

Lent 2 - Matthew Chapter 4, verses 5 – 7:-

As you read these verses note that the devil himself can quote scripture. Sometimes out of context, sometimes slightly twisted! The first temptation offered to humanity was introduced by the words “*Did God say*” (Genesis chapter 3, verse 1). The second temptation of the Lord Jesus is at least twofold. Notice the “*If you are the son of God. . .*”. Maybe the Lord Jesus would need the assurance that such a miracle would bring. Talking about a ‘miracle’, what could be better than a seemingly suicidal jump from the top of a public building being prevented by angelic intervention! That would surely kick-start an amazing public ministry.

Verse 5:- Here we find a change in the placing of the temptation - “*the holy city*” and the the centre of worship, the very seat of the presence of God in the midst of his people. Here Satan suggests that a simple test will prove the relationship of Jesus with the Father! The promise of aid comes in Psalm 91, verses 11 – 12. According to the Talmud, every man has two ministering angels beside him during his entire life. That angels were present and active in the life of the Lord Jesus is stated in both Mark chapter 1, verse 13 and here in Matthew chapter 4, verse 11.

Verse 6:- The devil seeks to make Jesus prove his claim that He abode by “*every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*” (see verse 4).

Verse 7:- The reply of the Lord Jesus “*Again it is written . .*” points to the totality of scripture as the guide for conduct and and the basis for faith. Jesus again quotes scripture “*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*” see Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 16 and the story in Exodus chapter 17, verses 1 – 7. Note that “*it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it expound one place of scripture , that it be repugnant to another*” Article XX of the Articles of Religion in the Book of Common Prayer.

The temptation to ask the Lord for proof of his presence and power is always with us as believers! We need to remember constantly that “*we walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7). It is always a temptation to ask God for ‘proof’ and to feel that ‘if He does not answer my prayer as I want He doesn’t really care!’ It is often a case of hanging in there even when there is no positive answer. Plenty of thought there for prayer this Lent, both for ourselves and others – especially those in church leadership at this time.

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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 1802 - 1865