

Stage III. The Early Judean Ministry

A. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

4. Jesus Begins His Ministry With 40 Days of Fasting and Prayer to Overcome Temptation

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #030 MT. 4.1-11 (Parallel Texts: MK 1.12-13; LK 4.1-13)

¹ ^LJesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was ^{MT}led forcefully by the Spirit into the wilderness ^Lwhere he was tempted by the devil (^Msatan) for forty days, and ^Mhe was with the wild animals. ^LHe ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them, ² ^{MT}after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

³ The Tempter came to him and said, "Since you are the Son of God, speak to these stones so they will turn into bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "*It stands written: 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT COMES FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'*" (Duet. 8.3)

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city ^Lof Jerusalem ^{MT}and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "Since you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it stands written:

'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO ^LGUARD YOU, ^{MT}AND THEY WILL LIFT YOU UP IN THEIR HANDS, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" (Ps. 91.11-12)

⁷ Jesus answered him, "*It also stands written: 'DO NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'*" (Duet 6.16)

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor ^Lin one moment of time.

⁹ "All this I will give you--^Lall their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give to anyone I want to," he said,. ^{MT}"So if you will bow down and worship me, ^Lit will all be yours."

¹⁰ ^{MT}Then Jesus said to him, "*Away from me, Satan! For it stands written: 'WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'*" (Duet. 6.13)

¹¹ ^LWhen the devil had finished all of this tempting, ^{MT}the devil left him ^Luntil a favorable time, ^{MT}and angels came and ministered to him.

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	The wilderness of Judea, West of the Jordan River

Stage III. The Early Judean Ministry

Timeline	Early Feb to Mid-March, 30 AD (Month One, Part of Two)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage III: The Early Judean Ministry
	A. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry
Title	4. Jesus Begin His Ministry With 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting to Overcome Temptation

TEXT NOTE: This readings shows us the second instance of "Q" in the Synoptics. The text of MT and LK have virtually identical wording, from their common written source: Q. Luke arranged the temptations in a different order. We follow MT's order in this reading. See the links below for more in-depth explanation of why we do so.

COMMENT:

Today's reading shows us that Jesus based his ministry on his hidden life of prayer. Jesus spent the first 40 of his roughly 400 days of ministry in prayer--a kind of tithe. As we move through the life of Jesus we will note how much Jesus was a man of prayer. At his immersion, it was *"while he was praying"* (LK) that the heavens were opened and the manifestation of the Father voice and Spirit's anointing were given. Now, it was no accident that Jesus began his ministry with focused prayer.

For Jesus, prayer was not just preparation for ministry, it WAS his ministry. It is still his eternal ministry for each of us as our High Priest...yesterday, today and forever. And prayer--communing and communicating with God--describes everything that goes on within the fellowship of the Trinity. Jesus intensified his prayer during these 40 days in two ways: (1) By separating himself from everything else in an isolated place, and (2) with fasting. His total focus was on communion and fellowship with the Father through the Spirit.

Jesus was constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit throughout his life. So he was led by the Spirit from his immersion into this season of prayer with fasting, and intense temptation from the devil. Like many of us, he went from a spiritual high, straight into the depths of battling satan. This is a recurring spiritual pattern for all of us. The Spirit leads us into blessing, but also into battles. Note how Jesus dealt with this.

First, we have seen that he relied on prayer and fasting. He is our example in this. Much later on, he said to his disciples: *"Pray, so that you will not fall into temptation."* (L 22.40) Jesus demonstrated this principle in the wilderness.

Second, Jesus bathed his prayer and fasting in the Word. He overcame every temptation with Scripture, not his own answers or opinions. The wily Tempter quickly noted this, and began quoting Scripture to him, but the Devil twisted the context of Psalm 91.11-12, and tried to make an erroneous application to Jesus. Jesus saw straight through this, and answered back with an accurate application of a command from his Father that applied directly to Satan's lie.

Note that the Tempter came at Jesus with temptations designed specifically for him as the Messiah. He assumed that Jesus was the Son of God... *"since you are the Son of God."* Jesus' identity was never in question. His obedience to his Father's will as revealed in the Scriptures for him as the Messiah was the issue. Temptation always comes down to obedience.

Though satan tempted Jesus throughout the 40 days of prayer, his most pernicious attempts to lead Jesus into sin occurred at the end of the 40 day fast, on the last day. Jesus was hungry and weak. He had finished the allotted time, but had yet to break the fast by eating food. He was famished. It was the perfect time for the tempter to strike, and he did. Three final temptations assailed our Lord.

For a look at each specific temptation, and how Jesus handled them, please access the following links:

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1. ["turn these stones into bread"](#)
2. ["throw yourself down from the top of the Temple"](#)
3. ["worship me \(the devil\)"](#)

Seeing Jesus' love of righteousness in this 40 day season of prayer and fasting ministry is inspiring and challenging as our perfect Example. This love of righteousness is what took Jesus to the cross. He battled against sin to the point of giving his own life to end it.

Jesus ended his season of prayer and fasting stronger in spirit than when he began. He had prayed over every aspect of his ministry, and his message. He was focused on his Father's presence and guidance in a moment by moment way like never before. The impact of his prayers would be seen in the abounding fruit that will last forever in his next 39 months of ministry.

APPLICATION:

Prayer, fasting, and Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit: these are our nutrients for spiritual growth, our weapons for battling temptation, our ministry to God as priests under Jesus, our High Priest, and the basis of our fruitfulness in ministry to people. Jesus is our perfect example in this.

What can you do to more fully emulate Jesus' example in prayer? In fasting? In the Word?

When, and how will you begin?