enraged because He

will not do for them what He did in Capernaum. They press against Him and He moves out to high ridge near the city. They intend to throw Him off the cliff. Jesus miraculously passes through the crowd and continues on His journey to minister to others in the district.

Back to Capernaum

Luke 4:31-32

Luke 4:31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; ³² and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.

Leaving the angry crowd in Nazareth, Jesus travels back to Capernaum where He enters the synagogue on the Sabbath and begins to teach. Just as in Nazareth, the people of Capernaum listen in amazement at the authority within His words and message. Why are they amazed? Is it because He speaks to them with force? No! Jesus always speaks with gracious but persuasive words. Luke probably means that the people's amazement stems from the competency in Jesus' words. His message contains an influence of superhuman power that allows the people to feel freedom, hope, and liberty!

Unclean Demon

Luke 4:33-37

Luke 4:33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst *of the people*, he came out of him without doing him any harm. ³⁶ And amazement came upon them all, and they *began* talking with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out." ³⁷ And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

On that Sabbath, Jesus heals His first demon-possessed man. Notice the proclamation of the demon when he calls Jesus the "Holy One of God!" The demon, a fallen angel, knows Jesus as his creator too! Even the fallen angels had spent time with Jesus before they chose to sin against Him and before He came to earth to be the Savior. The demon does not doubt that he stood before the creator of everything, nor does he doubt that Jesus has the power to destroy him. Jesus rebukes the demon; that is, He forbids him to speak any further. Jesus commands the demon to come out of this man and the demon leaves quietly, without harming the man. The man does not foam at the mouth or roll around on the ground! The people watch, amazed at the power of His words to cause the demon to do something that no other person could make a demon do! The people cannot keep this news quiet! As far as the news can travel, people will soon learn of the authority that only One man has and He is Jesus, the Savior of the world!

Healing Peter's Mother-in-law

Luke 4:38-39

Luke 4:38 Then He got up and *left* the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. ³⁹ And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.

As Jesus leaves the Capernaum Synagogue on the Sabbath, He enters the home of Simon Peter's mother-in-law! The man who will one day hold the keys to the formation of the church and preach the message on the day of Pentecost is a married man. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law on the Sabbath by rebuking the fever, the same kind of rebuke that caused the demon to flee from the man. The power in the words of Jesus forbids the fever to remain in the woman and she is healed. The fever is not a demon! It is a sickness. Had it been a demon, Luke would have said so!

Sunset on the Sabbath

Luke 4:40-41

Luke 4:40 While the sun was setting, all those who had any *who were* sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. ⁴¹ Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

With the sun's decline, Luke tells us that the end of the Sabbath is near. Remember that the new day for the Jews does not start at midnight but at sunset or 6:00 p.m. and extends from sunset to sunset. Here in Capernaum, at the start of the new day, Jesus is still healing the sick and, for a second time, casting out demons. Once again, Luke reminds us that all the demons know Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah that the Jews have been looking for all their lives. They know that Jesus as the "Son of God." If the demons know Jesus as the "Son of God," then should we do the same and nothing less?

Capernaum to Judea

Luke 4:42-43

Luke 4:42 When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³ But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴ So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.



Map 7: Area of Jesus' Ministry

Jesus knows His purpose here on earth! Even on this new day, He cannot get away from the crowd! So many people come to Jesus with their hurts and they need the Savior. Why would they want Jesus to leave Galilee, specifically Capernaum? They want to keep Him for themselves. He knows that He must go to other cities with the message of His kingdom and His Father. Luke states that Jesus' purpose in coming to earth is to preach the kingdom to all the people in all the cities! From Galilee, Jesus travels south to preach in the synagogues of Judea.