

Feb 3, 2008 (LS)

**JESUS' TEMPTATIONS AND OURS:  
PART 1: TURNING STONES TO BREAD  
MATTHEW 4.1-11**

Matthew is, by content and form, telling us that Jesus is the fulfillment, the culmination, of all of God's promises.

Temptation allusions: the wilderness wandering of Israel is in the foreground of all the allusions. More specifically, Moses' recounting of these wanderings as found in Deuteronomy is in view. Jesus' quotes: 8.3; 6.16; 6.13/10.20 respectively.

Inasmuch as Jesus is the Son of God and fulfills everything that comes with that title from the former Scriptures, these temptations relate to all of the sons of God in the Hebrew Scriptures.

One more allusion: Adam & Eve and the Garden.

**A JESUS IS LED INTO THE WILDERNESS TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL (1)**

**Led up by the Spirit:** How is it that the Spirit of God leads Jesus up into the wilderness to be tempted or tested by the devil? How can that be right? Does God "tempt" us?

"Tempt" is also "test." God leads us into tests (e.g., Job) in order to make us better (e.g., like a father disciplines his son; cf. Dt 8). The Devil uses the test to *tempt* us to rebel against God. Same package with different sources and intentions.

Just as Israel was led up after crossing the Red Sea into the wilderness for a time of testing, so God's new Israel, the Son, Jesus, is being led up by the Spirit after his baptism into the wilderness to be tested.

**The wilderness:** Wilderness = the way the world is and where humanity is *after* Adam's sin. Jesus doesn't start where Adam started but where the effects of sin left the world.

**The Devil:** Devil = "slanderer;" our enemy (1 Pt 5.8).

Didn't start out this way. Everything is "very good" in Gen 1.31. No "Devil" (even though the one who became the Devil existed). He was "Lucifer," light-bearer, chief cherub.

Man is created a little lower than the gods (rulers/judges)/angels (cf. Ps 8; Heb 2). Man is created under angelic oversight and guidance. The goal: man will mature and be exalted over the angels.

The chief cherub assigned to man in the Garden. Doesn't lead man into obedience but to disobedience. He sought to displace man. The means: get him to listen to his word and submit to him instead of God. Lucifer becomes the "Slanderer" when he attacks God's word and God's son (and daughter), seeking to destroy them; i.e., knowing that in the day they ate of the fruit of the ToKoGaE they would surely die.

Lucifer is replaced by another Angel who leads God's people through the wilderness; cf. Ex 33.2.

Movement of present passage: Jesus doesn't listen to the fallen angel (i.e., the Devil), obeys the Father, and then the angels minister to Jesus (i.e., Jesus is exalted over the angels). Cp. Heb 1 & 2.

**B THE TEMPTATION TO TURN THE STONES TO BREAD (2-4)**

**1. THE TEMPTER TEMPTING (2-3)**

**After fasting 40 days and 40 nights:** Fasting, 2 aspects. (1) Relates to the problem of sin. Food is originally given by God. Sin takes it away. Cp. Deut 28

Fasting voluntarily says, "I/We deserve the curse of sin." Jesus is doing this for us (cf. Mt 1.21).

(2) Compulsory fast in the Garden from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (TKGE). Not permanent. Eventually they would be given the fruit when they became wise enough (i.e., mature enough) to rule. But *not yet*.

Bread is not evil. Jesus would be able to have it at the appropriate time. But not yet.

Remember Israel when they left Egypt. They grumbled and complained against Moses and God (Ex 16). God gave them manna and instructions that would also be a *test* (Ex 16.4).

Jesus is the new Israel who fasts for forty days and is hungry but will not grumble and complain about the lack of bread, but will patiently wait for the provision of the Father.

Moses: fasts twice; recounted in Dt 9. 1<sup>st</sup> time he is receiving the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant (Dt 9.9, 11). 2<sup>nd</sup> after the golden calf incident (Dt. 9.18, 25); he intercedes for Israel so that God will not destroy them and raise up a new nation in Moses.

Jesus is refusing food for the sake of his people. He is voluntarily taking upon himself the curse, interceding for his people, and turning God's wrath away from them.

***The Tempter and the Temptation:*** The Devil = "The Tempter," connecting this to Gen 3; "Has God said?.." Challenges Jesus at the level of what the Father declared about him at his baptism.

Son of God = Israel (Ex 4.22-23); son of David (2Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7). He is the one who will sit on the throne of David/YHWH (1Chr 29.23).

"You've been declared to be the Son of God. Take what rightfully belongs to you NOW!"

Turning stones to bread is not just a cheap magic trick. Need to understand the nature of this temptation.

(1) Context: Israel in the wilderness. In Dt 8.9 we read that the Promised Land is "a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper." From this stony land will come bread in abundance.

Promised Land is "future bread." Manna is for right now as you patiently wait for God to bring you into the promised land.

(2) Note 3.9 - raise up children of Abraham from "these stones." Twelve stones = Israel in Josh 4. Israel is also 12 loaves of bread on the Table of Facebread ("Showbread").

Jesus is born in Bethlehem = "house of bread" = city of David, the king. Distributing bread is a kingly function; cp. 2Sam 6 (David distributing bread at entrance of the ark); 1Kg 8 (Solomon and the peace sacrifice; feast before the king)

Temptation: seize his position as the Son of God. If he does so it will do no good. The world needs new bread that can only come through the death and resurrection of Jesus in which Jesus will become "the Bread of Life."

## 2. THE RESISTANCE OF THE SON OF GOD (4)

***Jesus' use of the Scripture:*** quote from Dt 8.3. Passage: Israel being called by Moses to remember their God, obey him and enter into the land. The wilderness and their hunger is a time of testing. They were to rely upon God's provision of manna ("What is it?")

God was disciplining them as he disciplines a son (Dt. 8.5). Once they have learned these lessons and go into the land to eat bread in abundance and enjoy gold and silver, they are to remember God and continue to obey him. God does all of this in order that he may 'do them good in the end' (Dt 8.16). If they refused God's word, they would perish like the other nations.

Jesus: To seize the bread at this time, listening to the word of the Devil—following after other gods—would bring death that would not lead to life. Life would come only by abiding by the Word of God.

Word to Jesus: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?" This is the Suffering Servant son in Isaiah. That Son cannot grasp for premature glory. He must lay down his life for his people. He must not rely on 'old creation' bread.

Resisting the temptation was embracing the way of the cross.

***Jesus' temptation and ours:***

(1) *Whatever you suffer, whatever test you endure, you do so as a Christian.*