

Matthew 4

Matt 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit...to be tempted of the devil

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies this verse, explaining that the Lord did not go into the wilderness in order to be tempted, but in order 'to be with God.' All we know of this story is the Temptation of Jesus. Yet, the most important elements of Jesus 40-day fast occurred prior to Christ's victory over the tempter. Undoubtedly, His communion with the Father was so sacred that the details could not be included in the record.

Bruce R. McConkie

"For forty days Jesus pondered upon the things of the Spirit, poured out his soul to his Father in prayer, sought diligently to receive revelations and see visions, was ministered to by angels, and was enwrapt in the visions of eternity-during all of which time he was not subject to temptation. We may also suppose that during this period he was 'with God' in the literal sense of the word, and that the Father visited him." (*The Mortal Messiah*, 1: 410.)

David O. McKay

"Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord. Jesus set the example for us. As soon as he was baptized...Jesus repaired to what is now known as the mount of temptation. I like to think of it as the mount of meditation where, during the forty days of fasting, he communed with himself and his Father, and contemplated upon the responsibility of his great mission." (*Conference Report*, April 1946, p. 113.)

Matt 4:2 he was afterward an hungred

Howard W. Hunter

"*Satan tempts us when we are weak and vulnerable.* When Jesus had completed the fast of forty days and had communed with God, he was, in this hungry and physically weakened state, left to be tempted of the devil [see Matt. 4:3-10]. That, too, was to be part of his preparation. Such a time is always the tempter's moment-when we are emotionally or physically spent, when we are weary, vulnerable, and least prepared to resist the

insidious suggestions he makes. This was an hour of danger-the kind of moment in which many men fall and succumb to the subtle allurements of the devil." (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, p. 31)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Unsurprisingly, Satan appeared at this time of maximum importance for what he hoped would also be a time of maximum vulnerability: 'Lo, he [the Lord] shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer.' (Mosiah 3:7)

"Perhaps this period of temptation was the most difficult of all for the Savior-except for those later hours in Gethsemane and on Calvary. The dawning of the enormity of what He had yet to do; the weight and fate of so many souls resting upon Him; the realization that He, though innocent, must, in achieving the Atonement, experience the 'fierceness' of the justice of God; and the reality that He could actually choose-or refuse-to go through with it all: No one has ever faced anything like that! Yet Jesus was not exempted from the challenge of temptations common to mankind.

As **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** has written: 'Jesus was tempted-if we may so say-to fulfill all righteousness. It was part of the eternal plan. It gave him the experiences he needed to work out his own salvation, and it prepared him to sit in judgment upon his erring brethren, who, in a lesser degree, are tried and tested as he was.' (*The Mortal Messiah*, 1:416.)

"Total obedience and submissiveness would be required." (*Even As I Am*, p. 70.)

Matt 4:3 If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread

James E. Talmage

"Satan had chosen the most propitious time for his evil purpose. What will mortals not do, to what lengths have men not gone, to assuage the pangs of hunger? Esau bartered his birthright for a meal. Men have fought like brutes for food. Women have slain and eaten their own babes rather than endure the gnawing pangs of starvation. All this Satan knew when he came to the Christ in the hour of extreme physical need, and said unto Him: 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.'" (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 121)

Bruce R. McConkie

"Lucifer had made the providing of food for Jesus' hungry body a test of his divinity. 'If thou be the Son of God,' do this thing. It was as though he had said: 'Cut off your arm and restore it and then I will believe you are the Son of God and have the power you seem to think you have.' Of course he could turn stones into bread; in less than two months he would turn water into wine in Cana; and not long thereafter, on two separate occasions, he would multiply loaves and fishes so that thousands could eat...But here Lucifer was challenging him to glory in his divinity and to prostitute his powers. He was demanding that he prove something that needed no proof." (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 1: 412.)

James E. Talmage

"Moreover, the superior power that Jesus possessed had not been given to Him for personal gratification, but for service to others. He was to experience all the trials of mortality; another man, as hungry as He, could not provide for himself by a miracle; and though by a miracle such a one might be fed, the miraculous supply would have to be given, not provided by himself." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 121-2)

Matt 4:4 Man shall not live by bread alone

Bruce R. McConkie

"Of all the inspired words ever recorded by the prophets who preceded him, these few constituted the perfect rebuke to the rebel Lucifer. They are taken from the very sentence in which Moses reminded Israel of the bread from heaven, as it were, with which they had been fed for forty years... (see Deut. 8:2-3.)

"That is, even as Israel relied upon Jehovah for their daily bread, lest they die physically, so they must rely upon him for the word of God, which is spiritual bread, lest they die spiritually. Neither temporal nor spiritual bread, standing alone, will suffice; man must eat of both to live; and in the eternal sense, the word of God, which is the bread from heaven in the full sense, is the more important. Those who make the search for earthly bread their chief concern lose sight of eternal values, fail to feed their spirits, die spiritually, and lose their souls." (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 1: 413.)

Matt 4:4 but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God

"Every word. Not every other word, not those words that are most acceptable and pleasing, not those words that support my own peculiar views. Every word. Members of the Church would seldom become embroiled in doctrinal disputes, controversial dialogues, or gospel hobbies if they truly sought to live by every word that has come from the Lord, the scriptures, and the servants of God. To live by every word of God also implies the need to read and study widely, to be seeking for at least as much breadth in our gospel scholarship as we have depth, to seek to have the big picture. It has been wisely said that the greatest commentary on the scriptures is the scriptures themselves." (*Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series*, p. 387.)

Matt 4:6 If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down

Howard W. Hunter

"There is, of course, running through all of these temptations, Satan's insidious suggestion that Jesus was not the Son of God, the doubt implied in the tempter's repeated use of the word *if*. 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' (Matt. 4:3.) 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.' (Matt. 4:6.) These, of course, foreshadowed that final, desperate temptation which would come three years later: 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' (Matt. 27:40.) But Jesus patiently withstood that ploy also, knowing that in due time every knee would bow and every tongue confess." (*That We Might Have Joy*, p. 35)

Matt 4:6 cast thy self down, for it is written

In Christ's first rebuke of Satan, He had quoted scripture and demonstrated His intent to be obedient to the Father. In response, Satan immediately shifts tactics by quoting scripture and asking for a demonstration of the Father's protective intervention. Note how flexible are the tempter's tactics. He had shifted his focus from the physical to the spiritual as fast as the Savior had rebuked him. The perniciousness of this temptation was that "Satan tempted Jesus to tempt the Father." (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 123)

However, his use of scripture (Ps 91:11-12) should not surprise us. Satan is the master scriptorian, capable of manipulating the word of God for almost any wicked purpose. Thus, even Satan's temptations can come to us "mingled with scripture."

David O. McKay

"Satan then tried Him in another way. He dared him-an appeal to His pride, to His vanity, quoted scripture to support his temptation, for remember the devil can find scripture for his purpose, and 'an evil soul producing holy witnesses is like a villain with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart.'" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1999, p. 58 - 59)

Matt 4:6 he shall give his angels charge concerning thee

John Taylor

"The angels are our watchmen, for Satan said to Jesus: '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.' (Matthew 4:6.) It would seem from a careful perusal of the scriptures, that the angels, while God has saints upon the earth, stay in this lower world to ward off evil: for the prophet Isaiah has left this testimony on the subject: (see Isaiah 63:7-9.)

"...The action of the angels, or messengers of God, upon our minds, so that the heart can conceive things past, present, and to come, and revelations from the eternal world, is, among a majority of mankind, a greater mystery than all the secrets of philosophy, literature, superstition, and bigotry, put together. Though some men try to deny it, and some try to explain away the meaning, still there is so much testimony in the Bible, and among a respectable portion of the world, that one might as well undertake to throw the water out of this world into the moon with a teaspoon, as to do away with the supervision of angels upon the human mind." (*The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, edited by G. Homer Durham, p. 31.)

Matt 4:8 the devil taketh him up

The reader should take note that Joseph Smith Translation corrects the wording of verses 5 and 8 to reflect the idea that Jesus wasn't taken anywhere by the devil. Though his intent was evil, the tempter was following Christ-not the other way around.

Matt 4:9 All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me

James E. Talmage

"We need not concern ourselves with conjecture as to whether Satan could have made good his promise in the event of Christ's doing him homage;

certain it is Christ could have reached out, and have gathered to Himself the wealth and glory of the world had He willed so to do, and thereby have failed in His Messianic mission. This fact Satan knew full well. Many men have sold themselves to the devil for a kingdom and for less, aye, even for a few paltry pence." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 124)

Howard W. Hunter

"In speaking of the three temptations that came to Jesus, **Elder David O. McKay** made this statement concerning them: 'Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted, ever so little maybe, comes to us as (1) a temptation of the appetite; (2) a yielding to the pride and fashion and vanity of those alienated from the things of God; or (3) a gratifying of the passion, or a desire for the riches of the world, or power among men.'" (*That We Might Have Joy*, p. 36)

Matt 4:1-11 Lessons from the Temptation

Christ's manner of dealing with Satan is instructive on many levels. First, though His hand was weak with hunger, the Master never let go of the iron rod. On all three counts, Jesus' rebuttal came from the scriptures. As the supreme Exemplar, He was fighting His battle with the two-edged sword of the word of God. Though his faculties may have been dimmed by a 40-day fast, still the word of God was sharp, 'to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow' (DC 6:2). Thus, even amidst personal weakness, the scriptures can supply the clarity of thought and strength to repel the wicked one even when our individual strength slackens.

Neal A. Maxwell

"The Lord has declared not only of this first temptation, but of all His genuine and varied temptations, that He 'gave no heed unto them.' (DC 20:22) Yet He was tempted, not representatively, but 'in all points.' (Heb 4:15) Once put, however, Jesus dismissed each of these summarily. He did not temporize with temptations. He 'yielded not.' And neither should we.

"Brooding over temptations can produce self-pity and a false sense of nobility. Prolonged consideration of a temptation only increases the risks-but it does not increase our options: the two options and the consequences remain the same regardless of our dallying.

"Moreover, protracted consideration of a temptation does not increase the justification to succumb-only our rationalization...Lucifer is best dispatched at the doorstep-not after he's been invited in and has unpacked his things." (*Even As I Am*, p. 73-4.)

Neal A. Maxwell

"What further lessons emerge for us from the temptations of Jesus?

"Just as personal goodness in mortality consists of accumulating service rather than a single act, so temptation is not a one-time thing either. The points of our personal vulnerability, as Satan cunningly observes them, will be exploited. Lucifer will quote scripture if it helps, or cite supposed opportunities for us to do good. He will offer chances for self-indulgence and even provide the preparatory self-pity-whatever might induce rationalization on our part.

"Therefore, our challenge is to do as Jesus did-first, to resist temptation by giving it 'no heed.'

"Our doubts will also be used against us. Equivalent *ifs* will be flung at us, like darts designed to inflict pain. Circumstances may be used to cause us to call into question our true identity and our past spiritual knowledge. In fact, is not apostasy a denial of that which was once genuinely known but which now comes to be doubted, discounted, and discarded? Neglected and un nourished, the tree of testimony is, alas, plucked up and cast out. But the tree was there, a fact to which its dried branches and roots are stark witness.

"Power and authority and position, as Jesus taught and showed us, are not to be misused by us for personal gain or self-gratification. Almost all-not just a few-succumb to this particular temptation. Jesus was the enormous exception. Gloriously, Jesus did not succumb." (*Even As I Am*, p. 76)

Howard W. Hunter

"The question for us now is, Will we succeed? Will we resist? Will we wear the victor's crown? Satan may have lost Jesus, but he does not believe he has lost us. He continues to tempt, taunt, and plead for our loyalty. We should take strength for this battle from the fact that Christ was victorious not as a God but as a man.

"It is important to remember that Jesus was capable of sinning, that he could have succumbed, that the plan of life and salvation could have been foiled, but that he remained true. Had there been no possibility of his yielding to the enticement of Satan, there would have been no real test, no genuine victory in the result. If he had been stripped of the faculty to sin, he would have been stripped of his very agency. It was he who had come to safeguard and ensure the agency of man. He had to retain the capacity and ability to sin had he willed so to do. As Paul wrote, 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered' (Heb. 5:8); and he 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin' (Heb. 4:15). He was perfect and sinless, not because he had to be, but because he clearly and determinedly wanted to be. As the Doctrine and Covenants records, 'He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.' (D&C 20:22.)

"What about us? We live in a world of temptation-temptation that seems more real and oppressively rampant than any since the days of Noah. Are we remaining faithful in such a world? Every individual in the Church should ask, 'Am I living so that I am keeping unspotted from the evils of the world?'" (*That We Might Have Joy*, p. 35-6)

David O. McKay

"Your weakest point will be the point at which the Devil tries to tempt you, will try to win you...Resist him and you will gain in strength. He will tempt you in another point. Resist him and he becomes weaker and you become stronger, until you can say, no matter what your surroundings may be, 'Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' (Luke 4:8.)" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1959, p. 88.)

Matt 4:13 he came and dwelt in Capernaum...in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim

Matthew perceptively finds an Old Testament scripture for every place which Christ lived. From Bethlehem (Matt 2:6), out of Egypt (Matt 2:15), to Nazareth (Matt 2:23), and now in a city called Capernaum. In Isaiah's prophecies, Matthew recognized that Christ's Galilean ministry fulfilled the promise of a light which would shine in the darkness of Zebulon and Naphtali. These two poorly-known names are the names of the two tribes of Israel which settled the land of Galilee after the Israelites wandered in Sinai. (see map 5, 1981 edition; map 3 in the later editions Map Guide; The Division of the 12 Tribes)

THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

Mediterranean Sea



Matt 4:19 Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men

Henry B. Eyring

"[Speaking to all of the Lord's servants]...Now, your responsibility to touch lives might seem overwhelming. You can take heart that you were called by the Savior. You have the same promise he gave those he called at the beginning of his earthly ministry. He called first humble men, uneducated, with less schooling and less gospel knowledge than the most recently ordained of you may have. But consider what he said, and know that it applies to you: '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. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.' (Matthew 4:18-20.)

"He will make you a fisher of men, however inadequate you may feel now. It won't be done by a mysterious process. It will be the natural result of your choosing to follow him. Just think about what you must do to be a fisher of men, to touch lives with faith for him. You will need to love the people you serve. You will need to be humble and full of hope. You will need to have the Holy Ghost as your companion to know when to speak and what to say and how to testify.

"But all of that will come naturally, in time, from the covenants you make and keep as you follow him. (See Moroni 8:25-26.) And in the process you will experience a mighty change of heart. You may not have seen that mighty change in yourself yet. But it will come as you continue to follow him. You can trust that he will qualify you as his servant, to assist him in touching lives with faith to bring to pass the eternal life of man. And you will find satisfaction in that service beyond your fondest dreams. " (*To Draw Closer to God: A Collection of Discourses*, p. 191.)

Bruce R. McConkie

"When those whom God hath chosen to be 'fishers of men' (Matt. 4:19; Jer. 16:16) go forth preaching the gospel, they catch men of all sorts in the gospel net. Rich and poor, bond and free, Jew and Gentile, learned and ignorant, sincere and hypocritical, stable and wavering-men of all races, cultures, and backgrounds accept the gospel and seek its blessings. But all who are caught in the gospel net are not saved in the celestial kingdom; church membership alone gives no unconditional assurance of eternal life.

(2 Ne. 31:16-21.) Rather, there will be a day of judgment, a day of sorting and dividing, a day when the wicked shall be cast out of the Church, 'out into the world to be burned.' For those then living the Second Coming will be an initial day of burning, sorting, and judgment (Matt. 25:31-46; D. & C. 63:54); for all men of all ages the ultimate day of sorting and dividing will occur, after all men have been raised from the dead, at the final great day of judgment. (2 Ne. 9:15-16.)

"**Joseph Smith**, in applying this parable to latter-day conditions, wrote: 'Behold the seed of Joseph, spreading forth the gospel net upon the face of the earth, gathering of every kind, that the good may be saved in vessels prepared for that purpose, and the angels will take care of the bad. So shall it be at the end of the world-the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.' (*Teachings*, p. 102.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:302)

Matt 4:20 they straightway left their nets, and followed him

Marvin J. Ashton

"*Straightway* is a power word. *Straightway* is an action word. It means immediately, without delay or hesitation. It means at once. Also, it is associated with having no curve or turn-a straight course, track, or path. *Procrastination* would be the very opposite of *straightway*....My remarks today are going to be centered around this key word, *straightway*. 'And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.' How descriptive, how powerful, how rewarding when properly applied in human conduct.

"We invite all to serve the Savior and walk in His paths straightway. There is an urgency for all of us who have this knowledge of His divinity to act upon it without hesitation or delay. The time is now.

"Joshua reminds us of the importance of making decisions promptly: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' (Joshua 24:15.) Not tomorrow, not when we get ready, not when it is convenient-but 'this day,' straightway, choose whom you will serve. He who invites us to follow will always be out in front of us with His Spirit and influence setting the pace. He has charted and marked the course, opened the gates, and shown the way. He has invited us to

come unto Him, and the best time to enjoy His companionship is straightway." (*Be of Good Cheer*, p. 56.)

Matt 4:24 those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick

Many faithless scholars have explained away the miracles of Christ. One common notion is to deny the possibility that one could be possessed with a devil. Something so supernatural seems absurd to the super-scientist. Rather, they argue that those 'possessed with devils' were, in reality, afflicted with psychological or neurological disorders such as epilepsy. The implication is that the people of Christ's time were not sophisticated enough to understand psychological disorders-that they dismissed them all as demonic possessions. However, Matthew here demonstrates an understanding of the difference, referencing both those possessed by devils and those afflicted with disorders of the mind, i.e., 'lunatick.' Matthew further demonstrates that Christ's power healed all afflictions, whether of body, mind, or spirit.

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