

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Matthew 4:1-11

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, May 4, 2014

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, May 4, 2014**, is from **Matthew 4:1-11**. This commentary is the second part of a two part Bible Lesson that includes **Deuteronomy 6:10-19**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Matthew 4:1-11

(Matthew 4:1) Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Immediately following the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, Jesus heard the voice of His heavenly Father commending Him and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. However, Jesus did not begin His new ministry immediately. Instead, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for the devil to tempt Him. “No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13). After overcoming every temptation and passing every test, Jesus began to preach, teach, heal, call His disciples to follow Him, and raise the dead.

(Matthew 4:2) He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

When Jesus fasted, He probably drank only water, but after forty days and nights of fasting Jesus would be near starvation and physically weakened beyond our imagination. The devil’s temptations would not begin until Jesus had been physically reduced to extreme weakness and perhaps mental impairment. If people can recall how they behave when they are extremely hungry, imagine how Jesus might have been tempted to behave after forty days of fasting.

(Matthew 4:3) The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

Because of Jesus' extreme weakness, the devil had a tremendous advantage over Jesus. Most human beings know how difficult it can be to remain calm and civil when provoked during times of hunger and fatigue. The devil tried to take advantage of Jesus' weakened and susceptible state during the first temptation. The devil tempted Jesus to prove He was the Son of God by working a miracle, but Jesus did not doubt the words of God to Him at His baptism and His personal experiences with God His Father during the previous years of His life. The devil tempted Jesus to make His time of trial easier by turning stones into bread to have something to eat.

(Matthew 4:4) But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus did not try to reason with the devil; perhaps because Jesus knew the devil had already firmly committed himself to opposing God and His plans. Jesus knew that the devil wanted to use the Bible to trick Him, so Jesus used His reason and the Bible to overcome the devil's temptations. Jesus defeated the devil by simply quoting the Bible and telling the devil that He intended to live according to every word that comes from the mouth of God (for believers, that means living according to the Bible). It was more important for Jesus (and it is for all who follow Him) to live according to the Word of God than disobey God's will in order to have physical bread, take shortcuts in life, or acquire other material goods or power.

(Matthew 4:5) Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple,

For this temptation to be authentic, the devil had to physically move Jesus from the wilderness to the city of Jerusalem and place Him at the top of the temple where people could have seen Him. After forty days of fasting and suffering malnutrition, Jesus could have been dizzy from the height and thus needing intense mental and spiritual concentration to avoid the devil's deceptive use of the Scriptures (the words that came from the mouth of God that Jesus had committed himself to obey). God the Father gave the devil permission to tempt or test Jesus, and God the Father gave the devil permission to place Jesus in this place of extreme danger. We learn how the devil must ask permission from God before He tests or tempts God's children from the Book of Job.

(Matthew 4:6) saying 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 dash your foot against a stone.'"

In some sense, the devil wanted Jesus to question once again whether or not He was really the Son of God; perhaps He wanted Jesus to question the devil's power to move Him to such a place of danger if He were really the Son of God. This time, the devil quoted and misapplied the Word of God in an effort to convince Jesus to intentionally place himself in even greater danger so the Father would be "forced" to save His Son if Jesus really was His Son. The devil quoted the true Word of God to Jesus, but Jesus

reasoned that He would not act foolishly to prove that the Bible was true and He was the Son of God. Instead, Jesus used the Scriptures to interpret the Scriptures correctly.

(Matthew 4:7) Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Jesus quoted the Scriptures back to the devil with a statement of universal truth. Even in a fight against the devil or in an effort to “prove that the Bible is true,” believers must not put God to the test. As the Son of God, Jesus was the God of the devil, and the devil was disobeying God when he was putting Jesus to the test. Though God the Father permitted the devil to test Jesus, the devil was disobeying God when he was disobeying the commands of God in the Scriptures. Because Jesus was the Son of God and God had a specific plan for His life, later Jesus would be ministered to by angels and God would save Jesus from an angry crowd in Nazareth.

(Matthew 4:8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor;

From the top of the temple to the top of a mountain, the devil changed his temptation from one of offering Jesus a shortcut to religious power to offering Jesus a shortcut to political power. The devil may have had visions of the world’s greatest kingdoms in all their worldly glory pass before Jesus’ eyes. But Jesus had determined that His Kingdom would not be of this world or from this world (John 18:36). From a cold lofty mountain top, the devil may have made the comforts of a king’s palace seem appealing.

(Matthew 4:9) and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

The devil offered Jesus more than worldly comforts; he offered Jesus power to have anything on earth that He wanted from anyone on earth. Jesus would not just be the ruler of one kingdom or nation, Jesus would be the ruler over all of them, but to achieve this, Jesus would need to sell His soul, His future, His eternal destiny and ours to the devil and worship the devil instead of God the Father. Jesus would need to acknowledge that the devil was more worthy of adoration, worship, and obedience than God. Jesus would not need to walk the way of the cross, and we would not have God’s way of salvation open to us. By the love and grace of God, Jesus refused to do what the devil wanted.

(Matthew 4:10) Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

There came a time when it became virtuous for Jesus to command the devil to leave Him, to banish the devil from His presence, to refuse to hear another word from him. As an obedient Son of God, Jesus commanded the devil to be gone and told him why: He was committed to worshipping the Lord God and serving Him only. He would not serve the devil in any way. One key to overcoming temptations is the commitment to worship and serve only the Lord, and do nothing inconsistent with serving Him.

(Matthew 4:11) Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Because Jesus was and is the Son of God, the devil had to obey Jesus and he left Him. Because Jesus was and is the Son of God, He obeyed His heavenly Father, and in fulfillment of the Scriptures God sent angels to minister to Jesus' needs (see Matthew 4:6). Because Jesus was and is the Son of God, God sent angels to bring Him food and wait on Him. They did all that was necessary to restore Jesus, Who had a human body, to health and physical strength. Then, Jesus was fully prepared to begin His earthly ministry.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

Since this is the second of a two part Bible Lesson, only three of the five Study Questions will be asked below.

1. Should new Christians, who may be preparing to be baptized or join a church, be warned that the devil may tempt them to doubt God, Jesus, the Bible, and the fact that they are children of God?
2. What are some excuses that people give when they disobey God? If Jesus had chosen to sin when the devil tempted Him, could He have used any of these excuses?
3. What are some means or ways that believers can use to overcome temptations or tests of their faith?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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