

File No. 108

MATTHEW 4:1–11

Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13

JESUS TEMPTED BY SATAN

(SBS Bk 4 Story No 42)

Story Notes

Jesus came out of Egypt as Israel had done (Matt. 2:14–15). Now he was led into a wilderness as Israel had been — to be tested (cf. Deut. 8:2). It was the Spirit who led (or ‘drove him’) him because the Spirit was eager for the mission and the victory of this newly acknowledged Messiah to begin.

As head of the new covenant, he fasted for forty days, as Moses had done as covenant head of Israel (Deut. 9:9,18). The battle with evil powers, to secure a people who would love their God freely, was coming to its climax.

Jesus was also reliving and reconstituting the history of his people as God’s son. Israel had failed in their faith and calling, but now, Jesus, as the Head of the new Israel, showed what sonship was about. The first two trials, or temptations, confronted this Father-Son relationship directly: ‘If you are the Son of God...’

The Son said he lived by every word from his Father’s mouth and refused to accept that his life or the life of his people consisted in just being fed (cf. Deut. 8:3). Satan quoted Psalm 91:11–12, but Jesus refused to understand Sonship as obliging his Father to save him with a persuasive demonstration of power (cf. Deut. 6:16). Satan showed Jesus what he could give him, trying to outdo the inheritance God had shown Moses (Deut. 34:1–4), but Jesus knew any inheritance that put Satan over him would be no inheritance for him or for the people of God; he and his people would worship only the Lord (Deut. 6:13).

Everything for the Messiah and his people would be from the Father (by every word that he spoke), under the Father (don’t tempt him) and to the Father (worship God alone). The Serpent in Eden had fabricated a kingdom of his own, a kingdom which relied on things being ‘good for food, ... a delight to the eyes, and ... desired to make one wise’ (Gen. 3:6). Jesus had come to destroy this kingdom ruled by ‘the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life’ because it was ‘not of the Father’ (I John 2:16). He would destroy this false reign and draw people to himself and to the Father by the death he would die (John 12:31–33).

The trial being over, angels came and ministered to Jesus. The promise of Psalm 91:11 was still true.

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