

**The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Conception, Baptism and  
Temptation of Christ:  
Implications for the Pentecostal Christian  
Part II**

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**The Holy Spirit in the Temptation of Jesus**

In this section, I examine how the Holy Spirit was involved in the various Gospel accounts of the temptation of Jesus, which happened in the wilderness of Judea. “Wilderness” in Greek is *ερημος*, which, according to *BDAG*, means an uninhabited region or locality, desert, grassland, wilderness.<sup>1</sup> The wilderness theme in the Bible is important. In the OT, this is the place where God met his people and revealed himself (see Exod. 3:1-3, 19, Deut. 8:2, 1Kings 19:4-13);<sup>2</sup> while in the NT, it’s where Jesus sometimes withdrew himself to pray. In the Jewish tradition, the word has a further aspect. The Jews believed that the wilderness, being beyond the bounds of society, was the haunt of evil spirits.<sup>3</sup> The story of the temptation of Jesus reflects this. The wilderness was an arena of the battle between the Son of God, and Satan.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke include the account of the temptation of Jesus. All three put it after His baptism and before the opening of His public ministry, and all of them say that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. Following is an examination of how each Gospel writer describes this account in order to find the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd Edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 391.

<sup>2</sup>Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and The Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991), 137.

<sup>3</sup>Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 565.

## Mark 1:12

In Mark's account, the temptation of Jesus is described only in two verses. However, his unique usage of Greek is worth looking at in detail. After Jesus' baptism and the descending of the Holy Spirit, he went into the wilderness, which Mark describes in this way in verse 12: Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ("And immediately the Holy Spirit drove him into the wilderness"). The word εὐθὺς ("immediately") leads the readers to a new scene. Since Mark uses the word τὸ πνεῦμα ("Holy Spirit") twice in the prologue (vs. 1:8 and vs. 1:10), his use of εὐθὺς indicates that the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus in the Jordan led him into the wilderness.<sup>4</sup> It is unique that Mark uses the word ἐκβάλλει ("drove") to illustrate the leading of the Holy Spirit. Many times, ἐκβάλλει is translated as "cast out" and is often used in the scenes of the driving out of evil spirits. Matthew and Luke do not use ἐκβάλλει. Instead, Matthew uses the word ἀναγω ("lead up") and Luke the word αγω ("lead").

In Mark 1:12, ἐκβάλλει is in the present tense and is used as the "historical present," which is employed to highlight vividly a verb that happened in the past.<sup>5</sup> The reason that Mark uses ἐκβάλλει is that he wishes to highlight that the life of Jesus was fully and always led by the Holy Spirit. Hawthorne says, "With Mark they continue to stress the significant role played by the Spirit in bringing Jesus to the desert."<sup>6</sup>

## Mark 1:13

Verse 13 says that Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, stayed there 40 days, and was tempted (πειραζόμενος) by Satan. Interestingly, the temptation itself is not Mark's focal point, as made obvious by his usage of Greek grammar. The phrase "being tempted by Satan" in Greek is πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ. If the temptation itself was the center of his temptation narrative, Mark would not have used this brief participial phrase. Rather, he focused on how Jesus spent the 40-day period<sup>7</sup>—καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ ("Jesus was with the wild beasts and the angels were serving him").

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<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 62.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 526.

<sup>6</sup>Hawthorne, *The Presence and The Power*, 138.

<sup>7</sup>R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 83.

According to R.T. France, τῶν θηρίων (“the wild beasts”) are illustrated as the alliance of Satan, and Jesus was able to survive because he was the Son of God and angels were serving him. Thus, Mark’s main focus was on Jesus’ life in the wilderness and the fact that he was not alone. The Holy Spirit was there to help him and the angels there to serve him.<sup>8</sup> Jesus was in need of the strengthening of both the Spirit and the angels during this testing period as the Son of God.

#### Matthew 4:1

Matthew’s account, which takes up 11 verses and came from Mark and Q,<sup>9</sup> starts with the word Τότε (“then”). Being his favorite word to introduce a new scene, Τότε carries an important sequence from the previous account. Jesus heard the voice from the Father saying that he is the Son of God and received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In connection to this, something will happen in the new scene.<sup>10</sup> In verse 1, the word Spirit and the word Devil are in a parallel (ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος and ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου). Lenski explains this grammar as follows: “The one bestows all his power upon the human nature of Jesus, the other at once puts this power to a supreme test. In a strange way God’s will and the devil’s will meet in a tremendous clash.”<sup>11</sup>

In grammar, these two phrases are in a parallel, but the guidance of the Holy Spirit occurs first. This implies that the temptation of Jesus by Satan was initiated by God and the Holy Spirit.

While Mark uses the word ἐκβάλλει (“it drove”) to illustrate vividly the initiative of the Holy Spirit, Matthew uses ἀνήχθη (“he was led up”). The word ἀνήχθη in Matthew, although not as strong as ἐκβάλλει in Mark, should not be simply translated as “he was led up” or “he was shown the way.” It has a nuance of “taken” or “conducted.” Thus, if we can translate the sentence in an active sense, it would read, “Then the Holy Spirit took him into the wilderness.”<sup>12</sup> As in Mark, Matthew also emphasizes the initiative of the Holy Spirit here.

Among the Gospel writers, only Matthew clearly states why the Holy Spirit took Jesus into the wilderness. The infinitive form of the

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 86–87.

<sup>9</sup>Dale C. Allison, *Matthew: Volume 1: 1-7* (Edinburgh, SCT: T&T Clark, 2000), 353.

<sup>10</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 97. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel 1-14* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1964), 97.

<sup>11</sup>R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel 1-14* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1964), 138.

<sup>12</sup>Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (Broadway, NY: United Bible Societies, 1988), 80–81.

word *πειραζω* (*πειρασθῆναι*) indicates purpose. Again, his usage of *πειρασθῆναι* shows the initiative and superiority of the Holy Spirit. G.B. Garlington explains this well:

In fact Jesus' experience was both a testing and a temptation. The term has to do with "testing" when God stands in the forefront and with "temptation" when an evil force such as the devil is more prominent. So the combination of the Spirit's leading of Jesus and the devil's enticements give the verb a double connotation here . . . The confrontation is initiated by God. By means of Satan's "temptations" God was "testing" His Son.<sup>13</sup>

Also, usage of the word *πειραζω* in the OT is remarkably important, for it's used in contexts of God testing his people in order to assess the reality of their faith and obedience.<sup>14</sup> Since Matthew had the picture of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, the temptation of Jesus can be understood in the similar sense—i.e., God testing Jesus' obedience as the Son of God.

Unlike Mark, Matthew pays attention to the contents of the temptation (test). Jesus faced three tests that came from Satan—to transform a stone into a loaf of bread, to worship Satan, and to throw himself down. In the first, Jesus proved that the Son of God came to obey the will of God not to satisfy his own needs. In the second, Jesus proved that the Son of God lives only in a relationship of trust, which needs no test. And in the third, Jesus proved that the Son of God is loyal to his Father at all times.<sup>15</sup>

Luke 4:1—*πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου* ("full of the Spirit")

Luke's temptation narrative came from Q. Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke places the narrative after introducing the genealogy of Jesus, not immediately after the account of the baptism of Jesus. In 3:38, Luke says, "the Son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." This emphasizes that Jesus was God's Son, and the temptation

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<sup>13</sup>D.B. Garlington, 1994. "Jesus, the Unique Son of God : Tested and Faithful." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151, no. 603: 284-308. New Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost (accessed March 11, 2015).

<sup>14</sup>David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), 55.

<sup>15</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 98–100.

was to test this truth.<sup>16</sup> Mark and Matthew mention the Holy Spirit only once, but Luke does so twice—πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου and also ἤγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι. Obviously, Luke’s intention was to emphasize how the Holy Spirit was involved in the temptation narrative. The first reference to the Spirit is seen at the beginning of verse 1—Ἰησοῦς δὲ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ὑπέστρεψεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου (“And Jesus full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan”). The phrase πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου is Luke’s unique insertion.

Menzies explains the usage of the word πλήρης in Luke’s writings. Most of the time, when describing someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit, Luke uses the phrase ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου (“filled with the Holy Spirit”)—e.g., of the disciples in Acts as well as of John, Elizabeth, and Zechariah in the infancy narratives. However, for Jesus, Stephen, and Barnabas, Luke uses the phrase πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου. This may cause one to assume that it’s a special usage. However, says Menzies, it is not special but rather is used to describe an order. The phrase πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου (“full of the Spirit”) implies the prior experience designated by the phrase ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου (“filled with the Holy Spirit”).<sup>17</sup> Thus, those who are filled with the Spirit can be full of the Holy Spirit; but in terms of the Spirit’s functions, it changes nothing. Jesus was “filled with the Holy Spirit” at the Jordan, which is why he became “full of the Spirit.” Menzies adds, “Jesus, as one who has been filled with the Spirit at Jordan, has constant access to the Spirit of God who provides what is required.”<sup>18</sup>

Menzies also points out that Luke shows the connection between Jesus and the early church.<sup>19</sup> For Jesus, the Jordan experience was his Pentecost. After that experience, he was “full of the Spirit” (πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου) to continue to work on his divine task regardless of the difficulties. Similarly, on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Following that experience, they were “full of the Spirit” (πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου) to continue to work on their missions to impact the world. We Pentecostals carry this legacy to this today.

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<sup>16</sup>James B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA : Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 58.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Menzies, *Empowered for Witness* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 140.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 141.

## Luke 4:1—ἐν τῷ πνεύματι (“by the Holy Spirit”)

The second reference to the Holy Spirit is also seen in verse 1. “This Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was also led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness” (ἤγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ). The phrase ἐν τῷ πνεύματι (“by [or in] the Holy Spirit”) causes a big issue among scholars. Unlike Matthew who uses the word ὑπό (“by”), Luke uses ἐν, the prior meaning of which is “in.” Scholars like Hans Conzelmann<sup>20</sup> and Warrington<sup>21</sup> insist that the word ἐν should be translated as “in.” They say Luke makes this significant change to show that Jesus was not subject to the Spirit but rather was living in the sphere or presence of, or in association, with the Spirit. Jesus was not superior or inferior to the Spirit, but the two exist together in harmony.<sup>22</sup>

However, these scholars miss the point that Luke uses the passive form ἤγετο (“led”) in this phrase. If he wished to emphasize that Jesus was not subject to the Spirit, he would not have used the passive form. Joseph Fitzmyer contends that Luke shows the perfect subjection of Jesus to the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> So the translation should be “Jesus full of the Holy Spirit was led by the Holy Spirit.” Jesus is the second person of the Trinity and, as such, is neither superior or inferior to the Spirit by nature. He relied not on his own power and resources but on God’s Spirit. As Shelton says:

While Luke maintains that Jesus’ experience, as God’s Son through the work of the Holy Spirit is unique, he also shows that in his humanity Jesus is dependent upon the Holy Spirit to overcome temptation and carry out his ministry. This is why Luke uses the same terms to express Jesus’ relationship with the Holy Spirit and that of believers. This is good news to Luke’s readers. . . . Jesus does not rely on the uniqueness of his Spirit-generated birth (1:35) or his office of Messiah to win over temptation. He overcomes evil as God expects all people to triumph-through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1982), 180–181.

<sup>21</sup>Keith Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit* (Nottingham, UK: Inter Varsity Press, 2009), 67.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>23</sup>Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Broadway, NY: Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 1995), 54.

<sup>24</sup>Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*, 60.

### Summary: The Holy Spirit in the Temptation of Jesus

From the three accounts of the temptation of Jesus, we can see how the Holy Spirit was involved in the life of Christ during this time. Mark, Matthew, and Luke all acknowledge the importance of Jesus' life being led by the Holy Spirit. Mark uses the word ἐκβάλλει, which has a slight violence nuance. Matthew uses ἀνήχθ, which is not as strong as Mark's yet still clearly communicates that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was necessary in the life of Jesus. Luke refers to the Holy Spirit twice in one verse to emphasize a connection between Jesus and the event on the day of Pentecost by using the remarkable phrase πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου. He who was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit at the Jordan was continually being full of the Spirit, which allowed him to overcome the temptation.

### Conclusion

Through learning and exegeting the Gospel passages regarding the conception of Jesus, the baptism of Jesus, and the temptation of Jesus, I have found that there is a connection between the life of Jesus and the life of Pentecostal Christians today.

When Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowed her and created the human Jesus in her womb. Mary was an ordinary woman, but God's gracious and amazing gift came to her. The same power of the Spirit who created the human Jesus overshadowed Jesus' disciples, who were ordinary people but, because of this gift, became strong. This same gift is available to us today.

In the account of the baptism of Jesus, we recognize it was for us to show that the eternal Son of God would die for sinners to save the world. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was for him and also for us. Jesus became the permanent bearer of the Spirit, so that he could share this precious gift with us today.

As to the temptation of Jesus, even though he was the Son of God and born of the Holy Spirit, he perfectly depended on the Spirit's guidance. From the day that the Spirit anointed him, Jesus was full of the power of the Spirit, which allowed him to overcome those temptations. Luke especially shows the connection between Jesus and the event on the day of Pentecost—that those who were baptized by the Holy Spirit also could overcome any kind of hindrance and troubles that might otherwise have prevented them from telling the gospel. This power is also available to us today.

As stated at the outset, as Pentecostal Christian, we have tended to focus only on the power of the Holy Spirit and forget how precious this

gift is and who the giver is. It's not because we are extraordinary people that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us. Rather, this is his gift for the sinners who were forgiven only by grace. As Pentecostals, we must study how the disciples and the apostles were engaged in mission, being empowered by the Holy Spirit. But if our focus can be expanded to the original sender of this gift, we will be more appreciative and our perspectives and understandings of the Holy Spirit heightened.

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