

Which Is the Correct Order of Jesus' Temptations?

Question: Why do Matthew and Luke record the temptations of Jesus in a different sequence? Which is the correct order?

Answer: If we compare Matthew 4:1-11 with Luke 4:1-13, we find that both gospels agree with each other in content, but list the temptations of Jesus in a different order. Both accounts record the first temptation as the appeal to turn stones into bread, but they flip-flop the sequence of the other two temptations (jumping off the pinnacle of the temple and bowing down to Satan).

This isn't a contradiction, but simply different writing styles by the authors. Events can be recorded chronologically or non-chronologically. Sometimes the impact of the event is more important to the writer than sequence.

For example, a teenager comes home from being at an amusement park. He tells his father about all the rides, but he doesn't mention them in the exact order in which he rode them. Instead, he talks about the most exciting rides first. What affected him the most takes priority over the sequence.

The father doesn't say, "Because you didn't tell me the exact order of the rides, you must be lying." He understands the teenager is giving a description of what happened in a non-chronological way.

Most Bible scholars believe Matthew recorded the temptations in chronological order. He used the words "then" (Matt. 4:5) and "again" (Matt. 4:8), indicating a sequential order of the temptations. Luke, on the other hand, simply records the events as facts in a non-chronological way. He randomly links the three temptations together by using the word "and" (Luke 4:5, 9), instead of using the word "then" as Matthew does.

Thanks to these sources: ApologeticsPress.org and Larry Richards, *735 Baffling Bible Questions Answered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell).