



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Matthew 4:1-11

1st Temptation of Jesus – Identity & Self.

Matthew 4:1-11, *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ” Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, 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 shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ” ⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ” ¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.*

Jesus had fasted for 40 days. Our Lord was understandably hungry.

Our Lord's hunger would inevitably lead to death, apart from divine intervention. Satan's challenge that Jesus turn stone to bread was one which sought to cause our Lord to bring about that divine intervention from His own power. The power which had just been received from heaven through the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord's condition was this, then. If He continued not eating, He would die. Thus, Satan challenged, He must act. Whether or not He must act as Satan had challenged, by miraculously converting stone to bread, is doubtful, for it would seem that there would have been other means of satisfying His need for nutrition.

We can clearly see the need of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can also see the power from heaven to meet that need. By using His power Jesus can fulfil/satisfy His need.

Surely one's power could be used to meet one's needs, especially a need so vital as life itself. Satan seems to be appealing to that basic human instinct of self-preservation.

Previously it seemed to me that Satan was advocating self-indulgence here, but if that were the case he would have called for "steak and ale," not mere bread.

Bread was a basic essential of life, not a luxury food item. It is not self-indulgence but self-preservation which Satan is seeking to induce our Lord to accomplish through His divine power.

On the face of the matter, such an offer seems innocent.

After all, is there anything so wrong with meeting basic human needs?

Not at all!

Identity:

Firewalls are hacked, passwords are stolen, and confidential data and information is downloaded and passed into the hands of criminals. Hackers now have your digital picture or identity (name, address, social security number, employer, bank accounts, and passwords). Suddenly your personal financial details, medical history, employee benefits and services, checking, savings, credit card accounts, and credit rating are at risk.

Identity Theft is a Growing Problem

Industry reports indicate that cases of identity theft are on the rise each year. Estimates of the number of victims are in the millions and the economic impact in the billions.

Victims and their families report that the impact is more than financial. It is emotional and psychological and often results in

hardship, interruption or temporary loss of needed benefits and services, and frequently requires months of intense effort to resolve and restore order.

The Two Identities That Define You

There is one of two identities that you can allow to define your life at any one time.

- The first is a perceived identity.
- The second identity is from Heaven.

A perceived identity is a definition of who you are, characterized by how you feel, what you fear, the ways you fall or what others have said about you. This is where the enemy wants you, believing that perception is reality. Accordingly, he uses all the negative experiences and voices in your life to create a script to say, "This is who you are."

The second identity is one inked in heaven, which was given to you by God long before you were born, and despite the issues you face.

Ephesians 1:4, *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,*

First ever attack on the identity:

Genesis 1:26-27, *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* ²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

God created Adam and Eve in His image and in His likeness.
Satan comes to them ask the question.

Genesis 3:5, *For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Satan lies to them saying that they will become like God if they do something.

What did Satan ask them to do?

Genesis 3:1, *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

Casting doubt on the word of God.

Genesis 2:16-17, *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Not only making doubt in the mind but also telling an outright lie.

Genesis 3:4, *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."*

Adam living in the perfect condition, yet he listened to lie about his identity, and he disobeyed and sinned against God.

Jesus, the Second Adam.

V 3, *Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."*

What had happened at the Baptism of Jesus Christ?

Matthew 3:17, *And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Not just Son but beloved Son.

Also, God is well pleased with Him.

Yet what is the first attempt by Satan?

If you are the Son of God?

Making Jesus to doubt the Word of God.

command that these stones become bread.”

Hunger is a need which our Lord would later meet in His public ministry.

For our Lord, serious hunger even justified setting aside normal rules.

Luke 6:1-5, *Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. ²And some of the Pharisees said to them, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” ³But Jesus answering them said, “Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?” ⁵And He said to them, “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”*

Jesus defended the fact that His disciples “harvesting” grain on the Sabbath by referring to the precedent of David, who met his hunger and that of his men by eating the “consecrated bread”.

What was the evil, then, which caused our Lord to resist Satan's temptation?

The answer was to be found in the Word of God itself.

Matthew 4:4, *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'*

Jesus never used His anointing or His gifting to satisfy Himself it is for the glory of God.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, *And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.*

Moses quoting the incident took place with Israel in the Wilderness.

Exodus 16:2-7, *Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that*

we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather ^[a]a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.⁵ And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.”

⁶Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, “At evening you shall know that the Lord has brought you out of the land of Egypt.⁷ And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord; for He hears your complaints against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?”

The people wanted food and they were determined to take matters into their own hands.

They longed to return to slavery in Egypt because at least they had food to eat. God provided the people with food, but Moses explained that God wanted to know if the people were willing to obey Him.

So, the food was freely given (a gift of grace) but it came with stipulations that the Israelites had to obey.

They had to trust God that they would have enough food from day to day. They had to have faith that food would appear the next day.

Israel was about to enter into the promised land and God was, through Moses, reminding His people of the basis on which His blessings would be bestowed in the land.

It was the very first day that many in Israel demonstrated their lack of trust in God.

Exodus 16:20, *Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.*

Even on the first day of rest, when they were not to gather manna. Even though they had food left from the previous day, yet they went out and looked for more.

Exodus 16:27-28, *Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. ²⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?"*

Jesus quotes the whole incident that took place at the lives of Israelites in the wilderness.

Why did they go through the testing?

God wanted them to know what is in their heart!
God always knew what is in their heart but for them to know.

Small difference between Matthew and Luke.

Luke 4:4, *But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' "*

Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Jewish audience.
Luke's gospel is written to a Gentile audience primarily.

We have already noted the parallel which the gospel accounts draw between the experience of Israel in the wilderness and that of our Lord in the wilderness.

Our Lord knew this best of all, and thus deals with His own situation in the light of God's Word concerning the lessons which Israel should have learned from the experience of their forefathers.

Matthew 14:13-21

Feeding the 5,000

Matthew 15:32-39

Feeding the 4,000

This shows Jesus had the power to multiply the bread.

Not only Jesus had the power to produce bread but besides there was no commandment preventing Him not make bread out of stones.

So why did not Jesus make bread?

Jesus never used His power to satisfy His personal needs.

If Jesus had turned the stones into bread, not only would He have been acting without authority, He also would have been demonstrating a lack of trust in God.

Matthew 6:25-33, This great section Jesus preached about trust God for all our needs.

1. Our Lord understood that God uses deficiency to test man's faith.

Deuteronomy 8:2, *And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*

2. Our Lord understood that testing through deficiency is often God's preparation for future blessing.

In Deuteronomy God is referring to the lessons which God has taught Israel in order to prepare her for the blessings of the land.

If Satan was subtly suggesting that hunger was inconsistent with divine presence and blessing, Jesus knew from Deuteronomy that it was the evidence of divine love and care, in preparation for blessing.

3. Our Lord refused Satan's scheme.

Not because Jesus could not achieve it, but because He should not do so. The only reason that Jesus did not make the stone into bread was because it would have been wrong to do so. Jesus had the power to change His circumstances, to satisfy His hunger, but He refused to employ it in such a fashion. It would be no test of our Lord's character to make such a challenge as Satan had unless Jesus was capable of turning stone into bread.

4. Trust in God's leading.

Our Lord's presence and His hunger in the wilderness, like that of Israel of old, was the will of God, the result of God's leading.

God made it abundantly clear to Israel that when they complained about their circumstances, they ultimately complained against God, for it was He who led them.

If our Lord was hungry, it was the will of God for it to be so. For our Lord to have acted as Satan proposed would have been an act of disobedience.

5. Obedience to God.

The only motive for making the stone into bread would have been distrust regarding the goodness and the guidance of God. Ultimately, the only reason for our Lord's disobedience (making the stone into bread) would have been unbelief and distrust of the Father's care, goodness, and His divine provision.

Unbelief is the ultimate root of most disobedience.

Satan caused Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness and to disbelieve His word concerning judgment for eating of the forbidden fruit.

Israel grumbled against God in the wilderness and demanded that God prove Himself because they doubted His goodness and guidance.

So, it would have been in our Lord's case as well.

6. Life is more than food.

Life is more than mere physical survival and it must be sustained by more than food.

God told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit, yet they continued to live physically after their disobedience. We know that the death they experienced included physical death but involved much more.

Life was much more than physical existence. Intimacy with God was one of the things which was lost, for the evening walks in the garden were ended, along with life in the garden.

In the early chapters of Deuteronomy, God reminded the Israelites that His blessing was dependent upon their obedience, and further clarified His blessings as including “long life”.

Deuteronomy 4:1, *“Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you.*

Deuteronomy 4:10, *especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’*

Deuteronomy 4:40, *You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time.”*

Life, then, is sustained by more than eating, but more importantly for the Israelites, it was sustained by obedience to God's commandments.

It was for Adam and Eve as well.

The Old Testament gradually unveils the truth that "life" with God extends beyond the grave.

The promises God made to Abraham will still be fulfilled, and thus Abraham is not just a person of the past but will be raised from the dead. Abraham had to trust God by being willing to sacrifice his only son, believing that God would continue life beyond his death.

Hebrews 11:19, *concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

This Temptation and the Gospel

This temptation struck at the very heart of the gospel, for the Lord Jesus had come to the earth in obedience to the will of the Father, to die on the cross for sinners, so that they might be forgiven and have eternal life.

Philippians 2:8, *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

The Old Testament sacrificial system taught the Israelites that life could be sustained by a blood sacrifice. Thus, the sacrificial system put off the death penalty for sin.

Lord Jesus, as the Lamb of God (**John 1:29**) was to be the sin-bearer, whose sacrificial death would bring life to all who were in Him.

Would Jesus save His own life, contrary to the will of His Father?

Then He could not achieve eternal life for all men.

Would Jesus act on His own behalf, distrusting and disobeying the Father?

Then He would pursue the path of death, not life, for life requires obedience to God, even more than the feeding of the body.

To have turned the stone into bread would have been to have turned from the path which led ultimately to the cross. Our Lord's obedience to the Father and our salvation was on the line.

Jesus' rejection of Satan's proposition meant that He was determined to accomplish the will of God, even unto death, which paradoxically, was the way to life, for Him and for all who are found in Him.

Philippians 2:9-11, *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

To have exercised His divine power to meet His human needs would have meant the loss of His power to save. But as a result of our Lord's obedience to the Father, He emerged not only sinless, but mighty to save.

The priority of the spiritual above the physical, of obedience to the Father's will above mere existence shaped the teaching of our Lord.

The result was that Jesus' continually stressed the priority of man's spiritual condition over his physical state.

The Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes show us that.

Luke 9:23-25, *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?*

It is therefore much more important to fear the One who can destroy the soul (the spiritual dimension of man) than the body (the physical).

Matthew 10:28, *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Self-preservation is a basic human instinct, but also one that is often contrary to trust in God.

Throughout the Bible men got themselves into trouble by trying to save themselves.

Abraham, in an effort to save his life, put his wife in the position to have been sexually violated. Abraham's life was in God's hands, and he did not need to fear.

Furthermore, Abraham's future rested in the child which he and Sarah were to bear. His self-saving acts threatened his life and his future.

The ultimate test of Abraham's faith was his willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, through whom Abraham's future and his blessings would be brought to pass. When Abraham was willing to obey God, even when it appeared that doing so would be the end of his future, Abraham was proven to be a man of faith and obedience.

Application:

The Meaning of the First Temptation for Us

1. Identity:

You are the son/daughter of God.

Romans 8:14-15, *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*

Romans 8:31-32, *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

God is our heavenly Father, who loves us and will do anything for us.

John 1:12-13, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Do not listen to anything else. If you have any known sins just confess to the Lord and receive His forgiveness and restore the relationship.

2. Obey God.

How significant that He who would not make bread to save His own life presented Himself to Israel as “the bread of life”.

John 6:35, *And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

By believing in Him anyone may pass from death to life, they may find life in its fullest sense, not mere existence.

Jesus alone could claim to be the only way, the only truth, the only life (John 14:6).

Jesus Christ offers Himself to all who will believe in His, He offers Himself as the source of life eternal. If you have never trusted in Him, I urge you to experience the bread of life.

The first temptation of our Lord should instruct us that man has ultimately only one need—God.

To know God and to have fellowship is to possess life in its fullest, even if the path of following Him leads to physical death.

Satan is always attempting to create the false perception of other, more pressing, needs. Adam and Eve had everything one could ask for and were kept from but one thing.

Satan set about to convince Eve that this one forbidden fruit was her one greatest need, a need so great that she could disobey God to attain it.

For Satan, “life” was but mere physical existence. In order to maintain this kind of “life” it was necessary, according to Satan’s value system, to disobey the will of the Father, to act independently and in rebellion against God.

Christ’s definition of “life” was life in its fullness, life in fellowship, harmony, and union with God. In order to maintain this kind of “life” our Lord found it necessary to obey God, even if that meant experiencing death.

3. Never use your gifting for self.

If you are pastor/ Evangelist/ prophet whatever office, you hold please do not use your gifting to make money or selfish gains.

A prostitute offers her body to make money.

A spiritual person offers his service for money then it is spiritual prostitution.