

# THE REAL JESUS: WHO'S WHO

Week Six | May 13, 2018 | Meet the Powers Soon to Be Defeated

## PREPARATION

### GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's text, Luke 4:1-13. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

## THIS WEEK

### KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

By being fully God and fully man, Jesus has become the victor over both the physical and spiritual realms.

### THEOLOGY APPLIED

The real Jesus was an historical man who was also the supernatural God of the Bible. Knowing He is in full authority over the physical realm and the spiritual realm changes the way we see both the physical and the spiritual.

### MEDITATE

*And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'" (Luke 4:4).*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: *What do you believe about Satan? Do you think he is a real being?*

Q: *What do you think spiritual warfare is? Is it only for crazy people, or are you crazy not to believe in it?*

Believe it or not, it's often harder to convince people Satan exists than to convince them that there is a God! For hardcore skeptics, belief in God is irrational, unwarranted, and unproven. But for the average person, it's okay to believe some sort of a deity exists. This god often provides comfort and assurance when things are hard. "Moral therapeutic deism" is a term first introduced by sociologists in 2005. Its moral statutes are not exclusive to any major world religion. The basic beliefs are that 1) a god exists who watches over humanity, 2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair, 3) life's primary goal is to be happy and feel good about yourself, 4) we don't need God to be involved in our lives, except when needed to solve a problem, and 5) good people go to heaven when they die.\*\* Many have argued that it is the most prominent religion in America today.

Many people like their concept of God (which can be as similar to or different from the God of the Bible as they want) to provide the things they want without requiring anything of them. While the idea of God and even angels is endearing and pleasant, the belief in Satan and demons is not. Who wants to believe there really is a cosmic battle going on? That seems primitive, old-fashioned, and naïve. They like the idea of life after death possibly involving a kind of paradise, but they definitely don't want to believe there can be a hell. Moral therapeutic deists have stronger connections to a worldview of naturalism than they realize.

Everyone has a worldview, or a way of understanding reality that shapes our beliefs, practices, values, goals, and actions. Supernatural worldviews believe in a spiritual reality beyond the physical and allow for belief in the existence of supernatural beings like God, angels, demons, and Satan. They understand that humans are more than a blob of cells or a product of chance, but are designed and sustained by God and possess a spiritual component to their nature. In contrast, the worldview of naturalism argues that the physical world is all there is. Tom Clark, a prominent naturalist author, lecturer, and professor describes it this way:

"If you don't believe in anything supernatural—gods, ghosts, immaterial souls and spirits—then you subscribe to naturalism, the idea that nature is all there is. The reason you're a naturalist is likely that, wanting not to be deceived, you put stock in empirical, evidence-based ways of justifying beliefs about what's real, as for instance exemplified by science. You probably (and rightly) hold that such beliefs are usually more reliable and more objective than those based in uncorroborated intuition, revelation, religious authority or sacred texts. Kept honest by philosophy and critical thinking, science reveals a single manifold of existence, what we call nature, containing an untold myriad of interconnected

phenomena, from quarks to quasars. Nature is simply what we have good reason to believe exists.”

Does this way of viewing the world sound familiar to you? Do you know someone who holds this belief or a version of it? Have you had these thoughts yourself? Naturalism is often the driving force behind many attempts to discover the “real Jesus.” Many scientists and historians who have adopted this worldview think they can fully contain Jesus’s identity in terms of physical, natural phenomena and exclude any spiritual significance. Naturalism claims to be free from religion or to have risen above religion, but really it is just a different kind of religion. As Tom Clark stated, it starts from the deep desire to not be deceived and to know the truth. This is a good desire. But with that desire, they come to the persuasion that the only reliable source of knowledge is science. Things like tradition or revelation cannot be considered objective knowledge and should be put in the “fairy tale” category. The only things that can be true are those we can touch, taste, smell, see, and feel. And since the only things we can experience with our senses are the things in the physical world, that must be all that exists. Believing in a god of some sort may be acceptable, but believing in the spiritual realm, as revealed in the Bible, is “a bit much” these days. It is considered uneducated, extreme, and unscientific. We want to have some supernatural, but not too much.

On the other hand, some people adopt the opposite extreme, paying far more attention to the spiritual reality than the physical. They see God and Satan as equal powers at war with one another. Everything becomes a conspiracy theory, and they live in fear of a realm they cannot see. So, in an age where science and faith seem to be juxtaposed opposites, how do we understand the spiritual battle as something real, but different from fanatical, fear-driven speculation? And how does the spiritual battle help us see the real Jesus? These are the questions we will tackle in this week’s lesson as we look at the temptation of Jesus in Luke 4.

- ❏: *Look back at the brief description of “moral therapeutic deism” and then consider your own approach to God. Are there similarities?*
- ❏: *How do you feel about spiritual warfare? Do you tend to fall on one extreme or another? Or do you just try to forget about it altogether? If so, what does that say about the way you perhaps subconsciously view the world?*
- ❏: *Do you struggle to believe in the reality of Satan more than the reality of God?*

## ■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Luke begins his narrative of Jesus's life and ministry with His birth, baptism, genealogy, and temptation by Satan. By placing the temptation right after the genealogy, Luke brings together two things often considered polar opposites, historical and scientific fact and spiritual reality. We learned last week that God does not operate only in some other-worldly realm, but accomplished His redemption in time and space. This week we will see that the real Jesus changes not just the earthly reality, but the spiritual one as well. In his typical fashion, Luke brings together historical facts and theological significance to show us the real Jesus.

### 1. JESUS RESISTED IN HUNGER

### 2. JESUS RESISTED THE SHORTCUT

### 3. SATAN'S DOOM IS SURE

## GOING DEEPER

+ *This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.*

## JESUS RESISTED IN HUNGER

### ■ LUKE 4:1-4

Q: *Looking back at these verses, what clues do you see that indicate Jesus' humanity was as real and complete as ours?*

Q: *How was the temptation especially difficult or "real"?*

Jesus' temptation was not an allegory. It was a real, physical event. Jesus was tempted the same way you and I are. He experienced circumstances that made Him vulnerable, and the enemy knew exactly where to attack to try to convince Jesus that God was not truly good or that He was withholding goodness from Him. This was the same temptation Adam and Eve experienced in the garden of Eden. Their temptation was not an allegory or a legend. It was a real event as well.

To be the “second Adam”—to do what Adam could not—Jesus had to experience real temptation as well. The writer of Hebrews says Christ “had to be made like his brothers in every respect” (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus didn’t simply look human, He was fully human. He lived the human experience in every respect. Christ didn’t have a simulated human likeness; He had an absolute human likeness (Philippians 2:7). Unlike us, however, He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Kent Hughes points out that, “at his temptation, Jesus fully knew he was the Son of God, but he withstood the onslaughts of Satan as a real man, deriving his power to resist by depending upon God for strength. The temptations were real, and Jesus withstood them as a real man...” Jesus had to live this very real human experience so He could be our great High Priest who, as the writer of Hebrews says, “because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

In verses 1–4, Luke highlights Jesus’ humanity and the reality of the temptation He experienced. In verse 1, we learn that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for forty days. This wilderness is a real place, a part of Judea that is found on the edge of southern Palestine. Between the places of habitation in the hills and the Dead Sea lay a large wasteland called Jeshimon, which means “the devastation.” This was a real place that was well known, and, as its name indicates, no one wanted to spend forty days there! It was the exact opposite of the garden of Eden. But this was important. Adam and Eve were not able to withstand the devil’s temptation while they were in paradise. But Jesus would withstand while He was in a wasteland.

In verse 2, we are told that Jesus had nothing to eat for forty days. Imagine what that would be like! When we haven’t eaten in a long time, many of us get “hangry.” We don’t behave normally. We are far more agitated, impatient, and hasty. We are vulnerable in ways we aren’t when our stomachs are full. In this wilderness was Satan. He didn’t look like the pitchfork-holding devil, he had an alluring presence, just like he had in the garden. Just like he has with us. This was a real experience. Jesus’ stomach was growling. He was weak and miserable from the hunger pangs. There were real rocks, thorns, and crusty terrain all around Him, and He couldn’t see anything beyond it. We often like to use the phrase, “the struggle is real” in a colloquial and even sarcastic way. But for Him, the struggle was real. To make it even worse, He could have ended the temptation at any point. He was fully man, but He was also fully God. He could have snapped His fingers and turned stones into bread. But He didn’t. He resisted Satan not with His supernatural power, but as a human being who relied solely on the supernatural power of the Father for sustaining grace. He stayed like us in every respect.

It should be no surprise that the first thing Satan tempted Jesus with in this circumstance was food. It was the temptation to provide for Himself what God had either failed or neglected to provide for Him. Think about how incredible this is. When Abraham and Sarah saw that God had not fulfilled His promise to give them a son, they decided to “help Him out” by having Abraham have a son with Hagar. They thought God had dropped the ball, and they would work out their own salvation. They believed the lie that God was either incapable of providing good for them or that He wasn’t good. Like Adam and Eve, they believed God was withholding good from them. But Jesus refused to believe that lie. He responded with the truth of Scripture—God created the world and holds it together by His word. Therefore, human life is ultimately not sustained by the “bare necessities,” but

by the creative, life-giving, and life-sustaining word of God.

- ♀: *How does Jesus' complete trust in God's care for Him both challenge and encourage you?*
- ♀: *What human vulnerabilities do you have that the enemy takes advantage of to tempt you?*
- ♀: *Read Matthew 6:25-26. How did Jesus live this out perfectly in Luke 4:1-4? How does it speak to your own tendency to "help God out" when it comes to making sure you lack no good thing?*
- ♀: *What should you do when you are tempted? How can you follow Jesus' example in this text?*

## JESUS RESISTED THE SHORTCUT

### ☐ LUKE 4:5-12

- ♀: *How would you summarize the second and third temptations? How did the devil change his tactic?*

In the second temptation, Satan gives Jesus a vision of the world surrendering their false gods and self-worship to worship Christ. It sounds quite a bit like Philippians 2:10, which says, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord ..." But in this fantasy, Jesus got the glory without having to go through the pain. He got the crown without suffering the cross. He got Philippians 2:10 without going through Philippians 2:5-9, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in

human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.”

Imagine how powerful a temptation this was! Jesus could redeem the world in accordance with the Father’s will without the pain, without the suffering. Satan showed Him a shortcut that he said would allow Jesus to achieve the same end through much more pleasant means. Instead of the agony of the cross, Jesus could have instant exaltation. All Jesus had to do, Satan said, was recognize him as His authority and the true giver of good gifts. After all, Satan is the current “ruler of the world” (John 12:31, Ephesians 2:2), so he could have the world bow down to Jesus, no problem. Satan once again attacked God’s goodness and His plan. God’s ways are far too overbearing, life-destroying, and impossible for a human to handle, the tempter said. There is a path of least resistance. There is a way for instant gratification. Who would be crazy enough to not take it?, argued Satan.

But Jesus responded once again by quoting Scripture. He referenced Deuteronomy 6:13, when Moses warned the Israelites against idolatry, or worshipping false gods. So, according to Jesus, taking the path of least resistance or seeking a life of comfort and instant gratification without walking in obedience to God is a form of idolatry! It is worshipping the “prince of the power of the air” instead of God. It is following the world’s logic instead of God’s.

The third temptation has many similarities to the second. Satan suggests Jesus didn’t need to endure Calvary. A better way for everyone to see who Jesus really is would be to throw Himself off the temple and have the angels rescue Him. This display would awe the crowds below, and they would immediately know Jesus is the Son of God. Again, this would have made Jesus a shortcut Savior who went rogue on the Father’s plan of redemption in favor of another He thought was better. Once again, Jesus responds with Scripture, refusing to put God to the test, refusing to enact His own plan and expect God to bless it or to catch Him before He hit the ground. Kent Hughes calls this “rationalized disobedience.”

Remember, this encounter with Satan was a real conversation talking about real life, not a discussion of an abstract idea. The real Jesus reveals to us that the way we live our daily, mundane, physical lives proclaims a spiritual reality. Satan’s temptations don’t come as abstract ideas, they are almost always rooted in physical realities like circumstances and vulnerabilities. He knows the best tactic is to target our real lives.

**Q:** *Do God’s ways seem too overbearing, life-destroying, and impossible for a human to handle to you? Or, is there one of God’s commands in particular that you struggle to come to grips with? Do you live in “rationalized disobedience”?*

Q: *Jesus resisted the temptation of earthly ease, comfort, and a shallow political salvation in favor of eternal salvation. How are you tempted in the same way, and how can you resist that temptation like Jesus did?*

## SATAN'S DOOM IS SURE

### LUKE 4:13

Q: *In verse 1, we read that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and led by Him. How do you think that is significant for His resistance of Satan's lies?*

Q: *After Satan tempted Him three times and Jesus resisted all three times, what did Satan do?*

In studying who's who in the gospel of Luke, we have encountered several prominent characters and a whole genealogy of people who came before Jesus. This week we have been introduced to a different dimension that is no less real. Luke pulls back the veil and introduces Satan, a new character who plays a crucial role in the story. Discovering the real Jesus means looking at His multi-dimensional significance and seeing all the characters at play in a narrative that is both historical and spiritual.

Jesus's arrival not only changed the game for people on earth, it also changed the game for the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). This encounter with Satan and Jesus's complete resistance to his schemes sent a loud message to the forces of darkness that their end was near. The old tricks that had worked on everyone since Adam and Eve did not work on Jesus. Jesus' time in the wilderness sent a message to Satan that he should prepare to be defeated.

Jesus resisted Satan, maintaining perfect trust in God's goodness and obedience to His plan. Seeing he had no foothold, Satan left. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." No one has ever submitted to God to the extent that Jesus did. He resisted Satan's lies and obeyed God perfectly, even to the point of a torturous death on a cross in which He drank the cup of God's wrath against every sin that has



been committed and is yet to be committed. He carried a cross none of us could carry. Therefore, as the writer of Hebrews concludes, “let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1–2). In His human vulnerability, He refused to distrust God’s care for Him, nor did He accept a shortcut for God’s plan of redemption. Instead, He ran the race set before Him, which included enduring the shame and the pain of the cross. He followed God’s means to get to God’s end, and now the real Jesus is exalted and seated with all authority at the right hand of God the Father.

👤: *After studying this text, reconsider the question we asked in the beginning. Why do you think it’s hard for people to believe in a spiritual dimension, especially when it comes to Satan?*

👤: *We are not called to battle toe-to-toe with Satan. Jesus already did that. We are called to “resist” him. Read Ephesians 6:10–20 and consider it in light of Luke 4:1–13 and James 4:7. What does resisting Satan mean, and how do you do it?*

## NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God’s Word to your daily life. Process how what you’ve learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

👤: *Read Matthew 16:24–25. We are called to follow the path Jesus walked, picking up our crosses and following Him, knowing that the cross precedes the crown and suffering gives way to glory. In what ways are you tempted to pursue*

*“instant gratification” that sidesteps carrying the cross in obedience to the Father?*

- ♀: *What temptation are you experiencing right now? Is it similar to one Jesus faced? How can you resist it like Jesus did?*
- ♀: *How can you not be “ignorant of Satan’s schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:11) in your life while also resting in the fact that Christ is victorious over Him?*

## PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week’s focus.*

- Father, thank You for loving us so much that You sent your one and only Son to live, die, and be raised again on our behalf. Thank You for not leaving us as orphans, but making a way for us to be your sons and daughters.
- Holy Spirit, please fill me and give me grace to resist the lies of the devil in my own life. Please bring the Word of God to my mind so I may be constantly reminded of truth.
- Jesus, thank You for living the life I never could live and dying the death I deserve to die. Thank you for perfectly obeying the Father, for enduring the cross, and for not being a shortcut Savior.

## COMMENTARY

**LUKE 4:2** The words “being tempted” (present participle) indicate that Jesus was continually tempted for the entirety of the forty days in the wilderness. The three temptations Luke mentions were the culmination at the end of the forty-day period.

**LUKE 4:5-8** Matthew lists the temptations in a different order. Luke does not imply that he lists the temptations in chronological order the same way Matthew does.

**LUKE 4:9-12** Satan misquotes Scripture in this passage. In Psalm 91, the psalmist does not mean you can force God to protect you. Satan twists God's Word as an attempt to manipulate Jesus.

*\*All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, the Christ Centered Exposition (Luke), and The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament.*

## ENDNOTES

*\*\* This definition taken from [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralistic\\_therapeutic\\_deism#Definition](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralistic_therapeutic_deism#Definition)*

