



Chapter 4

Temptation of Jesus & Jesus Begins His Ministry

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Matthew 4: The Temptation of Christ

- Satan, as a person, is a knowledgeable, malevolent, powerful ruler.
- A personal Satan, your adversary.
- Two errors about Satan: we pretend he doesn't exist or we become so conscious of him that he receives more credit than he deserves.
- He is a created being—he is not omnipresent; he has location. He is a dignity, real, powerful, yet defeated.

McGee Introduction: The Threefold Temptation of Jesus

Let us follow the movement of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus came down to be born among us and so to be identified with us. He grew up as any other child would, except that He was harmless and without sin. Now, in His baptism, He has been identified with us. He has put on our sin. Now He is going to be tested because there are some real questions to be answered. Is the King able to withstand a test, and can He overcome?

The word *tempt* has a twofold meaning:

1. "Incite or entice to evil; seduce." There is something in each of us which causes us to yield to evil. This was not true of Jesus. "... the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). He was "... holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ..." (Heb. 7:26). So the temptation for Jesus had to be different from that which would cause me to fall, in that it needed to be a much greater temptation.

2. "Test." God does not tempt men with evil according to James 1:13. Yet, we are told "... God did tempt Abraham ..." (Gen. 22:1). This means that God was testing the faith of Abraham.

Jesus is now to be tested. Could Jesus have fallen? I want to answer that with an emphatic *no!* He could not have fallen. If Jesus could have fallen, then you and I do not have a sure Savior at all.

Perhaps you are asking, "Well then, if Jesus could not have fallen, was His temptation a legitimate and genuine temptation?" May I say to you that His temptation was much greater than any that you and I have ever had. When a new model Chevrolet or Ford or Dodge is developed, it is thoroughly tested to prove it can stand the test. And every genuine diamond is tested to show that it is not a phony. In a similar way, the Lord Jesus Christ was tested to demonstrate that He was exactly who He claimed to be.

Let me illustrate with this little story. When I was a boy, I lived out in West Texas. It was a sparsely populated area in those days. The Santa Fe railroad came through our little town, but it went on by and stopped in the next little town. But it crossed the left fork of the Brazos River near our town. In the summertime there wasn't enough water in that river to rust a shingle nail, but in wintertime you could float a battleship on it. One winter we really had a flood, and it washed out the Santa Fe bridge. We were without a train for a long time. Finally, they put in a bridge. They worked a long time on it. Then one day they brought in two engines, stopped them on the bridge, and tied down their whistles. Believe me, that was more whistling than we had ever heard in our little town! All twenty-three of us ran down to see what was happening. As we were standing around, one brave citizen went up to the engineer in charge with our question, "What are you doing?" The engineer answered, "Testing the bridge." Our man said, "Are you trying to break it down?" The engineer almost sneered, "Of course not! We're testing it to *prove* that it can't be broken down."

May I say to you, that was the exact reason the Lord Jesus was tested. It was to prove, to demonstrate, that He could not be broken down. His testing, therefore, was greater than ours. There is a limit to what we can bear. You give me enough temptation, you build up the pressure, and finally I'll succumb to it. That is true of you, too. But Christ never gave in although the pressure continued to increase. In other words, a ten-pound fishing line will break when twenty pounds of pressure is put on it, but a hundred-pound line can bear more than twenty-five pounds of pressure. Now, I'm the ten-pound fishing line, and He is the one hundred-pound line.

Another really interesting feature of this temptation is the comparison and contrast with the testing of Eve in the Garden of Eden. To begin with, Christ was tested in a wilderness while Eve was tested in a garden. What a contrast!¹



¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 4:1

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

[Then] has some link to what just transpired, the Baptism.

[led] by the Spirit. Cf. Mark 1:12 - says "immediately" and "was driven" - Mark suggests necessity to go to the wilderness. Mark was more dramatic.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit—This transaction appears to have taken place immediately after Christ's baptism; and this bringing up of Christ was through the influence of the Spirit of God; that Spirit which had rested upon him in his baptism.

Moses, David, etc. all went into the wilderness, typically for 40 days for a time of fasting and prayer.

[to be tempted of the devil] To be tested like Adam (Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:45). The first act of the ministry of Jesus Christ was a combat with Satan. Does not this receive light from Genesis 3:17. I will put enmity between the woman's seed and thy seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

[to be tempted] The word *to tempt*, in the original, means to try, to endeavor, to attempt to do a thing; then, to try the nature of a thing, as metals by fire; then, to test moral qualities by *trying them*, to see how they will endure; then, to endeavor to draw men away from virtue by suggesting motives to evil. This is the meaning here, and this is now the established meaning of the word in the English language.²

Word Focus

tempted

(Gk. *peirazō*) (4:1; Luke 4:2; Mark 1:13; Heb. 4:15) G3985: The word means "to try" or "to make proof of," and when ascribed to God in His dealings with people, it means no more than this (see Gen. 22:1). But for the most part in Scripture, the word is used in a negative sense, and means to entice, solicit, or provoke to sin. Hence the name given to the wicked one in this passage is "the tempter" (4:3). Accordingly "to be tempted" here is to be understood both ways. The Spirit conducted Jesus into the wilderness to try His faith; but the agent in this trial was the wicked one, whose object was to seduce Jesus away from His allegiance to God. This was temptation in the bad sense of the term. Yet Jesus did not give in to temptation; He passed the test (see 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26).

[the devil] This word originally means an adversary, or an accuser; thence any one opposed; thence an enemy of any kind. It is given in the Scriptures, by way of eminence, to the leader of evil angels—a being characterized as full of subtlety, envy, art, and hatred

² Barnes' Notes On the New Testament

of mankind. He is known, also, by the name of *Satan*, Job 1:6-12, Matthew 12:26; *Beelzebub*, Matthew 12:24; the *old Serpent*, Revelation 12:9; and the prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:2. The name is sometimes given to men and women. 2 Timothy 3:3 Truce-breakers, *slanderers*-in the original, devils. 1 Timothy 3:2: So must their wives be grave, not slanderers-in the original, devils.

One of the most common recitations of God's acts in the Old Testament was that he "led" his people in the wilderness (see especially Isaiah 63:14), where they were tested. Although the Old Testament only rarely mentions the devil, his activity as tempter (cf. Job 1-2) had come into focus much more by Jesus' day. The surprising feature here for most Jewish readers would not have been that the devil was providing temptation, but that he was doing it in person.³

This time of testing showed that Jesus really was the Son of God, able to overcome the devil and his temptations. A person has not shown true obedience if he or she has never had an opportunity to disobey. We read in Deut. 8:2 that God led Israel into the desert to humble and test them. God wanted to see whether or not his people would really obey him. We too will be tested. Because we know that testing will come, we should be alert and ready for it. Remember, your convictions are only strong if they hold up under pressure!

The devil, also called Satan, tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and here he tempted Jesus in the desert. Satan is a fallen angel. He is *real*, not symbolic, and is constantly fighting against those who follow and obey God. Satan's temptations are real, and he is always trying to get us to live his way or our way rather than God's way. Jesus will one day reign over all creation, but Satan tried to force his hand and get him to declare his kingship prematurely. If Jesus had given in, his mission on earth—to die for our sins and give us the opportunity to have eternal life—would have been lost. When temptations seem especially strong, or when you think you can rationalize giving in, consider whether Satan may be trying to block God's purposes for your life or for someone else's life.⁴

This temptation by the devil shows us that Jesus was human, and it gave Jesus the opportunity to reaffirm God's plan for his ministry. It also gives us an example to follow when we are tempted. Jesus' temptation was an important demonstration of his sinlessness. He would face temptation and not give in.

Jesus was tempted by the devil, but he never sinned! Although we may feel dirty after being tempted, we should remember that temptation itself is not sin. We sin when we give in and disobey God. Remembering this will help us turn away from the temptation.

Jesus wasn't tempted inside the temple or at his baptism but in the desert where he was tired, alone, and hungry, and thus most vulnerable. The devil often tempts us when we are vulnerable—when we are under physical or emotional stress (for example, lonely, tired, weighing big decisions, or faced with uncertainty). But he also likes to tempt us through our strengths, where we are most susceptible to pride (see the note on •Luke 4:3ff). We must guard at all times against his attacks.

³ Bible Background Commentary

⁴ Life Application Notes

Probably the wild Judean desert. The particular spot which tradition has fixed upon has hence got the name of *Quarantana* or *Quarantaria*, from the forty days—“an almost perpendicular wall of rock twelve or fifteen hundred feet above the plain” [ROBINSON, *Palestine*]. The supposition of those who incline to place the temptation amongst the mountains of Moab is, we think, very improbable.⁵

The Adversary. Greek *diabolos* (usually transliterated “devil”) translates Hebrew *satan*, “adversary, opponent, rebel.” In Isaiah 14:11–15, between the lines of a taunt against the king of Babylon, can be read the downfall of a creature who was once both powerful and beautiful but who in pride rebelled against God and came to oppose him; Ezekiel 28:11–19 is similar. On the other hand, Job 1–2 is explicit in showing Satan as the opponent of both God and man. In Genesis 3 as the serpent he tempts Adam and Eve to disobey God; equating the Adversary with the serpent is clear from Rv 12:9, which speaks of “that ancient serpent, also known as the Devil and Satan (the Adversary), the deceiver of the whole world.” The *satan* is a created being, in no way equal to his Creator; yet he is the background source of all sin, evil and opposition to God. The book of Job teaches that the reason why an omnipotent and good God permits such opposition is a mystery, but that God remains in perfect and unthreatened control. This we see most clearly in Job 40–41, where “Behemoth” and “Leviathan” are seen to be stand-ins for the Adversary, because when God challenges Job to deal with them he repents “in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Both the *Tanakh* and the New Testament take for granted the existence of a supernatural realm of good, obedient angels who serve God and evil, rebellious ones (demons) who serve the Adversary.⁶

The “temptation” of Jesus is closely related to His vocation as Messiah. Would He succumb to the false messianic ideals of contemporary Judaism, or choose God’s way of the Suffering Servant? The temptations were real, whether external and literal, internal and mental, or a combination of both. He did not pretend to be tempted, but by resisting the temptation to sin, Jesus demonstrated His qualifications to be God’s Messiah and humanity’s Sin-Bearer. Jesus will meet the temptations summarized here (vv. 1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13) throughout His ministry: when the crowds want only a healer (Mark 1:35-39), when they want to make Him King (John 6:14, 15), when His disciples reject a Suffering Servant Messiah (16:21-28), and finally when He is in Gethsemane (26:36-46). “The devil” is *diabolos* (Gk.), “slanderer.” By use of the definite article, Matthew identifies him as a real person, not just an evil influence (cf. Ezek 28:12; also see chart, “Names for Satan”).⁷

⁵Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 4:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁶Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁷Believers Study Bible

Satan did not lead Jesus to the temptation; the Holy Spirit did. This temptation took place immediately after Jesus' baptism (see Mark 1:12). Spiritual victories are often followed by testing (see 1 Kin. 19).⁸

Hegg: Mark's account of the Temptation (1:12–13) is extremely short:

Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

We may presume that the story of Yeshua's Temptation was well-known by Mark's audience, and thus he needed only to allude to it in order to evoke the complete story in their minds.² Luke's account is even longer than Matthew's, and he reverses the order of the last two temptations, perhaps in order to show a progression from the desert, to the mountain, and finally to Jerusalem.

In this opening verse, Matthew writes that Yeshua³ was "*led up* by the Spirit" (passive of *anago*, where the sense of "*led up*" has the topography in mind, going up from the river), while Luke has (*egeto*, passive from a *ago*). Mark has the active (*ekballo*), which the NASB translates "*impelled by the Spirit*," but the verb is probably more causative, emphasizing that Yeshua was "*driven*" by the Spirit into the desert (cf. Gen 3:24 Lxx where it is used where God "*expels*" Adam from the garden).

From Matthew's perspective, Yeshua was led into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted or tested (the Greek word *peirazo* can mean either "*to test*" or "*to tempt*"). This corresponds to Deut 8:2, which speaks of Israel's wanderings in the desert for the purpose of being tested. Matthew has the temptation begin after the 40 days of fasting. Both Mark and Luke put the temptation as occurring during the 40 days. It may be that Mark and Luke both consider the fasting to be itself a testing, which Satan attempted to exploit.

That the Spirit of God is credited with leading Yeshua into the desert in order to be tempted also accords with the regular connection of the Spirit in Israel's wanderings. Thus, Num 11:17, 25, 29 note the presence of the Spirit upon the 70 elders chosen to assist Moses, and Neh 9:20 parallels the giving of the Spirit with that of the manna. The rebellion of the Israelites was a rebellion against the Spirit (Ps 106:33), which Isaiah describes by "*they grieved His Holy Spirit*" (cf. Is 63:10–14). The connection of the Spirit of God with Israel during her wilderness experience is also common in the rabbinic literature (cf. *Targum Yer.* to Ex 15:2; *Mechilta* on Ex 14:13, 15; b.*Sota* 30b; Mid. Rab. *Num.* on 11:17; Mid. Rab. *Exodus* on 15.1).

The "*evil one*" is referred to here as "*the devil*" (*diabolos*), but later as "*the tempter*" (*peirazon*) in v. 3, and "*Satan*" (*satan*) in v. 10. Elsewhere, Matthew also uses the designation "*evil one*" (13:19, 38) and "*the enemy*" (13:39). *Diabolos* strictly means "*slanderer*" and is the normal word used by the Lxx to translate רָשָׁע , *satan*, which means "*adversary*" or "*opponent*." He is the "*chief opposer of God, the archenemy who leads all the spiritual hosts of darkness.*"¹ The idea that the figure of Satan evolved or underwent a metamorphosis in the biblical literature, from merely one of the hosts of heaven to a demonic figure, fails to take into consideration the progressive revelation of the Bible. While surely the Apostolic Scriptures have far more to say about the evil one, his

⁸ The Nelson Study Bible

appearance in the Tanach is in concert with the expanded revelation of his essential evil character as portrayed in the Tanach.

Besides the fact that the Temptation afforded the perfect proof of Yeshua's fitness to be the Messiah, it also teaches us a very important lesson: the Spirit's leading is not always to bring a person to a place of shelter and comfort. Sometimes the Spirit leads into a realm of testing where one's faith and character may be proven. We may be assured, however, that such a testing would never be more than what can be endured, for the purpose of the testing is always to prove His faithfulness in sustaining those He has purposed to save.

*(1Cor. 10:13) No temptation (or testing) has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted (or tested) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (or testing) will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*⁹

Matthew 4:2

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

“Fasting”: Many different kinds. Extended fasts, second and third days are tough, yet after third day, it gets easier for about another 37 days. Around the 40th day you will be desperately in need of food in a medical sense. Jesus was in need of food, it was no longer voluntary.

[forty days and forty nights] The 40 days come in before the events of John 1:19-2:1.

Four Men Fasted for Forty Days:

1. Moses (Deut. 9:9,18,25; Deut. 10:10)
2. Joshua (Exodus 24:13-18; Exodus 32:15-17)
3. Elijah (1 Kings 19:7-18)
4. Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 1:1-22)

[forty days and forty nights] It has been questioned by some whether Christ abstained wholly from food, or only from bread and the food to which he was accustomed. Luke says, (Luke 4:2,) that he *ate nothing*. This settles the question. Mark says, Mark 1:13, that angels came and ministered unto him. At first view, this would seem to imply that he did eat during that time. But Mark does not mention the time when the angels performed the office of kindness; and we are at liberty to suppose that he meant to say that it was done at the close of the forty days; and the rather as Matthew, after giving an account of the temptation, says the same thing, Mark 4:2. There are other instances of persons fasting forty days, recorded in the Scriptures. Thus Moses fasted forty days, Exodus 34:28. Elijah also fasted the same length of time, 1 Kings 19:8. In these cases, they were no doubt miraculously supported.

⁹ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

[afterward an hungred] Hunger always leaves after a few days of fast and returns after a long fast of about 40 days or when all toxic poisons have been expelled from the body. The breath at this time becomes as sweet as a baby's. Any normal healthy person can fast this long without any harm. Starvation only begins after hunger returns in such cases. One must use water in long fasts and break the fast gradually.¹⁰

Hegg: The fast for forty days and forty nights parallels not only Israel's 40 year wandering in the desert, but also the fast of Moses for the same period of time while upon Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex 34:28). The Exodus text specifically notes the Moses "did not eat bread or drink water," but Yeshua's fast was most likely from food alone, as Luke specifically states: "He ate nothing during those days" (Lk 4:2).

The notice that "He then became hungry" seems superfluous, for surely after fasting for forty days and forty nights, one would be hungry! But the NASB has reordered the words as found in the Greek. The original has this word order: "He fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry." We should probably understand *epeinasen*, from *peinao*) to mean "famished." That is, the Gospel writers wish to convey that point that after such a long fast, our Master was physically without strength. Thus, the enemy's temptations came at a time when Yeshua would be re-quired to rely entirely upon the strength provided by the Spirit. His humanity is thus fully in view. He faced the temptations of the evil one, not as a divine superhuman, but as a common man Who relied completely upon the Spirit for His victory. As such, He stands as the supreme example for all to follow.

We may still ask, however, how it was that the Son of God could be tempted to sin. Regardless of how we may construe the temptation, the obvious point is that the temptation consisted in Satan's invitation to act in a way that was contrary to the divine will. But if Yeshua was unable to sin since He was the divine Son of God, then how could the confrontation ever be construed as a *bone fide* temptation? While the answer to this conundrum once again puts us into the middle of the mystery of the incarnation itself, we may seek an answer by viewing temptation as a force and constructing an appropriate model. Consider this scenario: envision a locomotive moving at top speed down the railroad tracks. If someone were to stand on the tracks with hand outstretched, to stop the oncoming train, he would be bumped off the tracks without pause—the locomotive would not even register his presence. However, if the man were able to halt the train in its tracks, not only would the force of the locomotive be entirely stopped, but the man would also feel the full force or power of the oncoming train. In like manner, then, one who yields to temptation never feels the full force of it. Only the one who complete resists its power knows the full force of the temptation. In this way, Yeshua felt the full force of Satan's attack because He complete resisted the temptations.¹¹

fasting forty days and forty nights. Jesus' experience of 40 days of fasting in the wilderness corresponds to Israel's experience of 40 years of testing in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2–3). Jesus endured his testing victoriously and obediently. Moses also fasted and prayed for 40 days and nights on two occasions (Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 18,

¹⁰ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

¹¹ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

25; 10:10; cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 19:8). Fasting was a means of focusing intently on prayer. Forty days is about the longest a human can fast without permanent bodily harm.¹²

Matthew 4:3

And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

[If] is not conditional, as in “prove you are.” Rather used in a rhetorical sense, “since you are.” Opportunity is not mandate. Mission focus is an essential prerequisite to success.

Three Dimensions to Being Tempted

- 1) The desire of the flesh (appeal to the appetite).
- 2) Lust of the eyes (appeal to our aesthetic nature).
- 3) The pride of life (appeal to our spiritual pride).

What is wrong with turning rocks into bread? The fast is over and he is validly hungry. Is there anything wrong, morally, legally, levitically with being hungry? Jesus has used His supernatural power in other incidents to feed the multitudes, so why not use it now? The issue is not Him providing for His needs, but rather the Father's Will. Jesus discerned that it was not the Father's Will for Him to take this path.

For us, we can't turn rocks into bread so we are not tempted by this incident. However, you are never tempted to do something which you are not capable of doing. You won't stumble in your weak suit; you will stumble in your strong suit. For example, Peter - his strongest capability was boldness and courage. Where did Peter fail? Lack of Courage, the night Jesus was betrayed he denied Jesus three times!

The way we fall is through PRIDE.

[command that these stones] The stones that were lying around him in the wilderness, No temptation could have been more plausible, or more likely to succeed, than this. He had just been declared to be the Son of God, (Matthew 3:17) and here was an opportunity to show that he was really so. The circumstances were such as to make it appear plausible and proper to work this miracle. "Here you are," was the language of Satan, "hungry, cast out, alone, needy, poor, and yet the Son of God! If you have this power, how easy could you satisfy your wants! How foolish is it, then, for the Son of God, having all power, to be starving in this manner, when by a word he could show his power, and relieve his wants, and when in the thing itself there could be nothing wrong!"¹³

Son of God. (See 1:1N on “son of.”) This theologically important New Testament term can mean: (1) a godly person (without divine or supernatural overtones); (2) the special one sent by God; (3) the son of God in the flesh, as described in chapters 1–2 above and Luke 1–2; (4) a human whose presence on earth required a special creative act of God,

¹² ESV online study bible, Crossway

¹³ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

hence either Adam or Yeshua, who is therefore called “the second Adam” (Lk 3:38, Ro 5:12–21, 1 Corinthians 15); (5) the Yeshua who could in his earthly lifetime relate to God as his personal Father, calling him “*Abba*”; and (6) the divine, eternally existent individual or Word who always has and always will be within the inner “structure” of *Adonai* and, in that structure which is the one God, is in his essence the Son in both equal and subsidiary relationship with the Father (Yn 1:1–3, 14; 10:31; 14:9–10, 28; Pp 2:5–11). Here, from the mouth of the Adversary, it probably carries all six meanings.

The *Tanakh* says little explicitly about these things, yet it does offer strong *r. mazim* (“hints”; see 2:15N) at Isaiah 9:5–6(6–7), Micah 5:1(2), Psalm 2:7, Proverbs 30:4 and Daniel 7:13. In ancient Jewish literature Enoch 105:2 and , 4 Ezra 7:28–29, 13:32–52, 14:9 refer to the Messiah as the Son of God. Compare 8:20N on “son of man.”¹⁴

“If You are” can be translated “since You are.” The tempter knows the condition to be true and will tempt Jesus regarding the nature of His messianic mission. He will be tempted to under-confidence, over-confidence, and other-confidence with respect to God. The first two temptations (vv. 2-7) attempt to make Jesus doubt His divine sonship, the basis for His role as Messiah. Jesus counters the first (vv. 2, 3), which appeals to physical appetite (v. 4), with Deut 8:3; the second (Matt 4:5, 6), which calls for spectacular display (Matt 4:7), He counters with Deut 6:16. (Because Jerusalem became the center of redemptive history, Luke places this temptation last as a climax; cf. Luke 4:1-13. Thus, Luke’s order is more theological/geographical, whereas Matthew’s is the more chronological.) The final temptation listed here (vv. 8, 9), which deals with ambition, is countered by Deut 6:13 (Matt 4:10, 11). Thus, Jesus repels the temptation to compromise, choosing instead the path of the Suffering Servant Messiah.¹⁵

Hegg: The exact manner in which the three-phase temptation of our Master occurred is not certain, but it may have been more than merely carried out in the physical world. Standing atop a high mountain would not itself provide a glimpse of “all the kingdoms of the world,” so some supernatural vision is presupposed. Did Yeshua walk from desert to Jerusalem and to the mountain, or was He transported in a supernatural way? Even Paul was not always certain whether the visions he received were “in the body or out of the body” (2Cor 12:2). Regardless, the temptations were real, and existed in the realm of human existence as evidenced by the fact that Yeshua was hungry (i.e., physically weakened).

The first temptation related to this very hunger. The manner in which the temptation is given does not question the divine nature of Yeshua—it rather presupposes it. The conditional clause, “If You are the Son of God” is grammatically a real condition, and should be understood to mean “Since you are the Son of God” or “Since you claim to be the Son of God.” Satan is therefore not tempting Yeshua to prove His divine nature—that is a given as far as the temptation is concerned. Rather, in light of the fact that Yeshua was famished after His long period of fasting, the temptation Satan offered was to use His divine powers to fulfill His own needs. “Sonship of the living God, he [Satan] suggested, surely means Jesus has the power and right to satisfy his own needs.”¹ But how could

¹⁴ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:3). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

¹⁵ Believer’s Study Bible

using His divine power to fulfill His own needs be construed as wrong? The answer lies in the fact that Yeshua had voluntarily given upon the use of some of His divine attributes in order to fulfill the mission given to Him by the Father, i.e., to come as a man to redeem mankind. The temptation, then, was to use His sonship in a way inconsistent with His God-ordained mission. This is emphasized by Yeshua's response, which was to quote from Deut 8:3.¹⁶

Matthew 4:4

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Our Refuge: His Word

- In all three responses, Jesus counters by quoting the Scriptures: "it is written" (incidentally, all responses were from the book of Deuteronomy).
- Quoted from Deut 8:3. Forty years in the wilderness was for testing.
- One of the seven "I am" statements in John is "I am the Bread of Life," which is linked to manna from the wilderness.
 - "Thy words are found and I did eat them" (Ps 119; Jer 15:16; Rev 10:9).

[It is written ...] First words of Christ since His anointing. There were at least two sets of three temptations: the first three in Luke 4:1-13, after which Satan left Christ "for a season"; the last three in Matthew 4:1-11, after which Satan was dismissed by Christ, never to present like temptations again.

[Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God] Quoted from Deut. 8:3.

(Deuteronomy 8:3) *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.*

[every word] Not just New Testament, not just the Psalms... Every word.

Barnes: *But he answered and said,* etc. In reply to this artful temptation, Christ answered by a quotation from the Old Testament. The place is found in Deuteronomy 8:3. In that place the discourse is respecting manna. Moses says that the Lord humbled the people, and fed them with manna, an unusual kind of food, that they might learn that man did not live by bread only, but that there were other things to support life, and that every thing which God had commanded was proper for this. The term "word," used in this place, means very often, in Hebrew, *thing*, and clearly in this place has that meaning. Neither Moses nor our Saviour had any reference to *spiritual food*, or to the doctrines necessary

¹⁶ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

to support the faith of believers; but they simply meant that God could support life by other things than bread; that man was to live, not by that only, but by every other thing which proceeded out of his mouth; that is, which he chose to command men to eat. The substance of his answer, then, is:—"It is not so imperiously necessary that I should have *bread*, as to make a miracle proper to procure it. Life depends on the will of God. He can support it in other ways, as well as by bread. He has created other things to be eaten, and man may live by everything that his Maker has commanded." And from this temptation we may learn,

(1.) that Satan often takes advantage of our circumstances and wants to tempt us. The poor, and hungry, and naked, he often tempts to repine and complain, and to be dishonest in order to supply their necessities.

(2.) Satan's temptations are often the strongest immediately after we have been remarkably favoured. Jesus had just been called the Son of God, and Satan took this opportunity to try him. He often attempts to fill us with pride and vain self-conceit, when we have been favoured with any peace of or any new view of God, and endeavours to urge us to do something which may bring us low, and lead us to sin.

(3.) His temptations are plausible. They often seem to be only urging us to do what is good and proper. They seem even to urge us to promote the glory of God, and to honour him. We are not to think, therefore, that because a thing *may seem to be good in itself*, that therefore it is to be done. Some of his most powerful temptations are when he seems to be urging us to do what shall be for the glory of God.

(4.) We are to meet the temptations of Satan, as the Saviour did, with the plain and positive declarations of Scripture. We are to inquire whether the thing is commanded, and whether, therefore, it is right to do it, and not trust to our own feelings, or even our wishes, in the matter.¹⁷

Jesus was hungry and weak after fasting for 40 days, but he chose not to use his divine power to satisfy his natural desire for food. Food, hunger, and eating are good, but the timing was wrong. Jesus was in the desert to fast, not to eat. And because Jesus had given up the unlimited, independent use of his divine power in order to experience humanity fully, he wouldn't use his power to change the stones to bread. We also may be tempted to satisfy a perfectly normal desire in a wrong way or at the wrong time. If we indulge in sex before marriage or if we steal to get food, we are trying to satisfy God-given desires in wrong ways. Remember, many of your desires are normal and good, but God wants you to satisfy them in the right way and at the right time.

Jesus was able to resist all of the devil's temptations because he not only knew Scripture, but he also obeyed it. Ephes. 6:17 says that God's Word is a sword to use in spiritual combat. Knowing Bible verses is an important step in helping us resist the devil's attacks, but we must also obey the Bible. Note that Satan had memorized Scripture, but he failed to obey it. Knowing and obeying the Bible helps us follow God's desires rather than the devil's.¹⁸

It is written: Jesus' response to all three temptations was to quote the Word of God, showing His followers the power of Scripture in battling the Evil One (see Deut. 6:13;

¹⁷ Barnes' Commentary on the New Testament

¹⁸ Life Application Notes

8:3; Ps. 91:11, 12). There was nothing *morally* wrong with turning stones to bread; Satan was tempting Jesus to do a miracle outside of the Father's will. This explains why Jesus quotes Deut. 8:3. Bread alone does not sustain life; ultimately God is the One who sustains all life. Thus it is our responsibility to trust God and remain in His will.

Hegg: Yeshua counters the tempting suggestion of Satan by quoting Scripture, introduced by "it is written." It is the inspired word of God that stands as the absolute rule upon which Yeshua's actions are based.

Matthew quotes from the Lxx, leaving off the final clause since the former identical clause ("man shall live") is presumed by the strong contrast: "man does not live by X, meaning he does live by Y." The Lxx adds (*rhema*, "word") as explanatory for the Hebrew מוֹצֵא פִי-כֹל seog taht lla" , יהוה, "forth of the mouth of Adonai," meaning all that God reveals and accomplishes through His divine proclamation.

The context of the quote is essential in understanding Yeshua's choice of this Scripture. Moses is reminding the Israelites that their physical existence was obviously dependent upon God, not upon their own abilities. The manna was clear proof of this, for God commanded that bread rain down from heaven in order to provide food for the people. Thus, their physical well-being was the direct result of God's miraculous provision. Indeed, the very reason that God brought the test of hunger upon the Israelites in the first place was so that they would know that their existence depended entirely upon the Almighty.

In this way, Yeshua is rebuffing Satan for the idea that He could use His divine powers in a self-serving way. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). His divinely ordained mission meant that the voluntary suspension of His divine attributes was necessary, and their use in a self-serving way would therefore annul the very reason for which He had come.

It is this same mind that we, as disciples of the Master, must also have. Our mission is not such that obedience to God's will is given in order to gain personally, but that in our obedience His Name might be sanctified upon the earth. Moreover, we must live with this reality in view: obedience to God is in itself a resignation to His promised provision, for it is when we rely fully upon Him that He is glorified, for when our needs are met, it is seen as the result of what the Almighty has done for us, not what we have been able to accomplish by our own strength.

Yeshua therefore demonstrates the reality of Hab 2:4, for while Israel demanded bread but died in the wilderness, Yeshua denied Himself bread, retaining His righteousness, and living in faithful submission to God's word.

"The righteous one will live on the basis of his faith."¹⁹

Matthew 4:5

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

Implies that they were transported supernaturally. "Pinnacle of the Temple": Like a corner, a high point (Daniel 9, "wing" = pinnacle). One idea is that the coming world

¹⁹ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

leader will also be faced with these temptations and he will accept the nations of the world from Satan.²⁰

[pinnacle of the temple] It was about 700 feet from here to the valley below.

Barnes: *Setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.* It is not perfectly certain to what part of the temple the sacred writer here refers. It has been supposed by some that he means the roof. But Josephus says that the roof was covered by spikes of gold, to prevent its being polluted by birds; and such a place would have been very inconvenient to stand upon. Others suppose that it was the top of the porch or entrance to the temple. But it is more than probable that the porch leading to the temple was not as high as the main building. It is more probable that he refers to a part of the sacred edifice sometimes called Solomon's porch. The temple was built on the top of Mount Moriah. The temple itself, together with the courts and porches, occupied a large space of ground. Matthew 21:12. To secure a level spot sufficiently large, it was necessary to put up a high wall on the east. The temple was surrounded with porches or piazzas fifty-five feet broad, and seventy-five high. The porch on the south side was, however, sixty-seven feet broad, and one hundred and fifty high. From the top of this to the bottom of the valley below was more than seven hundred feet; and Josephus says that one could scarcely look down without dizziness. The word *pinnacle* does not quite express the force of the original. It is a word given usually to *birds*, and denotes *wings*, or anything in the form of wings, and was given to the roof of this porch because it resembled a bird dropping its wings. It was on this place, doubtless, that Christ was placed.²¹

Hegg: The “holy city” is Jerusalem (cf. Neh 11:1; Is 48:2; Dan 9:24) where the Temple resided. Again, the manner of moving from one location to another is not given, but the scene is that of the Temple complex. The “pinnacle of the Temple” is literally “the wing of the Temple” where “Temple” must stand for the entire complex, since Yeshua as a non-Levite would not have been allowed to enter the Temple proper. The Greek word “wing” is only found here in the Apostolic Scriptures. To what does this refer? We know that the rabbis considered the Temple to be at the center of Jerusalem (Josephus, *Contra Ap.* 1.196–8; b.*Yoma* 54a–b; *Tanchuma Qidd.* 10), and Jerusalem to be the earth’s navel, and even the highpoint of the whole earth (b.*Qidd.* 69a). The highest corner of the Temple mount was the southeast corner, or else one might think of the a high point of the southwest corner from which the shofar was played (cf. y.*Pesach* 35b). Regardless of the exact location, the picture the Gospel writers wish us to see is that Yeshua was standing at a place very high above the ground below.²²

Matthew 4:6

And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

A misquotation of Psalm 91:11-12.

²⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

²¹ Barnes’ Commentary on the New Testament

²² Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

(Psalm 91:11-12) ¹¹*For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* ¹²*They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

Satan misquoted Psalm 91:11,12. Scriptural response: (When can you “tempt God”? Malachi 3:8,10: “An offer we can’t refuse”!)

(Malachi 3:8-10) ⁸*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.* ⁹*Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.* ¹⁰*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

“The holy city” was a standard title for Jerusalem. The devil takes Jesus to a part of the temple that overlooked a deep valley; a fall from there would have meant certain death. Later rabbis acknowledged that the devil and demons could handle Scripture expertly. Here the devil cites Psalm 91:11-12 out of context; Psalm 91:10 makes clear that God’s angelic protection (cf. Mark 1:13) is for events that *befall* his servants, not an excuse to seek out such dangers. The devil phrases his temptation in standard Jewish wisdom language (Wisd. 2:18).²³

The devil used Scripture to try to convince Jesus to sin! Sometimes friends or associates will present attractive and convincing reasons why you should try something you know is wrong. They may even find Bible verses that *seem* to support their viewpoint. Study the Bible carefully, especially the broader contexts of specific verses, so that you understand God’s principles for living and what he wants for your life. Only if you really understand what the *whole* Bible says will you be able to recognize errors of interpretation when people take verses out of context and twist them to say what they want them to say.

Hegg: The demands of Satan against our Master involved the prohibition regarding testing God. Testing God means presuming upon His grace and promises. God’s people are to realize that God’s mercies are always the direct outpouring of His gracious intentions, and not that which anyone can demand. Throwing oneself down from a highpoint would involve a presumption that God is required to act in miraculous ways to overcome one’s own neglect or willful disregard for God’s revealed will. Preserving life is a central theme in the Torah, and preserving one’s own life is included in this. The sixth commandment which prohibits murder includes suicide as well.

Having been rebuffed in his first attempt by Yeshua’s reliance upon the Scriptures, the evil one resorts to quoting Scripture as well, though he does so poorly, for though he quoted correctly, his application of the text itself was such as to turn that which was righteous into sin. This, of course, is always the way of the tempter, for he excels at turning righteousness into evil.

²³ Bible Background Commentary

His quote, introduced by the common “for it is written,” is from Ps 91:11–12. The context of the Psalm speaks of those who find their refuge in God, and abide in the shadow of the Almighty (v. 1). God is the One Who protects His own, and brings them through all manner of trouble (vv. 2–4). He offers safety from enemies as well as from natural calamity (vv. 5–8). But such protection is for those who have made God “their dwelling place,” meaning those who have trusted in Him and have therefore chosen faithfulness as their manner of life (v. 9). In other words, the context of the Psalm is that of those who live in faithful obedience to the God of the covenant, and who therefore are blessed by His protecting hand.

Matthew has given the quote by the evil one as directly from the Lxx, with the exception that “to keep you in all your ways” is left out. Moreover, the Lxx is essentially an accurate translation of the Hebrew. The fact that Satan leaves out the clause “to keep you in all your ways” does not warrant the charge that he misquoted Scripture, for such general quotations given in general formulations are in line with the manner in which the Tanach is quoted elsewhere. However, the deleted clause may point to the manner in which Satan was attempting to interpret and apply the Scripture wrongly. For in leaving out the clause, the general tenor of the Psalm, that those who find shelter in the shadow of the Almighty are the ones He protects, is deemphasized. What exactly was the force of the temptation as formulated by the tempter? It appears that he intends to entice Yeshua into using some significant miracle to prove His status as Messiah, much like the miracle of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, as proof of the superiority of Israel’s God over the pagan god, Ba’al (cf. 1Ki 18). But the major miracle of attestation regarding the Messiah was His resurrection (Matt 12:39; 16:4). Other miracles that He performed were in line with what the prophets said the Messiah would do (cf. Matt 11:2–6; Lk 7:22), and were miracles involving compassion upon the sick and poor. Thus, the devil attempts to make faith subservient to miracles, when in fact, miracles are always understood only when preceded by faith (cf. Matt 13:58).

But more to the point, putting oneself in harm’s way in order to force God to perform a miracle is strictly forbidden by the Torah, as Yeshua immediately makes known by quoting Deut 6:16 in order to refute the improper interpretation of Ps 91 by the enemy. This in itself ought to inform us regarding the Master’s hermeneutic. Scripture, properly interpreted, coincides with other Scriptures. This presupposes the unity of the biblical text as the product of divine inspiration.²⁴

Matthew 4:7

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Quoting Scripture

- Satan’s misapplications
- Christ’s remedies: The Word of God

[Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God] Quoted from Deut. 6:16.

²⁴ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

(Deuteronomy 6:16) *Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.*

To this passage of Scripture Christ replied With another, which forbade the act. This is taken from Deuteronomy 6:16, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." That is, thou shalt not *try* him; or, thou shalt not, by throwing thyself into voluntary and uncommanded dangers, appeal to God for protection, or trifle with the promises made to those who are thrown into danger *by his providence*. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of his people who are placed *by him* in trial or danger; but it is *not* true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke him, and trifle with the promised help. Thus Satan, artfully using and perverting Scripture, was met and repelled by Scripture rightly applied.

Hegg: The counter quote is from Deut 6:16, and Yeshua introduces it by the common "it is written." He emphasizes, by the use of "on the other hand it is written" (literally, "again it is written," *πάλιν γέγραπται*), that one text may be properly understood and applied by the application of a second text. Yeshua does not quote this text, then, in order to refute the truth of Ps 91:11–12, but to show the manner in which it is to be properly interpreted and applied. Since the Torah expressly forbids putting God to the test, the protection promised in the Psalm cannot include those cases where God is disregarded and disobeyed. When one disregards the commands of God, one cannot count on God's blessing (cf. Gen 18:19).

The quote is directly from the Lxx, and essentially represents the Hebrew. The final clause is not quoted, since the major point is the prohibition regarding testing "the LORD your God."

What does it mean to "test God?" The incident at Massah (Ex 17) focused on the need for water. The people of Israel were quite sure that Moses had led them into the wilderness in order for them to perish: "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (Ex 17:3). The statement of the people was not so much a question of Moses' abilities, as it was a disregard for God's presence among them. He had promised to protect them and provide for them. Rather than arguing against Moses, and quarrelling among themselves, they should have sought God's help, for He had already promised to give it. Thus, Moses called the place Massah and Meribah (*מַסָּה / מְרִיבָה*), which mean "to test" (*נָטָה*) and "to dispute" (*רִיב*). This means to "test God" is to act outside of the realm of faith—to fail to take God at His word, and even to act as though God is not to be trusted.

How then does Yeshua apply this to His current situation and the attack of the evil one who was prodding Him to demonstrate His divine Sonship through an extra-ordinary miracle? The point is that Yeshua did not need some extra-ordinary miracle to prove His Father's faithfulness. He had perfect faith, and thus He took His Father's word as proof enough. To require some additional miracle in order to prove God's faithfulness would at the same time prove His own faith to be deficient. To require a miraculous demonstration of God's faithfulness could only have preceded from a challenge of whether He was faithful in the first place. This would have been to test God.

The application of this principle to our own lives is clear. In a time when people are flocking after so-called "miracles" as a demonstration of God's presence and faithfulness,

what the Scriptures call us to is a simple belief that what God has said, He will do. In many cases, the “signs and wonders” movement runs contrary to the direct command of Scripture, and the example of our Master, not to tempt God.²⁵

Matthew 4:8

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

[all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them] Satan is the present usurper of man's dominion—the "prince" and "god" of this world's system (John 8:44; John 12:31; John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Ephes. 2:1-3; 1 John 5:19).

Hegg: As noted above, the precise manner in which one would be able to see “all the kingdoms of the world” from any elevation in Israel is not clear. It may involve some kind of spiritual vision, though if that were the case, the reason why Matthew would include a “very high mountain” is not clear (Luke has only “he led Him up” without including a “very high mountain,” Lk 4:5). Perhaps Matthew is giving us a literary parallel to the end of his gospel, when Yeshua ascends the mountain and declares, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth” (Matt 28:16–18). What Satan deceitfully suggests he can give, the Son of Man acquires through His faithful life of sacrifice before the Father (cp. Phil 2:5–8).

It may be also that Matthew subtly wishes his readers to remember a similar situation when God took Moses up to Mt. Pisgah (Deut 3:27; 34:1–4) to show him all of the Land of Israel. Perhaps Matthew wants, once again, to emphasize that Yeshua is the fulfillment of which Moses was a foreshadow, in that ultimately the authority over the whole earth is granted to the risen and reigning Messiah.

The language of our verse is curious: “the devil took Him.” . While it may mean “to gain control over someone,” it may also merely mean “to take someone along,” as on a journey. Yet here we see, once again, the mystery of the incarnation. Surely Yeshua could not be constrained against His will, so He willingly goes with the tempter to this final (Luke has it as the second) temptation. The point must be that the temptation of our Master was done in order to show us His own impeccable character as well as to instruct us in the manner in which we too may be victorious over the evil one’s schemes.

The tempter “showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” Of course, the issue of the “glory” (*doxa*) of the kingdoms of the world is relative. From the vantage point of the evil one, their glory resides in their self achievements. If these kingdoms possessed any glory in the eyes of the Messiah, it would be in their future acknowledgement of Him as God’s rightful King. Indeed, He had come to “seek and to save those who were lost” (Lk 19:10), which ultimately would include those of the nations who were chosen to be saved. Thus, the only glory the nations really possess is dependent upon the completion of Yeshua’s own salvific death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.²⁶

²⁵ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

²⁶ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

Matthew 4:9

And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

[fall down and worship me] An expression of complete surrender, submission, and adoration.

Barnes: *Worship me.* Matthew 2:2. The word here seems to mean, to acknowledge Satan as having a right to give these kingdoms to him; to acknowledge his dependence on him rather than God; that is, really to render *religious* homage. We may be surprised at his boldness. But he had been twice foiled. He supposed it was an object dear to the heart of the Messiah and he seemed not to be asking too much, if he *gave* them to Jesus, that Jesus should be willing to *acknowledge* the gift, and express *gratitude* for it. So plausible are Satan's temptations, even when blasphemous; and so artfully does he present his allurements to the mind.²⁷

Hegg: We know, of course, that Satan had no actual ability to give what he offered, since the sovereign of the universe is God: "The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psa. 24:1, cp. Ex 9:29; 1Cor 10:26). Yet the evil one is given, for a time, some authority within the inhabited world. Satan is known as the "god of this world" (2Cor 4:4) and the "ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In Eph 6:12 Satan is included in the "world rulers" (*kosmokrator*, cp. Mid. Rab. Ex 18.3). John also states (1Jn 5:19) that "whole world lies in the power of the evil one." The authority given to the evil one, in order to bring about the divine purposes, is nonetheless temporary. Indeed, the coming of the Messiah and His ultimate victory over death secured the end of Satan's reign, and his ultimate demise. Thus, what he holds out to Yeshua is nothing more than a dishonest salesman's ploy: the "goods" are not actually his to give.

But the temptation was that Yeshua could gain the ultimate authority without fulfilling His role as the suffering servant of the Lord. It was an offer to ascend the throne of Kingship while by-passing the cross, and more than that, a temptation to achieve power by worship of God's rival. This is always Satan's tactic, to offer power to those who would bow to his authority, a power that denies the very source of life and authority, that is, God Himself. At first it seems that such a suggestion could hardly have been a temptation for our Master. Surely He would not have succumbed to idolatry as a means of gaining His rightful rule and reign. But we must again remember that Yeshua as the incarnate One, had accepted the character of mankind with many of its weaknesses. It is not a sin to be weak, and within the created soul of man there is an aversion to death. We hear this in our Master's garden prayer: "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Lk 22:42, cp. Mk 14:36). As our Master faced His own death, He did so as a man, and it was only natural that He should inwardly seek to overcome it. Thus, the offer of attaining glory without having to die as the Lamb of God contained some value from a strictly human perspective.

²⁷ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

But we must also see that this third temptation was made known to us in order that we might understand the utter necessity of our Master's sacrifice. It was only through His full submission to the Father, rendering Himself as the guilt offering for those He would redeem, that His obedience would be perfect, and His mission complete. "Yet not My will but Yours be done" (Lk 22:42). There was no other way.

Satan specifically says "fall down and worship." This language is reminiscent of the Hebrew verb *chawah* (always in the *hishtafel* form) which generally means "to bow oneself" or even "to lay prone" before someone. For this reason, it is also very often used in the Tanach of worship (note these examples from the Psalms: 5:8; 22:28, 30; 29:2; 45:12; 66:4; 72:11; 81:10; 86:9; 95:6; 96:9). The verb used in our verse (*proskeuneo*) regularly is used by the Lxx to translate *chawah*. The Sages understood bowing as an indication of worship, and defined idolatry as bowing to anything or anyone other than God:

[He who beguiles others is] one who says, "I am going to worship, "I shall go and worship," "Let's go and worship," "I shall make an offering," "I shall go and make an offering," "Let's go and make an offering," "I shall offer incense," "I shall go and offer incense," "Let's go and offer incense," "I shall make a libation," "I shall go and make a libation," "Let's go and make a libation," "I shall bow down," "I shall go and bow down," "Let's go and bow down" (m.*Sanhedrin* 7:10).²⁸

Matthew 4:10

Then saith Jesus unto him, *Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Quoted from Deut. 6:13.

(Deuteronomy 6:13) *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.*

The Ownership of Nations

- The "god of this world" is a title of Satan.
- Daniel 10 vs Gen 12: The destiny of America?
- Our heritage: David Barton: Wallbuilders, et al. Election rhetoric today? Character vs Destiny? Psalm 2 describes and Revelation details a time when the kingdoms of this world will take up arms against God!

If his ownership was in question, this would not have been a temptation! Cf. Luke 4:5: In order to be tempted, one must believe that one can deliver what is offered; i.e., for Jesus to be tempted by Satan's offer of all the nations of the world, Satan does really possess them!

In the course of this trial, it appears that our blessed Lord was tempted,

1st. To DISTRUST. Command these stones to become bread.

2dly. To PRESUMPTION. Cast thyself down.

²⁸ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

3dly. To worldly AMBITION. All these will I give.

4thly. To IDOLATRY. Fall down and worship me, or do me homage. There is probably not a temptation of Satan, but is reducible to one or other of these four articles.²⁹

From the whole we may learn:

First. No man, howsoever holy, is exempted from temptation: for God manifested to the flesh was tempted by the devil.

Secondly. That the best way to foil the adversary, is by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Ephesians 6:17.

Thirdly. That to be tempted even to the greatest abominations (while a person resists) is not sin: for Christ was tempted to worship the DEVIL.

Fourthly. That there is no temptation which is from its own nature, or favoring circumstances, irresistible. God has promised to bruise even Satan under our feet.³⁰

Barnes: *Get thee hence.* These temptations, and this one especially, our Saviour met with a decided rebuke. This was a bolder attack than any which had been offered. Others had been but an address to his necessities, and an offer of the protection of God in great danger; in both cases plausible, and in neither a direct violation of the law of God. Here was a higher attempt, a more decided and deadly thrust at the piety of the Saviour. It was a proposition that the Son of God should *worship* the devil, instead of honouring and adoring Him who made heaven and earth; that he should bow down before the prince of wickedness, and give him homage.

McGee: He is quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20. Friend, we see that our Lord answered each time with Scripture. Certainly, that ought to have a message for all of us.

Why is it that many of us are having trouble living the Christian life? May I say this very kindly: It is *ignorance* of the Word of God. Notice that our Lord always answered by giving the Word of God. I believe that the Word of God has an answer for your particular problem. That doesn't mean that *I* know the answer for your problem. It doesn't mean that your psychologist or psychiatrist knows the answer for your problem. But God has an answer for your problem, and it is in His Word. That is the reason we should know the Book better than we do.

Let me repeat, the Lord Jesus answered Satan every time out of the Word. He did not say, "Well, *I* think this" or "*I* believe there is a better way of doing it." He said very definitely that the Word of God says thus and so. He used the Word of God for His answer. And for the child of God, that is enough.

By the way, the devil seemed to think it gave good answers because in the next verse we read—³¹

The *Tanakh*, the Old Testament—rendered "Scripture" or "it is written" in most translations. The Hebrew word "*Tanakh*" is an acronym formed from the first letters of the three parts of the Hebrew Bible:

²⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

³⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary

³¹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

(1) *Torah* (“Teaching”)—the Five Books of Moses or Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

(2) *N.vi.im* (“Prophets”)—the historical books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), the three Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), and the twelve Minor Prophets.

(3) *K.tuvim* (“Writings”)—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the “five scrolls” (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

If you are the Son of God. Satan presents Yeshua with each of the three categories of temptation named by Yochanan (1 Yn 2:15–17&N): “the desires of the old nature” or “flesh” (Ro 7:5&N)—“**If you are the Son of God, order these stones to become bread**”; “the desires of the eyes”—**the Adversary ... showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory, and said to him, “All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me**”; “and the pretensions of life”—the Adversary took him to the holy city, **Jerusalem**, and set him on the highest point of the Temple. “**If you are the Son of God,**” he said, “**jump!**”

Satan was already using the same three kinds of temptations in the Garden of Eden: “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food” (desires of the flesh), “and that it was a delight to the eyes” (desires of the eyes), “and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (pretensions of life), “she took of the fruit and ate” (Genesis 3:6).

The difference is that “the first man” did not resist the Adversary (Ya 4:7), but “the last man” did (Ro 5:12–21&N; 1C 15:21–22, 45–49&NN; MJ 4:15). Yeshua, showing the power of the Word of God in resisting the Adversary (Ya 4:7), quotes the *Torah* in answer to all three temptations—Deuteronomy 8:3 at v. 4, Deuteronomy 6:16 at v. 7, and Deuteronomy 6:13 at v. 10. But Satan, “the inventor of the lie” (Yn 8:44), can misuse Scripture to deceive—Psalm 91:11–12 at v. 6.³²

Matthew 4:11

Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The devil fled. Satan does leave, thereby showing that he is NOT omnipresent. He can be bound, he has location. [A whole year apparently passes between verses 11 and 12. The Judean ministry is omitted.] The devil left him for a time, Luke 4:13. He intended to return again to the temptation, and if possible to seduce him yet from God.

[leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him] Ending the temptations, which were:

1. Use Your miraculous powers to supply ordinary and personal needs at my command.
2. Prove Your Sonship by a special demonstration of God's protection; be reckless and make a spectacle of Your power.
3. Use my power, influence, worldly organizations and kingdoms and become great among men whom You seek to get power over.

³²Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:4). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Barnes: They came and supplied his wants, and comforted him. From the whole of this we may learn,

(1.) That no one is so holy as to be free from temptation; for the pure Son of God was sorely tempted by the devil.

(2.) That when God permits a temptation or trial to come upon us, he will, if we look to him, give us grace to resist and overcome it, 1 Corinthians 10:3.

(3.) We see the art of the tempter. His temptations are adapted to times and circumstances. They are plausible. What could have been, more plausible than his suggestions to Christ? They were applicable to his circumstances. They had the appearance of much piety. They were backed by passages of Scripture-misapplied, but still most artfully presented. He never comes boldly and tempts men to sin, telling them that they are committing sin. Such a mode would defeat his design. It would put people on their guard. He commences, therefore, artfully, plausibly, and the real purpose does not appear till he has prepared the mind for it. This is the way with all temptation. No wicked man would at once tempt another to be profane, to be drunk, to be an infidel, or to commit adultery.. The *principles* are first corrupted; the confidence is secured; the affections are won; and then the allurements are by little and little presented, till the victim fails. How should every one be on his guard at the very *first appearance* of evil, at the first suggestion that may possibly lead to evil.

(4.) One of the best ways of meeting temptation is by applying Scripture. So our Saviour did, and they will always best succeed who best wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Ephesians 6:17.³³

Satan's final test related to God's plan for Jesus. It was and is God's design that Jesus Christ rule the world. Satan **showed** Jesus **the kingdoms of the world** with all **their splendor**. These kingdoms presently are Satan's, as he is "the god of this Age" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; cf. Eph. 2:2). He had the power to **give** all these kingdoms to Jesus at that time—if only Jesus would **bow down and worship** him. Satan was saying, "I can accomplish the will of God for You and You can have the kingdoms of this world right now." This of course would have meant Jesus would never have gone to the cross. He supposedly could have been the King of kings without the cross. However, this would have thwarted God's plan for salvation and would have meant Jesus was worshiping an inferior. His response, once again from Deuteronomy (6:13 and 10:20), was that **God** alone should be worshiped and served. Jesus resisted this temptation also.

Interestingly Satan's temptations of Eve in the Garden of Eden correspond to those of Jesus in the desert. Satan appealed to the physical appetite (Gen. 3:1-3; Matt. 4:3), the desire for personal gain (Gen. 3:4-5; Matt. 4:6), and an easy path to power or glory (Gen. 3:5-6; Matt. 4:8-9). And in each case Satan altered God's Word (Gen. 3:4; Matt. 4:6). Satan's temptations of people today often fall into the same three categories (cf. 1 John 2:16). The One who had identified Himself with sinners by baptism and who would provide righteousness proved He is righteous, and revealed His approval by the Father. Satan then **left** Jesus. At that moment God sent **angels** to minister to His needs.³⁴

³³ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

³⁴ Bible Knowledge Commentary

Satan's Temptations of Eve and of Jesus

Temptation	Genesis 3	Matthew 4
Appeal to physical appetite	You may eat of any tree (3:1).	You may eat by changing stones to bread (4:3).
Appeal to personal gain	You will not die (3:4).	You will not hurt Your foot (4:6).
Appeal to power or glory	You will be like God (3:5).	You will have all the world's kingdoms (4:8-9).

CHART: THE TEMPTATIONS – Life Application Notes:

<i>Temptation</i>	<i>Real needs used as basis for temptation</i>	<i>Possible doubts that made the temptations real</i>	<i>Potential weaknesses Satan sought to exploit</i>	<i>Jesus' answer</i>
Make bread	Physical need: Hunger	Would God provide food?	Hunger, impatience, need to “prove his Sonship”	Deut. 8:3 “Depend on God” Focus: God’s purpose
Dare God to rescue you (based on misapplied Scripture, Psalm 91:11-12)	Emotional need: Security	Would God protect?	Pride, insecurity, need to test God	Deut. 6:16 “Don’t test God” Focus: God’s plan
Worship me! (Satan)	Psychological need: Significance, power, achievement	Would God rule?	Desire for quick power, easy solutions, need to prove equality with God	Deut. 6:13 “No compromise with evil” Focus: God’s person

As if going through a final test of preparation, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert. Three specific parts of the temptation are listed by Matthew. They are familiar because we face the same kinds of temptations. As the chart shows, temptation is often the combination of a real need and a possible doubt that create an inappropriate desire. Jesus demonstrates both the importance and effectiveness of knowing and applying Scripture to combat temptation.

McGee: Luke 4:13 tells us that the devil left Him for a little season. I think he was back the next day—and was testing Him throughout His life. Especially do we see the temptation of the devil in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus endured indescribable suffering.

Now let's make a very brief recapitulation of this episode in the life of our Lord and notice some things that it clearly teaches.

First of all, we have seen that Jesus was born a King, He was introduced as a King, He was baptized as a King, and now we have seen that He was tested as a King. All the way through Matthew's Gospel He is a King.

This testing revealed several things. One of them is that the devil is a person. In this contact with Jesus, he is treated as a person. This ought to answer any Bible believer who has questions about him, because there are those who insist that the devil is only an influence.

Also, we notice the very subtle insinuation of the devil. He first said, "*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*" (v. 3). In other words, *prove* it in a way which is not God's way. There was no attempt, of course, to tempt Jesus to commit a crime. For Him, that would not have been a real temptation because the inclination of Jesus was to do good. Since bread was the staff of life, to make stones into bread would be a very good thing. And later on in His ministry He fed the multitudes with bread. But the inherent evil of Satan's temptation was to get Jesus to go outside of the will of God for His life.

Also, we see that all the way through the temptations, the Lord Jesus answered the devil from the Word of God. In other words, He used the sword of the Spirit (see Eph. 6:17) to meet the enemy of God and man. *Every* time His answer was, "It is written." Oh, my friend, if only we were more adept at using the sword of the Spirit! It is our weapon in this day, and it is a very effective weapon.

Another interesting point is that Jesus quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy.

The second thing the devil wanted Jesus to do was to become a religious leader by a stupendous miracle rather than by offering His credentials in the manner that God had prescribed. The devil's way would miss the cross of Christ. Much of what is called Christianity today is "Devil-anity" or "Satan-anity" because it leaves the cross of Christ out altogether. The devil is asking Jesus to become a great religious leader by a miracle.

Friend, it's very dangerous today to be led astray by miracle workers. Right now many people are going after so-called faith healers. I don't know why so many folk go after that type of thing when a little investigation would reveal that there are no real miracles taking place in their services, although there is a great deal of emotion and folderol involved. In Southern California I have made an offer of one hundred dollars to anyone who will come forward and present their credentials and demonstrate that they were actually healed by a miracle worker, a healer. Frankly, I have been amazed that only two or three have come. These were very sincere folk who really believed that they had been healed. They thought that I was way out in left field because I didn't believe they had been healed—and I didn't. But don't misunderstand, I believe in miracle healing—that is, I believe that you go directly to the Great Physician. When you have something seriously wrong with you, you don't go to an intern or a quack doctor. What you do is go to a specialist in that particular field. I've taken my case to the Great Physician, and I can recommend Him. I believe in going directly to Him and not through some of these so-

called miracle-workers. No man can perform miracles. Not even the Lord Jesus would become a religious leader the way the Devil wanted Him to become one, and that is very interesting.

You'll notice that the Devil came back and quoted Scripture also. He said: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee.... They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:11–12). The Devil was pretty good at quoting Scripture, but he wasn't quite accurate. Shakespeare said that the Devil could quote Scripture for his purpose; but, actually, the Devil can *misquote* Scripture for his purpose. Satan left out a very important phrase from the passage which he quoted from Psalm 91. He omitted "... to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11). That is the important part of the verse. Satan was attempting to get the Lord Jesus to ignore God's way. My friend, it is not always God's will to perform something in your life or in my life that is miraculous. There is an idea circulating in our contemporary society that we can *force* God to do something, that He is sort of a Western Union boy or that He is more or less working for you and is under your command to do what you desire Him to do. Oh, my friend, we can't do that! God is sovereign, and we happen to be the creature—He is the Creator. We must yield to the will of God. That may not be pleasant at times, but the will of God—not your will or my will—is that which is all important.

Another thing about this temptation which really raises a question is that the Devil offered the Lord Jesus the kingdoms of this world! Does the Devil have the kingdoms of the world to offer? Think that one over before you attempt to answer it. Well, let me give you my answer, and I have thought about it a great deal. The Lord Jesus did not challenge his statement that he had the kingdoms of the world to offer. Jesus didn't say to him, "You can't offer Me the kingdoms of the world because you don't have them to give." I assume that the Devil did have them to give. This fact gives us a little different viewpoint of the trouble we are having in the world today. The Devil is running everything! Some Christians tend to fight the evils of communism without realizing that behind communism is Satan and that behind the confusion and turmoil in the world is Satan. Let's remember who our enemy really is. He is a spiritual enemy. He wants to become God. Remember that he said to Jesus, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and *worship me*"!

In verse 11 we saw that after the third temptation, the Devil left the Lord Jesus for awhile. Certainly, he did not leave Him alone permanently.³⁵

Matthew 4:12

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

[John was cast into prison] For an account of the imprisonment of John, see Matthew 14:1-12.

Barnes: *He departed into Galilee.* See Matthew 2:22. The reasons why Jesus went then into Galilee were, probably, not that he might avoid danger- for he went directly into the

³⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

dominions of Herod, and Jesus had nothing in particular to fear from Herod, as he had given him no cause of offence -but,

(1.) because the attention of the people had been much excited by John's preaching, and it was more favorable for his own ministry.

(2.) It seemed desirable to have someone to second John in the work of reformation.

(3.) It was less dangerous for him to commence his labors *there* than near Jerusalem. Judea was under the dominion of the scribes, and Pharisees, and priests. They would naturally look with envy on any one who set up for a public teacher, and who should attract much attention there. It was important, therefore, that the work of Jesus should begin in Galilee, and become somewhat established and known before he went to Jerusalem.

Matthew 4:13

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthaim:

When speaking of the 12 tribes in this context, they are speaking geographically. These were two tribes of the children of Israel which were located in this part of the land of Canaan, and constituted, in the time of Christ, a part of Galilee. Comp. Genesis 49:13, Josh 19:10,32. The word borders here means boundaries. Jesus came and dwelt in the boundaries or regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.

[**Capernaum**] On the Sea of Galilee, in the Northeastern side of the country. This was a city on the north-west corner of the sea of Tiberius. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is repeatedly in the Gospels. Though it was once a city of renown, and the metropolis of all Galilee, the site it occupied is now uncertain. When Mr. Fisk, an American missionary, travelled in Syria in 1823, he found twenty or thirty uninhabited Arab huts, occupying what are supposed to be the ruins of the once exalted city of Capernaum.

In this place, and its neighborhood, Jesus spent no small part of the three years of his public ministry. It is hence called *his own city*, Matthew 9:1. Here he healed the nobleman's son, (John 4:47) Peter's wife's mother, (Matthew 8:14) the centurion's servant, (Matthew 8:5) and the ruler's daughter, (*Matthew 9:23-25.*)

Jesus moved from Nazareth, his hometown, to Capernaum, about 20 miles farther north. Capernaum became Jesus' home base during his ministry in Galilee. Jesus probably moved (1) to get away from intense opposition in Nazareth, (2) to have an impact on the greatest number of people (Capernaum was a busy city and Jesus' message could reach more people and spread more quickly), and (3) to utilize extra resources and support for his ministry.

Jesus' move fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-2, which states that the Messiah will be a light to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, the region of Galilee where Capernaum was located. Zebulun and Naphtali were two of the original 12 tribes of Israel.

McGee: Jesus withdrew from the Jerusalem area because John had been taken by Herod and put in prison. Now we have the Lord Jesus shifting His headquarters from the south to the north and from Nazareth, His hometown, over to Capernaum. Matthew does not give us the details of this move in his record. This is an example of the fact that the four gospel records do not attempt to parallel each other. One is not a carbon copy of any of the others. The attempt to harmonize the Gospels is a big mistake. I have written a booklet entitled *Why Four Gospels?* in which I attempt to show that each one is written for a definite purpose. Not one of them was intended to be a biography of the Lord Jesus—no one could write that. Each book presents its case to reach a certain segment of the human family. Matthew was written to reach the religious element and is primarily for the nation of Israel. Actually, it was written in Hebrew—Papias and Eusebius, church fathers, both say that, as well as others of that period.

Although Matthew gives us no details of the move to Capernaum, we learn from other gospels that Jesus had been rejected by His hometown. Capernaum became His headquarters and continued as such, as far as we can tell, until the hour that He went to Jerusalem for the final time to be crucified.

Matthew will give us the reason He moved His headquarters from Nazareth to Capernaum. The other gospel writers do not tell us this, but Matthew records it to show that in everything the Lord Jesus did, He was moving in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies—³⁶

K'far-Nachum (Capernaum; the Hebrew name means “village of Nahum”) was located on the northwest shore of Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee; see v. 18N) and site of much of Yeshua’s activity as described in the New Testament. Now an archeological park supervised by the Roman Catholic Church, it is a standard stop on Christian tours of Israel. An octagonal 5th-century Byzantine structure amidst earlier ruins is said to mark where Kefa lived (8:14); if so, the older remains may be part of the first Messianic Jewish congregation building. The walls of a fourth-century synagogue still stand. ³⁷

Matthew 4:14

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Matthew 4:15

The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

This place is recorded in Isaiah 9:1,2. Matthew has given the *sense*, but not the very words of the prophet.

³⁶McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³⁷Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:13). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

(Isaiah 9:1-2) ¹ Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. ² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

[The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea ...] The 7th Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in Matthew (Matthew 4:14-16; Isaiah 9:1-2). Next, Matthew 8:17.

[Nephthalim] Genesis 49:21; Joshua 19:32.

[Galilee of the Gentile] Galilee was divided into *upper* and *lower* Galilee. Upper Galilee was called *Galilee of the Gentiles*, because it was occupied chiefly by Gentiles. It was in the neighborhood of Tyre, Sidon, etc. The word *Gentiles* includes, in the Scriptures, all who are not Jews. It means the same as *nations*, or, as we should say, the *heathen nations*.

Matthew 4:16

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

[The people which sat in darkness] This is an expression denoting great ignorance. As in darkness or night we can see nothing, and know not where to go, so those who are ignorant of God, and their duty, are said to be in darkness. The instruction which removes this ignorance is called *light*. See John 3:19, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 1:6; 1 John 2:8. As ignorance is often connected with crime and vice, so darkness is sometimes used to denote sin, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, Ephesians 5:11, Luke 22:53.

(Isaiah 9:1-2) ¹ Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. ² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah's Prophecies

- Quoting from Isa 9:1,2 (LXX) Alluding to blessing and prophecies: Zebulun (Gen 49:13); Naphtali (Gen 49:21).
- Matthew is pointing out that prophecies of those two tribes are being fulfilled in the fact that the Messiah of Israel is present in their borders and is beginning to preach.

[light] Greek: *phos* (GSN-5457), underived and absolute light—the opposite of all darkness. Therefore, used especially of God (1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 1:5) and of Christ (John 1:4-10).

Barnes: *The region and shadow of death.* This is a forcible and beautiful image, designed also to denote ignorance and sin. It is often used in the Bible, and is very expressive. A *shadow* is caused by an object coming between us and the sun. So the Hebrews imaged death as standing between us and the sun, and casting a long, dark, and baleful shadow abroad on the face of the nations, denoting their great ignorance, sin, and woe. It denotes a dismal, gloomy, and dreadful shade, where death and sin reign, like the chill damps, and horrors of the dwelling-place of the dead. See Job 10:21, 16:16; 34:22, Psalms 23:4, Jeremiah 2:6. These expressions denote that the country of Galilee was peculiarly ignorant and blind. We know that the people were proverbially so. They were distinguished for a coarse, outlandish manner of speech, (Mark 14:70) and are represented as having been distinguished by a general profligacy of morals and manners. It shows the great compassion of the Saviour, that he went to preach to such poor and despised sinners.

Instead of seeking the rich and the learned, he chose to minister to the needy, the ignorant, and the contemned. His office is to enlighten the ignorant; his delight to guide the wandering, and to raise up those that are in the shadow of death. In doing this, Jesus set an example for all his followers. It is their duty to seek out those who are sitting in the shadow of death, and to send the gospel to them. No small part of the world is still lying in wickedness, as wicked and wretched as was the land of Zebulun and Naphtali in the time of Jesus. The Lord Jesus is able to enlighten them also. And every Christian should conceive it a privilege, as well as a duty, to imitate his Saviour in this, and to be permitted to send to them the light of life. See Matthew 28:19.³⁸

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[Repent] Repentance is one of the main themes of the Bible, being found 110 times from Genesis 6:6 to Rev. 16:11.

Seven Original Words for "Repent"

1. Hebrew: *nacham* (HSN-5162), to sigh, breathe strongly, to be sorry (Genesis 6:6; Exodus 13:17; Job 42:6; Jonah 3:10)
2. Hebrew: *shuwb* (HSN-7725), to turn back (1 Kings 8:47; Ezekiel 14:6)
3. Hebrew: *nocham* (HSN-5164), regret (Hosea 13:14)
4. Hebrew: *nichuwm* (HSN-5150), compassion (Hosea 11:8)
5. Greek: *metanoeo* (GSN-3340), to change the mind for the better morally, to change the attitude toward sin (note, □ Luke 13:3)
6. Greek: *metamellomai* (GSN-3338), to regret consequences of sin, not the cause (Matthew 27:3; 2 Cor. 7:8)

³⁸ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

7. Greek: *metanoia* (GSN-3341), a real change of mind and attitude toward sin and its cause, not merely the consequences of it (Matthew 3:8,11; Matthew 9:13; Luke 24:47)

[kingdom of heaven is at hand] Literally, "kingdom from the heavens." It is headed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of re-establishing the kingdom of God over this rebellious part of God's realm. Only found in Matthew because it is the gospel of Jehovah's King. It is a dispensational term and refers to Messiah's kingdom on earth. Offered by both John and Jesus (Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17; Matthew 10:7). Because it was rejected, it was postponed until Christ comes to set up the kingdom (Matthew 11:12,20-24; Matthew 27:22-25; Luke 19:11-27; Acts 1:6-7; Acts 3:19-26). It is now the realm of profession (Matthew 13:11-17,30,38-43,47-50). The parables of the kingdom apply to this age. At the end Christ will come and set up a literal earthly kingdom forever (Matthew 25:31-46; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 19:11-20:10; Zech. 14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44-45; Daniel 7:13-27; Luke 1:32-33). During the first 1,000 years of His eternal reign He will put down all rebellion and rid the earth of all rebels. Then God will become "all in all" as before rebellion (Rev. 20:1-10; Rev. 21:1-22:5; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Ephes. 1:10). Anything said of the kingdom of heaven can also be said of the kingdom of God, because the former is only the earthly dispensational aspect of the latter. There are many things said of the kingdom of God, however, which cannot be said of the kingdom of heaven (see note, [□] Matthew 19:24).

McGee: Jesus' message was, "Repent, turn around, come to Me, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was at hand in the person of the King, of course—they couldn't have the kingdom of heaven without Him. As we have seen the kingdom of heaven, simply stated, is the reign of the heavens over the earth. This is what the Lord Jesus will bring to this earth someday. This earth will become "heaven" for Israel, an earthly people, and they will go into eternity right down here. The church has a heavenly hope, but the earthly hope is also a marvelous hope, and it is the hope of the Old Testament.³⁹

Matthew 4:18

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

[sea of Galilee] A fresh-water lake, called also the Sea of Tiberias, Gennesaret and Chinnereth (Luke 5:1; John 21:1; Joshua 12:3; Joshua 13:27; Deut. 3:17).

Barnes: *Sea of Galilee.* This was also called the sea of Tiberias, and the lake of Gennesareth, and also the sea of Chinnereth, Numbers 34:11, Deuteronomy 3:17, Josh 12:3. It is about fifteen miles in length, and from six to nine in width. There is no part of Palestine, it is said, which can be compared in beauty with the environs of this lake. Many populous cities once stood on its shores, such as Tiberias, Bethsaida, Capernaum,

³⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Chorazin, Hippos, etc. The shores are described by Josephus as a perfect paradise, producing every luxury under heaven, at all seasons of the year. The river Jordan flows directly through the lake, it is said, without mingling with its waters, so that the course of the Jordan can be distinctly seen. The waters of the lake are sweet and pleasant to the taste, and clear. The lake still abounds with fish, and gives employment, as it did in the time of our Saviour, to those who live on its shores. It is, however, stormy, owing probably to the high hills by which it is surrounded.

[Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea] First of Christ's disciples (John 1:33-42). He returned to his fishing until his call with his brother Peter (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:17). He became one of the 12 apostles (Matthew 10:2; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). Mentioned in Mark 1:29; Mark 13:3; John 6:8; John 12:22. Tradition says he was of the tribe of Reuben, that he evangelized Scythia (becoming Russia's patron saint), and that he was stoned and crucified in Greece or Scythia.

Lake Kinneret is the name used in Israel for the body of fresh water formed by the River Yarden (Jordan) in the Galil (Galilee); it is so called because it is shaped like a harp (*kinnor* in ancient Hebrew). English versions of the Bible identify it as the Sea of Galilee; at Yn 6:1, 23 and 21:1 the Greek text calls it "the Sea of Tiberias."

Kefa is the name Yeshua gave Shim'on Bar-Yochanan (Yn 1:42&N); it means "rock" in Aramaic. The Greek word for "rock" is "*petros*," which is usually brought into English as "Peter." Occasionally, instead of translating "*Kefa*" as "*Petros*," the Greek text transliterates "*Kefa*" as "*Kephas*"; this appears in English versions as "Cephas."⁴⁰

Hegg: Our text does not give us any insight into Yeshua's previous contact with Peter and Andrew. How, then, did He choose them to be His talmidim? It seems very probable that He did have a previous acquaintance with them and their family, but it is also possible that here we see Yeshua's ability to know about a person without having formerly met them.

When Yeshua encounters the brothers, they were "casting a net into the sea." The Greek word *amfiblestron* (*amfiblestron*, used only here in the Apostolic Scriptures) denotes a circular net used for casting. To the edge of the net were attached small stones which made it sink quickly, engulfing the fish. When the net was drawn from a rope tied to the middle, the heavier stones would be gathered together and keep the fish entrapped.

Thus, Peter and Andrew made their living by fishing. The purpose for Matthew's specific note of their occupation is twofold. First, it sets up the manner of His calling them to be His talmidim, for He would send them out as "fishers of men." In this metaphor, their occupation does not change, just the objects netted. While they had made their living catching fish, now they would be engaged in gathering people. Secondly, the fact that Matthew specifies their occupation makes the parallel to the Elijah/Elisha pericope, as well as emphasizing that their becoming Yeshua's disciples would require a break with everyday affairs. It would be costly (in more ways than one) to become a disciple of the Master.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:18). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁴¹ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

Matthew 4:19

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

[Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men] The call to evangelism compared to fishing. To follow is an idiom of discipleship (2 Kings 6:19)

McGee: In the Gospels the Lord makes at least three calls to these men, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that three meetings took place between Christ and these men. The first meeting took place in Jerusalem, as recorded in John 1:35–42. Their second meeting took place by the Sea of Galilee, and apparently this is the record of it. They had seen Him before this, but at that time He had not called them to be with Him. Now here at the Sea of Galilee when He meets them again, He calls them to follow Him. And then we will find that they went back to fishing—Mark and Luke give us that detail. And finally He called them again, and that was to apostleship.

The wonder of it all is that Jesus called men like this. I have always felt that since He called imperfect men like the disciples were, He may be able to use me, and He may be able to use you. It is encouraging to know that we don't have to be super-duper saints to be used by Him. He may not make you a fisher of men, if you are not in the fishing business. But whatever business you are engaged in, He can use you. Whatever your talent may be, if you will turn it over to Him, He can use it. Years ago a lady in my church was absolutely tongue-tied when it came to witnessing for Christ, but she could bake the most marvelous cakes! She used to deplore the fact of her inability to witness, and I said to her one day, "Did it ever occur to you that the Lord may want you in the church family to bake cakes?" That may seem ridiculous, but it is not. The important thing for us is to give ourselves to Him. Under His direction He won't have us all doing the same thing because He gives us separate gifts. The body of Christ has many members in it, and they all have different functions to perform.⁴²

Matthew 4:20

And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

This was not the first time that they met Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, we see that they were interested in his ministry, almost as a disciple. Here He is calling them to service, which is different. This "calling" involves not just "leaving" but also "cleaving" (also found in Gen 2:24 in the context of marriage). The concept of a "calling" also involves the leaving behind of the old life. They were fishermen, most likely their fathers were fishermen...it was their profession in a very deep cultural sense. (They did not change careers like we do!) To leave their nets behind was a non-trivial step.

⁴²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

[left their nets, and followed him] Leaving all is required of all men. It is an idiom of putting God first in life (Matthew 19:27-30; Luke 14:33).

Barnes: *Left their nets.* Their nets were the means of their living, perhaps all their property. By leaving them immediately, and following him, they gave every evidence of sincerity. They showed, what we should, that they were willing to forsake *all* for the sake of Jesus, and to follow him wherever he should lead them. They went forth to persecution and death, for the sake of Jesus; but also to the honour of saving souls from death, and establishing a church that shall continue to the end of time. Little did they know what awaited them, when they left their unmended nets to rot on the beach, and followed the unknown and unhonoured Jesus of Nazareth. So we know not what awaits us, when we become his followers but we should cheerfully go, when our Saviour calls, willing to commit all into his hand—come honour or dishonour, sickness or health, riches or poverty, life or death. Be it ours to do our duty at once, and to commit the result to the great Redeemer who has call us. Comp. Matthew 6:33, 8:21,22 John 21:21,22.

Jesus told Peter and Andrew to leave their fishing business and become “fishers of men,” to help others find God. Jesus was calling them away from their productive trades to be productive spiritually. We all need to fish for souls. If we practice Christ’s teachings and share the gospel with others, we will be able to draw those around us to Christ like a fisherman who pulls fish into his boat with nets.

Matthew 4:21

And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son of Zebedee*, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

A few different Jameses noted, but here it is James the brother of John.

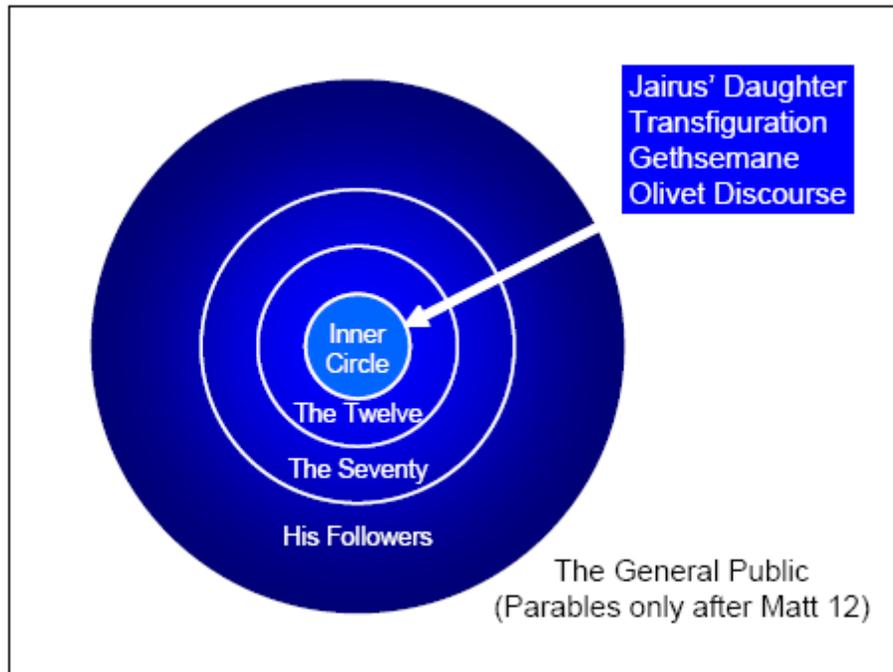
[James] English form of Jacob. Brother of John and son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21; Matthew 20:20; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10-11). One of the 12 apostles (Matthew 10:2; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). One of three most intimate with Jesus (Mark 5:37; Matthew 17:1-8; Matthew 26:36-46; see also Mark 13:3-4; Luke 9:54; John 21:1-14). First martyr among the apostles (Acts 12:1-2). Tradition says that he was of the tribe of Levi through his father and of Judah through his mother (of both the priestly and the royal house), that he preached in India with Peter and later in Spain, becoming the patron saint of Spain.

Ya’akov Ben-Zavdai and Yochanan, usually rendered “James the son of Zebedee and John.” English-speakers are usually unaware that the name “James” comes from the Hebrew name “*Ya.akov*” (“Jacob”). “*Ya.akov*” was transliterated into Greek as “*Iacobou*”; in Latin this became “*Iacobus*” and later “*Jacomus*,” from which comes

“James.” The seemingly Gentile name “James” thus displays its Jewish roots, as we saw above is also the case with the name “John” (3:1N).⁴³

Matthew 4:22

And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.



“The Sons of Thunder”

John and his brother were nicknamed “Sons of Thunder”—they were fisherman and very strong people. These four (Peter, James, John, and Andrew) are singled out by Matthew as an inner circle, often even narrowed down to three: Peter, James and John. There are number of occasions which only these three are allowed to experience (Mt 17). The four disciples are given a private briefing on the Second Coming: the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24-25).

Barnes: *Left their father.* This showed how willing they were to follow Jesus. They left their father. They showed us what we ought to do. If necessary, we should leave father, and mother, and every friend, Luke 14:26. If they will go with us, and be Christians, it is well; if not, yet they should not hinder us. We should be the followers of Jesus. And while, in doing it, we should treat our friends tenderly and kindly, yet we ought at all hazards to obey God, and do our duty to him. We may add, that many, very many children, since Sabbath schools have commenced, have been the means of their parents' conversion. Many children have spoken to their parents, or read the Bible to them, or other books, and prayed for them, and God has blessed them and converted them. Every

⁴³Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:21). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

child in a Sunday school ought to be a Christian; and then should strive and pray that God would convert his parents, and make them Christians too.

We see here, too, what humble instruments God makes use of to convert men. He chose fishermen to convert the world. He chooses the foolish to confound the wise. And it shows that religion is true, and is the power of God, when he makes use of such instruments to change the hearts of men, and save their souls. 1 Corinthians 1:26 and following.⁴⁴

Fishermen had more income than average people in Galilee, so James and John left behind a good job. More than that, however, they suddenly left behind their father and the family business; such abandonment could easily bring them dishonor in the community. (Both Jews and Greeks, however, had similar stories and would recognize this sudden departure as a sure sign of radical discipleship.)

Matthew 4:23

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

[Gospel of the Kingdom] This phrase is summarized in the next three chapters. Not about how to get saved; but why it is necessary! Sermon on the Mount destroys any possibility of keeping God's laws.

Good news as most are familiar with is the "Gospel." Christianity generally teaches the "Gospel" is; *the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah*. But how can Yeshua be preaching this if He is still alive? The apostles likewise preached the same while Yeshua was alive. Also, Hebrews 4:2-6 says that the Gospel was preached to the Israelites, some 1300 years before Yeshua's time. How can this be?

The explanation is in the Matthew verse itself -- the Gospel has to do with the healing of disease and sickness and restoration of creation, as will be seen in its fulness in the Millennium. For more information on this, see Yovel Year (Jubilees) and the Gospel. (CAUTION: This article is from our Revelation study and contains some advanced concepts. Use the BACK button to return here.) See also: Isaiah 26:14, 29:18, 35:4-6, 61:1.⁴⁵

[And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom] First traveling evangelist and missionary (cp. Matthew 9:35; Mark 6:6). Note His threefold work as He "went about" (Matthew 9:35; Acts 10:38).

[healing] Greek: *therapeuo* (GSN-2323), to wait upon menially, to relieve of disease. Translated "heal" 38 times and "cure" 5 times.

⁴⁴ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

⁴⁵ Yashanet.com/studies/matstudy/mat5d.htm

Barnes: *Synagogues.* Places of worship, or places where the people *assembled* together to worship God. The origin of synagogues is involved in much obscurity. The *sacrifices* of the Jews were appointed to be held in *one* place, at Jerusalem. But there was nothing to forbid the other services of religion to be performed at any place. Accordingly, the praises of God were sung in the schools of the prophets; and those who chose were assembled by the seers on the Sabbath, and the new-moons, for religious worship, 2 Kings 4:23, 1 Samuel 10:5-11. The people would soon see the necessity of providing convenient places for their services, to shelter them from storms and heat; and this was probably the origin of synagogues. At what tinge they were commenced is unknown. They are mentioned by Josephus a considerable time before the coming of Christ; and in his time they were multiplied, not only in Judea, but wherever there were Jews. There were no less than 480 in Jerusalem alone, before it was taken by the Romans.

The synagogues were built in elevated places—in any place where ten men were found who were willing to associate for the purpose; and were the regular customary places of worship. In them the law, i.e., the Old Testament, divided into suitable portions, was read, prayers were offered, and the Scriptures were expounded. The law was so divided, that the five books of Moses, and portions of the prophets, could be read through each year. The Scriptures, after being read, were expounded. This was done, either by the officers of the synagogues, or by any person who might be invited to it by the officiating minister. Our Saviour and the apostles were in the habit of attending at those places constantly, and of speaking to the people, Luke 4:15-27, Acts 13:14, 15.

The synagogues were built in imitation of the temple, with a centre building, supported by pillars, and a *court* surrounding it. Matthew 21:12. In the centre building, or chapel, was a place prepared for the reading of the law. The law was kept in a chest, or ark, near to the pulpit. The uppermost seats, (Matthew 23:6) were those nearest to the pulpit. The people sat round, facing the pulpit. When the law was read, the officiating person rose; when it was expounded, he was seated. Our Saviour imitated their example, and was commonly seated in addressing the people, Matthew 5:1, 13:1.⁴⁶

McGee: Notice that Jesus is *teaching* in their synagogues, and He is *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom. What is it? The gospel (Good News) of the kingdom is that it is at hand in the person of the King. They are to accept and receive Him. Also, He is healing their physical illnesses. Friend, there were thousands of people in that day whom Jesus healed. Matthew especially lets us know that. If we will pay attention to the text, we will find that there were not just a few isolated cases, but thousands of folk were healed. That is the reason the enemies of Jesus never questioned His miracles—there were too many of them walking around. By the way, I live in Southern California where many so-called faith healers claim the healing of thousands of people, but we don't see these purported miracles walking around, at least they don't come my way.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

⁴⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Good News is the *JNT's* rendering of Greek *evangelion*, which gives English such words as "evangelism." The more common English translation of the word is "gospel," which means "good news" in archaic English.⁴⁸

Matthew 4:24

And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Throughout all Syria, now called the Golan (north and east).

[**diverse diseases**] "Demons" are *not* an Old English euphemism for talking about psychiatric problems. Demon possession will be encountered later in Matthew. Epilepsy is a real medical malady, as opposed to demon possession, which is a real spiritual malady.

[**Syria**] A district of ten cities, of which Damascus was the chief.

This is possibly a mistranslation in the Greek texts, as the *DuTillet Hebrew Matthew* has instead, "the people" (which has a similar spelling to "Syria" and makes more sense).

[**diseases**] Greek: *nosos* (GSN-3554), translated "disease" 6 times (Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:34; Luke 4:40; Luke 6:17; Luke 9:1; Acts 19:12); "sickness" 5 times (Matthew 4:23; Matthew 8:17; Matthew 9:35; Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15); and "infirmity" once (Luke 7:21). Not *malakia* (GSN-3119), "disease" as in Matthew 4:23; Matthew 9:35; Matthew 10:1.

[**devils**] Demons or Unclean Spirits.

[**lunatick**] Greek: *seleniazomai* (GSN-4583), from *selene* (GSN-4582), moon; to be moonstruck, that is, insane. Found only here and in Matthew 17:15.

[**palsy**] Greek: *paralutikos* (GSN-3885), to be paralyzed (Matthew 4:24; Matthew 8:6; Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:3-9; Luke 5:24; Luke 5:18; Acts 8:7; Acts 9:33).

Barnes: *Those possessed with devils.* Much difficulty exists, and much has been written, respecting those in the New Testament said to be possessed with the devil. It has been maintained by many, that the sacred writers meant only by this expression to denote those who were *melancholy* or *epileptic*, or afflicted with some other grievous disease. This opinion has been supported by arguments too long to be repeated here. On the other hand, it has been supposed that the persons so described were under the influence of evil spirits, who had complete possession of the faculties, and who produced many symptoms of

⁴⁸Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:23). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

disease not unlike melancholy, and madness, and epilepsy. That such was the fact, will appear from the following considerations:

1st. That Christ and the apostles spoke *to* them, and *of* them *as such*; that they addressed them, and managed them, precisely *as if* they were so possessed, leaving their hearers to infer beyond a doubt that such was their real opinion.

2nd. They spake, conversed, asked questions, gave answers, and expressed their knowledge of Christ, and their fear of him—things that certainly could not be said of diseases, Matthew 8:29, Luke 8:28.

3rd. They are represented as going out of the persons possessed, and entering the bodies of others, Matthew 8:32.

4th. Jesus spoke to them, and asked their name, and they answered him. He threatened them, commanded them to be silent, to depart, and not to return, Mark 1:25, 5:8, 9:26.

5th. Those possessed are said *to know Christ; to be acquainted with the Son of God*, Luke 4:34, Mark 1:24. This could not be said of diseases.

6th. The early fathers of the church interpreted these passages in the same way. They derived their opinions probably from the apostles themselves, and their opinions are a fair interpretation of the apostles' sentiments.

7th. If it may be denied that Christ believed in such possessions, it does not appear why any other clear sentiment of his may not in the same way be disputed. There is, perhaps, no subject on which he expressed himself more clearly, or acted more uniformly, or which he left more clearly impressed on the minds of his disciples.

Nor is there any absurdity in the opinion that those persons were really under the influence of devils. For—

1st. It is no more absurd to suppose that an angel, or many angels, should have *fallen* and become wicked, than that so many men should.

2nd. It is no more absurd that Satan should have possession of the human faculties, or inflict diseases, than that *men* should do it—a thing which is done every day. What more frequent than for a wicked man to corrupt the morals of others, or by inducing them to become intemperate, to produce a state of body and mind quite as bad as to be possessed with the devil?

3rd. We still see a multitude of cases that no man can prove not to be produced by the presence of an evil spirit. Who would attempt to say that some evil being may not have much to do in the case of madmen?

4th. It afforded an opportunity for Christ to show his power over the enemies of himself and of man, and thus to evince himself qualified to meet every enemy of the race, and triumphantly to redeem his people. He came to destroy the power of Satan, Acts 26:18, Romans 16:20.

Those which were lunatick. This name is given to the disease from the Latin name of the *moon*, (Luna.) It has the same origin in the Greek. It was given because it was formerly imagined that it was affected by the increase or the decrease of the moon. The name is still retained, although it is not certain that the moon has any effect on the disease. On this point physicians are not determined, but no harm arises from the use of the name. It is mentioned only in this place, and in Matthew 17:15. It was probably the *falling sickness*, or the *epilepsy*, the same as the disease mentioned Mark 9:18-20; Luke 9:39,40.

And those that had the palsy. Many infirmities were included under the general name of palsy, in the New Testament.

1st. The paralytic shock, affecting the whole body.

2nd. The hemiplegy, affecting only one side of the body—the most frequent form of the disease.

3rd. The paraplegy, affecting all the system below the neck.

4th. The catalepsy. This is caused by a contraction of the muscles in the whole or a part of the body, and is very dangerous. The effects are very violent and fatal. For instance, if, when a person is struck, he happens to have his hand extended, he is unable to draw it back; if not extended, he is unable to stretch it out. It appears diminished in size, and dried up in appearance. Hence it was called the *withered* hand, Matthew 12:10-13.

5th. The cramp. This, in eastern countries, is a fearful malady, and by no means unfrequent. It originates from chills in the night. The limbs, when seized with it, remain unmovable, and the person afflicted with it resembles one undergoing a torture. This was probably the disease of the servant of the centurion, Matthew 8:6, Luke 7:2. Death follows from this disease in a few days.

And he healed them. This was done evidently by a miraculous power. A miracle is an effect produced by Divine power above, or opposed to, what are regular effects of the laws of nature. It is not a violation of the laws of nature, but is a suspension of their usual operation, for some important purpose, for instance, the regular effect of death is, that the body returns to corruption. This effect is produced by the appointed laws of nature; or, in other words, God usually produces this effect when he suspends that regular effect, and gives life to a dead body for some important purpose, it is a miracle. Such an effect is clearly the result of Divine power. No other being but God can do it. When, therefore, Christ and the apostles exerted this power, it was clear evidence that God *approved* of their doctrines; that he had commissioned them; and that they were authorized to declare his will. He would not give this attestation to a false doctrine. Most or all of these diseases were incurable. When Christ cured them *by a word*, it was the clearest of all proofs that he was sent from heaven. This is one of the strong arguments for Christianity.⁴⁹

Because many Jewish people lived in Syria, Matthew presumably intends Syrian Jews here (Matthew would have eagerly mentioned Gentiles had they come). The presence of multitudes seeking relief at hot springs (like Hammath-Tiberias) in Galilee testifies to the vast numbers who sought healing in the first century; teachers reputed as healers (usually Gentile magicians) also drew great crowds.

Although some contemporary medical writers (such as the second-century A.D. Greek physician Aretaeus, but unlike the fifth-century B.C. Greek Hippocrates) thought epilepsy was due to demonic activity, Matthew here distinguishes the two.⁵⁰

Demonized people. Greek *daimonizomenoi* is sometimes rendered “demoniacs” or “people possessed by demons.” As noted in 4:1N above, the Bible takes for granted the existence of a spirit-world. According to the New Testament, demons—also called

⁴⁹ Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament

⁵⁰ Bible Background Commentary

unclean or evil spirits, lying spirits, and angels of the devil—can affect people by causing physical illness, mental aberrations, emotional malaise and moral temptation.

“Demonized” means “affected by demons” in one or more of these ways. Actual “possession” or “ownership” of a human being by a demon is not taught in the Bible.⁵¹

Matthew 4:25

And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

Major Lessons

- John the Baptist: No one greater? (Mystery of Mt 11.)
- The “Lamb of God”? The Two Messiah view of the Rabbis.
- Temptations and their principal source; the ownership of the nation(s).
- The cost of discipleship: leaving as well as cleaving.

[From Decapolis] The Decapolis, the “Ten Cities,” was a Gentile area that included a large Jewish population. It was the name of a region of country in the bounds of the half tribe of Manasseh, mainly on the east of Jordan. It was so called because it included *ten cities*—the meaning of the word Decapolis in Greek. Geographers generally agree that Scythopolis was the chief of these cities and was the only one of them west of the Jordan; that Hippos, (Hippus,) Gedara, Dion, (or Dios,) Peleas, (or Pella,) Gerasa, (or Gergesa,) Philadelphia and Raphana, (or Raphanae,) were seven of the remaining nine, and the other two were either Kanatha and Capitolias, or Damascus and Otopos. These cities were inhabited chiefly by foreigners (Greeks) in the days of our Saviour, and not by Jews. Hence the keeping of swine by the Gergesenes, (Matthew 8:30-33,) which was forbidden by the Jewish law.

McGee: Decapolis was a district containing ten cities in the northeastern part of Galilee, east of the Jordan River. (I have had the privilege of visiting one of those cities.) Also, folk came up from Jerusalem and from Judea, the southernmost division of Palestine, and from beyond Jordan, which means a long way off. Jesus is ministering there in the north of Palestine.

It should be kept in mind as we consider the Gospel of Matthew that Matthew is making no attempt to give us a chronological record of the life of Christ. He is presenting Jesus in his Gospel as King, and he follows a pattern which is a movement in bringing the King and His claims to the nation Israel. This is important to observe. If we miss the movement in Matthew, we miss the purpose of this Gospel.⁵²

The devil

Hebrew: "haSatan" (HAH-say-TAHN) - *the adversary, opponent, rebel.*

⁵¹ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 4:24). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁵² McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Satan is the background source of all sin, evil and opposition to God. The Tenakh and "New Testament" take for granted a supernatural realm of good and evil, angels who serve God and those who serve Satan. This topic will be dealt with in our Revelation study.

References:

- Isaiah 14:11-15 is a taunt of the king of Babylon with a "hidden" reference to Satan
- Ezekiel 28:11-19
- Job 1, 2, 40, 41, 42:6 - *a created being opposed to God*
- Genesis 3 & Revelation 12:9