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1-11, The Temptation in the Wilderness

This episode is remarkable in that the only witnesses were the Lord and heavenly beings. For other episodes that the evangelists report, either they were witnesses, or events were public knowledge. Here, it is most likely that the Lord told his disciples about his temptations

Such candor is unusual among believers. We are reluctant to acknowledge that we have been tempted, much less describe how it unfolded. But the Scriptures are full of case studies of temptations, both those that turn out well (Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac) and those that do not (David and Bathsheba). Like the Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL center), the Bible places a premium on concrete examples to teach us how to live in a sinful world. Perhaps this is part of the reason that James exhorts us (Jam 5:16), "Confess *your* faults one to another."

Application: We should be open with one another about how we have met temptation and what we have learned from the process. It is probably not profitable to share every enticing thought with one another, but we should seek the Spirit's direction to show us when something in our experience might be useful to our brothers and sisters, and be willing to share it with them.

1-2, Background

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.--In 3:1, we found John in the wilderness. Now our Lord is led there to be tempted. The word is characteristic of Israel's wilderness experience (chart);¹ they tempted the Lord,

Num 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have **tempted** **πειραζω** **הנס** me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

and he tempted them (the AV changing the translation of the same Hebrew verb):

Deu 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to **prove** **πειραζω** **הנס** thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Both verses appear to conflict with

Jam 1:13 for God cannot be **tempted** with evil, neither **tempteth** he any man:

The verb "tempt" **πειραζω** is the same, but note the addition in James of "with evil." God's purpose is not to cause us to sin, but to test our devotion to him. The very same event may be viewed as an opportunity by the adversary to cause us to sin. Thus Israel's trials in the desert are ascribed to the Lord, but Satan clearly uses them to lead the people into sin; our Lord's trials in the desert are ascribed to Satan, but by them God proves his faithfulness. Perhaps the ultimate example of the bivalence of temptation is when David numbered Israel:

2Sa 24:1 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David

¹ See notes

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against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

1Ch 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

Here the same event is ascribed both to the Lord (2 Sam 24:1) and to Satan (1 Chr 21:1). So we are not surprised here when we learn that the Spirit (of God) led our Savior into the wilderness to meet temptation at the hand of Satan.

Application: As believers, we are not to be surprised when trials come (1Pe 4:12 “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you”). But we should always realize that they are two-edged. Satan intends to use them to defeat us, but God allows them to come to test and strengthen us for his purposes. When some people face temptation, they conclude that God has abandoned them, Satan is in control, and they must inevitably fail. But the presence of a temptation is not sin; it is an opportunity to triumph. If we recognize the twofold nature of testing, we will be equipped to stand against it, trusting God to lead us to triumph.

This testing takes place in “the wilderness.” This word describes the barren grazing land east of the crest of the Judaeen mountains (chart). Again, we are reminded of the promise of Ezekiel 20, that just as God tested Israel in the wilderness after the Exodus, so he will test his people in the wilderness before the coming day of the Lord. When our Lord is tempted there, we should see it as a reminder of how he represents Israel.

This chapter is the third time that our Lord is called the Son of God (chart).

- In 2:15, Matthew explains the flight into Egypt with Hos 11:1, “out of Egypt have I called my son.” Hosea’s original context clearly shows that the the son here is the nation Israel.
- In 3:17, at his baptism, God declares, “this is my beloved son,” recalling Jer 31:20, in which God describes Ephraim as “my dear [beloved] son,” anticipating the restoration from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.
- Now Satan twice declares, “If thou be the Son of God,” 4:3, 6. And the parallel with Israel’s temptation in the wilderness again reminds us that our Lord represents Israel. He is the neck of the hourglass.

As we work through the temptations, we should note that they fit a pattern that began in the garden of Eden, and continues today. There are three main channels through which Satan attacks us. Paul writes, “we are not ignorant of his devices” (2Co 2:11). If we are alert to these, we will be on guard against most of his challenges.

Application: Perhaps the most powerful weapon in warfare is intelligence. If we know what the adversary is planning to do, we can evade his attacks, and win the victory over him. The repetition of these three principles throughout the Bible encourages us to pay attention to them so that we can be prepared for spiritual combat.

John enumerates them in his first epistle [chart]:

1Jo 2:16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

We can see them reflected in the temptation of Adam and Eve, the temptation of Israel in the

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wilderness, and our Lord's temptation.

- The lust of the flesh is the desire to satisfy our natural biological urges, such as food, or drink, or reproduction. Our body is a remarkable machine, with sensors that give us feedback to guide our behavior. Those sensors tell us when we need food or water or sleep, and remind us of God's command to replenish the earth. We are supposed to work to gain the food and shelter that our bodies need. But in our rebellion against God, we use those sensors as an end in their own right, stimulating them beyond their natural function to bring us pleasure.
 - Adam and Eve fell to this when they saw that the tree was "good for food."
 - Israel's most frequent failures in the wilderness were in lusting for food and water, and in one instance falling prey to lascivious lusts.
 - Satan tempted our Lord in this area after his 40-day fast by suggesting that he use his divine power to turn stones into bread.
- The lust of the eyes is the desire to possess beautiful things. Again, beauty is not wrong in itself. The Lord created a beautiful world, and he filled Bezaleel the son of Uri with the Spirit of God to enable him to devise beautiful things in gold, and silver, and precious stones for the Tabernacle (Ex 31:2-5). The beauty of the world, and the beauty of the Tabernacle, were intended to draw people to worship the Lord whom they represent. But in our rebellion against God, we desire beautiful things for their own sake.
 - Adam and Eve fell to this when they observed that the tree was "pleasant to the eyes," and wanted to have power over it.
 - I can think of only one instance of this in the wilderness, when Israel constructed the golden calf. (The sin of Achan at Jericho was also of this kind, but that was after they entered the promised land.)
 - Satan tempted our Lord this way when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and offered him possession of them.
- The pride of life is the desire to think well of ourselves, to have others think well of us, and in particular to think that we are better than others. Again, this is a perversion of a legitimate instinct. Our Lord's command that we love one another should lead to a society in which each of us feels loved and valued, encouraged and strengthened to serve the Lord. But Satan perverts it into a competitive spirit that tears down others, or in a particularly perverse twist, into self-destructive and depressive moods (that still put the focus on us, rather than others).
 - Adam and Eve fell to this when they realized that the tree could make them wise, "as gods, knowing good and evil."
 - We see this in Israel's fear of defeat at the Red Sea and in refusing to enter the land, and in the rebellions of Miriam, Aaron, and Korah against the authorities that God had established.
 - Satan tempted our Lord in this way when he invited him to cast himself off the temple and enjoy the immediate attention of subservient angels.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.--There are

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numerous references to 40 as a period of time in the OT. By far the most common (19 x) is the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, one year for each day that the spies were in the land, and that is no doubt part of the imagery that we are to understand here (chart). It is not strange that a day for the Lord should stand for a year with the nation, for those 40 years were the penalty for 40 days of searching out the land:

Num 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, **each day for a year**, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

And just as the Lord fasted for this period, so God said that he suffered Israel to hunger during their 40 years in the wilderness:

Deu 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these **forty years in the wilderness**, to humble thee, *and* to **prove** thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and **suffered thee to hunger**, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Application: Like the references to the “son of God,” these parallels remind us of how our Savior is Israel’s substitute, fulfilling what she could not. And by God’s grace, he is our substitute as well.

But there is another allusion here as well. The expression “forty days and forty nights” appears only ten times in the OT. Two of these describe the duration of the flood (Gen 7:4, 12), and one describes the journey of Elijah from Beersheba to Mount Horeb (1 Ki 19:8). The other seven all describe Moses, who on two occasions fasted for forty days and forty nights before the Lord. The first time was after the nation accepted the covenant, when he went up to receive the instructions for the tabernacle, and the two tablets of the law:

Deu 9:9 When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, *even* the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water: (also 9:11; Exod 24:18).

The second time was after he had smashed the tablets because of the golden calf. He returned to intercede with the Lord for Israel:

Exo 34:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. ... 28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. (Also Deut 9:18, 25; 10:10)

We have already seen echoes of Moses in our Lord (chart). Herod (Pharaoh) seeks to destroy the Jew’s Messiah (Moses), by killing many children, but the child is delivered by a royal offspring (Joseph the son of David; Pharaoh’s daughter). Our Lord’s 40-day fast is another example, and reminds us that he is the “prophet like unto Moses” promised in Deut 18:18.

Application: In his role as the second Moses, our Lord is our lawgiver, whom we should heed, and

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against whom any rebellion will be severely punished.

3-4, Lust of the Flesh: Stones to Bread

3 And when the tempter came to him,--We have now the three temptations. We can observe two structural principles here.

First, an inclusio marks off the entire episode (chart). Here, the tempter comes to him; in v. 11, the devil leaves. This is an internal inclusio, grammatically part of the text that it incloses. (In a sentence diagram, it will be connected to something in the inside.) It serves as a section marker. It shows us that this section belongs together, and functions as a unit in its relation to the adjacent sections of text. By contrast (chart), an external inclusio (e.g., Eph 3:1, 14) is a repetition that is part of the surrounding text (as seen in a sentence diagram), and marks what it incloses as a parenthesis or footnote.

Second, there are some points at which the symmetry is broken (chart). Ancient authors used this “broken symmetry” to call our attention to special features.

- The first temptation is distinct from the other two in lacking a special setting.
- In the second temptation is distinct from the other two in that the devil quotes scripture.
- The third temptation is distinct from the first two in two ways. It lacks the challenge, “If thou be the son of God,” and includes our Lord’s dismissal of Satan.

Immediately, we notice the first broken symmetry. The second and third temptations take place in special settings. The first temptation is much less dramatic, a simple suggestion in light of the Lord’s immediate condition. It is more of a “stealth attack” (chart), a characteristic of temptation that will come to our attention later in the passage as well.

Application: We need to be alert to temptations that try to sneak in under the radar. Not every temptation comes with a big red warning label. Only a constant abiding in the Lord will make us alert to the sneak attacks that Satan will launch against us.

he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.--The condition is a first class conditional, a Greek form that (for the sake of discussion) assumes the truth of the condition. Satan does not question the Lord’s sonship. He is granting it (perhaps sarcastically), but urging the Lord to use it in a way contrary to God’s purposes, to satisfy his hunger. “OK, since you’re God’s son, there’s no reason for you to stand here hungry. Surely you can turn these stones into bread.”

There’s no question that the Lord has a legitimate need: he is hungry. He is the Son of God, and multiple times in his ministry he will generate food for hungry people (feeding the 4000 and the 5000; two miraculous draughts of fish). Why shouldn’t he feed himself?

Satan is appealing to the lust of the flesh, a biological drive that God has created. Surely a 40 day fast is reason enough to eat something, isn’t it?

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.--The Lord responds to this temptation, as to every temptation, by citing Scripture. We should note both the fact, and the specific Scripture that he chooses.

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To see why it would be sin for the Lord to take Satan's suggestion, consider first the specific Scripture that he quotes. We have seen it before. Here it is in context (chart):

Deu 8:1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. 2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the **wilderness**, to humble thee, **and to prove thee**, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and **suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna**, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that **man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD** doth man live.

Our Lord has clearly been meditating about Israel's wilderness trials in preparation for his own trial. In this central summary of those trials, he would learn the role of hunger in focusing our attention on the value of God's word. He would also be reminded that when God is ready to feed his people, he will do it, as he did with the manna. He will not short-circuit God's work with his own efforts.

Application: If we know that we have a weakness in a specific area, we should memorize Scripture in that area, to have it ready when temptation comes.

Next, note the simple fact that he responds with Scripture. The best way to meet temptation is with a verse of Scripture. The Lord did not invent this technique; he is following the example of the Psalmist, who wrote,

Psa 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Psa 37:30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31 The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Application: We must not trust our feelings to guide us in temptation. The heart is deceitful (Jer 17:9). The only way we can walk pleasing to the Lord is by knowing and following his word. Paul calls Scripture "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17), and it is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare.

5-7, *Pride of Life: Angelic Devotion*

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a the pinnacle of the temple,--Unlike the first temptation, the second and third are the focus of specific preparation that might lead the Lord to be on his guard. The Greek is definite, "the pinnacle." The location is usually thought to be the SE corner of the temple platform, which falls away into the Kidron valley (chart). The wall is presently 158 feet high above the bedrock,² and that is without the additional portico that would have been on it in Herod's day, and the further depth of the Kidron below (another 100 feet).

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:--By itself, this temptation is as

2 Hinckley G. Mitchell, "The Modern Wall of Jerusalem." The Annual of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Volume 1 (1920), pp. 28-50. See in particular p. 29. <http://books.google.com/books?id=HVQPAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA29&lpg=PA29&dq=jerusalem+se+corner+height&source=bl&ots=2dVUHWhT7J&sig=jpVErsbYiRakFV2nIpSSy7uzw3Q&hl=en&sa=X&ei=XbrfUrvPKpXdoAT-nlCgBA&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=jerusalem%20se%20corner%20height&f=false>

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inscrutable as the first one is obvious. But Satan clarifies, with a verse of Scripture.

for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.--Satan's use of Scripture is another instance of broken symmetry (chart). This is the only time in the three temptations that he quotes Scripture. He presents the Lord with a verse from Ps 91, which promises God's protection to the righteous (chart):

Psa 91:11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

As with the Lord's quotation, let's consider both the meaning of the verse and the significance of Satan's use of it here (and his non-use in the other two temptations).

The meaning of the verse is a promise that God's angels will watch over the righteous man. The Psalmist reports the same truth that we read in Hebrews, where the author is showing that the Messiah is superior to the angels:

Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

It's a wonderful thing to have servants, beings whose whole purpose is to wait on you. But most of the time they are invisible. The temptation is crafted specifically to set up the conditions described in the verse, call forth their action, and bask in their attention. If they are to "bear up" the righteous "in their hands," the righteous must fall somewhere. So Satan urges, "Jump off the temple, and watch the angels come running to your rescue. You are the Son of God, after all. The Scripture promises that the angels serve you, support you, protect you. Demonstrate your superiority to them, and their subservience to you. Enjoy the prestige that is rightfully yours." This is a direct appeal to the pride of life, a temptation to play with the angelic bodyguard that Scripture teaches is there.

Now that we understand how Satan uses the text, let's consider the fact that he quotes scripture at all. Note three things.

1. Most of the time he doesn't care about scripture. This verse is an exception among the temptations. Satan isn't interested in being subject to the Word of God. It doesn't dominate and control his life. It comes in only when he can exploit it for his purposes.
2. When he does quote it, he removes it from context and distorts it. The whole Psalm celebrates the security of the person who "dwells in the secret place of the Most High" and makes the Lord his "habitation," trusting constantly in the Lord and taking refuge in him. In our verse, this condition is expressed by the qualification, "**in all thy ways.**" The Lord's ways are those that the Father has given him, not those that he dreams up himself. Satan omits this qualification, and the whole context of dependency on the Father. Peter (chart) describes this kind of abuse of Scripture (2 Pet 3:16) as "wresting" (twisting, stretching, perverting). There is a great difference between searching the Scriptures (diligently and honestly trying to understand what they say, so we can obey them) and wresting them (subverting them to support a pre-existing conclusion). The first is the joy of every godly believer (compare Acts 17:11), while the second is Satanic.
3. The third thing to note is that Satan can quote Scripture. He can present "the form of godliness"

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(2 Tim 3:5), and appear as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:4). We must be careful not to be deceived by such manipulations.

Application: Don't be fooled into thinking that everyone who quotes Scripture represents the Lord. Follow the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11), who attentively heard what Paul said from the Scriptures, but then searched the Scriptures themselves to verify his claims.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.--The Lord again responds with Scripture. Again he quotes from the early chapters of Deuteronomy (chart):

Deu 6:16 Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah.

Three things call for our attention here.

First, the Lord adjusts the plural of the original verse to the singular "thou." He does not cite it as a historical statement about others, but as a personal obligation.

Application: I should always be trying to figure out how the Scriptures apply to me. If the command is given to the congregation at large, I should recognize how it applies to me, and make it personal.

Second, the full verse refers to events at Massah from Exod 17. As is often the case, biblical quotations pull their context along with them. There was no water, the people complained, and the Lord directed Moses to strike the rock to provide water for them. After the event:

Exo 17:7 [Moses] called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

"Massah" is a noun from the Hebrew verb נסה "to try, to tempt," which the LXX regularly translates πειραζω, used in Matt 4:1 to characterize our Lord's temptations. Massah was named after the phenomenon of the people's tempting of the Lord. ("Meribah," from ריב "to strive, contend," also recalls their immature and faithless behavior.) If our Lord has been meditating on Israel's wilderness experience, he would have been drawn to this prototypical example of Israel's failure. As with his first citation, he has been preparing for the temptation by meditating on relevant Scripture.

Third, note Moses' explanation of what they did wrong. On the surface, they asked for water. But what they meant was, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" If the Lord had taken Satan's suggestion to call out the angels, he would have been testing God to see whether his promise is true. The need to see the angels come flocking is compelling only if one questions God's promise that they really are there. God told Israel that such an attitude was unacceptable. The Lord heeds that lesson, and declines the offer.

8-10, Lust of the Eyes: All the Kingdoms of the World

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him,--Note the omission of the challenge, "If thou be the son of God," which is surprising in light of the parallelism. Matthew will leave us in suspense until the very end of his book, when at the cross we hear (chart),

Mat 27:39 they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. **If thou be the Son of God,**

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come down from the cross.

Matthew sees the scene at Calvary as an extension of the testing in the wilderness. It provides the missing third challenge, “If thou be the Son of God.” In the wilderness, Satan’s identity was obvious. At Calvary, he disguised himself among the multitudes passing by, but his message is the same. “Since you are the Son of God, you ought to exploit your power and authority for your own gratification.”

Application: This broken symmetry carries much the same message as the lack of a special setting in the first temptation. They both warn of the subtle and hidden nature of temptation. Sometimes Satan’s engagement is obvious, but sometimes he is hiding, and we need spiritual discernment even to know that we are under attack, let alone to stand against it.

All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.--The offer is plausible. Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), a domain that our Lord temporarily relinquished when he told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). The Father has allowed Satan dominion over the earth for a season, and the character of those who attain to positions of power suggest that Satan does give authority over this world to those who honor him.

The temptation here is clearly the lust of the eyes, the desire to possess “all these things” and “the glory of them.” But it goes beyond just appealing to human desires. Now we see Satan’s own desires, to usurp the Father’s place as the object of worship.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence behind me, Satan:--As long as Satan was just playing with the Lord’s human desires, the Lord allows the interview to continue. But now that Satan has expressed his own wicked ambitions, the Lord asserts his authority over Satan and dismisses him. This is the fourth instance of broken symmetry in the passage (chart).

Our version is translated from a printed edition of the Greek NT known as the Textus Receptus (TR). In most places it agrees with the majority of the manuscripts, but this is one point at which it differs. In the TR, our Lord says simply, “Go away, Satan.” But the majority of the manuscripts read “Get thee behind me, Satan,” the very words that our Lord addressed later to Peter in 16:23.

Mat 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan:** thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

The Lord outlines the necessity (“he must”) of his death and resurrection. Peter rebukes him, rejecting the whole redemptive program. Like the words of the crowds by Calvary, this rebuke is a resumption of the Satanic temptation, and the Lord answers it as he answered Satan in the wilderness.

Application: Again, we are reminded that temptation is not always labeled. It may come from our closest friends. Even Job’s wife urged him to “curse God and die” (2:9). We must be on our guard.

for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.--For the third time, the Lord quotes from the early chapters of Deuteronomy:

Deu 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14

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Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you;

This time his reference is looser, but in a way that emphasizes his faithfulness to the context (chart).

- The Lord cites “worship” where Moses wrote “fear.” But this is not a great deviation:
 - “Worship” and “fear” are very close: “worship” means “to prostrate oneself,” the appropriate gesture to one whom we fear (Psa 5:7 in thy **fear** will I **worship** toward thy holy temple). The two occur in poetic parallelism:

Psa 96:9 O **worship** the LORD in the beauty of holiness: **fear** before him, all the earth.
 - Satan has just asked for his “worship,” so the Lord is adapting the citation to respond to the specifics of the temptation. This is an example of adapting his citation to the context of his current conversation.
- The Lord says “only,” where Moses does not, at least in v. 13, but in v. 14 he adds the negative. So by adding “only,” the Lord is able to capture the context of the original text.

In v. 6, we criticized Satan for changing Ps 91:11 by omitting the phrase “in all thy ways.” Yet here our Lord changes the text he cites, and in v. 7 he changed “you” to “thou.” The difference is that Satan’s changes obscure the meaning of the verse in its context and twist it to mean something that it does not mean. Our Lord’s modifications either personalize the verse (v. 7), or emphasize something in the context, allowing him to make his point more concisely. Incorporation of interpretation into the text is a practice known³ to be common in Jewish exposition around the turn of the era. He is neither misremembering the text nor distorting it, but integrating both his current context and the context of the original passage into a short, memorable citation that is faithful to both.

11, Conclusion

11 Then the devil leaveth him,⁴--Satan is ultimately subject to the Lord, and leaves when he is dismissed.

Three times Satan has sought to command the Lord, and each time, the Lord has resisted him. But the moment the Lord commands Satan, he departs. We immediately recognize who is the more powerful.

The Lord’s power to dismiss Satan lies behind Paul’s promise in 1 Cor 10:13 (chart). Interestingly, the context there, as here in Matthew, deals with Israel’s sins in the wilderness, and Paul’s wording there suggests that he may have the temptation story in mind.

- 1 Cor 10:1, 2 refers to the sea and the cloud (Exodus), but describes them as a “baptism” (Matt 3), another deliverance through water accompanied by the Lord’s visible presence.
- 1 Cor 10:6-11 recalls the full range of temptations in the wilderness.
- 1 Cor 10:12-13 present a negative warning and a positive encouragement.

³ The technique (“midrash pesher”) is common at Qumran. The work of E. Ellis is influential in demonstrating this technique in the NT, particularly in Paul; Stendahl points it out in Matthew.

⁴ In light of the clear resumptives of the temptation that Matthew marks by broken symmetry here and by repeated phrases in 16:23 and 27:39, it is curious that he does not insert at this point, as does Luke (4:13), that the Devil’s departure was only “for a season.”

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- The warning is against over-confidence, and recalls Israel's persistent failure.
- The encouragement is God's control over the entire process, who "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (1 Cor 10:13). We see this in our Lord's experience. This control is further evident in the word translated "way of escape," which may also be rendered "outcome" (as it does in its only other use in the canonical Greek Bible, Heb 13:7, "the end of their conversation").

Application: We should be encouraged in our temptations that God is in control. He is greater than the tempter, he allows the temptation to accomplish his purposes in our lives, and he will dismiss the tempter at the appropriate time. When we feel that we are under Satan's control, we must remember that he in turn is under the Father's control (chart of Geppetto and Pinocchio puppets).

and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.--Matthew's use of "behold" is interesting. In narrative text, this particle has the effect of calling attention to a thematic character, someone who is central to the narrative.⁵ The only other reference to angels in this passage is in Satan's quotation of Ps 91:11 in the second temptation. By marking their appearance here as central to the story, Matthew is bringing our minds back to that reference. He is saying, "God's promise in Ps 91:11 is true after all. The Lord Jesus is the object of the angels' solicitous care, and when he faithfully 'dwells in the secret place of the Most High,' they are faithful to care for him."

Application: Remember that the care of the angels is promised not only to the Son of God, but to all the "heirs of salvation," Heb 1:14. God's angels are watching over us, preserving us as we hold close to the Lord.

In fact, on reflection, all three of the appetites to which Satan appealed end up being satisfied (chart).

- The angels do come to minister to him.
- His fast did end
- One day, all the kingdoms of the earth will bow to him.

This observation reminds us that the point of temptation is often not so much **what** we do, as **when** we demand it. All three avenues of attack have legitimate roles in our lives. It's not wrong to want food, or the respect of others, or the enjoyment of beautiful things. But these must come in the Lord's time.

The temptation in the garden reflects this temporal emphasis. Satan's temptation to Adam and Eve was "you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). It's not wrong for us to want to know good and evil, but God's purpose is that we should learn this by experience:

Heb 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who **by reason of use** have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Satan tempted them to rush ahead of God's time, and he tempted our Lord to rush ahead of God's time. Our Lord's success, and their failure, consists largely in being willing to trust in God to bring about his purposes in his time.

⁵ Roger Van Otterloo, "Towards an Understanding of 'Lo' and 'Behold': Functions of ἰδοὺ and ἰδεῖν in the Greek New Testament." Occasional Papers in Translation and Textlinguistics 2:1 (1988), 34-64. Van Otterloo views Matt 4:11 as anomalous, but the explanation above shows that it fits very well with his theory.

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12-16 Return to Galilee

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;--If we compare this statement with John's gospel, we see that quite a bit has happened between the temptation and this trip to Galilee (chart).

- In John 1, the Lord is back in Galilee with John, meeting his first disciples.
- He returns to Jerusalem in 2:13 to clean the temple and meet Nicodemus.
- He is baptizing in Judaea in ch. 3.
- Then he returns again to Galilee in 4:1.

John is ministering openly through ch. 3, so the trip to Galilee in Matt 4:12 can be no earlier than that in John 4:1, and John's experience may explain why the Lord "must needs go through Samaria"--because an extended journey through Perea, down the Jordan Valley, near where John had been baptizing, would expose him to Herod.

These differences illustrate an important Bible study principle. The Bible authors are selective. Each one has a message to communicate, and he marshals their materials to communicate it most effectively.

13 And leaving Nazareth,--Luke 4:16-31 reports the immediate event that prompted the move from Nazareth to Capernaum. In his sermon in the synagogue, he claimed to be the promised Messiah of Isa 61:1-3. (chart)

Luk 4:28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way, 31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

As Matthew puts it,

he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:--This is not the first time the Lord is in Capernaum. He previously visited it, briefly, after the wedding in Cana of Galilee:

Joh 2:11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. 12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there **not many days**.

"His disciples" (from ch. 1) are John (the unnamed disciple), Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. At least Andrew, Peter, and Philip are from Cana. They accompany the Lord to the wedding (John 2:1), and afterward (map) the Lord visits their fishing village. But now "he came and dwelt" there.

Capernaum as a whole is not more responsive than Nazareth (Mat 11:20-24). But, unlike Nazareth, he did have a nucleus of disciples there. His move reflects a principle that he later conveys to his disciples:

Mat 10:11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. 12 And when ye come into an house, salute it. 13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14

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And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Application: Our responsibility is to expose people to the gospel, not to argue with them or force them to believe. If they will not receive our message, we are to move on to someone else.

Isaiah promised that the northern districts, which were the first to feel the oppression of Mesopotamian invaders, would also be the first to enjoy the blessing of the coming kingdom. When our Lord moves from Nazareth (in Zebulun) to Capernaum (in Naphthali), both of the tribes mentioned by Isaiah would be associated with his ministry:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.--Again Matthew emphasizes how our Lord fulfills the OT. The quotation is very close to Isa 9:1-2 (MT 8:23-9:1) (chart), and for the most part is even more literal than the MT. There are only a few deviations:

- Matthew omits the references to first despising, then honoring this part of the country. His point is the geographical reference, not a recounting of the history of Mesopotamian invasion.
- Instead of “walking” in darkness and “dwelling” in the shadow of death, he refers to those who “sat” in both places, reminding us of Ps 107:10 (chart), which in turn goes back to Isa 42:7, one of the Servant Songs. The references to bondage and imprisonment confirm that Ps 107 (probably post-exilic) is drawing on Isa 42:7. So Matthew’s slight modification is simply his way of linking the reference in Isa 9 with the Servant prophecy in Isa 42.

Beginning of the next part

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.--With the Lord’s message, compare the record of John the Baptist:

Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, **preaching** in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

The extra “ye” in 3:2 is a translation artifact; the statements are exactly the same. John is in prison, but the message must continue.

4:17, like 16:21, is a major heading. It introduces the second main section of the gospel. Recall the overall structure of Matthew (chart):

- 1:1-4:16 The Person of Jesus the King
- 4:17-16:20 The Proclamation of Jesus the King
- 16:21-28: 20 The Passion of Jesus the King

18-22 The Call of the Four

This section introduces the first of the two major sections of ch. 4-16, dealing with the Lord’s

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presentation of himself (chart). It is organized chiastically, with an interesting broken symmetry:

- It begins with the call of the four fishermen by Galilee (4:18-22), and ends with the call and sending out of the twelve (10:36-11:1).
- Next are two very similar summary statements emphasizing his threefold ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing. Note that they give equal and parallel prominence to the three themes.
 - Mat 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, **teaching** in their synagogues, and **preaching** the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing** all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.
 - Mat 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, **teaching** in their synagogues, and **preaching** the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing** every sickness and every disease among the people.
- The central chapters are examples of his teaching (5-7, the Sermon on the Mount) and healing (8-9). But these leave us asking what happened to the preaching.
- 10:5-11:1 is without parallel in the other sections, and gives instructions on how they are to preach. By its asymmetrical placement, along with its introduction in the summary verses, it commands special attention. Its emphasis on a broad outreach lays the foundation for the final commission of the church to “go and teach all nations” (28:19).

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son of* Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.--This is not the first time the Lord has met these men. John 1:35-42 tells us that the Baptist introduced Andrew and one other disciple to Jesus; this other disciple, unnamed throughout the fourth gospel, is usually understood to be John the son of Zebedee. Andrew goes on to introduce the Lord to his brother Peter. So both of these fishing families already knew the Lord. In fact, John 2:2 speaks of the Lord as already having “disciples” at the time of the wedding at Cana. So they were already associated with him before his move to Capernaum.

What is new about this call is that the Lord sets them apart for an itinerant ministry that will take them away from their profession. He is inviting them to join him in the extensive traveling described in 4:23 and 9:35, and this section will culminate (ch. 10) in his sending them out independently.

When the call comes, they obey him immediately (εὐθεὶς, translated “straightway” in v. 20).

Application: The preparation for the call, and their response, are both exemplary.

1. The Lord prepared them for the call. They had known him, and accompanied him on at least one occasion. So he prepares us for the commands he gives us. He will not give us a task for which he has not prepared us.

2. They responded immediately, without delay, and so should we.

What corresponds to such a call today, when the Lord is no longer walking the earth?

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The common understanding in Christendom is that it is up to the individual to sense this call. A young person “hears the call to the ministry,” goes to Bible School or Seminary, and on into “full-time Christian work.” But we see no evidence of this process in the NT.

In the book of Acts, the call comes through the local church, often at the initiative of an older brother. Consider some examples (chart).

- The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to look after events among Gentiles in Antioch:
Act 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and **they sent forth Barnabas**, that he should go as far as Antioch.
- Barnabas in turn went to get Saul to help him.
25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, **he brought him unto Antioch**. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.
- Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul with relief for the believers in Jerusalem
Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also **they did**, and **sent** it to the elders **by the hands of Barnabas and Saul**.
- Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey.
Act 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As **they** ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, **Separate me Barnabas and Saul** for the work whereunto I have called them.
- Paul and the church at Derbe-Lystra sent Timothy to work with Paul.
Act 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek: 2 Which was **well reported of by the brethren** that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 **Him would Paul have to go forth** with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

We live in an individualistic age. Books are written on “how to know the will of God for your life,” but the emphasis is on the individual awareness of an intangible call, not on the role of the church in that call. Yet it is the church, not any individual Christian, who is the body of Christ. And in Acts, as by the sea of Galilee, it is Christ who calls people to special service for himself.

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Application: This insight has two implications.

1. As individuals, we need to “submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21)
2. As a church, we need to be willing to sense the Lord’s leadership and be his mouth in calling one another to serve him.

23-25 Summary Statement

This statement is closely parallel to 9:35-38, continuing the chiasmic structure set up by the two “call” sections.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee,--His ministry at this point is focused on Galilee. Starting in 9:35, it is broader, extended to “all the cities and villages.” Perhaps the trip to Jerusalem mentioned in John 5 is encompassed within this broader range. The opposition stimulated by our Lord’s words in John 5 would fit well with the growing opposition noted in Matt 11ff.

In both summary verses, the ministry has three parts, which build on one another.

teaching in their synagogues,--As we see in Luke 4, in the synagogue service, after the reading of the assigned portion from the prophets, one of the men offered teaching based on it. The Lord took advantage of this existing custom. Matthew records no details of this aspect of his ministry.

and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,--The difference between teaching and preaching is mode of presentation, not content. Luke 4:15-27 shows that the synagogue ministry concerned the arrival of the Messianic king. “Preach” κηρυσσω is the action of a herald κηρυξ, who proclaims something openly, in contrast to the more structured setting of the synagogue service. The difference between “teach” and “preach” corresponds to the inclusion of Gentiles. They would not be found in a synagogue, but they might hear the message in the open street.

The contrast between the two is neatly captured by comparing the beginnings of the major discourses that concern each of these:

Ch. 5, where he presents the central content for teaching, begins,

Mat 5:1 when he was set, his disciples **came** unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and **taught** them,

To the disciples in ch. 10, he begins the instruction on preaching,

Mat 10:7 And as ye **go, preach,**

Teaching is what happens in the synagogues, where the faithful come together, eager to learn. Preaching reaches out to those who might not otherwise hear.

The content of his message, “the gospel of the kingdom,” is important enough to deserve special attention, in a moment. For now it is enough to note that he is proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God, the rule of God over the earth promised through the prophets.

and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.--The third aspect of his ministry is physical healing. We saw in Isaiah that the promised restoration would include an end to physical maladies:

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Isa 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
6 Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria:--Syria is the Roman title for the northern half of the Levant, brought under Roman rule by Pompey in 64 BC. It includes what we think of as Lebanon and Syria, but not yet Judaea or Galilee (which were incorporated in AD 135 after the Bar Kochba rebellion). This is thus a clear reference to Gentile interest in our Lord's ministry, and a result of the open "preaching" (as opposed to the "teaching" in synagogues) of the previous verse.

and they brought unto him all sick people [,--If v. 24a summarizes the result of "preaching," the second half of the verse amplifies the "healing." Matthew follows "all the sick people" with four subcategories.

those] that were taken with divers diseases and torments,--Here is the most comprehensive description of illness. But it is distinguished from three other cases.

and those which were possessed with devils,--The NT recognizes a particular condition, being possessed by an evil spirit.

and those which were lunatick,--It is interesting that Matthew distinguishes this case from the previous one. He is able to distinguish mental illness from demons.

Only here and in 17:15 does the Greek Bible use this term, which is usually understood of epilepsy. However, in ch. 17 the condition is later attributed to a demon (v. 18). It may be that the physical malfunctions associated with mental illness make such people particularly susceptible to possession, but our verse still shows that Matthew recognizes a difference.

and those that had the palsy;--These are people who are paralyzed.

and he healed them.--He is able to reverse all these forms of malady.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.--Decapolis and "beyond Jordan" would include significant numbers of Gentiles (chart), just as "Syria" does in v. 24. However, the list notably omits Samaria.

This early awareness of the Lord's ministry among Gentiles, like his healing ministry, is evidence of his Messianic impact. Isaiah promised Zion,

Isa 60:3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

The coming of Gentiles to seek healing from our Lord, like the coming of the kings in ch. 2, is a precursor of the great ingathering of the Gentiles, which exploded in the days of the early church, and will reach its culmination in the full realization of the kingdom at the Millennium.

Excursus on the Gospel of the Kingdom

v. 23 mentions "the gospel of the kingdom." What is this, and how does it compare with the gospel that we preach?

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When our Lord comes preaching “the gospel of the kingdom,” what would people naturally understand? The emphasis on the “kingdom” would remind them of the ancient promises. We saw when we began our study that Daniel’s teaching of a delay in the coming of the Messiah made Jews of this period particularly hopeful that the kingdom was near. If we imagine ourselves as first century Jews in Israel, we would naturally look to our OT, the LXX, to understand this theme. Let’s turn our attention first to the term, “Gospel,” then to the description of this gospel as dealing with the kingdom.

The OT Background

The Greek nouns “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελία) and the verb “preach the gospel” (εὐαγγελίζω)⁶ are concentrated in 2 Samuel 18 (noun 4x, verb 5x) and the second half of Isaiah (6x). The concentration in 2 Samuel 18 provides new insight for Isaiah’s use of the term, and both of them provide significant associations for Matthew and his readers (chart).

The concentration of these terms in 2 Samuel 18 is overwhelming (9x; no other OT chapter has more than two) (chart). This is the report of the messengers carrying news to David, the exiled king, that his son and rival Absalom has been slain. The good news is that a usurper to the throne has been removed. The other instances of the nouns, and most of the uses of the verbs, also fit this pattern (chart, see notes).

Isaiah’s use of the term (chart) reflects this theme as well. His vision of the Day of the Lord (ch. 2) is a restoration of the rule of the earth to the proper King, after it has been usurped by ungodly Jewish rulers (e.g., ch. 28) and pagan powers (Assyria and Babylon). The restoration of rule to the proper King is good news.

Isaiah’s first use of the term pictures Zion as the evangelist.⁷

Isa 40:9 O Zion, that **bringest good tidings**, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that **bringest good tidings**, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Note the content: God has come. The king has arrived. Isaiah’s “good tidings” are the news about the coming kingdom. Then the Gentiles bring their tribute to Jerusalem, this good news is on their lips:

Isa 60:6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall **shew forth** the praises of the LORD [LXX “**tell the good news** of the salvation of the Lord”].

In the other cases, the evangelist is a single individual:

Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that **bringeth good tidings**, that publisheth peace; that **bringeth good tidings** of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to **preach good tidings** unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

⁶ See notes for discussion of the very close relation between these terms and the Hebrew vocabulary.

⁷ This “Jewish mission” is also prophesied (though without the verb εὐαγγελίζω) in 2:3; 37:31-32; and notably 66:19.

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This last verse is the one that our Lord used to describe his ministry, according to Luke 4:18. Isaiah's Redeemer describes himself as an evangelist. The good news he bears is the defeat of the Lord's enemies and the establishment of his rule over all the earth, and our Lord claims to be that Redeemer.

To Jews in the first century, a subject people under pagan Rome, this message would indeed be good news, and the Lord did remove Rome, as he earlier removed Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon from their oppressive positions over his people. But the Lord's mission goes far beyond a geopolitical one. The Jews recognized at least since the time of Daniel (10:12-21) that the nations of the world were ruled by malevolent spirits, an insight that Paul summarizes by describing Satan as "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). The NT repeatedly presents our Lord's mission as defeating Satan and ending his illegitimate rule over the earth (chart):

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; **it shall bruise thy head**, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Mat 12:28-29 But if I **cast out devils** by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first **bind the strong man?** and then he will spoil his house.

Joh 12:31-33 Now is the judgment of this world: **now shall the prince of this world be cast out.**

Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, **triumphing over them in it.**

Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might **destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;**

So the "gospel of the kingdom" is ultimately the good news that Satan, the usurper to God's authority over his creation, is defeated, and "the rule of God is at hand."

The Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Grace of God

This last point is extremely important. Our Lord taught his disciples (chart),

Mat 24:14 And **this gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Many of us have been taught that the gospel that we preach, and that Paul preached, is different from this, something that Paul calls "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). We would turn to 1 Cor 15 to define it as the message that the Lord Jesus has died and risen again to take away his people's sin.

But it may be a mistake to draw too bright a line between these. The kingdom was central in the preaching of the early church:

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip **preaching** the things concerning **the kingdom of God**, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Act 14:21 And when they had **preached the gospel** to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples,

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and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into **the kingdom of God**.

Act 19:8 And [Paul] went into the synagogue [in Ephesus], and **spake boldly** for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning **the kingdom of God**.

Act 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify **the gospel of the grace of God**. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone **preaching the kingdom of God**, shall see my face no more.

Act 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom **he expounded and testified the kingdom of God**, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

Act 28:30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 **Preaching the kingdom of God**, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

How about 1 Cor 15? Its focus is on the mechanism by which the Lord has saved us:

1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

But we should read the whole chapter. The heart of 1 Cor 15 is Paul's recounting of the history of the world, including the kingdom:

1Co 15:24-25 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For **he must reign**, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

In fact, the reason Paul insists on the physical nature of the resurrection is the coming kingdom:

1Co 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit **the kingdom of God**; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

The death and resurrection of our Lord are central to what we preach, but they are not separate from "the gospel of the kingdom." Isaiah foretold them as part of what was necessary for the Redeemer to restore Zion. Without the forgiveness of sin, the kingdom would have no citizens.

It is common in some circles to distinguish "the gospel of the kingdom" from "the gospel of the grace of God." The latter phrase appears only once, in Acts 20:24, and in the very next verse Paul describes his ministry as "preaching the kingdom of God." In fact, the gospel is described in many different ways (chart, see notes), each with its own emphasis:

- Most commonly (14x) as the gospel of Christ, the **messenger** who brings it.
- Next (8x) as the gospel of God, the **one who sent** it.

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- 4x as the gospel of the kingdom, the primary **content**
- 2x with reference to its **audience** (the gospel of the circumcision, of the uncircumcision)
- 2x (from Isaiah 52:7) the gospel of peace, the **effect** it brings
- 1x each the gospel of the grace of God (explaining God's **motive**), and of your salvation (**effect**, as in "the gospel of peace").

There are not seven different gospels. It is all one gospel, considered from different facets.

The primary purpose of redemption is not to get us into heaven. Quite the contrary, its primary purpose is to get us into the coming earthly kingdom. The wicked will have "no peace," as Isaiah repeatedly reminds us, and will be excluded from those blessings. The ultimate point of the Good News is that the usurper has been defeated, God's rule is drawing nigh, and he has made a way for us to enter into it as citizens, not to be banished as rebels.

Matthew 5-16, focusing on our Lord's proclamation, sets forth this "gospel of the kingdom."

Notes

Structure of ch 3-4

Review of 1-4:

- ch. 1 establishes the Lord as the son of David.
- ch. 2 begins in Judaea and ends in Galilee ("that he should be called a Nazarene")
- ch. 3:1-4:16 begin in Judaea and end in Galilee. The Lord comes from Galilee to be baptized, then returns there. Suggests that 4:12-16 is
 - parallel to 2:22-23, cf. Reference to Nazareth
 - rounds out inclusio from 3:13.

"Tempt" *πειραζω*

Dedicated in the LXX to *πειραζω*, which in turn is dedicated to *πειραζω*.

The word is used of Israel's wilderness experience:

Deu 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deu 8:16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

Of specific testings:

Exo 15:25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

Exo 16:4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and

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the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

Exo 20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

Deu 33:8 And of Levi he said, *Let* thy Thummim and thy Urim *be* with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, *and with* whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

The verb is also used repeatedly of how Israel tempted the Lord in the desert:

Num 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

Exo 17:2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

Exo 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

Deu 6:16 Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah.

Psa 78:18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

Psa 78:41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

Psa 78:56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

Psa 95:8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and as in* the day of temptation in the wilderness 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

Psa 106:14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

In all, 6x of God's testing Israel, and 9x of God's testing Israel; 15/36 hits are with reference to the the wilderness experience.

Israel in the Wilderness

How did Israel fail in the wilderness? Do these align with the Lord Jesus' three temptations?

Num 14:22 all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

The Rabbis enumerated ten temptations in the wilderness: see Gill, K&D.

	1J2 category	Arakin 15b	Companion Bible
Ex 14:11-12 fear of death before the Egyptians	Pride of life	2 (going down, coming up)	1

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	1J2 category	Arakin 15b	Companion Bible
Ex 15:23 Bitter water at Marah	Lust of flesh	x	2, 3
Ex 16:2-3 no food in Wilderness of Sin	Lust of flesh	x	
Ex 16:20 keeping manna overnight	Lust of flesh	x	4
Ex 16:27 gathering manna on Sabbath	Lust of flesh? Pride of life?	x	5
Ex 17:2 no water	Lust of flesh	x	6
Ex 32:1-35 golden calf	Lust of eyes	x	7
Nm 11:1 complaining at Taberah		x	8
Nm 11:4 desire for flesh at Kibrot haTaavah	Lust of flesh	x	9
Nm 12 Miriam and Aaron protest against Moses	Pride of life		
Nm 13-14 refusal to enter the land	Pride of life		10
These follow 14:22:			
Nm 16 Korah	Pride of life		
Nm 20:3 water	Lust of flesh		
Nm 21:5 serpents: lack of meat and water	Lust of flesh		
Nm 25 whoredom with dtrs of Moab	Lust of flesh		

Arakin 15b: These are (1) at the Red Sea (Exod 14:11–12); (2) at Marah (15:23); (3) in the Sin Wilderness (16:2); (4–5) twice at Kadesh (16:20, 27); (6) at Rephidim / Massah / Meribah (17:2–7); (7) at Sinai (32:1–35); (8) at Taberah (Num 11:1); (9) at Kibroth Hattaavah (11:4–34); and (10) here at Kadesh in the Zin Wilderness (13:1–14:45) ('Arakin 15b). The rabbis described them as two at the Red Sea, two for water, two for food, two for flesh, one for the idolatry of the golden calf, and one for the spies. Cf. also Ashley, *Numbers*, 260–61; Gray, *Numbers*, 158.⁸

Gray: The Talmud ('Arakin 15a 6) takes "ten" literally, and explains by reference to two temptations at the Red Sea (Ex. J411, Ps. 1067), two in demanding water (Ex. 1523 172), two for food (Ex. 1620·2'1), two for flesh (Ex. 1681 Nu. II'), the golden calf, and the spies.

It was taught: R. Judah said, With ten trials did our forefathers try the Holy One, blessed be He: two at the sea, two because of water, two because of manna, two because of the quails, one in connection with the golden calf, and one in the wilderness of Paran, 'Two at the sea': one at the going down, the other at

⁸ Cole, R. D. (2000). *Vol. 3B: Numbers*. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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the coming up.

Companion Bible:

- (1) At Red Sea (Exo 14:11, Exo 14:12).
- (2) At Marah (Exo 15:23, Exo 15:24).
- (3) Wilderness of Sin (Exo 15:23, Exo 15:24).
- (4, 5) Twice about manna (Exo 16:20, Exo 16:27).
- (6) At Rephidim (Exo 17:1-3).
- (7) At Horeb (golden calf) (Exo 32).
- (8) At Taberah (Num 11:1).
- (9) At Kibroth Hattaavah (Num 11:4).
- (10) Here, at Kadesh (Num 14:2).

Forty Days and Forty Nights

There are many time periods of 40 in the OT. Several are prominent.

Period of Judgment

- Days, Gen 7:4, 12 (& nights), 17; 8:6, the duration of the flood
- Years, Ezek 29:11-13, desolation of Egypt
- Days, Ezek 4:6, duration of Ezekiel's lying on his right side, a day for a year

40 years of wandering (from 40 days of spying)

- Days, Num 13:25; 14:34, duration of the spies' survey of the land; each year of wandering corresponds to a day
Num 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.
- Years, Num 14:33; 32:13; Deu 2:7; 8:2, 4; 29:5; Jos 5:6; Neh 9:21; Psa 95:10; Amos 2:10; 5:25; Acts 7:36, 42; 13:18; Heb 3:9, 17, wilderness wandering
- Years, Exo 16:35, duration of the manna

40 days of fasting

- Days and nights, Ex 24:18; Deut 9:9, 11, Moses is in the mount to receive the instructions for the Tabernacle and the tables of the law; no food or water
- Days and nights, Ex 34:28; Deut 9:18; 10:10, Moses in the mount to replace the tables and intercede with God; without food or drink,
- Days and nights, Deut 9:25, Moses interceding for the people after they refused to enter the land
- Days and nights, 1 Ki 19:8, Elijah's fasting journey to Horeb

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Period of Rule

- Years, Jud 3:11; 5:31; 8:28, rest under Othniel, Deborah, Gideon
- Years, Jud 13:1, period of Philistine dominance
- Years, 1 Sam 4:18, length of Eli's judgeship
- Years, 2 Sam 5:4; 1 Ki 2:11; 1 Chr 29:27, David's rule over Israel
- Years, 1 Ki 11:42; 2 Chr 9:30, duration of Solomon's rule
- Years, 2 Ki 12:1; 2 Chr 24:1, length of rule of Jehoash/Joash
- Years, Acts 13:21, Saul's rule

Age at a momentous event

- Years, 2 Sam 2:10, Ishbosheth's age at coronation
- Years, Acts 7:23, Moses' age when he visited his brethren

Others

- Days, Gen 50:3, the mourning for Jacob in Egypt
- Years, Acts 7:30, time of Moses exile from Egypt
- Days, 1 Sam 17:16, period during which Goliath taunted Israel
- Days, Jon 3:4, interval before judgment comes on Nineveh
- Days, Acts 1:3, post-resurrection ministry of our Lord

Chronology of 4:12

4:12-13 put our Lord's return to Galilee, and transfer of his base from Nazareth to Capernaum, after John's imprisonment.

Neither Mark nor Luke notes a temporal relation between John's death and our Lord's return to Nazareth:

- Mark 6:17 simply reports John's imprisonment as a flash-back when Herod wonders whether Jesus is John risen from the dead.
- Luke 3:20 reports John's imprisonment before the Lord's baptism, but as a conclusion to his description of John's ministry, without any indication of temporal order.

How does this line up with John's chronology?

- 1:28 puts both John and Jesus together at Bethany beyond Jordan, probably on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee (see notes to Matt 3), subsequent to the Lord's baptism (since John has already seen the Spirit descending, 1:32).
- In 2:1, he is in Cana of Galilee
- 2:12, he visits Capernaum for "not many days"
- 2:13, he goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, cleanses the temple, and (ch. 3) meets with Nicodemus

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- 3:22-24, the Lord comes with his disciples and baptizes in Judaea, and John in Aenon near Salim (probably near the mouth of the Wadi Farah, which would be in Manasseh). The Lord was already in Jerusalem; did he return to Galilee, get the disciples, and then come back? But they would also have come to passover. Or did the Lord simply go from the urban area into the countryside (Carson)? Westcott compares Mark 1:5; Acts 16:20 to this effect.
- 4:1, return from Judaea to Galilee through Samaria. This appears to correspond to the return in Matt 4:12
- 5:1, returns to Jerusalem. In 5:33, speaks of John’s ministry in the past tense.
- 6, Galilee (feeding of 5000, aligns with Matt 14, which is said to follow the death of John)
- 7, back in Jerusalem for Tabernacles; remains in Judaea through ch. 20
- 21, meets disciples in Galilee, cf. Matt 28

The Herod who killed John was Antipas, son of Herod the Great of ch. 3, who ruled over Galilee and Perea (the east bank of Jordan). John in Aenon would have been close to this region, and thus exposed to Antipas. Our Lord in going through Samaria in John 4 may have been trying to avoid this region (though his destination, Galilee, was also under the rule of Antipas). France understands “withdraw” in Matt 4:12 *αναχωρεω* as indicating evasion, but the Lord is moving into Antipas’ area of control.

The root εὐαγγελ* in the LXX

The NT neuter noun “gospel” ο εὐαγγελιον appears only once, of the report of Saul’s death brought to David in hope of reward in 2 Sam 4:10.

The feminine noun η εὐαγγελια, which appears nowhere in the NT, occurs five times, four in 2 Sam 18:20-27, and once when the lepers discover that the hosts of Ben Hadad have abandoned their siege of Samaria, 2 Ki 7:9.

The verb εὐαγγελιζω appears 22x, most commonly in 2 Samuel (7x, five in ch. 18) and the second half of Isaiah (6x).

These are clearly both the dominant and the dedicated translations of the Hebrew noun בשרה and verb בשר D (table). So the Hebrew terms appear in the same contexts that the Greek ones do.

The noun is always in a setting of deliverance from an oppressive or usurping ruler. The prominence of the verb in 2 Sam 18 reinforces this, and this meaning is appropriate for Isaiah with his focus on the Day of the Lord (ch. 2) and the rule of both ungodly Jewish rulers (e.g., ch. 28) and pagan powers.

	Verb בשר	Noun בשרה	Other	Total
το εὐαγγελιον		1	0	1
η εὐαγγελια		5	0	5
εὐαγγελιζω	21		2	23
αναγγελω	1			
παραγγελω	1			
Other	1	0		
Total	24	6		

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The Gospel of X

The kingdom 4x

Matthew 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching **the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Matthew 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the **gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Matthew 24:14 And this **gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the **gospel of the kingdom of God**,

Jesus Christ, Christ 14x

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the **gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**;

Romans 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the **gospel of his Son**, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the **gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Romans 15:19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the **gospel of Christ**.

Romans 15:29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the **gospel of Christ**.

1 Corinthians 9:12 If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the **gospel of Christ**.

1 Corinthians 9:18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the **gospel of Christ** without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious **gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

2 Corinthians 9:13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the **gospel of Christ**, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

2 Corinthians 10:14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the **gospel of Christ**:

Galatians 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the **gospel of Christ**.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the **gospel of Christ**: that whether I

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come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

1 Thessalonians 3:2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the **gospel of Christ**, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

2 Thessalonians 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the **gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**:

God 8x

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the **gospel of God**,

Romans 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the **gospel of God**, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

2 Corinthians 11:7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the **gospel of God** freely?

1 Thessalonians 2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the **gospel of God** with much contention.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the **gospel of God** only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the **gospel of God**.

1 Timothy 1:11 According to the glorious **gospel of the blessed God**, which was committed to my trust.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the **gospel of God**?

Audience 2x

Galatians 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the **gospel of the uncircumcision** was committed unto me, as *the gospel of the circumcision* was unto Peter;

Peace 2x (from Isa 52:7)

Romans 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the **gospel of peace**, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Ephesians 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the **gospel of peace**;

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Others 2x

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the **gospel of the grace of God**.

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the **gospel of your salvation**: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,