

Two Men, a Garden and a Desert

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Date: 09 May 2010

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[0 : 00] Explanation is needed. It's no wonder Chris was confused. See, Heather has distinguishing between various sorts of birds, such as swans and eagles.

She also has no idea about football, to tell the truth. As I was brought up in a footballing family, anyway, I suspect it's a Freudian slip. It's very easy to move one bird into another when you're under pressure, I suppose.

But anyway, be assured, we are eagles' supporters. Well, I am anyway, I'm not sure. But she does have an eagles' flag and a docker's flag sitting on her desk that her workmates gave her before she left Perth.

I should also tell you one more thing about football. When we were leaving, we had a friend whose son used to play for the eagles. And he said, of course, Andrew, there's only one good thing that comes out of Melbourne.

He was wrong, but I'll tell you what he said anyway. So this shows you Western Australians. There's only one good thing that comes out of Melbourne, the road west. Anyway, that's enough Western Australian things.

[1 : 10] I will shut up about Western Australia from now on. But let's pray and let's ask God to help us. Father, we pray this evening that you would guide us as we look at your word together.

Father, we pray that you'd be at work among us. We pray that your spirit might work in our hearts to change us and to bend our wills and to inform our minds.

Father, please transform us to be like your son. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Friends, the word temptation is very common in our contemporary world, isn't it?

We speak about being tempted by rich and luscious foods such as chocolate or about being tempted by images of people that we desire or perhaps even things that we desire or being tempted by money or by profit or being tempted by our own thoughts or temptations to be lazy or temptations about good things or even temptations about bad things.

The language of temptation is very common in our contemporary world and temptation is the main topic of the passage we are going to look at tonight from Luke 4. And so to get started, I thought we'd look a bit at how the Bible talks about temptation.

[2 : 33] Now, the first thing I need to say is that the way we use the word temptation is not the way the Bible largely uses it. Let me give you an example. In our contemporary world, thin is given the status of good, isn't it?

I mean, we sort of think thin is good and ads help us think that way and so on. And for that reason, many people in our society have a goal in life to be thin.

Then comes chocolate. Now, chocolate is full of the two most important enemies of thinness, isn't it? Sugar and fat.

Now, however, it's also full of everything that tastes good. So in many ways, you could consider, couldn't you, chocolate to be a seducer.

You see, it creeps up on you and seduces you from the goal of thinness. Now, it enchants us, doesn't it? We walk past it, we smell it, you know, people offer it to us.

[3 : 36] And what it is doing is enchanting us and begging us to leave the good way of thinness and to feed our heavenless bend. So, chocolate is there for a temptation, isn't it?

A temptation to leave the path of thinness. Now, a seduction, therefore, away from what society says is good.

It is a seduction. But in the Bible, temptation is viewed somewhat differently. Temptation is not so much about seduction. In the Bible, temptation is viewed somewhat differently. In the Bible, temptation is more about a test or a trial that comes upon you.

And so, to tempt someone is actually to test them rather than seduce them. Do you understand the difference from that? One is sort of waving something underneath your nose or near your palate or something like that.

But the other is actually testing you to do something or not do something. And so, you can test for a good purpose. That is, you can test someone to test their mettle or to prove their value or to improve their quality.

[4 : 43] And in the Bible, God even does that sort of testing. You see, God will test people on a regular basis. He tests people to see if they are committed to Him. He tests them to see what their faith is like.

He tests them to see what their faithfulness is like. However, the Bible also talks about temptation for evil purposes. So, in the Bible, a person can be tempted in order to trap them into wrong action. And that sort of temptation doesn't come from God, as James says. No, that comes from the evil one. And he does that sort of tempting on a very regular basis. He tempts people all the time to leave faithfulness to God aside.

He lays traps for them to get them to forsake God and forsake His ways and come along with Him and follow His wiles. So, there's our general introduction to temptation.

Now, what I want to do is give you a very potted history of temptation in the Bible. So, we're going to start in Genesis 1, Genesis 1 to 3. And there we're told, aren't we, that God creates the universe.

[5 : 49] He creates the world and He creates it good. And Genesis 1, 31 says that God saw all that He had made and it was very good.

Genesis 2 tells us that God placed Adam and Eve in this good world. In fact, He placed them in a garden called Eden, the very best part of His good world.

Almost the sort of hub of this good world, the central part of it, the thing that was best about it. And in that garden, He then gave them everything that they needed.

He gave them all the goodness there could be in the created world. Themselves, a garden, fruit, things to do, just everything. And mostly, He gave them His own presence.

And He said, enjoy. He gave them the goodness of the material world. He gave them the goodness of the material world, regular and unrestricted access to Him.

[6 : 48] And in that garden, there was everything they could ever need. God placed, however, something in the garden that would test Adam and Eve.

No, I didn't say tempt them, test them. He placed a tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And He told Adam and Eve, look, you can eat anything within this garden except from that tree.

And it's into that context that the serpent comes. And the serpent immediately takes advantage of the presence of this tree to not test but tempt Adam and Eve.

He tells them how good it would be if they had that fruit for all aspects of their life. Life would be that much richer if they had this thing. And He attempted to persuade them that God was in fact holding back on them.

That it actually, He really knew that this was the thing to have. And it's the one thing it held back. The serpent, in other words, sowed doubts in their mind that God really did have their best interests in mind.

[7 : 52] And Adam and Eve caved in, as you know. They snatched out at being like God. And they showed us what being human is all about. What is being human all about?

Being human is about being centered on yourself. That's what it is to be genuinely human in that sense, in the sinful sense. It's about wanting to do your own thing your own way without God.

It's about putting aside God's way of doing things in favour of your own. Being human is all about in fact choosing to be God yourself rather than letting God be God. It's saying, God I really don't think you've got this down off pat.

I know better than you. In fact, I'm God. Because isn't that what God is? God is someone who tells you what is good for you and prepares everything good for you. And you're saying I know that better than God himself.

The end result of such an attitude is that you cannot remain related to God because he can't have any competition. There's either you or him. So you can't remain related to him. And so in Adam's and Eve's situation God then said well look I must shut you out of my presence.

[8 : 54] Ban you from the garden. And he sent them and their descendants out of his presence until they were fit to return. But now let's move from Adam and Eve. We are eventually going to get to Luke 4.

So we will get there but just hang on in there for a moment. Let's move through history. Past God's choosing of Abraham. Past God's sending of Abraham's descendants into Egypt.

Past God's rescue of the Israelites out of Egypt. And out into the wilderness after they got out of Egypt. And here we find them between Egypt and the promised land and here's where Psalm 78 comes in.

So pick it up in your Bibles and have a look at it with me. Psalm 78. Psalm 78. Now I want you to look at the first eight verses in particular and particularly verses 5 to 8.

Let me read them to you. Psalm 78. 5 to 8. He established a decree in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children that the next generation might know them the children yet unborn and rise up and tell them to their children so that they may set their hope in God and not forget the works of God and keep his commandments and that they should not be like their ancestors a stubborn and rebellious generation a generation whose heart was not steadfast whose spirit was not faithful to God.

[10 : 12] Now friends can you see what God is saying here? He's saying look I give Israel my word my law my commandments and in verse 5 it says I've established a decree in Jacob I've appointed this law in Israel then in verse 7 I've done it with a purpose I've done it so that you might be not like your ancestors but you'd keep the commandments and you'd not be stubborn and rebellious you'd be a generation whose heart was steadfast whose spirit is not faithless to God.

Now look at verses 17 and 18 these tell us about reality in the wilderness this is what happened when they were out there in the wilderness after coming out of Egypt this is what Israel was like yet they sinned still more against him rebelling against the most high in the desert they tested God in their heart by demanding the food that they craved in other words you see what does Israel do Israel refuses to live as God had designed them to live by his word they refuse to believe he has their best interests in mind they refuse to trust him they are like Adam and Eve and so God punishes them just as he punished Adam and Eve they were not ready yet to return to the garden however God did let them into the promised land they made it into Canaan God looked after them then they said well look actually we are not so sure about God being king we would like a king and God says I will even give you a king and so he gives them a king but all their kings failed just as Adam and Eve had failed before them so the story of the garden is identical try and understand this to the story of the wilderness is identical to the story of the kings of Israel

God's kings are the same as God's people who are the same as Adam and Eve they do not want to live under the rule of God and they cave in when temptation comes let's see if we can draw some conclusions this is my very brief history of temptation let's see if we can draw some conclusions I've got four points to make point number one God's people live in a world full of temptations and tests point number two in such a world God's desire for humans is that they trust his advice that is they depend on his word that is they trust his goodness they actually say oh you do actually have our best interests in mind third human nature is such that humans cannot stand up to temptation now if there are any of you here who can please talk to me afterwards because you know something that no one else knows we can't resist temptation can we not not uniformly not consistently despite minor resistances at times we inevitably cave in to be human is to be frail to be unable to stand up against temptation is to be captive to the evil one and all of his wiles there is a fourth point because of our independence and our lack of trust in

God we humans stand under the judgment of God we face his punishment now with all that background we can finally come to Luke 4 so please open up your Bibles and as you do as you find Luke please just look with me in your English translations there of Luke chapter 1 to 3 and as you flip through turn the pages getting to Luke 4 I want you to notice something notice all the quotations in there see all the poetry sections there and there's a few more apart from that Luke is quoting Old Testament time and time and time again and it's his way of telling us what is about to happen here is something extraordinary what is about to happen here is that this person that this story is about is God's anointed and appointed person he is the one promised to Adam and Eve in the garden in Genesis he is the one foretold in the law he is the one to whom the prophets look he is the hope of all of Israel now all of these promises and hopes are to some extent summarised in the passage immediately before the one we're going to look at tonight look for example at Luke 3 22

Luke 3:22 do you notice what it says it tells us that Jesus is God's only son that's another way of saying he's God's true king Psalm 2 uses this phrase to refer to God's king look at verses 23 to 38 we're also told that Jesus is the son of Adam and with that we come to our passage for tonight so let's look at it now the first thing I want you to notice is the circumstances of the temptation this is the temptation of Jesus by the devil verses 1 and 2 tell us what that temptation occurs in the wilderness it also tells us that temptation occurs over 40 days we're told that God is involved through his spirit Satan is also involved can you see what's going on here it's very important to note you see not only is Jesus the new Adam not only is he the new king of Israel the son of God he is also the new

[15:25] Israel he is the new Israel out in the wilderness facing temptation as they did he is he's repeating the situation of Adam situation of the kings of Israel and of Israel itself he is reliving Israelite history he is reliving human history he is reliving kingly history and he's seeing if something can be different and the question is how will it go how will the new Adam go how will the new Israel go how will the new king of Israel go will he be like his ancestors for no one else has been able to manage this or will something new and something different happen with that in mind with Psalm 78 in mind with Genesis 1 and 2 in mind let's look at temptation number one just as the focus of the temptation in the wilderness and in the garden was food think about it for a moment wilderness in Exodus it's all about food and water in the garden it's all about food so it's food here

Jesus eats nothing for 40 days and in the midst of the hunger the devil comes to him in verse 3 and he says to him if you are the son of God command this stone to become a loaf of bread and of course this temptation could never have been a temptation for Adam or to Israel could it because they couldn't do this sort of thing but it was for Jesus and the devil knew it for Jesus is God in the flesh he had the ability to turn stones into bread and here Jesus makes his intentions clear look at verse 4 he quotes Deuteronomy verse 3 he only gets halfway through the verse and Deuteronomy 8 verse 3 says that humans do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God can you see what Jesus is doing it's a profound statement you see Israel in the wilderness was always worried about what their bellies

Jesus making this profound statement they always wanted full stomachs they were always whinging about it always telling God we'd like you know some bread then we'd like some quail then we'd like you know or meat they were always wanting something for their bellies they wanted full stomachs but God said that God wanted them to trust him and his word he wanted them to live by his word to depend upon him to trust him he didn't want them to be worried about how full their bellies were but he wanted them to be worried about how full their lives were with God's word and God's will and Jesus is not like Israel and Jesus is like Israel was meant to be you see Jesus is in effect saying to the devil I am not going to live by filling my belly with physical food I am going to live dependent upon God and upon his word and so he throws that word of God back at the evil one and he says one does not live by bread alone don't give me that stuff

I am going to live by God's written word instead it is so strong isn't it he's broken that temptation that was so prevalent that brings us to the second temptation now this time Jesus doesn't tempt him on the basis of who he is he tempts him on the basis of the question of authority have a look at it in verses five now the resolve of Jesus at this point gives him no option you know he's got to go the way of the cross he knows that he resolves to do it Israel had always opted out not this Israel only God's way is worth it only God's way works now that brings us to temptation number three and in this temptation the devil returns to the theme of who Jesus is and this time he's far more subtle have you noticed there's been a bit of a progression here he's learned how to quote a bit of scripture himself the scripture comes from Psalm 91 and it promises that God's Messiah will have angelic protection the devil challenges

Jesus can you listen to it it is very important he's saying will you live by scripture it's so subtle so sophisticated isn't it will you live by scripture because God's Messiah will be born up by angels but Jesus sees through it he sees that it's really an attempt to tempt God as Israel did in the wilderness and it's testing God to see if he keep his promise and scripture makes clear let's see if we can sort of tie together what we've seen in this passage the overall impression is that Jesus is determined to live the way God intended isn't it that's what he's going to do he's going to live by God's word just as psalm 78 said God's people ought to God's intention was that humans trusted him that they listened to his word that they live by his life and die by

[20 : 34] God's word his food the thing that filled his belly and filled his life would be God's word his identity would be formed by God's word and God's purpose he would be truly human you see what it is to be truly human not false human is to live under the word of God and let it rain he would be truly human in a way no human in history has ever been he would be the first true human for he would live under the rule of God so we've had a look at the general background of temptation we've looked at how Jesus tackles it now we need to see what we can make of how this story fits with us now I guess on first reading of the passage most of us are pretty impressed with the way Jesus handles scripture we see him resisting the devil we find a model therefore I think we look and we see this is how

I should deal with the devil as well we see him quoting scripture resisting the devil and we see that's for me and that helps us doesn't it because we know temptation just as he does and so when the devil tempts us we think maybe I should handle it Jesus way do what Jesus does here so when the devil tempts us sexually what would be a good sort of appropriate way to respond perhaps we could go back to the scripture remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 5 27 you've heard that it was said do not commit adultery but I tell you that anyone who looks on a woman lustily has already committed adultery in his heart and so we might remind ourselves of that scripture and that would be a constructive and good thing to do or when we're tempted by greed we might tell ourselves the ten commandments thou shalt not covet or one of Paul's commands it says coveting amounts to idolatry and we warn ourselves and teach ourselves from scripture our view is I think that by doing this we quench the flaming missiles of the evil one and we show a determination that we're going to be like

Jesus we're not going to live by bread but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God now I think that's a healthy and good thing to be doing it is good to observe Jesus dealing with the devil and learn from it but I don't think that's why this passage is here I don't think it's here to model how you deal with the devil I don't think that's why it's here I think it's here for a much more profound reason let me explain you see when we enter Jesus was didn't we you see he's the spirit anointed one he's the one he's God's Christ he's God's Messiah but he's also the beloved son of God he's also the son of Adam and this is where he is the one who enters into the fray in Luke 4 and in Luke 4 this fully divine fully human king engages with the great opponent of God great opponent of his people great opponent of his purposes as he has done with every human being in history the evil one works at deflecting this human from

God's will and God's word and he fails he fails enormously no matter how sophisticated he gets he fails and the normal case when humans have been tempted by the devil is what when you've been tempted by the devil and you've caved in how do you walk away from the situation you walk away weakened don't you it's another chink in your armour it's another part of your existence gone and we are because we know that we're so frail and so human but I want you to notice exactly how this chapter ends look at it verse 14 read it tell me how is it different from everyone else before him Luke 4 verse 14 says how Jesus walked out of this encounter did he walk out like you and I walk out when I failed do you know how I walk away I think I've done it again how does

Jesus walk away he walks away in the power of the spirit and he begins to teach that very word he has lived by where Adam and Israel failed he succeeds where every human being has failed he has succeeded can you hear it this is a clanging resounding ringing bell in human history it sounds an ominous sound for Satan and he knows it it sounds an ominous sound for all his minions it rings out their defeat they are left cowering wondering when they might have another go and knowing it will be fruitless hoping that it might not be that's what this passage is about it's about the possibility of a new start for human beings with a new human being like none ever before and we know how it will end don't we look at verse 13 verse 13 tells us that Satan departs from him but ominously it says until an opportune time he and his representatives take this man at an opportune time later and they hang him on a cross and on that cross he does it again for he defeats them he winds up their power over humans as

[26 : 13] Paul says in Colossians 2 verse 15 Jesus on the cross disarms the spiritual rulers and authorities he makes a public spectacle of them he triumphs over them in the cross and then he returns to sit at the right hand of his father in the power of the spirit forever to rule over God's world and God's people he has what Satan said he could have by a shortcut but it's far grander because he's not defeated so what does this passage then mean for us what's an impact how does it help us to answer the question I want you to come with me to the last book in the Bible come to Revelation

look at Revelation 12 with me it's a grand story it tells about the defeat of Satan and particularly verse 9 have a look at it there so Revelation 12 verse 9 it tells us that Satan is thrown down but I want you to notice something I want you to notice verse 11 verse 11 tells us how the saints conquer Satan so that's us how do we conquer Satan it's clear it's categorical they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony in other words the saints defeat Satan not by their own resistance but by the death of their Lord only the death of Jesus and our word of testimony about that death can defeat the evil one friends please hear me we cannot defeat Satan if you're engaged in a battle thinking you can do it you are fighting a losing battle it has been done and only one can do it only Jesus can do it he began in Luke 4 he signed sealed and delivered it on the cross and he will wrap it up on the last day when he will finally fling that evil one into the burning sea so if this is true what defense then can we Christians have in the face of temptation what should we do when we are tempted to sin well this passage seems to point us in the right direction I think we should remind ourselves and remind the devil that he is defeated already that his days are numbered that the cross has spelt his end and that my destiny and your destiny is dependent on someone else therefore he has no power over us if we belong to Jesus the evil one cannot harm us please don't get into this superstitious mumbo jumbo that people get into the evil one cannot touch the people of

God who cling to Jesus and his work on the cross if we belong to Jesus the evil one cannot harm us if you belong to Jesus the evil one cannot harm you he can tempt you he can push you but the cross of Christ will send him running all the time you can turn to God you can turn to God for grace to help in time of need no one but no one can snatch you out of the hand of the God who sent his son to the cross for you God will bring you blameless to the throne of God on the last day he can do it he's guaranteed it in the cross can you see what I'm saying the way to face temptation not to rely on yourself it is not to rely on your own strength and your own willpower and your own devices know the way to deal with temptation is to rely on the only human who has defeated it it is to trust in Jesus Christ Jesus alone can deliver you Jesus alone is victorious against the evil one trust in Jesus cling to him trust in him alone and tell Satan to go where he belongs overcome him by your word of testimony and your confidence in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ conquer the devil by the blood of the lamb and by your word of testimony about him let's pray father father god we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ thank you for him entering the fray in Luke 4 as we've read about tonight thank you for his defiance of the evil one and his resistance thank you for his death on the cross when he made a public display of the evil one and father please please help us to trust in the blood of the lamb and to ring out that word of testimony about the Lord Jesus Christ father we pray this in Jesus name amen we We We