

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 12- Jesus' Preparation for Ministry through Temptation- Part 1

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Matthew 4:1-11

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

2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

7 Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

11 Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now this is one of the most fascinating Passages in the entire Bible. Here we read the Apostle Matthew's Account of Jesus' Temptation by satan himself. And this is an *historical* Account. In other words, this really happened. And it happened to Jesus. John Mark devoted two verses to it in his Gospel Record (**Mark 1:12&13**); Dr. Luke went into great detail about it (**Luke 4:1-13**); but the Apostle John doesn't mention this Account at all¹.

And this is an example of why Theologians call **Matthew, Mark, and Luke** the "*Synoptic Gospels*"- which comes from a Greek word (*synoptikos*) which has to do with "*being seen together*". So, these three Gospel Records usually give the *same* Account of Jesus' Life and Ministry- from three different angles- so we can get a full understanding of what actually happened. So, when you *combine* everything that the *Synoptic Gospels* say about a particular Event or Teaching in the earthly Life of Jesus- you will have a much better understanding of what was going on than if you only had one.

Now, evidently, Jesus conveyed this Account of His Temptation to His Apostles at some point after it happened- because at this point in Jesus' Life- He had NO disciples. It is also possible that Jesus revealed this Event directly to Matthew, and the Apostle Peter (Mark), and the Apostle Paul (Luke) at some point after He had already ascended into Heaven.² But either way- Matthew gives us this Account of Jesus' Temptation- not merely for information's sake- but to help us- in two main areas:

1. Our Belief and Trust in Jesus as being "*fully God and fully Man*"
2. Our own Faithfulness when we are tempted

You see, to be saved- in addition to believing that God raised Jesus from the Dead- we MUST also believe and confess that Jesus was God Almighty in human flesh (**Romans 10:9&10**). And it is also very important that we understand what the writer meant when he wrote this in **Hebrews 4:15**:

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Under the Old Covenant, the High Priests were chosen from among the people. And all the Priests, who operated in the First Covenant, came from the Tribe of Levi. And God did that, so the Priests could relate to the people and

¹ John was NOT disagreeing with the others about Jesus being tempted. John was mainly concerned about proving the Deity of Christ and his Gospel Record focused on that.

² The Apostle Peter commissioned John Mark to write the Gospel Record that bears his name; while the Apostle Paul commissioned Dr. Luke to write his.

sympathize with them- as the people lived their lives and faced various Temptations.

So, in the New Covenant, Jesus followed the “Pattern” that had already been established (**Hebrews 8:5&6**). So, the New Testament clearly and repeatedly tells us that Jesus was “*fully Man*”. And both Levi (Matthew) and Dr. Luke gave us genealogies to *prove* that from both His foster Father and from His Mother- Jesus was a Jew; He was from the Tribe Judah; and He was of the lineage of King David.

So, Jesus was chosen- IN THE SAME WAY as the High Priests of the First Covenant- “*from among the people.*” Why? The writer said, so He could:

... sympathize with our weaknesses ...

... and that is wonderful! As “*fully Man*”- Jesus understands our weaknesses. And that means that He can relate to us and comfort us when we are tempted.

But the New Testament doesn’t stop there. One of the reasons that the New Covenant is infinitely BETTER than the Old- is that our High Priest- Jesus, the Christ- is also “*fully God*”! And as God- Jesus was perfectly SINLESS! The writer of **Hebrews** said that Jesus was...

... One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

And that is one huge Distinction between Jesus and the High Priests of the Old Covenant. Because every Priest that ministered under the Covenant of bulls and goats, was himself, a guilty sinner- who had to offer Sacrifices for *himself*- FIRST- *before* he could offer for the people (**Hebrews 9:7**). While Jesus offered Himself- ONCE FOR ALL- as the FINAL Sacrifice!

Now as we examine this section of God’s Word, we need to focus on several Issues:

1. How Temptation works
2. The Distinction between Temptations and Trials or Tests
3. The absolute Sinlessness of Jesus
4. How Jesus’ Temptation in **Matthew 4** relates to us
5. How we may remain Faithful when we are tempted

... so, let’s look at these together.

1. How Temptation Works

The first thing out of the devil's mouth was a Statement- followed by three Challenges. And the Statement was:

If You are the Son of God...

... and then this Statement is followed by three separate Challenges:

1. Turn stones in bread
2. Throw Yourself down
3. Worship me

And the Statement is what sets up the three Challenges. "*IF You are the Son of God- you will do this or that.*" And what is *implied* here, of course, is that if Jesus *doesn't* take up the specific Challenges that satan has placed before Him- then He *isn't* the Son of God. So, the Goal of satan here is to *force* Jesus to "ascent" to his three Challenges in order to prove that He is, in fact, the Son of God.

Now what is fascinating is that the devil knows full well that Jesus IS the Son of God. And he knows that as much or more than anyone else on earth- because satan was with God in Heaven at some point after Creation. So, satan believes the Truth about Jesus. And yet he isn't saved and CAN'T ever be saved. And this illustrates the Reality that simply mentally agreeing with some facts about Jesus doesn't save anyone.

God MUST grant Repentance to the individual rebel; and He must sovereignly lift the veil that blinds us- or nobody will repent and trust in Jesus and in His finished Work. So, the Lost sinner MUST also "behold" or "see" the Glory of God in the Face (or in the Person) of Jesus Christ; and he MUST then love what he sees; and then he must begin to be changed into what he sees- or that individual will remain Lost and in his Sins (**2Corinthians 4:3-6**).

Now unlike lost Humanity- satan NEVER once doubted Who Jesus was. He didn't dispute His Deity; and He never doubted His Divine Authority. Jesus simply spoke and the devil and the demons instantly obeyed. So, in this scenario- satan is NOT disbelieving Who Jesus is. He is merely using the Reality about Who Jesus is- to get Jesus to sin against His Father.

So, the devil wants Jesus to totally forget everything that has happened to Him so far. So, he is, in essence, telling Jesus, "*Just forget everything that has already happened, that proves that You ARE the Son of God. Forget that You have been with God- forever (John 1:1). Forget that from Eternity Past- You and Your Father have dwelled together in perfect Love; and perfect Harmony; and perfect Unity (John 17:5). Forget the Plan that Your Father created- that includes You-*

to magnify the Glory of His Grace- by saving unworthy sinners by what God alone does for them (Ephesians 1:6). Forget the angelic Host with the shepherds that talked about You (Luke 2:14). Forget the Magi, who worshipped You (Matthew 2:11). Forget the angelic visitations to Your earthly father, Joseph (Matthew 1:20). Forget the star that led the Magi to Your earthly parent's house (Matthew 2:9). Forget Anna and Simeon, who equated You with the 'consolation of Israel' and the 'redemption of Jerusalem' (Luke 2:25-38). Forget that John the Baptist called You, 'The Lamb of God, Who takes away the Sin of the world.' (John 1:29&36). Forget the audible Voice out of Heaven- when Your Father publicly announced that You were His beloved Son (Matthew 3:17). And then forget that You have been perfectly led by God the Holy Spirit to fast 40 days and to go into the Wilderness- so that this encounter with satan will prepare You for Ministry."(Matthew 4:1)

Now that's a lot of forgetting. But that's the way satan (and those who are in league with satan) work in ALL Temptations. He makes a Statement that brings in Doubt and then issues Challenges that supposedly prove whether you're saved or not. But inherent in those Challenges- is that you MUST forget who you are in Christ; and you must forget ALL that God has already done *in* you; and *for* you; and *through* you; and *to* you.

So, satan desires to always be the one to set the Parameters around HOW the Conversation MUST take place. So, satan always seeks to establish the Premise around which the Discussion of your Salvation MUST take place. And that is why we must NEVER allow him to do that with us.

So, IF Jesus is the Son of God- then Jesus MUST do what satan says. And in our case, the devil says, "*IF you are saved- then you WILL do thus and so; or you will NOT do thus and so- and that is the ONLY way to prove Who You are!*" Well, no, it isn't.

So, the very first thing to remember about Temptation is this: Don't allow satan to set the Parameters around which the Conversation MUST take place. Or better yet- Don't engage satan in a Conversation to begin with!

But when you find yourself in a "*Time of Temptation*"- remember what God, the Holy Spirit led James to tell us:

James 1:13-16:

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.³

Now here in verse 13- James teaches that God CANNOT be tempted by Evil. Why? For two reasons:

1. God's Nature is Perfect
2. God has NO fallen Flesh

The Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that the one, true, and living God, Who is revealed in Nature; and on the pages of sacred Writ; has a "Nature" or an "Essence" as well as three distinct Persons. And the one single "Nature" or "Essence" or "Substance" of God- is *perfectly* Righteous; *perfectly* Holy; and *perfectly* Pure. There is NO fault or Weakness or Imperfection in God's Nature.

So, God is already EVERYTHING that is Perfect. Therefore, He has NO lack. He wants for NOTHING that is perfectly Good. Therefore, there is NOTHING within the single Nature of God that satan can capitalize on. Which means that it isn't possible that God can be Tempted with Evil.

But that also means that God never tempts anyone else either. And when we say this- we are very narrowly defining "tempts" here to being tempted to Sin against God. So, God never *tempts* anyone to do something that is contrary to God's Own Character or Nature. And that means that God NEVER *forces* anyone to Sin. People always sin because they *want to*- nobody *forces* them to sin. God never *forces* anyone to sin- but the devil doesn't either. So, people sin because they *want to* and that is *why* God can hold them accountable and judge them.

But it is very important to note that, while *our* Holiness or *our* Purity is defined by Scripture- God's is NOT. God's Sinlessness; God's Perfection is defined by His Own pristine Nature- which *supersedes* the Bible. So, the Standard of Perfection that God has; and that controls what God can and cannot do- is *Himself*.

So, for example, God is Omnipotent- meaning God is Almighty or Sovereign over all that He has made. Nothing in the created Universe operates in an *autonomous* way or a "*Self-ruled*" way. Everything operates in a *theonomous* way- or "*God-ruled*."

So, God controls ALL that is made. But God's Sovereignty does NOT mean that God can do ANYTHING. He can't. For example, in **Hebrews 6:18b**, the infallible Word of the living God says,

³ I have a very in depth Teaching about this Passage in the "*Journey through James*" series of Sermons that you may download and read for help with this Issue.

... it is impossible for God to lie ...

Now this does NOT say that God DOESN'T lie. It says God CANNOT lie. In other words, God doesn't possess the Power or the Ability to tell a Lie. So, even though God is Almighty; Omnipotent; and Sovereign- He CANNOT think or act in any way that is contrary to His Own sinless Character or Nature.

And the reason we say that God's Own personal Standard of Perfection supersedes the Bible- is because there are parts of God's Character and Nature that He did not choose to reveal to us. So, even though we may learn a lot about God by observing Nature and by reading and studying the Bible- we will NEVER learn EVERYTHING about God. So, to that extent- God remains a Mystery to us.

2. The Distinction Between Tests and Temptations

But while it is true that God doesn't tempt anyone to sin- God DOES "try" us; and He DOES "test" us. But isn't that the same thing as tempting us? No. But the reason "Temptation" is NOT like "Tests" or "Trials" is NOT what you may think. And this is very interesting.

The Greek word that was translated into English as "**Tempt**" or "**Tempted**" or "**Temptation**" (*peirazoo*; Strong's #3985) is a *neutral* word. So, it can be either a "*Temptation*" or a "*Testing*" - it could be either one! It could be a "*Testing for Good*"; or it could be a "*Temptation for Evil*".

Now when we see the word "Tempt" or "Temptation" or "Tempted" we always think of a bad thing. And to us it means: *to entice somebody to do Evil; to entice somebody to do Wrong; to seduce somebody to Sin*. But the original Greek word doesn't carry that connotation. The Greek word doesn't have to mean: *an enticement to Evil*. It can also mean a "Test" of a *positive* nature. So, this word can be either positive or negative.

So, the difference is NOT in the definition- it is in the way that the word is actually used. For example, from God's perspective- a *peirazoo* is ALWAYS a "Test" to prove something wonderful. But from the devil's perspective- that same word is ALWAYS a "Temptation" to bring about Evil. So, from God's view here in **Matthew 4**- *peirazoo* is a way to prove that the Son is Worthy. But from the devil's view- that same word is a way to get the Son to prove that He is Unworthy.

So, the various things that come our way to entice us- from the devil- are ALWAYS negative- to draw us into Sin. But God may *allow* them- as ways to prove us or test us.

Now the Bible talks about us being *tempted* by satan. But the Bible also says that God periodically *tests* us. Let me show you the difference by having you

look at one Book which presents both- **James**. In **James 1:2**- the Holy Word of God says,

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials

... and the Greek word that was translated here into English as “**trials**” is *peirasmos*- which is a derivative of *peirazoo*. Now read verse 3:

knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

... and the Greek word that was translated here into English as “testing: is *peirasmos*- the very SAME word! Now look at **James 1:13**:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

... and the Greek word that was translated here into English as “**tempted**” is *peiraz*- which is a derivative of the very SAME word!

So, the ONLY difference is in how this word is used and NOT in the definition of the word itself. So, God will absolutely “test” somebody to prove Righteousness- but He will NEVER entice or “tempt” someone to Sin. Satan, on the other hand, will ALWAYS entice or “tempt” somebody to sin- but he will NEVER “prove” or “test” someone in Righteousness.

So, the things that come into our lives from Satan's viewpoint- are enticements to Evil; but from God's perspective- they are ways to prove our Faithfulness or our Righteousness.

So, “Temptation” is ALWAYS about the devil capitalizing on a Lust- THAT ALREADY RESIDES IN OUR FLESH- by giving us an opportunity to sin and dishonor God. “Tests” and “Trials”, however, are designed by God to reveal Weaknesses in our Faith; and in our Lives along with aspects about the Bible that we don’t understand or see.

So, Temptations are about satan giving us an opportunity to do something that our Flesh *already* wants to do anyway. And this is ALWAYS to our Detriment. Tests and Trials, however, are about God revealing hidden Weaknesses in our Faith and bringing those Weaknesses to the forefront- so we can see them and then begin to work to overcome them.

Now it is common to hear people say, “*Well God tested you so He could see if you really believed.*”. But actually, that isn’t true. You see, God is “*Omniscient*”- so He already knows everything about everything. And so, nothing is hidden from God. He knows more about you than you or anyone else knows. So, God already

knows whether you believe or not. You're the one who doesn't know. So, God tested you- so that YOU could see whether you actually believe or not. But God didn't do this to damn you or ever to shame you. He tested you and He tried you- so you could see what you need help with.

It is also common to hear people say that they're in a "*Trial of their Finances*" or a "*Trial with their Health*" or that God is "*Testing them with their Children*" and so forth. But the Bible teaches that we only have ONE Trial or Test:

The Proof of your Faith (1Peter 1:7)

... because all of those other things fall underneath our ability (or disability) to Believe; and Trust; and Hope in God.

3. The Absolute Sinlessness of Jesus

Now even though everything I just told you is true- what I just told you has NOTHING to do with what is happening with Jesus here in **Matthew 4**. Remember, James said that the reason *we* sin is because...

... each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

... and that is true with all of us- because *our* Flesh is "fallen".

So, we have to understand that our fallen Flesh is *cursed* by God. And in the Flesh of all Humanity there lies various Lusts. And that is why we all will die- *regardless* of how much we love God; or how much we understand the Bible; or how much we are doing for God. It is also why the body we have now- can't go into Heaven and we have to get a glorified Body in the Resurrection.

But we need to understand that what many teach about physical Healing in the Full Gospel; or Health, Wealth; and Prosperity Movement is wrong. The Salvation of our souls did NOT rescue our fleshly bodies from the Curse that God placed on our first earthly Father (Adam) after he sinned in the Garden. And we have received that same Curse because of Original Sin that came to us from the seed of our earthly fathers.

Now in His Mercy, God may periodically *interrupt* the normal way in which that Curse operates- so He may heal our bodies when we are sick. But that physical Healing is NEVER permanent. We WILL get sick again. And unless Jesus comes back during our Lifetime- we WILL all die.

And that isn't because of a lack of Faith as some teach. Getting sick and dying; or getting older and having areas of our physical body to break or not work properly- has infinitely MORE to do with the Divine Curse that God has placed on all Flesh than it does with a lack of Faith.

But what we need to understand is that the Lusts that our cursed Flesh has- are not all *sexual* Lusts. Our Flesh may lust after Money; or the Applause of other people. Our Flesh may lust to lean to our own natural understanding; or we may lust with Pride and Arrogance.

But satan is NOT Omniscient- so he doesn't know everything. He makes mistakes and he gets frustrated. But the devil has been on earth for at least 6,000 years. And so, he has learned that the Flesh of Men are troubled by certain Lusts while he knows that certain Lusts are in the Flesh of most Women. So, when satan presents an opportunity for us to act on the Lusts of our Flesh that are already inherent within us- he has no idea whether it will work or not. He has to observe our behavior to know if we are actually being tempted because satan CANNOT read our minds.

But once again- that Truth does NOT apply to Jesus because Jesus' Father was God. So, Jesus was born WITHOUT Original Sin attached to Him. And that means that the human Flesh of Jesus was NOT cursed by God and therefore, did NOT contain *any* inherent Lusts. So, with Jesus, there are no internal Lusts that satan can capitalize on. Therefore, Jesus' "Time of Temptation" here in **Matthew 4** was completely *unique* to Him. None of us are tempted the way Jesus was tempted in this Passage.

Now Jesus had been tempted as all people are tempted throughout the thirty years of His Life up until this point. So, as fully Man- Jesus was tempted as an infant; He was tempted as a small child; He was tempted as an older child; He was tempted as a teenager; and as a young adult; and Jesus was tempted as an adult- in the very SAME way that everybody else is tempted.

Only Jesus never sinned! Ever. He *never* even had a bad attitude- not even for a single second! He never yielded a single moment of His Life to Jealousy; Envy; Vengeance; or Bitterness. The ENTIRE time Jesus walked on this earth- He loved His Father with ALL His heart, soul, mind, and strength. And every second He was here- Jesus loved His neighbor as Himself.

But here at the launching point of His Ministry- there is a concerted Work of Temptation- not just by the fallen sinful System that was all around Him- but by the devil himself. And this concerted Effort intended to destroy Him as Messiah before He ever got started.

Yet from God's perspective- this same intense series of Temptations were gigantic Tests that were designed to Prove beyond any Doubt that Jesus was, in fact, the long-awaited Messiah and the ONLY Savior of the world. And that is

true- because satan simply CANNOT succeed in any way in drawing Jesus into Sin.

So, Messiah's Credentials then MUST include His ability to demonstrate Power over satan and over all Temptation. You see, the Jews knew that satan had conquered the sinless Adam- because Adam sinned. Now we don't understand *why* Adam sinned- because Adam had no fallen Flesh or Original Sin in himself until AFTER he sinned. So, the Bible is silent on *why* Adam Sinned. Why does a man, who was born without Original Sin, and who has NO fallen flesh, desire to sin? We don't know why- all we know is that he did. So, the desire of Adam to sin is a Mystery to us that will remain so, until we can ask Jesus.

But now the Question was: "*Would satan conquer the sinless Jesus? Would Jesus sin or would He prove that He was the 2nd Adam?*" The Jews also knew that Adam lived in a perfect Environment that had never experienced Sin. And here we find Jesus in the most *imperfect* of all Environments- one that had experienced the *worst* of all Sins. So, if Adam was in "*Eden*", then Jesus is in "*anti-Eden*". Now please read **Matthew 4:2** again with me:

And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

Now be careful that you don't put your own thoughts into this verse. This does NOT say that Jesus fasted 40 days. This says that at the Time that satan came to Him to tempt Him- Jesus had *already* fasted 40 days and 40 nights. But it doesn't say that Jesus broke his Fast after 40 days. So, as far as Jesus knew- God simply wanted Him to fast and there wasn't a time limit on that Fast.

Now I have an in depth Teaching on Fasting that you might want to get to help you as you meditate on this Passage- so, I don't want to get into the Subject of Fasting too much here except to say that Fasting is where you are either so hungry for God that your eating appears to be in the way; or the Trial you are in is so hard and heavy- that you sense a Need for more Help.

God knows that we have to eat to live- so a Fast for ANY length honors God. The length of a Fast should NEVER be used by anyone to prove that he is better than others. But even though many have made Fasting a mockery- *especially* around Lent- Fasting is a marvelous "*Means of Grace*" that EVERY believer should avail himself of. Fasting is NOT weird or goofy. It is as normal as Prayer and as natural to the believer as reading the Bible. And yet, it is one of the *least* used Means of Grace- and that is a shame.

Here Jesus has not eaten food for 40 days. And Levi tells us that Jesus is hungry. So, Jesus has gone 40 days and 40 nights and has not eaten any food. And the devil comes to Him- *supposing* that His physical Weakness has made Jesus more susceptible to Temptation. So, how does satan tempt Jesus?

And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God ...

So, the devil, the tempter, puts forth the Statement, “**IF you are the Son of God...**” and then he places the first of his *manufactured* Challenges before the Lord...

... command that these stones become bread."

Now remember, Jesus hasn't eaten bread for 40 days and His physical body is now literally dying for lack of nourishment. And satan wants Jesus to turn the stones on the ground into loaves of bread. In other words, satan is tempting Jesus to eat.

Okay, but wait a minute! Is eating a Sin? Is it wrong to eat? Don't we NEED to eat in order to live? Didn't God create food? Does God want Jesus to just die? According to what I have read- Jesus is about 50 days away from Death at this point. So, two Questions:

1. Why is it a Temptation for Jesus to eat?
2. How does this Temptation relate to us?

First of all- this would NEVER be a Temptation to any of us- because we have NO Ability to turn rocks into bread. But Jesus did. So, we can learn something here. We can't be tempted unless we are actually able to do what satan wants. Okay. But *why* is Jesus eating- a sinful Temptation?

Because God told Jesus to fast. And so, it is God's Will for Jesus to stop eating. And, evidently, God has NOT given Jesus a timeline for how long He wants Jesus to fast. And Jesus loves His Father- perfectly. So, Jesus is humbly and joyfully obeying the Will of His Father to *refrain* from eating. And it is up to God how long this will be.

Now look at HOW the devil tempted Jesus to Sin at the end of verse 3:

... command that these stones become bread.

In other words, the devil is telling Jesus, “*Prove that You are the Son of God and use Your sovereign Power of Miracles and Creation to go against the Father's Will and change the DNA structure of these rocks- so they can be instantly turned into loaves of bread- so You can eat and not die. I mean, after all, Jesus, God just spoke to You out of Heaven at Your Baptism and said that You were His beloved*

Son. So, now God wants you to starve to death? How is that a Good thing? How is that Love?

Now on the surface, eating actually seems like a pretty good idea. Because if Jesus *continues* to fast- He will die. And how could Jesus dying by Starvation be a good thing? How would that honor God? And surely an open demonstration of His Power to perform Miracles and to turn rocks into bread- would be so amazing that other people might even be brought into God's Kingdom if Jesus were to do what He is certainly able to do. But there are two things at stake here:

1. The Will of God
2. Jesus perfect Submission to God's Will

... and those two things *supersede* everything else.

God had already told Jesus to stop eating. And He hasn't told Him to break His Fast- yet. So, the Will of God is for Jesus to fast. And if Jesus is the Son of God- He will ONLY do what is God's Will. So, what is it that fuels Jesus' determination to obey- even to the point of Death- when He has the Power to stop it? Jesus loves His Father perfectly. So, this Test (from God's Perspective) and this Temptation (from satan's perspective) is merely an Opportunity for Jesus to prove His perfect Love for His Father through perfect Obedience to the Father's Will.

So, what satan is doing here is to present to Jesus with an Opportunity for Him to publicly demonstrate His Power and Authority as God- OUTSIDE THE FATHER's WILL. Satan wants Jesus to do what only God can do- right in front of others- so they can see it! And there is only one thing standing in the way: Jesus' perfect Love of both His Father and His Father's Will.

It is NOT God's Will for Jesus to demonstrate His Power as God at this time. It is time for Jesus to seek and to save that which is Lost. It is time for Jesus to teach and preach that the Kingdom of God is at hand. It is time for Jesus to gather His people and to choose the Apostles. And it is time for Jesus to die.

But it is NOT God's Will for Jesus to operate *independently* of His Father or the Will of His Father. To do so, would be for the Plan of God in Salvation to be destroyed. Because for Jesus to be the spotless Lamb- that takes away the Sins of the world- Jesus MUST be perfectly *obedient* to the Father's Will; *perfectly* led by God the Holy Spirit; and to *perfectly* preach and teach ONLY what the Father tells Him to.

So, Jesus would rather starve to death than to operate independently of God and His Will. So, Jesus responds to this Test and Temptation by quoting the written Word of God from **Deuteronomy 8:3** to the devil:

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

In other words, it is *better* to obey God's Word than to live. It is *better* to be submissive to the Word of the living God than for everybody to see Jesus demonstrating Divine Power over rocks. So, what was *infinitely* more important to Jesus than living- was to joyfully and humbly obey His Father. So, Jesus is resigned to trust that God will tell Him when to eat; and so, He doesn't need to act independent of His Father. Then Matthew tells us that the devil tried another tact:

**5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,
6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"**

So, if trusting God to provide was the Answer to the *first* Temptation- then the devil uses that same Logic here against Jesus in the 2nd one. "*Just throw Yourself off the Pinnacle and God will catch You. You need to just trust God, Jesus.*"

Now the first thing we should notice here is that the devil actually had the Power and Ability to take Jesus up in the air to the top of the Pinnacle. But secondly, there was a reason satan chose the Pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem for this 2nd Temptation.

The Temple bordered the Valley of Kidron. So, from the top of the Pinnacle to the bottom of the Valley- was about 450 feet. And this is where the Lord's half-brother, James, the first Pastor of the Church at Jerusalem, and the writer of the Epistle that bears his name, was thrown off this very spot and was martyred.

Now keep in mind that between the time that Malachi wrote his Book and Matthew was writing his- was a span of time of about 400 years. And during those 4 Centuries- the Heaven was brass. There was no Voice of God; no Prophet; no Miracle; no Sign; no Angel; no Wonder. Nothing but 400 years of deafening Silence. And into this vacuum came many false Messiahs. Several men rose up and laid claim to be the long-awaited Messiah. And part of what they all did was to announce a public Miracle that they would perform that would give them the Divine Credibility that they needed so that people would follow them. And several

of them announced that they would jump off the Pinnacle of the Temple- Herod's Temple- and that God would catch them.

Well God didn't catch them. And they all died when their bodies hit the ground 450 feet below the Pinnacle. Now their jump was just fine- it was the landing that didn't work out for them. So, one of the reasons satan wanted Jesus to emulate those false Messiahs- was so when God didn't catch Jesus and He hit the ground and died- Jesus would always be named along with all the other false Messiahs.

So, the devil is using the Logic of trusting God that Jesus used in the 1st Temptation. So, this tells us that the devil is a quick learner. He always adjusts his tactics to fit in with the current situation.

So, what's the Issue here in this 2nd Temptation? The Issue here is trying to *force* God's Hand. In other words, if God told Jesus to jump off the Pinnacle- then God *would* have caught Him. No problem. God will do similar things with Jesus in the near future. For example, in **Luke 4**- Jesus went to the Synagogue in His Hometown. So, these are the people that Jesus grew up with. And Jesus reads 1-1/2 verses in **Isaiah** and says this Passage is fulfilled in Him- and these people try to throw Jesus off of a cliff and kill Him! And Dr. Luke wrote this in **Luke 4:30**:

But passing through their midst, He went His way.

So, this angry mob grabbed Jesus and were pushing Him toward the cliff- to throw Him over and yet the Power of God allowed Jesus to simply walk right through them! So, God took care of Jesus here by a supernatural Miracle because Jesus was in God's Will by going there to Teach and it wasn't Time for Him to die. But if Jesus were to take the bait of satan and try to *force* God's hand by jumping off the Pinnacle- when God had not told Him to do that- He would be on His own.

So, the difference is NOT whether God was able to rescue Jesus- because manifestly He was. The Issue was that God will only do that- as long as Jesus is obeying God's Will. And that is *why* Jesus replied to satan:

Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

So, once again Jesus proves that obeying the Will of God- *joyfully and humbly*- even to the point of Death in this Life- is much BETTER than performing Miracles or being rescued by a Miracle!
And Lord willing- I'll finish this next week.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.