Single-Minded Obedience
Matthew 4:1-11
SS Lesson for 02/02/2020

Devotional Scripture: 1 Peter 5:6-11

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

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Key Verse: Matt 4:10
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

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How to respond to the yielding to sin (from the teaching of Charles Stanley)
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The Three ways Satan Tempts (1 John 2:15-16)
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    We must not yield to our sinful nature because we are children of God (Romans 8:12-14)
    Instead of yielding to our sinful nature, we must live to please the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16)
  Lust of the eye (from Barnes’ Notes)
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- Worship God only because no one can serve more than one master (Matt 6:24)
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Obedience through resisting Satan (10)
- Resist Satan by not giving him a foothold (Eph 4:27)
- Resist Satan by putting on the full armor of God (Eph 6:11-13)
- Resist Satan by submitting to God (James 4:7)
- Resist Satan by being alert and self-controlled (1 Thess 5:6)
- Resist Satan by praying that we will not fall into temptation (Matt 26:41)

Obedience through sustenance of God (11)
- God sustains by upholding those who fall (Ps 37:23-24)
- God sustains from birth (Ps 71:6)
- God sustains through providing a willing spirit (Ps 51:12)
- God sustains because He will never forsake His own (Ps 55:22)
- God sustains because He promised to do so (Ps 119:116)
- God sustains because He always finishes what He starts (Phil 1:6)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

Commentary Thoughts from Allen Ross
Analysis of the Temptations
Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Churches with a liturgical heritage have long observed the “fast of Lent.” Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a 40-day period of self-denial loosely patterned on Jesus’ 40-day fast before His temptation. Traditionally, Lent has involved denying oneself certain foods. However, many churches now promote fasting as a self-discipline during that 40-day period since many people are given to consuming large quantities of food. Other disciplines encouraged are those of Bible study and prayer as replacements for unhealthy practices involving body and/or spirit. The hope, of course, is that the 40 days will shape the rest of one’s year. Proverbs 25:28 likens the lack of self-control to a city whose walls are broken down and therefore defenseless. How Jesus maintained His self-discipline when His defenses seemed at their lowest is still a model for us some 20 centuries later.

The time of preparation for Jesus’ ministry was almost over but not quite. By the point where today's lesson begins, Matthew has told us of the work of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah (Matthew 3:1-12). John’s ministry intersected with that of the Messiah himself at the baptism of Jesus. Done “to fulfil all righteousness” (3:15), Jesus’ baptism was a kind of anointing. It showed that He had accepted the task given to Him and that He had the approval of both the Holy Spirit and the Father (3:16, 17). The account of Jesus’ temptation as recorded in Matthew 4 gives far more detail than the summary in Mark 1:12, 13. The parallel account in Luke 4:1-13 offers additional insights. The most obvious difference between the accounts in Matthew and Luke is the order in which the temptations are recorded. Luke reverses the second and third from Matthew’s order, which is usually understood to be the original. Luke's reason for this change is not immediately apparent. Otherwise, the three accounts agree regarding the historical fact of Jesus' temptations. Use of the term “the holy city” to refer to Jerusalem in today's text reveals that Matthew was rooted in the Jewish faith (compare Matthew 4:5; 27:53 with Nehemiah 11:1; Isaiah 52:1). By contrast, Luke, of Gentile background (implied in Colossians 4:11, 14), never uses that term (contrast Matthew 4:5 with Luke 4:9).
Key Verse: Matt 4:10

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.'"

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

4:1-2. After being baptized, Jesus was led immediately by the Spirit of God into the desert (traditionally near Jericho; see map) for a period of testing. This period of time was a necessary period under God’s direction—a time in which the Son obeyed (Heb. 5:8). After fasting 40 days, when the Lord was hungry, the tests began. From God’s standpoint the tests demonstrated the quality of the Lord. It was impossible for the divine Son to sin, and that fact actually heightened the tests. He could not give in to the tests and sin, but He had to endure until the tests were completed.

4:3-4. The first test pertained to the matter of sonship. Satan assumed that if He were the Son, perhaps He could be persuaded to act independently of the Father. Satan’s test was subtle for since He is the Son of God, He has the power to turn the stones all around Him into bread. But that was not the will of His Father for Him. The Father’s will was for Him to be hungry in the desert with no food. To submit to Satan’s suggestion and satisfy His hunger would have been contrary to God’s will. Jesus therefore quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, which affirms that man does not live on bread alone, but by God’s Word. It is better to obey God’s Word than to satisfy human desires. The fact that Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy showed that He recognized the inerrant authority of that book, one often criticized by scholars.

4:5-7. The second test by Satan appealed to personal display or popularity. This test built on the first, for if He is the Son of God and the Messiah, nothing could harm Him. Satan took Him to... the highest point of the temple. Whether this was actual or simply a vision cannot be determined dogmatically. Here Satan made a subtle suggestion to Jesus as the Messiah. In effect he was reminding Jesus of Malachi’s prophecy (Mal. 3:1), which had led to a common belief among the Jews that Messiah would suddenly appear in the sky, coming down to His temple. Satan was saying, in essence, “Why don’t You do what the people are expecting and make some marvelous display? After all, the Scripture says His angels will protect You and You won’t even hurt a foot as You come down.” Satan may have thought if Jesus could quote Scripture to him, he could quote it too. However, he purposely did not quote Psalm 91:11-12 accurately. He left out an important phrase, “in all Your ways.” According to the psalmist, a person is protected only when he is following the Lord’s will. For Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in some dramatic display to accommodate Himself to the people’s thinking would not have been God’s will. Jesus responded, again from Deuteronomy (6:16), that it would not be proper to test... God and expect Him to do something when one is out of His will.

4:8-11. Satan’s final test related to God’s plan for Jesus. It was and is God’s design that Jesus Christ rule the world. Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world with all their splendor. These kingdoms presently are Satan’s, as he is “the god of this Age” (2 Cor. 4:4) and “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; cf. Eph. 2:2). He had the power to give all these kingdoms to Jesus at that time—if only Jesus would bow down and worship him. Satan was saying, “I can accomplish the will of God for You and You can have the kingdoms of this world right now.” This of course would have meant Jesus would never have gone to the cross. He supposedly could have been the King of kings without the cross. However, this would have thwarted God’s plan for salvation and would have meant Jesus was worshiping an inferior. His response, once again from Deuteronomy (6:13 and 10:20), was that God alone should be worshiped and served. Jesus resisted this temptation also.

Interestingly Satan’s temptations of Eve in the Garden of Eden correspond to those of Jesus in the desert. Satan appealed to the physical appetite (Gen. 3:1-3; Matt. 4:3), the desire for personal gain (Gen. 3:4-5; Matt. 4:6), and an easy path to power or glory (Gen. 3:5-6; Matt. 4:8-9). And in each case Satan altered God’s Word (Gen. 3:4; Matt. 4:6). Satan’s temptations of people today often fall into the same three categories (cf. 1 John 2:16). The One who had identified Himself with sinners by baptism and who would provide righteousness proved He is righteous, and revealed His approval by the Father. Satan then left Jesus. At that moment God sent angels to minister to His needs.
Major Theme Analysis
(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Process of Temptation (Overview)

Steps of the tempter (from the teaching of Charles Stanley)

- Compliments - to bring down defenses
- Suggestions - to slowly bring me around to the same thinking
- Sin - the actual act of disobedience

How to respond to the yielding to sin (from the teaching of Charles Stanley)

1. Repent before God
   - Complete repentance:
     - Confess guilt to God
     - Recognize sin is against God
     - Assume full responsibility for sin
     - Be totally open and honest with God about sin
     - When repentance comes quickly, punishment/discipline is less or reduced (Stanley's interpretation)
2. Accept the forgiveness of God
3. Make restitution
4. Accept God's discipline willingly
   - 2 Sam 12:10 (God's discipline on David)
     Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'
5. Learn from failures
   A. Humility - Put God first
   B. Purity - God cleanses
   C. Instruction - God teaches us how not to repeat
6. If we continue to struggle with a particular temptation, seek Godly instruction/counsel
7. Share WISELY God's Grace and God's Power in our temptation experiences (Ps 51:13)
   Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

How to Respond to Temptation (James 1:12-21)

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. 16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. 19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

1. See the benefits of resisting temptation (vs 12)
2. Take responsibility for our actions (vs 13-15)
3. Acknowledge God's goodness (vs 17)
4. See ourselves as the recipient of God's Grace (vs 17)
5. Exercise patience (vs 19)
6. Listen submissively to God (vs 21)
7. Put off all moral filth and evil (vs 21)
The Three ways Satan Tempts (1 John 2:15-16)

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Lust of the flesh

The phrase, "the lust of the flesh," here denotes that which pampers the appetites, or all that is connected with the indulgence of the mere animal propensities. (from Barnes' Notes)

Satan's first temptation focused on Jesus' physical weakness and hunger. The devil knew that after forty days of fasting, Jesus would have a strong desire for food as well as a genuine need for nourishment. He also knew that when an enticing opportunity (temptation) matches a person's inner desires, the conditions are right for sin to occur (James 1:14, 15). Our own experience with sin bears out this truth, for we can recall occasions when our moral judgment and good intentions were set aside because we felt overwhelmed by the desires of our flesh. (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Is driven by our sinful nature (Romans 7:18)

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

We must not yield to our sinful nature because we are children of God (Romans 8:12-14)

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. [13] For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, [14] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Instead of yielding to our sinful nature, we must live to please the Holy Spirit (Galatians 6:8)

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Lust of the eye (from Barnes' Notes)

That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly clothes, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to the frivolous vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life. It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty--for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life--when it is sought without any connection with religion or reference to the world to come

We must be careful what we see because the eye is the lamp of our soul (Luke 11:34-36)

Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. [35] See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. [36] Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

We must never let the desires of our eyes cause us to sin (Matthew 5:28-29)

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Pride of life

The phrase means, properly, ostentation or boasting, and then arrogance or pride.-Robinson. It refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride, or that is an index of pride, such as the ostentatious display of dress, equipage, furniture, etc. (from Barnes' Notes)
Pride causes destruction (Prov 16:18)
    Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride keeps me from thinking of God (Ps 10:4)
    In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Pride brings disgrace (Prov 11:2)
    When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Obedience During Weaknesses (Matt 4:1-4)

1 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.' "

Obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit (1-2)

Power of hope (Rom 15:13)
    13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Power to rest faith on (1 Cor 2:5)
    5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Power that comes through being a part of the kingdom of God (1 Cor 4:20)
    20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

Power to strengthen the inner being (Eph 3:16)
    16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.

Power that God gives through the Spirit of power (2 Tim 1:7)
    7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Obedience through being a child of God (3)

A child that overcomes weaknesses through love (1 John 3:10)
    10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

A child that overcomes weaknesses through freedom given by God (Rom 8:20-21)
    20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

A child that overcomes weaknesses through the righteousness of God (Phil 2:15)
    15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe
A child that overcomes weaknesses through the truth of God (1 John 5:18-20)

18 We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. 19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. 20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

A child that overcomes weaknesses through indwelling power of God (1 John 4:4)

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Obedience through the power of the God's Word (4)

Power of the Word to revive the soul (Ps 19:7-8)

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Power of the Word to keep one's life pure (Ps 119:9-11)

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. 10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Power of the Word to save the believers (Rom 1:16)

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Power of the Word as the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17)

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Power of the Word to provide hope (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Obedience Against Pride (Matt 4:5-7)

5 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.' "

Obedience through discerning Satan's schemes (5-6)

Discerning Satan's schemes by forgiving (2 Cor 2:10-11)

10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Discerning Satan's schemes through use of the full armor of God (Eph 6:11)

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.
Discerning Satan's schemes through Jesus' intercession for us (Luke 22:31-32)

31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Discerning Satan's schemes through being self-controlled and alert (1 Peter 5:8-9)

8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Obedience through depending on and trusting God (7)

Trusting in God and not worrying (John 14:1)

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

Trusting in the name of God (Ps 20:7)

7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Trusting in God and not fearing man (Ps 56:4)

4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

Trusting in God, our refuge, at all times (Ps 62:8)

8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Trust that must be proved faithful (1 Cor 4:2)

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Trust that relies on God not self (2 Cor 1:9)

9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Obedience Against Idolatry (Matt 4:8-11)

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.

Obedience through worshiping only God (8-9)

Worship God only because we are to serve Him only (Deut 6:13)

13 Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

Worship God only because we are to have no other gods (Exodus 20:3)

3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

Worship God only because God is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14)

14 Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.
Worship God only because He is the only One who can save us (Dan 3:16-18)
16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Worship God only because no one can serve more than one master (Matt 6:24)
24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Worship of God because He is due it (Ps 29:2)
2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Worship of God because He is the creator (Ps 95:6-7)
6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; 7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,

Obedience through resisting Satan (10)

Resist Satan by not giving him a foothold (Eph 4:27)
27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Resist Satan by putting on the full armor of God (Eph 6:11-13)
11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Resist Satan by submitting to God (James 4:7)
7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Resist Satan by being alert and self-controlled (1 Thess 5:6)
6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

Resist Satan by praying that we will not fall into temptation (Matt 26:41)
41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Obedience through sustainment of God (11)

God sustains by upholding those who fall (Ps 37:23-24)
23 If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; 24 though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

God sustains from birth (Ps 71:6)
6 From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you.

God sustains through providing a willing spirit (Ps 51:12)
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

God sustains because He will never forsake His own (Ps 55:22)
22 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.
God sustains because He promised to do so (Ps 119:116)

116 Sustain me according to your promise, and I will live; do not let my hopes be dashed.

God sustains because He always finishes what He starts (Phil 1:6)

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Allen Ross

Analysis of the Temptations

1. Turn stones into bread. The first temptation picks up immediately on the fact that Jesus was hungry, that he had not eaten for forty days. The tempter said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

There is a fine point of grammar here that you would probably learn from a good commentary (unless along the way you studied Greek). You can still understand the temptation without knowing it, but knowing it helps just that much more. Sentences that begin with “if” (called conditional sentences) have different meanings. Some are contrary to fact, and some are not contrary to fact. The way it is written in the original indicates the type. For example, Martha said to Jesus, “If you had been here [but you were not], Lazarus would not have died.” That is a condition contrary to fact. That is not what we have in the words of Satan here. When he said, “If you are the Son of God,” he did not mean “If you are the Son of God [but you are not],” but rather he meant “since you are the Son of God.” He knew who this was, and would build his temptation on it. He was saying, “Look, you are divine! Why should you be hungry? Just change some stones to bread.”

Now then, we have to ask what was wrong with that. Was there anything wrong with making something to eat? He had the power to do it. He multiplied food later for people who were hungry. So why was this a temptation?

The answer, I think, is that Jesus had come out into the wilderness to fast for forty days. That was a spiritual exercise that had a very important place in His life at the moment. But the devil wanted to ruin the mission of Jesus, and so if he could convince Jesus on this seemingly trivial thing to abandon a spiritual work, then he would have had him. The temptation was to turn His spiritual nature into a means of satisfying His material need without reference to finding the will of God. In fact, he would be doing the will of the devil. The devil simply chose a little thing for the test; but it would have destroyed the work of Christ.

The perfection of Jesus is displayed in His refusal. Hunger was not wrong, especially in a spiritual time of fasting (fasting was designed to focus attention on the spiritual and away from the comforts of life). And Jesus was announcing to Satan, and to all of us who will hear it, that it is better to be hungry than to be fed without any reference or recourse to the will of God. Satan had hit the nail right on the head--Jesus is the Son of God. But the essence of Sonship is obedience to the will of the Father. He would not, therefore, act independently of the will of the Father. Jesus knew that the Spirit had led Him into a place that necessitated hunger, and so He would fulfill that task.

In response Jesus quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” If you go back and read Deuteronomy 8 you will see that the topic there is about the Israelites hungering in the wilderness for forty years. God tested them in the wilderness so that they would learn that they must obey what comes from the mouth of God. He gave them Manna; but to acquire it and enjoy it required that they follow God’s instructions carefully. The main point was that if they obeyed the LORD He would provide their food. And so it was more important to obey God than to have all the food they could eat (recall that Adam and Eve chose to eat rather than obey God’s word).

So Jesus saw through the clever little ploy of Satan. He defeated the temptation by appealing to a clear principle of Scripture. But He was not just quoting a favorite verse; He was drawing in the whole context of the passage to show that if God puts you in a place of deprivation for some spiritual purpose you do not try to change it solely for the purpose of satisfying your physical needs. The first thing that the person must do is try to discover what God is doing through the deprivation, what spiritual growth is desired and how it should be achieved. This would show that one does not live by bread alone, but by everything that God says and does.

2. Throw yourself down from the temple. If the first test was in the realm of the physical, the second is a test of the spiritual. In fact, the test strikes at the heart of the previous victory. Jesus had escaped that temptation by showing that He was not just physical but spiritual, that He could accept the hunger and the weakness if it
meant obeying God. And so Satan wants Him to do something spectacular to demonstrate that He is spiritually perfect. Satan was saying to Jesus, “Very well, you have shown your trust in God in response to my first appeal; so now show your trust in God by flinging yourself from the pinnacle of the temple.” This, no doubt, was to be in full view of all the assembled people; they would witness that God was with Jesus in a very special way.

What is interesting now is that Satan himself quotes Scripture in making the appeal. He quotes from a psalm that says that God will give the angels charge over him so that he will not dash his foot against a stone (Ps. 91:11,12). The psalm is a psalm of trust, telling how God protects his people. It was never intended to be claimed apart from practical wisdom. God promises to protect His people; but He has also given them common sense.

The response to this temptation is a little more involved. At the outset one should consider the source: if the devil, or, more obviously for us, someone who has no inclination to obey Scripture, if such a person prompts you to do something that it looks like the Bible says you can do, you would be wise to think it through very carefully. A lot of Scripture is quoted out of context, or partially, and needs to be investigated.

Jesus’ response is also from Scripture: “It is also written, ‘You shall not put the LORD your God to the test.” This also comes from Deuteronomy, 6:16. This is the chapter in the Law that is foundational to Israel’s faith. It had the creedal statement in it, “Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone.” The chapter then exhorts the people to obey His commands, and to do what is good and right before Him--but warns them not to test God.

The moment an individual puts God to the test, that person gives evidence that he or she does not really trust God. The context of Deuteronomy 6:16 refers to Massa and Meribah in the wilderness where the people murmured against God and tested Him--because they did not believe He could or would give them water (“Massa” is one name; it is derived from the verb in Hebrew nasa, “to test”; the other name is “Meribah”; it is from the verb rib, “to strive”). A trust that is weak or wavering seeks a sign or a dramatic intervention to make it steady.

So Jesus said, “No, my trust is perfect; I do not need to do anything heroic to prove it. And I will not test God’s word by doing something foolish--at your prompting.” And so the spiritual nature of Christ retained its dignity and lived out its quiet, confident trust in the Father. He refused to do something dangerous to see if the angels would protect Him.

3. Fall down and worship me. The last temptation is amazing in its boldness. It is almost as if the devil realized he was not winning, and so with nothing to lose calls for Jesus to worship him. Its purpose was to prevent the work of the king, the work for which He had come into the world.

He took Jesus to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth. This verse seems to suggest something mystical, something supernatural. There is no mountain in Israel high enough to see much of anything. But the idea is probably that the devil provided some vision of these kingdoms. And the promise was that he would give them to Jesus if only Jesus would fall down and worship him. Luke adds that Satan claimed he had been given these kingdoms and it was his right to give them to whomever he wished. Satan was saying to Jesus, “Look, you came as the king to inherit the nations. Here they are. Why go through the trouble of being the suffering servant to get to the crown. Give me one moment’s homage and I will abdicate.”

Well, even in the words of Satan there were some clues that this was a malicious temptation. First, the offer was coming from the one who is the prince of liars. Who would knowingly do a deal with the devil? Jesus will later explain (John 8:44) that he was a liar from the beginning and the truth was not in him. What a lie this was. Did Satan actually imagine for one moment that the Son of God would believe him? Never would Satan have given him the kingdoms; that was simply the bait for him to bow before the evil one. Unfortunately, far too many people have believed the evil tempter. Adam and Eve surely did.

Second, all Satan could offer were the “kingdoms,” plural kingdoms--these warring, divided, conflicting powers and races in the world. Who wants them? The Father had promised the Son a Kingdom, united in peace and righteousness and harmony. Of course, there is no way to inherit such a kingdom apart from redemption, apart from changing human nature to make it fit for the kingdom, for without it there would never be peace and harmony in the world. Satan’s offer is a cheap substitute.

So Jesus’ response was, “Away from me Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the LORD your God, and serve Him only.’” This too comes from Deuteronomy (6:13). It is the cardinal truth of Scripture: worship God only. For the righteous there would not even be a thought of bowing down and worshiping the prince of darkness. Jesus would hold to that principle; He would never worship Satan. And so He would receive the kingdom in God’s
time, and in God’s way—by defeating Satan, first here in the temptation, and later at the cross. And His will be a far better kingdom than this world could ever offer.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/6-temptation-jesus-matthew-41-11)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the man who did not yield to temptation was confirmed during the three years Matthew lived closely with Jesus. Therefore, with full confidence that it was true, Matthew was able to write today's account of Jesus' successfully resisting temptations. Jesus' wilderness experience involved genuine temptations, offering Him the opportunity to sin. God was surely looking on this episode with a great desire and confidence that Jesus would not succumb. Even so, the Father probably still saw this as an important test of Jesus' character. This is true for us as well. God knows we are tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Some situations may even function as needed tests of our faith (1 Corinthians 11:19; James 1:1-3). God may test us (Exodus 16:4; etc.), but he never tempts us to sin (James 1:13-15). Successfully overcoming temptation builds character (1:2-4) and results in eternal life (1:12). Winning interim battles against everyday temptations prepares us for the great testing of faith that comes with life crises. How do we gain such triumphant self-control? This lesson gives us a pathway in that regard. First, self-control builds confidence as it is exercised. Second, self-control must be guided by Scripture. Third, we are never to forget that God is with us in our times of trial. Self-control is more successful when we know others are watching and supporting us. May we cooperate with God in allowing Him to strengthen our self-control!

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

In the Wilderness - After Jesus' baptism by John, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the barren Judean wilderness. He survived in that desolate place without food or water for 40 days. After the 40 days, Satan taunted Him with three temptations. God used these confrontations with the enemy to demonstrate to believers how to depend on the Lord and His Word in situations of temptation.

Appetite Temptation - Naturally, after an extended period without nourishment, Jesus endured hunger pains. The tempter offered Him bread. Jesus responded with Scripture, boldly telling Satan what His Father has said. God's Word will always be more precious than food.

Tempting God - The second test pulled at the human desire for public approval. Satan, once again, tried to force Jesus to do a supernatural act. He took Jesus up on the highest part of the temple and said if He jumped, angels would catch Him. The devil even quoted part of a psalm, but he twisted the words.

Materialism - The last test attempted to get Jesus to bypass the Cross. Jesus could have power over all the kingdoms of this world if He would just worship Satan, "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4, KJV). At this point, Jesus commanded Satan to leave. Immediately God's angels began to minister to Him.

How to Fight - This passage teaches Christians several lessons about being single-minded and obedient. First, if the enemy came after Jesus, surely he will attack Christ's followers. It's naïve to think Satan does not exist or he won't cause havoc and harm. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the Lord's weapon of choice. Jesus repeated in each of these confrontations, "It is written." He defeated Satan's lies with God's truth. It's fruitless to fight or resist this powerful enemy with human intellect, education, or common sense. Scripture is our defense against temptation so we may experience victory over the adversary.