

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 4:1-11
Life of Worship 1: Focus on Him

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Matthew 4:1-11

Verse 1

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

- These events follow immediately after Jesus' baptism. Remember on that occasion, he heard God say, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." See Matthew 3:13-17.
- It is important to note that Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit to the place of temptation. He is not tempted to do evil by the Spirit. But, as with Job, the Lord allows the temptation. It is part of the spiritual growth process.
- It is important to note that the temptation is not, in and of itself, evil. It is the response of the one tempted that determines the outcome of the temptation event.
- In the case of Jesus, as in every case, the agent of temptation is Satan.

Verse 2-3

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

- Fasting is a form of spiritual discipline in which one denies the body food and sometimes water for a specific period of time. A fast that lasts for forty days is an exceptionally long fast. Jesus' body would have been drastically weakened by this extended fast.
- Satan attempted to use Jesus' physical need for food to cause him to misuse his God-given powers. He told Jesus to use his power to turn stones into bread. What Satan tried to do was to focus Jesus' attention on Jesus' personal need for food and to use the power that God had given him to resolve his personal need.
- The phrase "if you are" is designed to imply that Jesus is not the Messiah.

Verse 4

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

- Jesus refuses to focus on his own needs and to misuse the power God has entrusted to him.
- Instead he quotes Scripture to Satan. The quotation is from Deuteronomy 8:3.

Verse 5-6

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

- The holy city is Jerusalem.
- The highest point of the temple would have been the roof of the building in the temple courts which housed the holy of holies. The reference is to the third Temple or Herod’s Temple.
- Again, Satan implies doubts as to Jesus being the Messiah.
- Again, Satan attempts to get Jesus to focus on himself and to use his power to protect himself.
- This time Satan quotes Scripture to Jesus. He quotes Psalm 91:11-12 out of context. Satan knows Scripture and is not above bending it to his purposes.

Verse 7

“Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- Again Jesus refuses to be lured into Satan’s trap. He will not focus on himself nor will he use his power inappropriately.
- He counters Satan’s second temptation by quoting Scripture. This time Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16.

Verse 8-9

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

- In the third temptation Satan offers Jesus what is his only for a short time. He offers Jesus everything this world has to offer, and all Jesus

has to do to get the gift is to worship Satan. In so doing, Jesus would be giving up his God-appointed role as Messiah to claim for himself what this world has to offer.

- Notice that the doubt related to Jesus being the Messiah is not implied here. Satan is calling on Jesus to surrender that role to gain worldly wealth, power, and prestige.

Verse 10

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

- A third time Jesus turns Satan away with words of Scripture. This time Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:13.
- A third time Jesus refuses to shift his focus to himself and to abandon the call he had received from God.
- At that point the devil broke off the series of temptations and left Jesus. He could not cause Jesus to refocus his attention away from God nor to use his power for selfish ends.
- As Satan himself had predicted (see verse 6) angels came to attend to Jesus’ needs.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Life of Worship 1: Focus on Him* preached by Mr. Peter E. Jensen. The notes have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)