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DRIVEN INTO THE WILDERNESS

– FEBRUARY 25. – MARK 1:9-11; MATT. 4:1-11. –

"For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." – Heb. 2:18.

OUR STUDY for today is a most interesting one. It points to the time when Jesus reached the age of thirty and consequently was permitted to offer Himself without spot to God as the world's Sin-offering. Saint Paul quotes as applicable to Him the words of the Prophet, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, oh God," as it is written in the volume of the book concerning Me. I now present myself to be the Antitype, the fulfiller, of every prophecy that Divine wisdom has caused to be recorded, and the Antitype of every feature of the Law applicable to Me.

There the Redeemer became the antitypical Passover Lamb, the antitypical bullock of the Atonement Day Sin-offering. There He gave up His life to the doing of the Father's will; there He as the Man Jesus died; there He as the antitypical bullock was slain; there He was begotten of the Holy Spirit and became the antitypical Priest – the Sacrificer. Through the following three and a half years of His ministry He carried out this consecration and completed it at Calvary, crying, "It is finished!" [R4970 : page 50]

LED OF THE SPIRIT – INTO TEMPTATION

When Jesus received the begetting of the Holy Spirit at His baptism it was the begetting to the divine nature, and with it came great enlightenment to His mind, as represented in the words, "And the heavens were opened unto Him," literally, *rent asunder*. Forthwith He could see clearly into the Divine arrangements and purposes respecting Himself in a manner not possible to Him prior to His consecration. And so it is with all those who follow in His steps. The deep things of God

are revealed to them gradually, as they are able to receive them, but never until after they have made their consecration vows to the Lord. With His followers as with Himself, the trial or temptation or testing as to loyalty comes more particularly after consecration than before. Hence the importance of Jesus' injunction: "Sit down first and count the cost." – Luke 14:28-33.

But with us as with Jesus the Father provides not only a clearer appreciation of our trials and responsibilities, but also a clearer perception of the glories which will follow to the faithful. In Jesus' case the opening of the heavens – the enlightenment of His mind respecting the Divine Plan – was a much more wonderful matter than it is with us, because with His perfection of brain and of heart He was able to realize instantly the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of His undertaking, in a manner only partially attained by us after years of progress and study. At once the Master realized the full import of the Day of Atonement sacrifices, of the Passover Lamb slain, of the prophecies that spoke of Himself as being led as a lamb to the slaughter, and of the type which pictured **[R4970 : page 51]** Him as the Antitype of the brazen serpent, lifted on high for the healing of Adam's sin-bitten race.

As these thoughts began to rush into the Savior's mind, He was first of all pressed of the spirit (His own spirit or mind) to go apart for awhile and to study out afresh the full import of the Law and the Prophets and His own obligations according to the covenant He had just made. For forty days and nights His intense earnestness made Him oblivious to almost everything else. Apparently He neither ate nor slept until the forty days were ended; and He "afterward hungered." Then it was that the Adversary appeared as a tempter – at the moment of His physical weakness as the result of fasting – at the moment when His soul was overwhelmed with the realization of the importance of the great contract He had made and of what it would cost Him to fulfil its terms. It was the severest test imaginable. Would the Redeemer prove Himself loyal to God – to the Divine Program – to His covenant of

consecration, unto *death*? Or would He feel that the Father had poured too bitter a cup for Him – that God had made the tests of loyalty and obedience too severe – that it was neither just nor loving to allow Him to enter into such a contract?

How glad we are to note the loyalty which triumphed over every temptation! With the angels we acclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!" Not merely in the sense of consecrating His will, but in maintaining His full submission and deadness, according to the flesh, faithfully even to Calvary and the death of the cross. To Him be glory, honor, dominion and might everlasting!

TEMPTED AS WE ARE

The Savior was not tempted with the habits of a drunkard nor with the weaknesses of a debauchee or a libertine, neither are those the temptations which come to us – His footstep followers. We are to remember that the Scriptures clearly differentiate between us and the world: "Ye are not of the world even as I am not of the world." "Tempted like as we are" therefore signifies that the temptations or trials which Jehovah permits to come upon His consecrated people are of the same kind that He permitted to come upon our Redeemer.

It is important, therefore, that we notice the character of our tests. God is not testing us to see whether or not our *flesh* is perfect, for He knew all along that amongst men there is none righteous, no, not one. The Father's tests for those whom He receives as sons are tests of loyalty to Him, loyalty to the principles of righteousness, loyalty to the Truth, loyalty to the Divine methods – a refusal to take our own way or to seek our own glory or our own ease at the expense of Truth or of the Divine method.

JESUS' THREE TEMPTATIONS

When the Master was weakened through fasting, at the end of the forty days of Bible study, the Adversary appeared – not as an enemy

and a fiend of darkness, but as a friend, "as an angel of light." (2 Cor. 11:13-15.) Professing interest in the Savior's welfare and an interest also in His work, he said, You are hungry, man, and unnecessarily so. Do you not know that the holy power which came upon you forty days ago is more than sufficient for your every need? Do you not know that now you may command even these stones to be made bread, and therefore have no need to be hungry? Do so, at once, please, before we have a conversation, for I have a great interest in you. I remember you well from the long ago when we were in fellowship, before my deflection.

But Jesus replied, The power received was not to be used for ministering to My own flesh. It was received, rather, because I had made a consecration of My flesh to death. The Divine power which I possess I may use in any manner for the Father's glory, but not for self-gratification, however apparently legitimate. Besides, My eternal life is not dependent upon bread, nor upon the maintenance of this physical body. Rather, My hope is in God and in His promise that, if faithful in the use of this holy power which He has committed to Me – if faithful in My consecration unto death – He will give Me a crown of life – glory, honor, immortality.

That temptation failing, Satan tried another. We assume that He took our Lord *in mind* to Jerusalem and the temple, saying, If you will go to the pinnacle of the temple and cast yourself down therefrom, it will be a means of proving to the people that you are the Son of God, and it will be the quickest method by which you can convince them of your mission and gain their adherence and loyalty and make them your disciples and thus accomplish your mission. I will quote you the prophecy in proof that this was God's intention for you: "He shall give His angels a charge concerning Thee and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." (Psalm 91:12.) But Jesus declined this proposition also.

If He had been thrust off the Temple pinnacle by the hands of an angry mob before His time was come, surely the Father's power would have interfered that He should not be injured; but to deliberately defy the laws of nature and to expect Divine protection from the natural consequences of His own course would have been to tempt God; this Jesus refused to do.

The third temptation also was a mental presentation. A high mountain, in symbol, is a high kingdom. From no mountain on earth could all the kingdoms of the world be seen, since the world is round; but Satan's own kingdom was called to the attention of Jesus. Satan said, "You realize, of course, that I am the Prince of this world, that I am the God of this world and that I now have practical control, through ignorance and superstition, of the masses. I have a proposition to make to you. I confess to you that I am weary of the reign of sin and death which has progressed in the world because of my domination. I would rather share the Kingdom and have it uplifted and blessed. In other words, I propose to you a federation – that together we shall unite in the bringing of humanity out of sin and death conditions. What do you say? I on the spirit plane and you on the human plane will be quite masters of the situation, for you see I have the power in my hand and can easily turn the thing to our favor, and quickly the world will be blessed. Thus you will attain the glorious consummation of your hopes, and that without the awful trials, sufferings, experiences, etc., which you are now anticipating through following God's arrangement outlined in the prophecies. Come, let us federate and co-operate. Speedily I will turn things your way; victory will begin to come from the very hour of our federation!

Our Lord was indignant that it should be thought for a moment that, having left the heavenly glory to do the Father's will, He would now prove traitor to His covenant, and for fear of the cross and the shame and the death He would enter into a confederacy with the great Arch-enemy of righteousness – Satan. He answered, "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him

only shalt thou serve." I will not serve you nor co-operate with you in any sense of the word. "Then the Devil leaveth Him." So far as we know, Satan never thought it worth while to return to [R4970 : page 52] the attack on the Savior. Then by Divine arrangement angels came to the famished Overcomer and ministered unto Him – strengthened Him, revived Him.

The Lord's followers are to note how these same temptations are the very ones by which the Adversary assails them: (1) He would be their friend and helper and would thereby induce them to violate their covenant of sacrifice by requests for physical healing, physical blessings, which they have agreed to sacrifice. (2) He would suggest to them some wild, foolish way of capturing the world for God by some great exploits or prayer tests. (3) He would have them compromise with the world and its spirit and its methods by Church Federation and otherwise. We are to resist the Adversary courageously that he may leave us permanently, seeing no hope of winning us.

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