

Luke 4

The Temptation of Jesus

Victorious in Trial, Rejected at Home: A Journey through Luke 4

Luke 4 takes us on a journey of Jesus' early ministry marked by His victory over temptation, the fulfillment of prophecy, and His power to heal and deliver. His rejection in His hometown contrasts starkly with His acceptance in Capernaum, revealing that acceptance of Jesus isn't automatic, even for those familiar with Him. His dedication to proclaiming God's kingdom reminds us to prioritize God's mission in our lives.

The Temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, is led into the wilderness and tempted by the devil for forty days. He successfully resists each temptation by quoting Scripture, after which the devil departs until an opportune time.

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth (Luke 4:14-30)

Jesus returns to Nazareth and reads from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue. He declares the prophecy fulfilled, but the townspeople, offended, try to throw Him off a cliff. Jesus, however, walks right through the crowd and leaves.

Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit (Luke 4:31-37)

In Capernaum, Jesus teaches with authority and drives out a demon from a man in the synagogue. The people are amazed at His authority and power, and news about Him spreads.

Jesus Heals Many (Luke 4:38-44)

Jesus heals Simon Peter's mother-in-law and many others who are sick or possessed by demons. Early in the morning, He withdraws to a solitary place, but the crowds find Him and try to keep Him from leaving. Jesus, however, insists that He must proclaim the good news of God's kingdom to other towns as well.

Luke 4 narrates a series of significant events early in Jesus' ministry: His victory over temptation in the wilderness, His proclamation of fulfilled prophecy, and His subsequent rejection in His hometown, Nazareth. Despite the rejection, Jesus' authority and power manifest as He drives out demons and heals the sick in Capernaum.

Themes

Temptation and Resistance
Fulfillment of Prophecy
Rejection and Acceptance
Authority and Power of Jesus

Topics

The Temptation of Jesus
Jesus Rejected at Nazareth
Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit
Jesus Heals Many

People

Jesus
The Devil
The people of Nazareth
Simon Peter
Simon's mother-in-law
The people of Capernaum
Various sick people and those possessed by demons

Locations

The Wilderness
Nazareth
The Synagogue
Capernaum
Simon's house

Bible Study Questions

1. How does Jesus resist temptation, and what can we learn from His approach?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose the particular passage from Isaiah to read in the synagogue?
3. What factors contribute to Jesus' rejection in His hometown, and what can this tell us about human nature?
4. How does Jesus' authority manifest in His teaching and miracles?
5. Why does Jesus insist on going to other towns to preach, even when the people in Capernaum want Him to stay?
6. How do Jesus' actions in this chapter demonstrate His mission and purpose?
7. How does Jesus' rejection at Nazareth reflect on how we might be received when we share the gospel?
8. How does Jesus' response to the devil's temptations inform our own approach to spiritual warfare?

9. Why might the people of Nazareth, who knew Jesus from His childhood, find it harder to accept Him as the Messiah?
10. How does Jesus' handling of the situation in Nazareth model grace and courage in the face of opposition?
11. How does Jesus balance His time between healing, casting out demons, and preaching?
12. What does Jesus' retreat to a solitary place reveal about His spiritual practices, and how can we apply this to our lives?
13. How does the crowd's reaction to Jesus' message in Nazareth differ from their reaction in Capernaum, and what might this suggest about acceptance of the gospel message?
14. How does the authority of Jesus contrast with the religious leaders of His day, and what does this tell us about true spiritual authority?
15. How do the various responses to Jesus in this chapter inform our understanding of the range of reactions to His message today?
16. How does the episode in the synagogue in Nazareth inform our understanding of Jesus' mission?
17. How does Jesus' interaction with the demonic realm in this chapter inform our understanding of His power and authority?
18. In the light of Jesus' healing miracles, how can we understand and approach illness and healing in a contemporary context?
19. How can we apply the lessons from Jesus' rejection at Nazareth in our personal contexts when we face rejection for our faith?
20. In what ways does Jesus' example in this chapter provide guidance for dealing with temptation, rejection, and the demands of ministry in our lives?

ST JOSEPH THE WORKER
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



LUKE 4

The Temptation of Jesus.

1 Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert

2 for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry.

3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered him, “**It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’**”

5 Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant.

6 The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish.

7 All this will be yours, if you worship me.”

8 Jesus said to him in reply, “**It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.’**”

9 Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet 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: ‘With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

12 Jesus said to him in reply, “**It also says, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’**”

[4:1] Filled with the holy Spirit: as a result of the descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism (Lk 3:21–22), Jesus is now equipped to overcome the devil. Just as the Spirit is prominent at this early stage of Jesus’ ministry (Lk 4:1, 14, 18), so too it will be at the beginning of the period of the church in Acts (Acts 1:4; 2:4, 17).

[4:2] For forty days: the mention of forty days recalls the forty years of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites during the Exodus (Dt 8:2).

[4:9] To Jerusalem: the **Lucan order of the temptations concludes on the parapet of the temple in Jerusalem**, the city of destiny in Luke-Acts. It is in Jerusalem that Jesus will ultimately face his destiny (Lk 9:51; 13:33).

13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

IV. THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry.

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region.

15 He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

The Rejection at Nazareth.

16 He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue **on the sabbath day**. He stood up to read

17 and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He **unrolled the scroll and found the passage** where it was written:

18 **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”**

20 **Rolling up** the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.

21 He said to them, **“Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

22 And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, **“Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”**

23 He said to them, **“Surely you will quote me this proverb, ‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say, ‘Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’”**

24 And he said, **“Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.”**

25 **Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land.**

26 **It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.**

27 **Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”**

[4:13] For a time: the devil’s opportune time will occur before the passion and death of Jesus (Lk 22:3, 31–32, 53).

[4:14] News of him spread: a Lucan theme; see Lk 4:37; 5:15; 7:17.

[4:16–30] Luke has transposed to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry an incident from his Marcan source, which situated it near the end of the Galilean ministry (Mk 6:1–6a). In doing so, Luke turns the initial admiration (Lk 4:22) and subsequent rejection of Jesus (Lk 4:28–29) into a foreshadowing of the whole future ministry of Jesus. Moreover, the rejection of Jesus in his own hometown hints at the greater rejection of him by Israel (Acts 13:46).

[4:16] According to his custom: Jesus’ practice of regularly attending synagogue is carried on by the early Christians’ practice of meeting in the temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:12).

[4:18] The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me: see note on Lk 3:21–22. As this incident develops, Jesus is portrayed as a prophet whose ministry is compared to that of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Prophetic anointings are known in first-century Palestinian Judaism from the Qumran literature that speaks of prophets as God’s anointed ones. To bring glad notifications to the poor: more than any other gospel writer Luke is concerned with Jesus’ attitude toward the economically and socially poor (see Lk 6:20, 24; 12:16–21; 14:12–14; 16:19–26; 19:8). At times, the poor in Luke’s gospel are associated with the downtrodden, the oppressed and afflicted, the forgotten and the neglected (Lk 4:18; 6:20–22; 7:22; 14:12–14), and it is they who accept Jesus’ message of salvation.

[4:21] Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing: this sermon inaugurates the time of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Luke presents the ministry of Jesus as fulfilling Old Testament hopes and expectations (Lk 7:22); for Luke, even Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection are done in fulfillment of the scriptures (Lk 24:25–27, 44–46; Acts 3:18).

[4:23] The things that we heard were done in Capernaum: Luke’s source for this incident reveals an awareness of an earlier ministry of Jesus in Capernaum that Luke has not yet made use of because of his transposition of this Nazareth episode to the beginning of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. It is possible that by use of the future tense you will quote me..., Jesus is being portrayed as a prophet.

[4:25–26] The references to Elijah and Elisha serve several purposes in this episode: they emphasize Luke’s portrait of Jesus as a prophet like Elijah and Elisha; they help to explain why the initial admiration of the people turns to rejection; and they provide the scriptural justification for the future Christian mission to the Gentiles.

[4:26] A widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon: like Naaman the Syrian in Lk 4:27, a non-Israelite becomes the object of the prophet’s ministry.

28 When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury.

29 They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong.

30 But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

The Cure of a Demonic.

31 Jesus then went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the sabbath,

32 and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority.

33 In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice,

34 “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

35 Jesus rebuked him and said, “**Be quiet! Come out of him!**”

Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm.

36 They were all amazed and said to one another, “**What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.**”

37 And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

The Cure of Simon’s Mother-in-Law.

38 After he left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon’s mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her.

39 He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them.

Other Healings.

40 At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them.

41 And demons also came out from many, shouting, “You are the Son of God.” But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Messiah.

[4:31–44] The next several incidents in Jesus’ ministry take place in Capernaum and are based on Luke’s source, Mk 1:21–39. To the previous portrait of Jesus as prophet (Lk 4:16–30) they now add a presentation of him as teacher (Lk 4:31–32), exorcist (Lk 4:32–37, 41), healer (Lk 4:38–40), and proclaimer of God’s kingdom (Lk 4:43).

[4:34] What have you to do with us? Have you come to destroy us? the question reflects the current belief that before the day of the Lord control over humanity would be wrested from the evil spirits, evil destroyed, and God’s authority over humanity reestablished. The synoptic gospel tradition presents Jesus carrying out this task.

[4:38] The house of Simon: because of Luke’s arrangement of material, the **reader has not yet been introduced to Simon** (cf. Mk 1:16–18, 29–31). Situated as it is before the call of Simon (Lk 5:1–11), it helps the reader to understand Simon’s eagerness to do what Jesus says (Lk 5:5) and to follow him (Lk 5:11).

[4:41] They knew that he was the Messiah: that is, the Christ (see note on Lk 2:11).

Jesus Leaves Capernaum.

42 At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them.

43 But he said to them, **“To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent.”**

44 And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

[4:42] They tried to prevent him from leaving them: the reaction of these strangers in Capernaum is presented in contrast to the reactions of those in his hometown who rejected him (Lk 4:28–30).

[4:44] In the synagogues of Judea: instead of Judea, which is the best reading of the manuscript tradition, the **Byzantine text tradition and other manuscripts read “Galilee,” a reading that harmonizes Luke with Mt 4:23 and Mk 1:39.** Up to this point Luke has spoken only of a ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Luke may be using Judea to refer to the land of Israel, the territory of the Jews, and not to a specific portion of it.