THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS: MATTHEW SHARES THE GOSPEL STORY.

Dear friends.

It came to me to discuss with you all what I am sure will be called the temptation of Jesus by Satan. It's the start of my chapter 4, and as asked, you've all read it (if not the whole book!) before joining with me here. In summary, what Jesus experienced is what we can all expect to experience as we make our way to understanding and proving our commitment to God. Jesus is our example. He not only gave his life for us, but lived his life for us, that we would learn from him how we must be. Let's just briefly look at the end of my Chapter 3 before looking at the temptations.

Jesus had just been baptised by John, and I've written: ***" lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."***(Matthew 3:16 lo, 17). Friends, this Spirit now leads Jesus into the wilderness. Why? For what purpose? Wasn't it to prepare for his ministry? Don't we all need at times to re-appraise what we are doing, think through quietly our aims and objectives, our closeness to God? Jesus went in to the wilderness for forty days, He knew he was the Messiah, he knew God was with him, but how to go forward?

On many occasions he went up a mountain to pray, to find solitude , to be with God,- and here he was forty days in praying! and guess what, he became hungry! The tempter came to him, - *"Look, you're the Son of God, why not just stoop down, pick up a stone, make it bread, - that will solve your hunger!"* Easy! OK, question time……What would you have done? It was certainly possible, - we know that because he fed thousands from just a few loaves and fishes! Just consider. You have nearly reached the end of your prayerful communion with God, but just before its conclusion this material interjection appears, - *"Don't think about God for a moment, - you've done enough of that, - look after yourself! Have something to eat, then carry on!"* It 's a bit like running in a race, nearly at the finish line, and stopping for a breather! Jesus was clear in his response, he clearly knew what was more important! He wasn't to be put off! **"IT IS WRITTEN MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."** Which is more nourishing? Which will last for ever? Yet, my friends, aren't we sometimes too quick to seize what is in front of us? Tempted to take that breather , - hadn't we earned it?? Haven't we all said: "Give me a break!" Had Jesus acquiesced to this temptation, he would have put Satan before God. He absolutely did not! And yes! He is our example. He put God first, and kept God first. He did not waver, he did not enter in to a discussion! He turned to the Bible and that was it!

So, surprise, surprise! The next temptation grew more subtle! Jesus had been praying how to reach out, so here's a good suggestion, - *"You're the Son of God so prove it! Why don't you jump down from one of the pinnacles of the temple in Jerusalem, - there's sure to be a good crowd, and they'll all see you land safely! "FOR IT IS WRITTEN",* - the devil using what Jesus has said and stood by, *"that He shall give His angels charge over thee, to bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"*. [Note here, wasn't this the same with Eve, that the serpent quoted what God had said to draw her in]. It's the devil using our own arguments against us, seeking validity, lowering our guard. So what is his temptation? In our keenness to spread the Word, haven't we all at some point imagined doing some miracle to attract attention, - but then realised how short term it would be? What are we planning, as opposed to letting God do the doing! It would be like Jesus saying to God, "If I do this, will you see me OK?" Jesus was not about bargaining with God, he was about KNOWING God, that God was his only action! In the period leading up to his crucifixion, even then he prayed "Thy will be done"! Jesus wasn't have this either!! **"IT IS WRITTEN AGAIN, THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD THY GOD".** And what a clear message this is, - we do not tempt the Lord our God by presenting our plans, as if they might be better than His! We are not separate from God, and cannot bargain with God. We follow Him, not the other way round! Satan dismissed!

Jesus' time in the wilderness was nearing its fulfilment. Jesus mission was to reach all mankind, so what better temptation to offer exactly that! The devil thought showed him all the material kingdoms of the world, everything that matter could offer in all its seeming beauty and grandeur. Offered him so-called everything in his apparent power on just the one condition, *"If thou wilt fall down and worship me"*. Dear friends, what a moment! The ultimate temptation, - and how similar to other occasions in the Bible, to temptations we have all faced! How

ironic that Jesus had to fall down to save the fall of man! Make a pact with the devil! What would we have done? Sell our souls? When we know the devil is a liar? But once we worship other than God, we go astray. How could anyone worship a liar, and the Father of all lies, when the Father of all truth is holding our hand?

Jesus' response was quick, and sharper than the proverbial two-edged sword **"GET THEE HENCE SATAN:"** Here is a very strong message to each of us, - listen no more to the devil!! **"IT IS WRITTEN, THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD, AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE".**

Jesus stood utterly by the words of the Bible, and here the First Commandment is the foundation of his reply. It is the foundation of all our worship. This categoric statement of loyalty, and the instant dismissal of Satan, was the fulfilment of Jesus wilderness experience, the moment when he rose above all the temptations of Satan and could begin his ministry! And this became his core message, - look at verse 17 **"From that time, Jesus began to preach and to say "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

His complete dismissal of Satan was the start of his healing ministry.

That's a good place to stop, - for that is exactly where we need to be, the instant dismissal of Satan and the instant acknowledgement of God, yes, God every part of our thinking. Being of the same mind as Jesus.

May we be too ready to go forth, and as successful!

Thank you for listening!

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5

WILDERNESS. ***Loneliness, doubt and darkness. Spontaneity of thought and idea; the vestibule in which a material sense of things disappears, and spiritual sense unfolds the great facts of existence.",*** SH p.597:16)