

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT INVOCABIT

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Travis Loeslie



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MATTHEW 4:1-11 ESV

Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the Apostle wrote this Gospel in c. AD 50. Parallel accounts of Jesus' temptation are found in Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the temptation for the unique purposes of the audiences of their Gospels under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is God. He is sinless. He is not prone to failure or mistakes. Still the temptation of Jesus is a real and deep temptation with drastic consequences. The devil has his moment to lure Jesus to join him and his wicked enmity against God and His people. All of creation and the world's history hangs in the balance, waiting and watching to see who comes out the victor.

⁴ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

- Just as Jesus comes up out of the waters of His baptism in the Jordan, "then" He is led in chapter 4 "by the Spirit into the wilderness." The Spirit leads Jesus to a spiritual showdown with cosmic consequences. He does not choose this battle and cross, but the Spirit chooses it for Him.
- The purpose of the Spirit's leading is this: Jesus will be tempted by Satan, that "sworn foe of God and all Christians." He "...does nothing but attack, and wreak all havoc and heartache on us here, and accuse, defame, and speak all evil of Him above. For he is a murderer from the beginning and a liar [John 8:44]. It is by this lying demon and murderous spirit that Christ chose to be tempted, that we might bear temptation more easily" (Johann Spannenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 108).
- "Why immediately after His Baptism? To show that a Christian's life from Baptism to the grave is nothing other than a daily duel and battle with the devil, the world, and the flesh, and that immediately after

Baptism, we are placed by the Holy Spirit into the wild, wanton world and subject to all manner of tribulation." (Johann Spannenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 106).

- Temptation (Greek: *peirazo*; Latin: *tentatio*; German: *Anfechtung* or 'spiritual attack') is a painful reality that is all-too-near for the life of saints in a fallen world.

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

- Jesus fasted for a divinely long period of time. Fasting is a profitable spiritual preparation against the attack of the devil.
- The devil appeals to Jesus' highest quality: His divinity. "You are the Son of God. You can do turn this into bread. Shouldn't You, of all people, be entitled to a fat, full belly of bread?" This kind of temptation Luther calls the concern or care for the belly (*die Bauchsorge*).
- Amazingly, the devil cites chapter and verse against Jesus. This Adversary wields an unusual, evil power.
- Jesus' power is in the Word of God. "It is written!" He shields Himself with the powerful words from Deuteronomy 8:3. He wards off the devil's first temptation with the all-powerful Word.
- Luther: "Therefore this Gospel is sweet consolation and power against the unbelief and infamy of the stomach, to awaken and strengthen the conscience, that we may not be anxious about the nourishment of our bodies, but be assured that he can and will give us our daily bread" (Luther's Church Postil in *Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, volume 1.2, pg. 136).

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⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said 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, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

- In the second temptation, the devil brings Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem. Jesus stood on the high point of the temple, some 15 stories down, or about 100 feet.
- The devil tempts Jesus to test God to provide angels at the perfect moment. Satan’s prideful arrogance is so brazen that he calls up chapter and verse against the Son of God Himself. He also knows that the Word of God is his only possible fodder for persuading Jesus to submit to him.
- The nature of the temptation is ambition for a great name. Jesus had been a lowly, humble carpenter’s son from little-known Nazareth. Throw Himself down from the temple, and the great crowds of the holy city would embrace Him as a Messianic rock star. Surely the angels would catch the Son of God!
- The devil tempts Jesus to embrace the role as a theologian of glory. Instead Jesus continues His humble Messianic office and walk toward the cross long-prophesied for Him.
- Jesus shields himself with Deuteronomy 6:16.
- The second temptation is the highest spiritual temptation for Jesus and every spiritual leader. It is a temptation to become one’s own God, one’s own theologian, to turn the emphasis off of Christ and to the self.

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”

- Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain. The devil puts Rome, Greece, Egypt and all the kingdoms of the world on display for Jesus. “Why not have all these worldly kingdoms? No more suffering, no more fear of the coming cross, only You and me and the glory of the world. The only price: fall down and worship me.”
- Jesus, the greatest spiritual warrior, shields himself and all of His Church from the chaotic consequences of a world under Satan’s authority.
- Jesus yells in victory, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,” worship the Lord your God and serve Him alone (Deuteronomy 6:16).

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

- Jesus withstands the devil through the temptation with the Word of God. The spiritual attack was over for the moment.
- Angels come to minister to Jesus in the wilderness.
- Jesus’ temptation is an example for us as Christians face spiritual battles as members of His Body, the Church.
- Jesus suffered temptation for all men, even going to the cross for the sins of the world.
- Jesus conquered Satan in that great, cosmic battle once and for all.
- Now the devil limps along like a “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8), but with a mortal-wound. He still has power and a nasty bite to those who come too near to him. He is a ‘has-been,’ and his overthrow has already been accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ.
- Spannenberg offers comforting words in conclusion, “Do we have any comfort in such tribulation? Our comfort in the cross and tribulation is this: just as the angels ministered to Christ after His temptation, they also minister to all those who believe in Him. For it is written, “They are all ministering spirits sent out for service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1[:14]); and “The angel of the LORD camps around about those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Ps. 34[:7]). So if the devil attacks us, and we fight valiantly, and stand and attend to our vocation, and do our duty, many angels must minister to us, defend us, and protect us. And if we continue and remain steadfast in the faith, we shall lack nothing. The angels would first come from heaven to be our butlers, cooks, and waiters, and minister to us in every need just as they ministered to Christ. And truly, if they ministered to Christ as our head, they must in the end also watch over us, Christ’s members, and bring our souls to Abraham’s bosom in eternal life! Amen.” (*The Christian Year of Grace*, 109).



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