

Matthew 4:1-11 – Jesus' Temptation

John the Baptist was introduced in chapter 3. In fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "prepare the way of the Lord." He was the first Biblical prophet to appear after Malachi. It had probably been more than 400 years between Malachi and John. John, the prophet, baptized Jesus who was the one to sit on David's throne forever. The Holy Spirit testified to Jesus by descending on him in the form of a dove. God the Father testified to Jesus by saying "this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Read Matthew 4:1-4.

In verse 1, why did Jesus go into the wilderness? (4:1)

In verse 2, what happened after Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights? In the Old Testament, who went without food and water for forty days and forty nights? See Exodus 34:28 and 1 Kings 19:8. What does the number forty typically represent in the Bible? What are some examples? See Genesis 7:4; Numbers 13:25, 14:33; Jonah 3:4. (4:2)

In verse 3, what was the devil called? Why did the devil begin his temptation with "if you are the Son of God"? ESV, KJV, NASB, and NIV all have "the Son of God". The phrase could be translated "a Son of God". Either is a valid translation of the phrase in the original language. The context determines whether it should be "the" or "a". The only reason it is debatable is because of the one speaking. Did Satan acknowledge that Jesus was "the Son of God" or did he take a jab at Jesus by referring to him as "a Son of God"? What did the devil challenge Jesus to do? As some have noted, the challenge would not be a temptation for us because we could not make stones become bread. Compare and contrast this temptation with Adam's temptation in the Garden of Eden. (4:3)

We know that Jesus did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Was Jesus able to sin? Some ask, "if Jesus could not sin then was he really tempted?" How would you answer that question?

In verse 4, how did Jesus respond to the devil's temptation? What Bible verse did Jesus quote? See Deuteronomy 8:3. What is Deuteronomy 8:2-3 about? How did the Israelites react in the wilderness when they became hungry? See Exodus 16:1-3. Comparing Adam's temptation is natural, but Jesus recalled a situation that was more similar to his circumstance of being hungry in the wilderness. (4:4)

Read Matthew 4:5-11.

In verse 5, where did the devil lead Jesus? Did the devil and Jesus walk there or was this like a vision? (4:5)

In verse 6, the devil once again prefaced his temptation with “if you are the Son of God”. This is a familiar manipulation tactic. For a male, the manipulation may come in the form of “if you are a man” you will do the thing I want you to do. Challenging a man’s manhood plays on our pride. What are some other ways that people try to manipulate us by playing on our pride? What did the devil challenge Jesus to do? What was the devil trying to do? Was he trying to get Jesus to commit suicide? The devil is a liar and a murderer. (4:6)

In verse 6, the devil tried to use God’s word to tempt Jesus. This is another tactic of the devil. He twists God’s word to try to deceive people and bring them to harm. What are some examples of this? What scripture did the devil quote? See Psalm 91:11-12. In verse 7, what scripture did Jesus quote in response? See Deuteronomy 6:16. Jesus did not include “as you tested him at Massah”. What is the context of this verse? See Exodus 17:1-7 which is referenced in Psalm 95:7b-11. This passage in Psalm 95 was also quoted in various places in Hebrews (3:7-11, 15; 4:3, 7). When viewed in its context, Jesus’ quote was powerful given that Israel’s testing of God at Massah was tied to God’s anger with Israel and the judgment of them wandering and dying in the wilderness. (4:6-7)

In verse 8, where did the devil lead Jesus? What did he show to Jesus? Some think that this is impossible because they do not know of any mountain where you can see all the kingdoms of the world. How would you respond to this thinking? What did the devil promise to give Jesus? What was the condition for “the gift”? The devil was no longer trying to appear to be “helpful”. He went into full evil mode. Was this a good temptation? Did the devil offer Jesus what was already his, or would be his? Explain your answer. (4:8-9)

In verse 10, how did Jesus respond? Do you think you would have been as restrained as Jesus was? What scripture did Jesus quote in response to the devil? See Deuteronomy 6:13. Deuteronomy 6 was a very important passage to Jews. Verses 4 begins the Shema (the Hebrew word for “hear”). The full version is in verses 4-9. Jews put the Mezuzah (this passage encased in a small container) on their doorpost. Again, Jesus’ choice of scripture was very powerful and very much in context. In verse 11, the devil obeyed Jesus’ command and left. What happened to Jesus? (4:10-11)

What are some techniques that Jesus used to defeat the devil that we can also use?