

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes March 29, 2006

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The Gospel of Matthew 4:1-11

- 1: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
2: And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.
3: And the tempter came and said to him,
 "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."
4: But he answered,
 *"It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone,
 but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"*
5: Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple,
6: and said to him,
 *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down;
 for it is written, `He will give his angels charge of you,'
 and `On their hands they will bear you up,
 lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"*
7: Jesus said to him, *"Again it is written, `You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"*
8: Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain,
 and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;
9: and he said to him, *"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."*
10: Then Jesus said to him, *"Begone, Satan! for it is written,
 `You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"*
11: Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

Discussion Notes:

Introduction:

- People sometimes feel a large gap between themselves & Scripture . . .
- Especially whenever the Bible mentions the Devil, demons, temptation, or hell!
- In this story, the gap diminishes!
- Reasons why this story is here?
 - True & important event in Jesus' life;
 - Addresses the temptations & trials of every Christian, then & now

The Set-up:

*1: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness
to be tempted by the devil.*

- Previous context: Baptism! Descent of Holy Spirit! Voice from above!
- *"Then"*: Every mtn top experience often followed by valley of temptation
- *"led up by the Spirit"* . . . Therefore, intended! Necessary . . .
- *"to be tempted by the devil"* (literally "diabolos" = "accuser")
- POINT: Suffering & trials are mysteriously a part of God's plan!

The Condition:

2: And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.

- "fasted forty days & forty nights" [background: Moses; Elias; Israel]
- "afterward he was hungry" Afterward?!
- POINT: Jesus, in His incarnate humanity, purposefully exposed himself to the conditions that we face in our everyday lives that make us susceptible to temptation!

Trial One:

3: And the tempter came and said to him,

"If you are the Son of God,

command these stones to become loaves of bread."

- Imagine Jesus sitting at foot of a mountain, famished, kicking stones . . .
- "the tempter" [different term]
- "If . . . then": a favorite tool of "the tempter"; A logical conclusion?
- "you are the Son of God": What did Satan know? Was it enough?
- "command . . .": What's wrong with this?! (Concupiscence of flesh)

JESUS' ANSWER:

4: But he answered,

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,

but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

1. No anger, self-justification, ridicule, or debate, just the Word of God!
2. Quote: Deut 8:3 . . . context:
 - God's discipline, providence, & promises to His people!
3. Jesus had accepted call for OTHERS not for SELF! (Jn 3:16; Phil 2:5f)

Trial Two:

5: Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple,

6: and said to him,

"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down;

for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,'

and 'On their hands they will bear you up,

lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

- Imagine Jesus climbing further up slope to where he can see the Temple . . .
- Q: "How to get the attention of all these people who have already sold out?"
- "If . . . then" again: Is this a logical conclusion?
- This time the Devil quotes Scripture!!! (Psalm 91:11-12)
 - "OK, 'by every word . . .,' then how about this . . ."
 - Not everyone using Scripture uses it correctly!!!!
- Tempt: use big scene to force God's hand! The dramatic! The flashy!

JESUS' ANSWER:

7: Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

- Quote from Deut 6:16, context 10-17 . . . trust, don't test God!
- Two-edged response: Jesus not to tempt God; Devil not to tempt Jesus!

Trial Three:

*8: Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain,
and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;
9: and he said to him, "All these I will give you,
if you will fall down and worship me."*

- Imagine Jesus having climbed to the top of the mountain, where he can see in the distance Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and many other cities.
- "I will give you . . ." -- AROGANT, but true? (all of these, he has won!)
 - But yet, the devil is deluded as to how much power he really has!
- Tempt: compromise to gain wealth, power, position, influence, NOW!

JESUS' ANSWER:

*10: Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written,
'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"*

- "Begone Satan!" -- 1st time Jesus uses more than Scripture!
- Quote from Deut 6:13 . . . no compromise is ever worth it!
- Again two-edged response . . .

God's Providence:

11: Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

- "The devil left him" . . . he cannot / does not tempt infinitely! He will fail!
- "angels came" . . . the other half of the supernatural the devil wants us to forget!
- "ministered to him" . . . Jesus received what he knew God would provide; he just had to wait patiently

BREAK

LOOK AT HOW, LIKE JESUS, WE ARE VICTIMS TO THE SAME TEMPTATIONS:

- 1. The set-up:** We, too, are led into the desert after mountain top experiences.
- 2. The Condition:** When we are at our weakest . . .
 - Eph 4:26-27 *"Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."*
 - Eph 6:10-11: *"Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*
- 3. Trial One:** Satan always begins with seemingly small things! [venial] BUT Basic human / natural urges sometimes scream the loudest!
- 4. Our response:** Self-denial & detachment; Mt 6
- 5. Trial Two:** Self-centered attention: "It's about ME!"
- 6. Our response:** It's not about you!; "Love one another . . ."
- 7. Trial Three:** Sell out, compromise, buy into false promises.
- 8. Our response:** "Love the Lord your God . . ."
 - James 4:7: *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*
- 9. God's Providence:**
 - God always promises to care, even in our suffering!
 - 1 Corinthians 10; Romans 8:28; etc.

BREAK

A THIRD LAYER OF MEANING: YOU AND I AS TEMPTERS!

- Sometimes, either consciously or unconsciously, we put God to the test, by applying the devil's "If . . . then" demands.
- "If God is all powerful, all knowing, all caring (if He truly loves me), then . . . :
 - i.** provide for my needs . . . (for me!)
 - ii.** OK, then I'll force his hand . . . (for me!)
 - iii.** All right, then, I can do it myself!! (for me!)
- All of Jesus' answers are aimed at us! . . .