

Jesus Leads Us Through the Wilderness

March 9, 2025

Luke 4:1-13 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. ³ And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴ But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." ⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" ⁹ Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him 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 shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' ¹¹ "and, 'In *their* hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" ¹³ Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me

Why does God say, "no other gods before me?" That could sound like its ok to have other gods as long as they are ranked less than Yahweh. And yes that is exactly what the Lord is teaching us in this commandment, as long as we correctly understand the meaning of "gods" in this context. There are other people whom we ought to trust, love and obey, but the LORD God must come before any of them.

The word "god" or in the Hebrew Elohym literally means powerful one. It has two basic uses in scripture.

The first and most prevalent use is to mean the all-powerful creator. In this sense there is only one God. As Isaiah proclaims:

Isaiah 44:8 Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.'"

Secondly, it can at times also be used of beings who are less than Yahweh, but who are still powerful. In this sense it is used of angels, kings, and even of prophets who have authority from God and are thus rightly called powerful ones. As Jesus points out in the Gospel of John:

John 10:35 He called them gods, to whom the word of God came

It is in this second sense of the word that God says, "before me." He acknowledges that there are others who rightly have authority over us, whom we should love and obey, such as our parents, elected officials, police, bosses, pastors and others. However, nothing is to take priority over the LORD God. Jesus reminds us in Matthew:

Matthew 10:37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

By wording the commandment in this way, the LORD cuts to the heart of our sinfulness. If the only thing this commandment required of us was that we confess there no "god" other than the LORD, this would be an easy commandment to keep. The commandment speaks about much more than this. It reminds us that all those things and people which we are tempted to love and trust more than the LORD God must come second to him.

Martin Luther once wrote:

"God cannot be held in the hand, he must be held in the heart" - Martin Luther

To bow down and worship God is nothing, even the most godless person can easy do this. The commandment teaches us

we must do much more than that. We must fear and trust God in our heart and place him above everything else in our life. Whatever you love most that is your god, for ultimately you will serve that which you love.

God wants us to put him first because he is a jealous God. He wants us to be his. Just as our parents want us to be theirs. Just as our spouses want us to be theirs. So, God also wants us to belong to him. He wants to lead us through the wilderness of this life into the salvation he has waiting for us.

We have not put him first in all things. We have not listened to his voice. We have gotten lost in the wilderness. The Lord who is still jealous for us, sent his son. As we read in our text this morning, His son was led by the spirit into the wilderness to do what we could not. He trusted God, listened to his voice and in so doing made it through the wilderness. He made it through the wilderness and in so doing found us and brought us with him.

3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." 4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

Satan stresses Jesus' deity, but Jesus responds by stressing his humanity. Satan emphasizes Jesus' authority, but Jesus

responds with obedience. Satan wants Jesus to trust in himself, but Jesus puts his trust in the word of God.

As Satan tempted Jesus so he would also convince us that we can make our own decisions. We don't need to listen to any authority, especially not a book written four thousand years ago. We each have two choices. We can trust God and be obedient to him, or we can be obedient only to ourselves. If we are obedient only when we think God is right, then we not trusting him nor being obedient at all.

Forty days without food but Jesus didn't give into the temptation but trusted that God would provide when it was time.

Jesus was obedient to the Spirit. "He was led by the Spirit." He was obedient to the voice of the Father and made it through the wilderness. He was obedient for us; in so doing he defeated Satan.

9 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him 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 shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' 11 "and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 12 And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

The third temptation is more subtle than the other two. Satan attempts to use Jesus own professed faith in God against him. You say that you trust in God prove your faith by jumping off the temple.

Even though Satan quotes form scripture there are two problems with what Satan says:

First, he only partly quoted the passage. He leaves out key words.

Psalm 91:11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, *To keep you in all your ways.*

The promise is given to us as we go about our daily activity, not if we purposely go out of our way to put ourselves in danger. Fire insurance does not cover a fire you purpose start on your own, nor does God's promise pertain to those who purposely jump off the temple.

Secondly as Jesus himself points out, the scriptures specifically condemn putting God to the test. "I'm going to jump off the temple to see if God's angels really will 'bear me up.'"

Numerous Christians have attempted to prove their faith through acts like what Satan tempts Jesus with. Last month we talked about one example of a young girl who died waiting for God to miraculously heal her diabetes instead of just taking the

insulin that was right there. Others have purposely been bitten by snakes to show off their faith.

Such acts do not prove your faith. True faith does not need to test God's promises but accepts and trust them. It takes greater faith to continue steadfast while suffering, than it does to jump off a temple. Jesus continues steadfast in obedience to God's word rather than put God to the test.

This third temptation also foreshadows his death. Satan led Jesus to the temple, but God himself would lead Jesus back to Jerusalem three years later again to go up, not on the temple but on the cross. Through that cross Jesus defeated Satan and delivered us from death and the devil. The glory that Satan tempted Jesus with, he received not on the temple but on through the cross. The demonstration that he was the son of God came when he rose again from the dead.

God sent Moses to lead his people through the wilderness. Moses had to listen to the voice of God and trust him. Even more so Jesus leads us through the wilderness. We do not listen or trust the voice of God as we ought, and the result is that we get lost. Jesus was led by the Spirit. He was obedient. He leads us through, defeats sin and Satan, and brings us out into eternal salvation.