

## Luke: 4:1–13

### From Catena Aurea:

1. And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,
2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.
3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.
4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Christ is tempted after His baptism, shewing us that after we are baptized, temptations await us. Hence it is said, But Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit, &c.

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** God said in times past, My Spirit shall not always abide in men, for that they are flesh. (Gen. 6:3. Vulg.) But now that we have been enriched with the gift of regeneration by water and the Spirit, we are become partakers of the Divine nature by participation of the Holy Spirit. But the first-born among many brethren first received the Spirit, who Himself also is the giver of the Spirit, that we through Him might also receive the grace of the Holy Spirit.

**ORIGEN.** When therefore you read that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, and it is written in the Acts concerning the Apostles, that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, you must not suppose that the Apostles were equal to the Saviour. For as if you should say, These vessels are full of wine or oil, you would not thereby affirm them to be equally full, so Jesus and Paul were full of the Holy Spirit, but Paul's vessel was far less than that of Jesus, and yet each was filled according to its own measure. Having then received baptism, the Saviour, being full of the Holy Spirit, which came upon Him from heaven in the form of a dove, was led by the Spirit, because, as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God, (Rom. 8:14.) but He was above all, especially the Son of God.

**GREEK EXPOSITOR.** (Severus.) But if we order our lives according to our own will, how was He led about unwillingly? Those words then, He was led by the Spirit, have some meaning of this kind: He led of His own accord that kind of life, that He might present an opportunity to the tempter.

**BASIL.** For not by word provoking the enemy, but by His actions rousing him, He seeks the wilderness. For the devil delights in the wilderness, he is not wont to go into the cities, the harmony of the citizens troubles him.

**AMBROSE.** He was led therefore into the wilderness, to the intent that He might provoke the devil, for if the one had not contended, the other it seems had not conquered. In a mystery, it was to deliver that Adam from exile who was cast out of Paradise into the wilderness. By way of example, it was to shew us that the devil envies us, whenever we strive after better things; and that then we must use caution, lest the weakness of our minds should lose us the grace of the mystery. Hence it follows: And he was tempted of the devil.

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** Behold, He is among the wrestlers, who as God awards the prizes. He is among the crowned, who crowns the heads of the saints.

**ORIGEN.** But Jesus is tempted by the devil forty days, and what the temptations were we know not. They were perhaps omitted, as being greater than could be committed to writing.

**BASIL.** Or, the Lord remained for forty days untempted, for the devil knew that He fasted, yet hungered not, and dared not therefore approach Him. Hence it follows: And he eat nothing in those days. He fasted indeed, to shew that He who would gird Himself for struggles against temptation must be temperate and sober.

**AMBROSE.** There are three things which united together conduce to the salvation of man; The Sacrament, The Wilderness, Fasting. No one who has not rightly contended receives a crown, but no one is admitted to the contest of virtue, except first being washed from the stains of all his sins, he is consecrated with the gift of heavenly grace.

**GREGORY NAZIANZEN.** (Orat. 40.) He fasted in truth forty days, eating nothing. (For He was God.) But we regulate our fasting according to our strength, although the zeal of some persuades them to fast beyond what they are able.

**BASIL.** (ex Const. Mon.) But we must not however so use the flesh, that through want of food our strength should waste away, nor that by excess of mortification our understandings wax dull and heavy. Our Lord therefore, once performed this work, but during this whole succeeding time He governed His body with due order, and so in like manner did Moses and Elias.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. 13. in Matt.) But very wisely, He exceeded not their number of days, lest indeed He should be thought to have come in appearance only, and not to have really received the flesh, or lest the flesh should seem to be something beyond human nature.

**AMBROSE.** But mark the mystical number of days. For you remember that for forty days the waters of the deep were poured forth, and by sanctifying a fast of that number of days, He brings before us the returning mercies of a calmer sky. By a fast of so many days also, Moses earned for himself the understanding of the law. Our fathers being for so many years settled in the wilderness, obtained the food of Angels.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Con. Ev. lib. ii. c. 4.) Now that number is a sacrament of our time and labour, in which under Christ's discipline we contend against the devil, for it signifies our temporal life. For the seasons of the year run in courses of four, but forty contains four tens. Again, those ten are completed by the number one successively advancing up to four. This plainly shews that the fast of forty days, i. e. the humiliation of the soul, the Law and the Prophets have consecrated by Moses and Elias, the Gospel by the fast of our Lord Himself.

**BASIL.** (ubi sup.) But because not to suffer hunger is above the nature of man, our Lord took upon Himself the feeling of hunger, and submitted Himself as it pleased Him to human nature, both to do and to suffer those things which were His own. Hence it follows: And those days being ended, he was a hungered. Not forced to that necessity which overpowers nature, but as if provoking the devil to the conflict. For the devil, knowing that wherever hunger is there is weakness, sets about to tempt Him, and as the deviser or inventor of temptations, Christ permitting him tries to persuade Him to satisfy His appetite with the stones. As it follows; But the devil said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command these stones that they be made bread.

**AMBROSE.** There are three especial weapons which we are taught the devil is wont to arm himself with, that he may wound the soul of man. One is of the appetite, another of boasting, the third ambition. He began with that wherewith he had already conquered, namely, Adam. Let us then beware of the appetite, let us beware of luxury, for it is a weapon of the devil. But what mean his words, If thou art the Son of

God, unless he had known that the Son would come, but supposed Him not to have come from the weakness of His body. He first endeavours to find Him out, then to tempt Him. He professes to trust Him as God, then tries to deceive Him as man.

**ORIGEN.** When a father is asked by his son for bread, he does not give him a stone for bread, but the devil like a crafty and deceitful foe gives stones for bread.

**BASIL.** (ubi sup.) He tried to persuade Christ to satisfy His appetite with stones, i. e. to shift his desire from the natural food to that which was beyond nature or unnatural.

**ORIGEN.** I suppose also that even now at this very time the devil shews a stone to men that he may tempt them to speak, saying to them, Command this stone to be made bread. If thou seest the heretics devouring their lying doctrines as if they were bread, know that their teaching is a stone which the devil shews them.

**BASIL.** (ubi sup.) But Christ while He vanquishes temptation, banishes not hunger from our nature, as though that were the cause of evils, (which is rather the preservative of life, but confining nature within its proper bounds, shews of what kind its nourishment is, as follows; And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

**THEOPHYLACT.** As if He said, Not by bread alone is human nature sustained, but the word of God is sufficient to support the whole nature of man. Such was the food of the Israelites when they gathered manna during the space of forty years, and when they delighted in the taking of quails. (Exod. 16:15, Numb. 11:32) By the Divine counsel Elias had the crows to entertain him; (1 Kings 17:6) Elisha fed his companions on the herbs of the field. (2 Kings 4:44.)

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** Or, our earthly body is nourished by earthly food, but the reasonable soul is strengthened by the Divine Word, to the right ordering of the spirit.

**GREGORY NAZIANZEN.** (Poem. Mor. x. 624.) For the body nourishes not our immaterial nature.

**GREGORY OF NYSSA.** (in Eccles. Hom. 5.) Virtue then is not sustained by bread, nor by flesh does the soul keep itself in health and vigour, but by other banquets than these is the heavenly life fostered, and increased. The nourishment of the good man is chastity, his bread, wisdom, his herbs, justice, his drink, freedom from passion, his delight, (εὐφροσύνη quasi ex εὐφρόνειν) to be rightly wise.

**AMBROSE.** You see then what kind of arms He uses to defend man against the assaults of spiritual wickedness, and the allurements of the appetite. He does not exert His power as God, (for how had that

profited me,) but as man He summons to Himself a common aid, that while intent upon the food of divine reading He may neglect the hunger of the body, and gain the nourishment of the word. For he who seeks after the word cannot feel the want of earthly bread; for divine things doubtless make up for the loss of human. At the same time by saying, Man lives not by bread alone, He shews that man was tempted, that is, our flesh which He assumed, not His own divinity.

4:5–8

5. And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

**THEOPHYLACT.** The enemy had first assailed Christ by the temptation of the appetite, as also he did Adam. He next tempts Him with the desire of gain or covetousness, shewing Him all the kingdoms of the world. Hence it follows, And the devil taking him up.

**THEOPHYLACT.** But how did the devil shew Him all the kingdoms of the world? Some say that he presented them to Him in imagination, but I hold that he brought them before Him in visible form and appearance.

**TITUS BOSTRENSIS.** Or, the devil described the world in language, and as he thought brought it vividly before our Lord's mind as though it were a certain house.

**AMBROSE.** Truly in a moment of time, the kingdoms of this world are described. For here it is not so much the rapid glance of sight which is signified as is declared the frailty of mortal power. For in a moment all this passes by, and oftentimes the glory of this world has vanished before it has arrived. It follows, And he said unto him, I will give thee all this power.

**TITUS BOSTRENSIS.** (non occ.) He lied in two respects. For he neither had to give, nor could he give that which he had not; he gains possession of nothing, but is an enemy reduced to fight.

**AMBROSE.** For it is elsewhere said, that all power is from God. (Rom. 13:1.) Therefore from God's hands comes the disposal of power, the lust of power is from the evil one; power is not itself evil, but he who evilly uses it. What then; is it good to exercise power, to desire honour? Good if it is bestowed upon us, not if it is seized. We must distinguish however in this good itself. There is one good use of the world, another of perfect virtue. It is good to seek God; it is a good thing that the desire of becoming acquainted with God should be hindered by no worldly business. But if he who seeks God, is from the weakness of the flesh, and the narrowness of his mind, often tempted, how much more is he exposed who seeks the world? We are taught then to despise ambition, because it is subject to the power of the devil. But honour abroad is followed by danger at home, and in order to rule others a man is first their servant, and prostrates himself in obedience that he may be rewarded with honours, and the higher he aspires the lower he bends with feigned humility; whence he adds, If thou wilt fall down and worship me.

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** And dost thou, whose lot is the unquenchable fire, promise to the Lord of all that which is His own? Didst thou think to have Him for thy worshipper, from dread of whom the whole creation trembles?

**ORIGEN.** Or, to view the whole in another light. Two kings are earnestly contending for a kingdom; The king of sin who reigneth over sinners, that is, the devil; The king of righteousness who ruleth the righteous, that is, Christ. The devil, knowing that Christ had come to take away his kingdom, shews Him all the kingdoms of the world; not the kingdoms of the Persians and of the Medes, but his own kingdom whereby he reigned in the world, whereby some are under the dominion of fornication, others of covetousness. And he shews Him them in a moment of time, that is, in the present course of time, which is but a moment in comparison of eternity. For the Saviour needed not to be shewn for any longer time the affairs of this world, but as soon as He turned His eyes to look, He beheld sins reigning, and men made slaves to vice. The devil therefore says unto Him, Camest Thou to contend with me for dominion? Worship me, and behold I give Thee the kingdom I hold. Now the Lord would indeed reign, but being Righteousness itself, would reign without sin; and would have all nations subject to Him, that they might obey the truth, but would not so reign over others as that He Himself should be subject to the devil. Hence it follows, And Jesus answering said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** (in Thes. 32.) But how comes it that the Son (if as the heretics say a created being) is worshipped? What charge can be brought against those who served the creature and not the Creator, if the Son (according to them a created being) we are to worship as God?

**ORIGEN.** Or else, All these, he says, I would have subject to me, that they might worship the Lord God, and serve Him alone. But dost thou wish sin to begin from Me, which I came hither to destroy?

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** This command touched him to the quick; for before Christ's coming he was every where worshipped. But the law of God casting him down from his usurped dominion, establishes the worship of Him alone who is really God.

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9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

**AMBROSE.** The next weapon he uses is that of boasting, which always causes the offender to fall down; for they who love to boast of the glory of their virtue descend from the stand and vantage ground of their good deeds. Hence it is said, And he led him to Jerusalem.

**ORIGEN.** He followed evidently as a wrestler, gladly setting out to meet the temptation, and saying, as it were, Lead me where you will, and you will find me the stronger in every thing.

**AMBROSE.** It is the fate of boasting, that while a man thinks he is climbing higher, he is by his pretension to lofty deeds brought low. Hence it follows, And he said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, throw thyself down.

**ATHANASIUS.** (non occ.) The devil entered not into a contest with God, (for he durst not, and therefore said, If thou art the Son of God,) but he contended with man whom once he had power to deceive.

**AMBROSE.** That is truly the devil's language, which seeks to cast down the soul of man from the high ground of its good deeds, while he shews at the same time both his weakness and malice, for he can injure no one that does not first cast himself down. For he who forsaking heavenly things pursues earthly, rushes as it were wilfully down the self-sought precipice of a falling life. As soon then as the devil perceived his

dart blunted, he who had subdued all men to his own power, began to think he had to deal with more than man. But Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and often from the Holy Scriptures weaves his mesh for the faithful: hence it follows, It is written, He shall give, &c.

**ORIGEN.** Whence knowest thou, Satan, that those things are written? Hast thou read the Prophets, or the oracles of God? Thou hast read them indeed, but not that thyself mightest be the better for the reading, but that from the mere letter thou mightest slay them who are friends to the letter. (2 Cor. 3:6.) Thou knowest that if thou wert to speak from His other books, thou wouldest not deceive.

**AMBROSE.** Let not the heretic entrap thee by bringing examples from the Scriptures. The devil makes use of the testimony of the Scriptures not to teach but to deceive.

**ORIGEN.** But mark how wily he is even in this testimony. For he would fain throw a slur upon the glory of the Saviour, as though He needed the assistance of angels, and would stumble were He not supported by their hands. But this was said not of Christ, but of the saints generally; He needs not the aid of angels, Who is greater than angels. But let this teach thee, Satan, that the angels would stumble did not God sustain them; and thou stumblest, because thou refusest to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God. But why art thou silent as to what follows, Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, (Ps. 91:13.) except that thou art the basilisk, thou art the dragon and the lion?

**AMBROSE.** But the Lord, to prevent the thought that those things which had been prophesied of Him were fulfilled according to the devil's will, and not by the authority of His own divine power, again so foils his cunning, that he who had alleged the testimony of Scripture, should by Scripture himself be overthrown. Hence it follows, And Jesus answering said, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** For it is of the devil to cast one's self into dangers, and try whether God will rescue us.

**CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA.** God gives not help to those who tempt Him, but to those who believe on Him. Christ therefore did not shew His miracles to them that tempted Him, but said to them, An evil generation seeketh a sign, and no sign shall be given to them. (Mat. 12:39.)

**CHRYSOSTOM.** But mark how the Lord, instead of being troubled, condescends to dispute from the Scriptures with the wicked one, that thou, as far as thou art able, mightest become like Christ. The devil knew the arms of Christ, beneath which he sunk. Christ took him captive by meekness, He overcame him by humility. Do thou also, when thou seest a man who has become a devil coming to meet thee, subdue him in like manner. Teach thy soul to conform its words to those of Christ. For as a Roman judge, who on



the bench refuses to hear the reply of one who knows not how to speak as he does; so also Christ, except thou speakest after His manner, will neither hear thee nor protect thee.

**GREGORY OF NYSSA.** (ubi sup.) In lawful contests the battle is terminated either when the adversary surrenders of his own accord to the conqueror, or is defeated in three falls, according to the rules of the art of fighting. Hence it follows, And all the temptation being completed, &c.

**AMBROSE.** He would not have said that all the temptation was ended, had there not been in the three temptations which have been described the materials for every crime; for the causes of temptations are the causes of desire, namely, the delight of the flesh, the pomp of vain-glory, greediness of power.

**ATHANASIUS.** (non occ.) The enemy came to Him as man, but not finding in Him the marks of his ancient seed, he departed.

**AMBROSE.** You see then that the devil is not obstinate on the field, is wont to give way to true virtue; and if he ceases not to hate, he yet dreads to advance, for so he escapes a more frequent defeat. As soon then as he heard the name of God, he retired (it is said) for a season, for afterwards he comes not to tempt, but to fight openly.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Or, having tempted Him in the desert with pleasure, he retires from Him until the crucifixion, when he was about to tempt Him with sorrow.

**MAXIMUS.** (lib. ad. piet. ex. 12.) Or the devil had prompted Christ in the desert to prefer the things of the world to the love of God. The Lord commanded him to leave Him, (which itself was a mark of Divine love.) It was afterwards then enough to make Christ appear the false advocate of love to His neighbours, and therefore while He was teaching the paths of life, the devil stirred up the Gentiles and Pharisees to lay traps for Him that He might be brought to hate them. But the Lord, from the feeling of love which He had towards them, exhorted, reprov'd, ceased not to bestow mercy upon them.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de con. Ev. lib. ii. c. 6.) The whole of this narrative Matthew relates in a similar manner, but not in the same order. It is uncertain therefore which took place first, whether the kingdoms of the earth were first shewn unto Him, and He was afterwards taken up to the pinnacle of the temple; or whether this came first, and the other afterwards. It matters little however which, as long as it is clear that they all took place.

**MAXIMUS.** (ut sup.) But the reason why one Evangelist places this event first, and another that, is because vain-glory and covetousness give birth in turn to one another.

**ORIGEN.** But John, who had commenced his Gospel from God, saying, In the beginning was the Word, did not describe the temptation of the Lord, because God can not be tempted, of whom he wrote. But because in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke the human generations are given, and in Mark it is man who is tempted, therefore Matthew, Luke, and Mark have described the temptation of the Lord.

### **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

#### **4:1–2 Led by the Spirit into the Wilderness for Forty Days**

##### **Why Satan Waits to Tempt Jesus.**

Ephrem the Syrian: Why didn't Satan tempt him before his thirtieth year? He tempted Jesus because a definite sign of Christ's divinity had not yet been given from heaven. He appeared modest like others, and he had not received any obvious homage in the presence of his people. Satan refrained from tempting him until the beginning of this event. When he heard, "Now, behold the Lamb of God is coming," and "This is he who takes away the sins of the world," Satan was astonished. Yet he waited until Jesus was baptized to see if he would be baptized as if he needed to be baptized.

Then he saw the splendor of the light that appeared on the water, the voice that came from heaven. Then Satan knew that he who fulfills every need had gone down into the water and that he had not come to baptism as if he needed to be baptized. Satan reflected and said to himself, "As long as I have not tested him by combat through temptation I will not be able to identify him." But it was not fitting that the Benefactor should resist the will of him who had come to tempt him. For, not knowing how to tempt him, Satan did not dare approach him. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 4.4–5.

##### **Led by the Spirit into the Wilderness for Fasting.**

Cyril of Alexandria: "He was led, therefore," it says, "in the Spirit in the wilderness forty days, being tempted of the devil." What is the meaning of the word led? It signifies not so much that he was led there as that he dwelt and continued there....

He dwelt therefore in the wilderness in the Spirit, that is, spiritually. He fasted, granting no food whatsoever to the necessities of the body. I imagine someone may immediately object to this: And what harm, then, did it do Jesus to dwell in cities constantly? And in what way could it benefit him to choose to inhabit the wilderness? He did not lack one good thing. And why, too, did he fast also? Why was it necessary for him to labor? He does not know what it means to have a depraved desire. For we adopt the practice of fasting as a very useful expedient, by which we kill pleasure and attack the law of sin that is in our bodies and completely destroy those emotions which lead on to fleshly lust. But why did Christ need to fast? The Father slays the sin in the flesh by his body. He kills the motions of the flesh in us. He has abolished sin in miserable beings—in us. What kind of fasting could he need in anything that concerns himself? He is holy, undefiled by nature, wholly pure and without blemish. He cannot experience even the shadow of a change. Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

#### **Adam Goes from Paradise to the Desert; Christ from the Desert to Paradise.**

Ambrose: It is fitting that it be recorded that the first Adam was cast out of Paradise into the desert, that you may observe how the second Adam returned from the desert to Paradise.... Adam brought death through the tree. Christ brought life through the cross. Adam, naked of spiritual things, covered himself with the foliage of a tree. Christ, naked of worldly things, did not desire the trappings of the body. Adam lived in the desert. Christ lived in the desert, for he knew where he could find the lost. With their error canceled, he could recall them to Paradise....

So Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, is led into the desert for a purpose, in order to challenge the devil. If he had not fought, he would not have conquered him for me. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 4.7, 14.

#### **4:3–4 The First Temptation: Stones into Bread**

##### **Gluttony Captured the First Adam.**

Origen: Mark and Luke say that Jesus “was tempted for forty days.” It is clear that during those days the devil first tempted him from a distance to sleep, apathy, cowardice, and other such sins. Then, since he knew that Christ was hungry, the devil came closer to him and attacked him openly. Notice what he does. He had heard, both from John and from the voice that came from above, that “this man is a son of God.” He did not know that “the Son of God” had become man, for God concealed the inexpressible incarnation from him. So he assumed that Christ was a man who was pleasing to God because of his virtues. He was

also jealous of him because of this honor just as he had been jealous of the old Adam. He was eager to cast this man down, just as he had cast Adam down. So he approaches Jesus and introduces the first temptation, that of gluttony, through which he had also captured the first Adam. Since there was no food anywhere, because the whole region was a desert, he knew that bread would satisfy Christ's hunger. He himself does not produce bread, because Christ was not going to take it from the enemy. But he commands him to make bread from the stones that he points to. Look at Satan's wiles and great wickedness—he tried to keep Christ from knowing his plot. He did not simply say, "Turn the stones into loaves of bread," but he prefixed it with, "If you are a son of God." He did this to show that he wanted this act done to prove that Christ is a son of God. For he was thinking that Christ would be provoked by his words and offended by the suggestion that he was not a "son of God." He thought that Christ would not recognize the deception and, as a man who has power from God, turn the stones into bread. Then, when he saw the bread, he would yield to his stomach, since he was very hungry. But the devil did not escape the notice of him who "catches the wise in their craftiness." Christ answered him and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' " and the rest, because he knew the devil's villainy. He did not perform the sign that the devil sought, because he worked his signs to help those who saw them. Fragments on Luke 96.

### **Jesus Says Neither "I Can" Nor "I Cannot".**

Cyril of Alexandria: Satan said, "If you are the Son of God, bid this stone become bread." He approaches him, therefore, as an ordinary man and as one of the saints, yet he had a suspicion that possibly he might be the Christ. How, then, did he hope to learn if this was the case? He reasoned that to change the nature of any thing into that which it was not would be the act and deed of a divine power. For it is God who makes these things and transforms them. "If he does this," said the devil, "certainly it is he who is expected to subvert my power. But if he refuses to work this change, I am dealing with a man. I will set aside my fear. I am delivered from danger." Therefore it was that Christ, knowing the monster's plan, neither made the change nor said that he was either unable or unwilling to make it. Rather, the Lord shakes him off as annoying and meddlesome, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone." He means this: If God grants a man the ability, he can survive without eating and live as Moses and Elijah, who by the Word of the Lord passed forty days without taking food. If, therefore, it is possible to live without bread, why should I make the stone bread? He purposely does not say, "I cannot," that he may not deny his own power. Nor does he say, "I can," lest the devil, knowing that he is God, for whom alone such things are possible, should depart from him.: Observe, I beg you, how the nature of man in Christ casts off the faults of Adam's

gluttony. By eating we were conquered in Adam, by abstinence we conquered in Christ. Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

### **Jesus Defeats Satan with the Word of God.**

Ambrose: So, look at the arms of Christ with which he conquered for you, not for himself. For he who showed that stones could, through his majesty, be changed into bread by the transformation into a different nature, teaches that you must do nothing at the devil's behalf nor for the purpose of manifesting virtue. At the same time, learn from the temptation itself the ingenious cunning of the devil. The devil tempts that he may test. He tests that he may tempt. In contrast, the Lord deceives that he may conquer. He conquers that he may deceive. For if he had changed nature, he would have betrayed its Creator. Thus he responded neutrally, saying, "It is written, 'That man lives not by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" You see what kind of arms he wields, to defend humanity, surrounded and protected against the inducements of appetite, against the assault of spiritual wickedness. For he does not wield power as God—for what good would that be to me? So, as man, he summons common help for himself, so that eager for the food of the divine Word, he neglects the body's hunger and obtains the nourishment of the heavenly Word. Eager for this, Moses did not desire bread. Eager for this, Elijah did not feel the hunger of a long fast. For he who follows the Word cannot desire earthly bread when he receives the essence of the heavenly Bread. There is no doubt that the divine surpasses the human, as the spiritual the physical. Therefore he who desires true life awaits that Bread which through its intangible substance strengthens human hearts. At the same time, when he says, "Man lives not by bread alone," he shows that the man is tempted, that is, his acceptance of our flesh, not his divinity. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 4.19–20.

### **4:5–8 The Second Temptation: Kingdoms of the Earth**

#### **Satan Showed How He Ruled the World.**

Origen: We should not think that when the devil showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world, he showed him, for example, the kingdom of the Persians and of the Indians. "He showed him all the kingdoms of the world," that is, his own kingdom, how he reigned in the world. Homilies on the Gospel of Luke 30.1.

### **Jesus Restores Kingdoms Seized by Fraud.**

Cyril of Alexandria: Did you think to have him as your worshiper at whom all things tremble, while the seraphim and all the angelic powers sing hymns to his glory? It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." It is fitting that he made mention of this commandment, striking as it were at his very heart. Before his advent, Satan had deceived all under heaven and was himself worshiped everywhere. But the law of God, ejecting him from the dominion he had usurped by fraud, has commanded people to worship him only who by nature and in truth is God and to offer service to him alone. Commentary on Luke, Homily 12.

### **4:9–12 The Third Temptation: Pinnacle of the Temple**

#### **Satan Uses Scripture Selectively by Convenience.**

Ephrem the Syrian: [Satan] set [Jesus] up on the pinnacle of the temple. Satan wanted him to suppose that he who was a man could become God, by means of the godly house, just as Satan had once made Adam suppose that he could become God by means of that tree. He brought him up to the mountain, as though he were in need. "To you will I give the kingdoms, if you will adore me." When he changed his mode of cunning, he did not change the true One with it. In the beginning God made him, and, when complete, he was in need and a worshiper. But Satan became blind in the arrogance of his worship, because of all that he had acquired, and for this reason he was punished even more. Because Satan did not recognize the One who knew him intimately, our Lord addressed him by his name, Satan. But he did not know how he should address our Lord.

Therefore he said to him, "Fall down from here, for it is written, 'They will guard you lest you stumble.'" Tempter, if it is concerning him that the psalm is fulfilled, is it not also written there, "With his wings, that he may deliver you"? It is not possible for a bird to fall, for the air beneath its wings is like the earth. Is it not also written, "You will tread on the serpent and the lion"? Satan studied only those passages from Scriptures that were convenient to him and omitted those which were harmful to him. The heretics are like this too. They appropriate from Scripture those passages that suit their erroneous teaching and omit those that refute their errors, thereby demonstrating that they are disciples of this master. Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 4.8b-c.

### **Eve Enticed by the Desire to Worship Another.**

Ambrose: You see, ancient errors are undone in Christ's footsteps, and the snares, first of the stomach, second of sexual sin, and third of ambition, are loosed. For Adam was enticed by food. Because he willingly transgressed in the matter of the forbidden tree, he also was charged with heedless ambition, for he desired to be like the Godhead. Therefore the Lord first remitted the debt of the ancient wrong, in order that, having shaken off the yoke of captivity, we may learn to overcome our faults with the help of the Scriptures.... The devil shakes the whole world with cunning deceit, in order to corrupt people, and fights with all the enticements of this age. You must beware of his flattery all the more. Food had not persuaded Eve, nor had the forgetfulness of the commands deprived her. If she had been willing to worship the Lord alone, she would not have sought what was not due to her. So a remedy is given, which blunts the dart of ambition, so that we serve the Lord alone. Pious devotion lacks ambition. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 4.33–34.

### **Jesus Did Not Need the Help of Angels.**

Origen: Therefore let us see what the devil says to the Lord from the Scriptures. "Scripture says, 'He gave his angels a command concerning you that they should raise you up in their hands, lest perhaps you strike your foot against a stone.' " See how crafty he is, even in the texts he quotes. For he wishes to diminish the Savior's glory, as if the Savior needed the help of angels. It is as if he would strike his foot unless he were supported by their hands. The devil takes his verse from Scripture and applies it to Christ. Yet it is written not of Christ but about the saints in general. Freely and in total confidence I contradict the devil. This passage cannot be applied to the person of Christ, for Christ does not need the help of angels. He is greater than the angels and obtained a better name than they by inheritance. "God never said to any of the angels, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.' " Homilies on the Gospel of Luke 31.4.

### **The Pinnacle of the Temple is Christ.**

Prudentius:

Still the pinnacle stands, outlasting the temple's destruction,

For the corner raised up from that stone which the builders rejected

Will remain throughout all ages forever and ever.

Now it is head of the temple and holds the new stones together.

Scenes from Sacred History 31.

#### **4:13 Until an Opportune Time**

##### **The Devil Returns as Roaring Lion at Crucifixion.**

Augustine: When the Lord had been tempted with this triple temptation—because in all the allurements of the world these three are to be found, either pleasure or curiosity or pride—what did the Evangelist say? After the devil had concluded every temptation—every kind, but of the alluring sort—there remained the other sort of temptation, by harsh and hard treatment, savage treatment, atrocious and ferocious treatment. Yes, there remained the other sort of temptation. The Evangelist knew this, knew what had been carried out, what remained, and so he said, “After the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him until the time.” He departed from him in the form, that is, of the insidious serpent. He is going to come in the form of the roaring lion. The one who will trample on the lion and the cobra will conquer him. Satan will return. He will enter Judas and will make him betray his master. He will bring along the Jews, not flattering now, but raging. Taking possession of his own instruments, he will cry out with the tongues of all of them, “Crucify him, crucify him!” That Christ was the conqueror there, why should we be surprised? He was almighty God. Sermon 284.5.