

4:1-16 Concluding Matthew's Introduction to Jesus

4:1-11 The Temptation of Jesus

The Temptation evokes the memory of Israel's wandering through the wilderness. But where they failed in the face of temptation, Jesus succeeds. In other words, Jesus is continuing to "fulfil all righteousness" (3:15) - to walk the path that God intended for man - by heeding the call and claim of God in baptism, and now in resisting the call of sin.

Led by the Spirit

The Spirit which descended on Jesus now leads him into the wilderness. Even though Jesus was fully God, yet in becoming fully human, it is through the Spirit that he knows God's will and possess God's power - just as it is for Jesus' disciples today.

Fasting



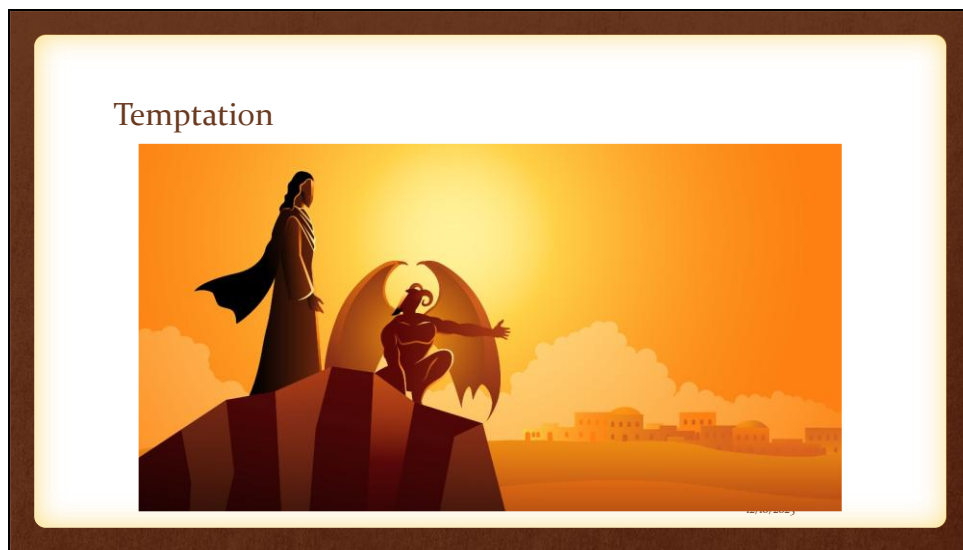
Fasting was a common religious practice among Jews and later among Christians, but we don't know all the details, and fasting might have varied across different people and times. A fast might only be during the day, or might limit you to certain basic foods and water.

That Jesus went into the wilderness suggests that he was severely limited in what he could have eaten (remember John the Baptist's diet, 3:4). Regardless of the details, 40 days is a very long time to be fasting. Jesus would no doubt have been very weak. But fasting was not a form of self-punishment. It was not intended to starve yourself. The point was to deprioritize the physical to focus on the spiritual. Food took a long time to prepare and gather. You had to work hard for food. And food brings us physical satisfaction. In fasting, we take time away from the work and effort that goes towards

preparing food, and we seek satisfaction through devotion and prayer to God instead. Fasting goes beyond food. How might we as Christians follow the example of Christ here?

Christ's fasting in the wilderness was an extreme example. This moment in his life called specially for it, and we might find that there are occasions in our life that call for the same focus. It is not expected that this extreme fasting is the norm, but it is expected that we have a regular (if less extreme) habit of "fasting" to focus on the spiritual. A time of worship or prayer with the church is a good example, as well as quiet time alone.

Temptation



The Spirit led him with the intention that the Devil would test him. What the devil did was not good, but God's purpose in it was good. God desires that we have the opportunity to prove our faith through trials. Jesus was given no special exemption. But he did demonstrate a special commitment to God that far exceeds our own ability, hindered by sin.

The devil tempts Jesus 3 times, and each time Jesus responds by quoting from the law (Deuteronomy).

- The devil tempts Jesus to end his fast - "you are hungry, and you can make food, so why not?" But this undermines the purpose which Jesus had at the time. His purpose was to set aside his physical needs and devote himself to God. He knew he needed to do this, in preparation for his ministry, because he knew that "man does not live by bread alone"
- Then the devil tempts Jesus to prove God's promises - "Can you really trust God in this ministry? You should prove him first!" But what Satan asks Jesus to do is not faith, but presumption. Faith does not attempt to force God to act. Faith bows humbly before God and welcomes whatever path God will lay.

- Finally the devil is very bold. He offers Jesus a path that subverts the purpose God has for him - "Why endure rejection and suffering, when I just give you the glory that is yours now!" But Jesus was committed to the path God had given - the way of the cross. He trust that God's way is the best way, and he was prepared to embark on a ministry that would cause him great suffering and death, knowing that through it God would bring great joy in the salvation of many, and the exaltation of Christ over all.

4:12-16 Jesus settles in Capernaum.

The first part of Matthew's introduction to Jesus (his infancy) ended with him settling in Nazareth. A little known place. Now, at the commences of his ministry he resettles in Capernaum. This is a step out into the public view. He brings himself closer to the crowds and gives himself a strategic base for mission.

He once again closes with a quotation of fulfilled prophecy from Isaiah 9.

4:17 - 16:20 - The Ministry of Jesus



"From that time Jesus began to preach..." (4:17, cm. 16:21)

The second (and main) section of Matthew's gospel brings us into the public ministry of Jesus including his teaching and miracles.

4:17-9:35 - The Authority of Jesus' Ministry

Includes the Sermon on the Mount (ch. 5-7), along with the calling and teaching of disciples (4:18-22; 9:9-17), and many miracles (4:23-25; 8:1-17, 23-34; 9:1-8, 18-35).

The subsection opens and closes with almost identical summaries of Jesus' ministry. These explicitly tell us the two parts of Jesus ministry - teaching & proclaiming, and healing

- 4:23 "he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction ..."
- 9:35 "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction."

4:17-25

These passages form an introduction to the subsection.

4:17

Jesus' message is a direct continuation of John the Baptist's

4:18-22

Discipleship is a big theme in Matthew. Here we see the radical nature of following Jesus. These fishermen left behind their work and family to follow him. A disciple was a highly committed student of some teacher (called a Rabbi). They would dedicate their time to listening, learning, serving and ultimately emulating their teacher, spreading their teaching to others also - this is exactly the model of discipleship that Jesus calls us to as well.

4:23-25

Matthew is not concerned with giving us a detailed chronicle of the ministry of Jesus. He has certain goals, which require him to be selective in his focus. Hence, he is content to give us a wide-ranging summary of Jesus preaching, teaching and healing. Jesus has firmly stepped out of obscurity and into the spotlight.