

## **Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 – 11 - The preparation of Christ Himself for Ministry :**

It is worth reading the account of the Temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark chapter 1, verses 12 - 13 and Luke chapter 4, verses 1 – 13. As we read and meditate on the temptations suffered by our Lord Jesus, maybe it is of value this Lent to think through the same kind of temptations we undergo and our reaction to them for good or ill.

### **Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 – 2:-**

Matthew, along with Luke, talks of the Spirit “leading” Jesus into the wilderness. Mark gives us a more forceful description! It happened straight after the baptism and Jesus was acting under a compulsion from the Spirit. (See Hebrews chapter 5, verses 7 – 10).

The “40 days and 40 nights” is probably a reflection on the length of time spent by the People of Israel in the Wilderness of Zin (Sin). See Numbers chapter 14, verses 26 – 35 and Deuteronomy chapter 8, verses 1 – 5.

### **Verses 3 – 4 – Bread:-**

Underlying this temptation is the fact that the Devil questions the humanity of the Lord Jesus. “*If you are hungry....*” After a period of fasting of course the Lord would be hungry. As the Son of God He could have avoided the very human problem of hunger! Bread was (and still is) the staple diet in much of the world, including the Middle East.

How far are we content with our basic needs? We pray “Give us this day our daily bread”. Are we content with what we have or do we want more ‘luxury goods’?

### **Verses 5 - 7 – Miracle:-**

Again underlying this temptation is a subtle questioning of the divinity of our Lord. “*If you are the Son of God...?*” A very public miracle would have been a marvelous start to the Lord’s ministry and a removal of any doubts in his mind.

Are we satisfied with the limited resources at our disposal as human beings? Wouldn’t it be wonderful to perform a miracle or two and make our name as someone with the angels on our side?

### **Verses 8 – 10 – Power:-**

This is the one where so many stumble and fall, both secular and Christian! Just do this, cut a few corners and it will all come good! Note that although God the Father is ultimately in charge, the “*ruler of this world*” has some apparent authority and can influence worldly affairs. See the Gospel of John chapter 12, verse 31 and chapter 14, verse 30: also 1 John chapter 5 verse 19.

As Christians we belong to and serve the Lord. Are we tempted to ‘bend the knee’ to any other authority to make life easier or to gain any material advantage? ‘Integrity’ can be easily set aside in both politics and church life.

### **Verse 11 - Relief and comfort:-**

After the stress of fasting and the encounter with the enemy, the Lord Jesus received comfort from heavenly messengers.

As we face all the realities of life may we know the presence and comfort of the Holy Spirit sent to us by the Lord Himself.

1) *Be Thou my guardian and my guide,  
and hear me when I call;  
let not my slippery footsteps slide,  
and hold me lest I fall.*

2) *The world, the flesh, and Satan dwell  
around the path I tread;  
O save me from the snares of hell,  
Thou quickener of the dead.*

3) *And if I tempted am to sin,  
and outward things are strong,  
do thou, O Lord, keep watch within,  
and save my soul from wrong.*

4) *Still let me ever watch and pray,  
and feel that I am frail;  
that if the tempter cross my way,  
yet he may not prevail.*

Isaac Williams 1842