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~ **The Wanderer in the Wilderness** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read the text in which we find the story. This story is found in Matthew 4, Mark 1, and Luke 4.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story from the New Living Translation.

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Matthew 4:1-11	Mark 1:12-13	Luke 4:1-13
<p>Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.² For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.</p> <p>³ During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”</p> <p>⁴ But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say,</p> <p>‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”</p> <p>⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple,⁶ and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,</p> <p>‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”</p> <p>⁷ Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’”</p> <p>⁸ Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world</p>	<p>The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness,¹³ where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.</p>	<p>Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness,² where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.</p> <p>³ Then the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.”</p> <p>⁴ But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone.’”</p> <p>⁵ Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.⁶ “I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,” the devil said, “because they are mine to give to anyone I please.⁷ I will give it all to you if you will worship me.”</p> <p>⁸ Jesus replied, “The Scriptures say,</p> <p>‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’”</p> <p>⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off!¹⁰ For the Scriptures say,</p>

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<p>and their glory. ⁹“I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”</p> <p>¹⁰“Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’”</p> <p>¹¹Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.</p>		<p>‘He will order his angels to protect and guard you.</p> <p>¹¹And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.”</p> <p>¹²Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’”</p> <p>¹³When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.</p>
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

1. A temptation is a test of loyalty.
2. In Persia, the “Satan” was an agent who worked undercover testing people’s loyalty to the king. In the Bible he is a rebellious part of God’s creation who not only tests but recruits for his anti-god movement.
3. Jesus does not answer with his own words but in the words of God. “He does not answer in his own words, as if his honor derives from what he is in himself. To do that would be to grasp honor above that of his own Father and turn honor into dishonor. So he answers as a loyal middle east son would always answer – with something from his family tradition. He offers the words of his true Father in Deuteronomy and by such laudable behavior he gains honor as virtue.”
4. The second temptation (in Luke) is about worship. The word for worship was used means to fall down before a person and kiss someone’s feet, to kiss the hem of a garment, or the ground on which a person walked.
5. Satan puts himself as a broker, seeking to speak for God and even quoting Scripture. Jesus tells him to get behind him. He is not to be between him and God.
6. The pinnacle was used figuratively of the edge or extremity of something and here of some high and visible part of the Temple.
7. A rabbinic saying in Pesiqta Rabbati says “when the King, the Messiah, reveals himself, he will come and stand on the roof of the temple.”
8. The testing of God. Will He protect His children? Many passages speak of His special protection in the Temple – 36:7-9; 91
9. The offer of the whole world from Satan recalls Psalm 2:8 where the Father promises the Son-King the whole world as his inheritance.
10. The quote from Deuteronomy 6:13 is in the midst of a warning of idolatry. In the Old Testament, idolatry is associated with demon worship – Deut 32:17; Psa 106:37-38. Jesus will not be an idolater and will worship only the God of Israel.

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11. Israel in the wilderness was called the son of God – Deut 1:31; 8:5; 32:5. Jesus the obedient son of God in the wilderness.
12. Parallels between Jesus and Moses – God led them into the wilderness (Deut 9:9); 40 days and nights (D 9:9-18, 25; Ex 34:28); Jesus shown all the kingdoms from a mountain as Moses was shown the promised land from a mountain (Deuteronomy 3:27; 34:1-4).
13. The temptation in the wilderness was because Israel was tempted in the wilderness (Psa 78:17-20), the age of salvation starts in the wilderness (Isa 40), and demons inhabited the wilderness who had to be overcome.

These insights taken from Bruce J. Malina, A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels.

3. Answer these reflective questions.

How difficult was it for Jesus to resist the temptation to turn stones into bread after fasting for forty days and becoming extremely hungry?

Jesus resisted the temptation to turn stones into bread by saying “man shall not live by bread alone but by every word coming from the mouth of God.” How did this overcome Satan? What does this verse mean for your life?

In the second temptation, Jesus resisted Satan’s suggestion that he hurl himself off the temple trusting God to send his angels to bear him safely to the courts below. Jesus said this would be forcing a test on God. How would this have been forcing a test on God? What does it mean to test God?

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In the third temptation Satan tried to lure Jesus from the Father’s path by showing him the glory of the kingdoms of the world. How would this have been a genuine temptation to Jesus?

Jesus resisted the third temptation when he said “you shall worship and serve God alone.” In what ways do you place God first in your life and worship and serve Him only?

Read the following verses and explain what they mean for your life:

¹⁴We have a great high priest, who has gone into heaven, and he is Jesus the Son of God. That is why we must hold on to what we have said about him. ¹⁵Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin! ¹⁶So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.

Jesus quoted three passages in his defense against Satan. They are all taken from the time when Israel was in the wilderness. Read these verses in their Old Testament context.

Temptation 1 – Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3. Read 8:1-11. What is this passage about?

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Temptation 2 – Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16 and in Temptation 3 he quoted from 6:13. Read 6:10-19. What is this passage about?

The temptation of Jesus and His victory over the Tempter means that in every place mankind has failed, Jesus has succeeded. What does Jesus' victory over temptation mean for your life?
