



Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. ² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. ³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴ But he answered and said, *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* ⁵ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said unto him, *It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* ⁸ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, *Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* ¹¹ Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him. (Matt 4:1-11)

God placed our primal parents in a lush, beautiful Garden eastward at Eden. All of their wants were abundantly provided by a loving God. There was daily communion with God in the Garden. It was a perfect setting for joy and happiness. God had given Adam one commandment only – *16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* (Gen 2:16-17) But man could not keep that ONE commandment. He disobeyed God by partaking of the cursed tree instead of that blessed Tree of Life which stands in the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder that we are unable to faithfully obey TEN Commandments when we fail to obey only ONE?

The Paradise of God was removed to Heaven along with the Tree of Life. *1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* (Rev 22:1-2 see also Rev 2:7) Man was evicted and set out into the great Wilderness which is the World. The Wilderness of this world extends across the span of every life born of woman. A wilderness is a place of unbridled want and sorrow – so is the world, filled with sin and ugliness. In the Wilderness, beyond the eastern Cherubim of Eden, (Genesis 3:24) man no longer had the constant fellowship of God. Every day was filled with labor and heartache. Of the first two sons of Adam, one (Cain) was a murderer, and the other (Abel – a prophet) was the victim. How Adam and Eve must have longed for the joys and satisfactions of old Eden! But God made provision

– long before Adam’s sin – for a Deliverer from that Wilderness of the World – His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ – chosen and called in the Councils of Heaven in Eternity Past.

Just as we have our natural descent from Adam, God has arranged for our spiritual descent in the Seed of Promise (Jesus Christ) made to Father Abraham. If we are in Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Savior, and Lord, we are truly children of the Promise made to Abraham, and are God’s children indeed. But greater Israel was unable to come to a full acceptance of that promise. Only a remnant of the people would believe by faith, as did Abraham. As the embryo of Israel descended from Abraham, God worked many amazing miracles to make His Presence and His Will known to the people. They required dramatic evidence in their primitive state of mind. As a result of egregious sin and perversions, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. By Providence, He allowed Joseph to be taken captive into Egypt (symbolically, sin and error), and exalted Joseph to the number two ruler of mighty Egypt. Joseph was a type and figure of Christ. Though treated harshly by His own brothers, he became the salvation for them during the years of famine that fell upon all of the land.

By His mighty Hand of Providence, God forced (after 400 years of bondage) the Pharaoh of Egypt to “*let My people go!*” With an outstretched arm, He abated the banks of waters of the Red Sea to create a dry course for the children of Israel to escape the pursuing Egyptian armies. And by the same miracle that saved Israel, God caused the Egyptian army to perish. The entire nation of Israel was baptized in the Red Sea waters.

Israel then wandered in the Wilderness for forty years. They were subjected, due to the hardness of their hearts, to many trials and tribulations. It was a time of trial and temptation. It was also a time of teaching and building up in truth and faith. They were forced to depend upon the Almighty for their sustenance. They learned the Commandments and the proper means of worship. We may undergo such a wilderness in our lives when God has called us to a higher wisdom and understanding of His Word.

The number ‘forty’ is symbolic of trials and challenges. Did not the waters above and beneath the firmament gush upon the earth for forty days in the days of Noah? The giant, Goliath, struck fear into the hearts of the Israelites for forty days ere he was struck dead by the lad, David. (1 Sam 17:16) Nineveh was under the threat of annihilation in Jonah’s day for forty days ere they repented and were spared. (Jonah 3:4) Our Lord, too, appeared and spoke with the Apostles for forty days after His passion. (Acts 1:1-3)

Now we come to the account of our Lord, following the moment of His fulfilling the terms of baptism at Jordan Banks, being driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for forty days and forty nights. Please note that this trial and testing did not occur until AFTER Jesus was baptized. Please do not fall for the deceitful notion that our troubles will be over once we are only baptized. Satan is waiting in the wings for those who come to Christ via the Sacrament of Baptism and the profession of faith. He may not hinder us so much before our profession of faith, but I can assure you, he will do so after.

All guidance and counsel that God abundantly provides in Holy Scripture is of great value in the rule of our lives. The account of Jesus in the Wilderness is pregnant with strong counsel of great value.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. What an understatement! The fast of Jesus was not that fast of the muslims whereby they avoid solid food from sunrise to sunset, and then devour every morsel in sight. The fast of Jesus was a total deprivation of all nourishment! So after forty days, He was hungry? Yes, and long before the forty days as well! We all hunger for things that seem essential, but we discover, when they are withheld, that we did not need them so much after all. I was often tempted to spend my lunch money in elementary school on sweets that would not

profit; but, when I stayed the urge, I was happy later to eat a full course meal in the cafeteria.

There was no possibility that Jesus could have succumbed to the wiles of the devil in the Wilderness; so why did He endure the experience? It was given as a lesson to us. He did suffer want and deprivation, but His Holy will would not allow Himself to submit to those temptations thrust upon Him.

Appealing to our hunger, Satan may offer us the leaven-laced bread of this world. But we must not, even in our hunger, partake of the false fruit of that tree of Satan. ³ *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* Note that, just as in the Garden with Eve, Satan begins with a question – “IF.” How did Christ respond? ⁴ *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* Christ answered the devil just as we should answer him – with Holy Scripture!

What next? ⁵ *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,* ⁶ *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* There is one major point of worth presented here: that is, Satan knows and can quote Scripture very well. The only problem with it is that he employs Scripture with great error. ⁷ *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Like generations of our day, Satan is seeking a sign of the evidence of Christ. We must never demand evidence of the person of God – He has provided more than enough in Creation itself. Satan got away with tempting Eve, but not the Son of God!

Satan lies well. He promises that which is not his to give, for all of the kingdoms of the world belong to Christ. ⁸ *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;* ⁹ *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”* Jesus again answers with Scripture and a command that can be uttered by every Christian to great profit. What was the command? ¹⁰ *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

If you are harboring some sin that you are inclined to commit, try repeating the command Christ gave to Satan, and then see if you can commit that sin! *Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written.....* I do not believe you can disobey flagrantly after pronouncing that command of Jesus. What happens when we rebuke Satan with Holy Scripture? (Not our rebuke, but rather the Lord’s). Satan will swiftly abscond from you. ¹¹ *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels . came and ministered unto him.* Then, the powers of Heaven will muster on your behalf. The help of the Lord is an invincible help! Thus, you may escape the Wilderness of this world.