



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

Chapter 4

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Introduction

The Chapter's Main Points:

- Jesus overcame His temptation by the devil
- The beginning of His ministry in Galilee, His message and methods
- The call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John to discipleship

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- At His baptism, Jesus was proclaimed the Son of God (Mt 3:17)
- After His baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to face a three-fold covenant ordeal as Satan tested Jesus' loyalty and obedience to God
- Jesus had to be tempted just as Adam was tempted in the garden of Eden
- Moses and Elijah each fasted for the same length of time
- It was a period of spiritual exaltation, of meditation and prayer, of preparation for His work
- At the close of this period nature began to assert her demands, and hunger was keenly felt

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- In Biblical numerology, the number forty represents: trials, testing, and probations
- We see this number forty, interwoven by the Divine influence of the Holy Spirit, throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, (Gen 7:12); (Deut 9:9); (Deut 29:5); and (Acts 1:2-3)
- The number forty appears some 153 times in the Holy Scriptures
- How important it is to personally know and understand the Word of God
- Through the knowing of it, we can avoid being deceived by Satan and his lies
- The three great temptations mentioned by St. Matthew are the three great classes of temptations to which men are now exposed

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- In each of Jesus' three tests, Satan tempted Jesus to rebel against God
- The tempter (Satan) came at Jesus in the wilderness, just as the serpent (Satan) came at Adam in the Garden of Eden
- Jesus was hungry because of His forty day fast from food, and Satan was tempting Him to break the fast that He was offering to God as an obedient sacrifice
- The devil chose his time craftily, as he always does when he assails man
- Christ came to save others, not himself
- Self-denial was the law of His mission

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- The Lord uses the sword of the Spirit in His reply
- Jesus was quoting [Deut 8:3]
- The meaning is: If it pleases God to sustain by other means than bread, it will be done
- His word can be trusted
- God fed Israel with manna, sent by His word, and we can trust His promises
- Jesus sets for us the example of how to deal with Satan
- To use the scriptures, one must know the scripture first

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- Our Lord had repelled the first temptation by an act of confidence in the power and goodness of God; and now Satan solicits Him to make trial of it
- The very means we make use of to repel one temptation may be used by him as the groundwork of another
- Jesus had expressed His trust in the word of God
- The devil now asks Him to go from the extreme of distrust to that of rashly tempting God
- It was, perhaps, the demand so often repeated and always refused, to show a sign from heaven (Mt 16:1; Mk 8:11; Lk 11:16), to make a display of His power to secure popular applause

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- The enemy, like a false adviser, quotes from Ps 91:11 to justify his request
- Satan will twist scripture to deceive us, just like the false teachers are doing
- Once again Jesus sets the example, He quotes scripture back at Satan
- This time quoting from Deut 6:16
- Jesus does not argue with Satan
- But a simple reply that shows what is asked is forbidden

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- From some lofty center Satan spreads before Jesus a panorama of the kingdoms of this world with all their glory
- We are not to suppose that all the kingdoms were literally visible, but they are portrayed in such a way as to be present to the mental eyes
- Satan claims to be the Prince of the world and the disposer of human kingdoms
- The temptation is to turn away from the path of self-denial, the cross and the tomb, and to establish an outward, worldly domain
- Satan can empower his followers on the earth temporarily
- Some of Satan's many names are: "The prince of this world" [Jn 12:31], "The prince of the power of the air" [Eph 2:2]

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- Jesus did not treat this temptation as the others; but, with Divine authority, commanded the tempter to return to his own place
- Since the tempter has now thrown off the mask, and stands forth in his true character, our Lord calls him by his right name
- The three temptations had been met: three times the tempter had been baffled, three times the victory had been won
- The first assault had been made through the door of appetite, the lust of the flesh; the second through vain glory, the lust of the eyes; the third through ambition, the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16)

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- All had appealed to Jesus to turn away from the pathway of self-denial and suffering marked out for Him
- All had been met by the shield of faith, and the tempter beaten back by the word of the Spirit
- St. Matthew personifies Jesus as the true Israel and the true Son in contrast with Israel the rebellious and disobedient son
- Jesus' covenant ordeal reminds us of Adam's covenant ordeal in the garden Sanctuary in Eden when Satan, disguised as a serpent, tempted Adam and Eve by inviting them to rebel against God by making their own choices contrary to the will of God (Gen 3:1-13)

Satan Tempts Jesus (4:1-11)



- Obedience is a characteristic of true sonship
- Jesus is the new Adam and the new Israel; He is the obedient Son who rejected each of Satan's temptations
- Satan has been finally dismissed and he left Him for a time, Luke 4:13
- He intended to return again to the temptation, and, if possible, to seduce Him yet from God, John 14:30
- When the devil is resisted he always flees
- Jesus is attended to by the Angels
- This ministry was to supply Him with food, but they also would afford spiritual sympathy and praises

Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry (4:12-17)



- A long period lapses between the temptation and the next event recorded
- St. Matthew does not follow the order of events
- Our Lord awaited the close of St. John the Baptist's ministry, by his arrest and imprisonment, before beginning His own
- Capernaum, a city famous in the New Testament, but never mentioned in the Old
- It was called Christ's own city because He made it an earthly home
- It was on the border between the tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali
- He left Nazareth because He was rejected there (Lk 4:16-30)

Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry (4:12-17)



- The passage quoted is found in Isaiah 9:1-2
- St. Matthew's way of saying: Thus was fulfilled
- Galilee was divided into upper and lower Galilee
- Upper Galilee was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because it was occupied mainly by Gentiles
- It was in the neighborhood of Tyre, Sidon, etc. The word "Gentiles" includes in the Scriptures all who are not Jews
- It means the same as nations, or the pagan nations
- In the teaching of Jesus in the region described by the prophet there was a remarkable fulfillment of the prediction
- They saw Christ, the Light of the world

Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry (4:12-17)



- This is the official beginning of Jesus' ministry
- His message is the same as St. John the Baptist (Mt 3:1)
- He commands repentance, and declares the kingdom of heaven is at hand, not yet come, but near
- Our Lord sometimes speaks of the new kingdom as already come—in His own Person and ministry; but the economy of it was only "at hand" until the blood of the cross was shed and the work of the Holy Spirit began

Four Fishermen Called as Disciples (4:18-22)



- When Christ began to preach, He began to gather disciples
- The sea of Galilee is about thirteen miles long and six miles wide in the widest place and the Jordan runs through it
- On its borders Jesus lived, taught, and did most of His miracles
- These two brethren, Peter and Andrew, were already disciples (Jn 1:35-42)
- Simon was the name of the first until Christ changed it to Cephas, or Peter
- Their home was at Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee (Jn 1:44)
- They had been John's disciples, but he directed them to Jesus (Jn 1:29-34)

Four Fishermen Called as Disciples (4:18-22)



- Why did not Jesus Christ call some of the eminent Scribes or Pharisees to publish His Gospel, and not poor unlearned fishermen, without credit or authority?
- We may observe that most of the calls of God to man are expressed in a few solemn words
- Their nets were the means of their living, perhaps all their property
- By leaving them immediately, and following him, they gave every evidence of sincerity
- They obeyed at once
- Thus Christ ought always to be obeyed
- No excuses for delay were offered

Four Fishermen Called as Disciples (4:18-22)



- James and John, the sons of Zebedee were fishermen also and are supposed to have been cousins of Jesus, probably were already disciples (Jn 1:29-42), but were now called to preparation for their great work
- Mending their nets means they were not actually engaged in fishing
- They left the boat at once
- They had received a higher call
- No earthly preference can excuse a rejection of the call of Christ

Jesus Heals a Great Multitude (4:23-25)



- Wherever Christ went, he confirmed His Divine mission by miracles
- The synagogues, the Jewish houses of worship, where the Jews met every Sabbath, was a suitable place for teaching
- In Matthew 4:23-25 are condensed the labors and teaching of a long period, of which a detailed account is given in the following chapters
- He announced the good news of the speedy advent of the long expected kingdom of the Messiah
- He did not, however, at this time proclaim himself to be the Messiah
- He sympathized with all human affliction and healed the body in order that He might heal the soul

Jesus Heals a Great Multitude (4:23-25)



- It is not easy to fix the exact bounds of Syria in the time of our Savior
- It was, perhaps, the general name for the country lying between the Euphrates on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west; and between Mount Taurus on the north, and Arabia on the south
- Persons were actually subject to the control of demons (Mk 5:4); (Mt 12:22); (Acts 16:17); (Mk 1:24); (Mt 8:32); (Mk 5:9); (Lk 10:17); (Mt 12:28); and (Acts 10:38)

Jesus Heals a Great Multitude (4:23-25)



- Verse 25 is immediately connected with the fifth chapter
- Decapolis—a region lying to the east of the Jordan, so called as containing ten cities, founded and chiefly inhabited by Greek settlers
- The fame of His teaching and miracles cause great multitudes to gather from all Palestine
- But the more immediate object for which this is here mentioned is, to give the reader some idea both of the vast concourse and of the varied complexion of eager attendants upon the great Preacher, to whom the astonishing discourse of the next three chapters was addressed



Conclusion

- What are some examples in Scripture where the number 40 is found?
- Satan begins the test by asking Jesus to give proof that He is the "Son of God." Does this mean Satan knows Jesus is God's divine Son? What is meant by the title "Son of God"? Who else in the Old Testament bore this title? Job 1:16; Ex 4:22; Wis 18:3-4; Deut 14:1; Mt 5:9,45; Ps 2:7;89:26; 2 Sam 7:8,12-14; 1 Chron 17:13
- What comparisons can be made between the temptation of Adam and the temptation of Jesus?



Conclusion

- What comparisons can be made between the desert testing experiences of Jesus, the Son of God, and the Israelites, the sons of God?
- Does Satan have the authority to make this offer?
- Who arrested John the Baptist and why?
- How does Jesus' testing by Satan provide practical applications for Christians who are faced with circumstances that test their faith and obedience? Give three examples



Conclusion

- Where did Jesus begin His public ministry? Fulfilling what prophecy?
- What was the theme of Jesus' preaching?
- How many of the twelve were fishermen?