

Passages worth the dig

A miniature figure of a person wearing a black cap, a black t-shirt, and grey pants, is shown digging in an open book. The person is holding a shovel and is illuminated by a bright blue light emanating from the book's pages. The background is a blurred stack of books in various colors (blue, red, yellow, purple).

Matt 4.1-11

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG



MATTHEW 4. THE DEVIL DIDN'T MAKE ME DO
IT

Matthew 4:1-11

The same Spirit that came down on Jesus “like a dove” now leads him into the wilderness for a time of testing (cf. Mark 1:12-13).

Dove symbolizes Jesus’ destiny in suffering

JESUS AND THE TEST



But the Spirit is not alone.

The agent of testing:

the devil

The location:

the wilderness

The duration:

40 days and nights

JESUS AND THE TEST



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG:



The word translated “tempted” (*peirasthenai*) can be translated “trial” or “test.”

God tests his people . . .

Two come to mind . . .

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

God put Abraham to the test when he asked Abraham to take his only son to Mt. Moriah and sacrifice him there.

Abraham obeyed the voice of the Lord and the angel of the Lord.



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have **done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son,** ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, and I will make your **offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven** and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall **possess the gate of their enemies,** ¹⁸ and **by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”**

(Gen 22:15-18)

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Moses to Israel on the plains of Moab:
God has led you 40 years in the wilderness to humble and test you (Deut 8.2).

The test reveals what is in your heart.
Not so much for God's benefit but for yours

Tests are part of God's training program.

Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you. ⁶Therefore keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

(Deut 8.5-6)

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Throughout Matthew's Gospel, he shows how Jesus is "the son of Abraham," the offspring who brings universal blessing.

Also, he shows how Jesus is new Israel, true Israel, everything Israel was supposed to be.

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The Duration of the Testing:

40 days and 40 nights

- 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness
- 40 days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai (Deut 9.9)
- 40 days and 40 nights it rained on the earth (Gen 7.12)
- Jonah announced to Nineveh that it would be overthrown in 40 days (Jon 3.4)
- The spies scouted out the land of Canaan 40 days (Num 13.25)

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

The agent of testing:

the devil, the Satan

Best known in the Hebrew Bible in his role as a **prosecuting attorney** in Job 1.6-9 as he seems to **make a deal** with the Lord for the blameless and upright Job.



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

Satan appears again as an accuser, this time of the Joshua the priest (Zech 3.1-2).

Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?”

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Jesus' name, of course, is the Hebrew name **Joshua**. And ***both Joshua's pass the test***. Joshua, the high priest, assumes his priestly garb and is **granted the right to intercede for the people**. He and his colleagues are **an omen of things to come when God brings "my servant the Branch"** (Zech 3:8-10), the Nazarene. **Jesus too passes the test and will assume a priestly role beyond any in Israel's past.**

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG



First temptation:

“the tempter” lures him: **if you are the Son of God**—as the voice from heaven declared—then **“speak so that these stones become bread”** (4:3 [AT]). The language here is reminiscent of the LORD’s instruction to Moses to **speak to the rock and command it to yield water** (Num 20:8).

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Answer: Deuteronomy

One of the best known and most quoted books at the time of Jesus.

“It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Deut 8.3

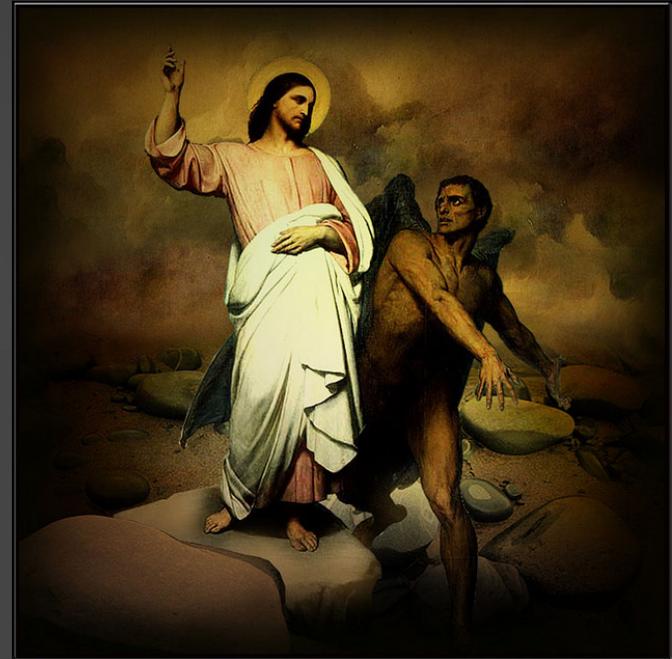


PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

Moses reminding the people:

Whatever success you have in the land is not yours; **it is God's**. *Obedience to God and allegiance to his teaching will **light the way** to the future.*

Result: humility and a recognition that life is not our own; it comes from God.



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

The Second Temptation

The Setting: **the holy city, Jerusalem.**



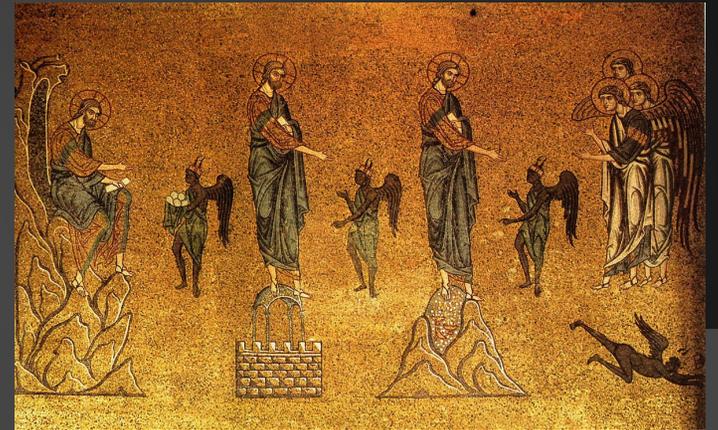
The “devil” takes him and places him on “the pinnacle “of the temple. Is Jesus bodily still in the wilderness? Is he having a vision? or did the devil track him back to Jerusalem to harangue and harass him? Is it likely that these temptations followed Jesus and latched on to him as he left the wilderness behind?

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

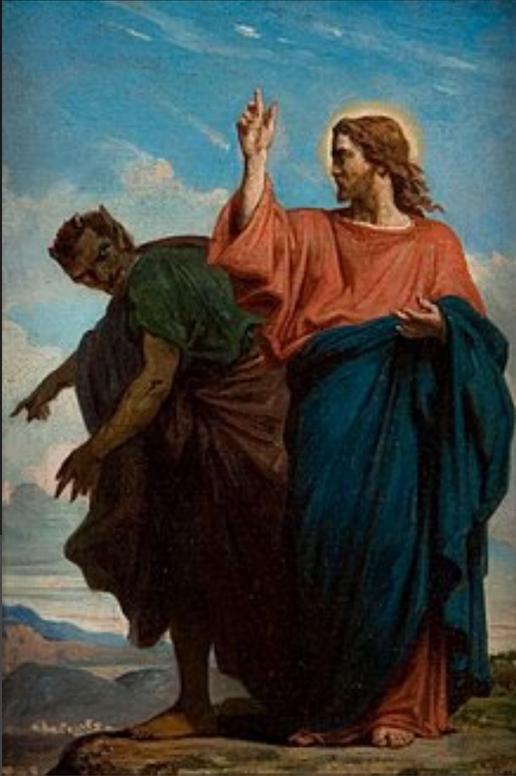
The tempter:

If you are the Son of God—again, as the voice from heaven declared—then **you can jump** knowing that **God will call in his angel army to catch you** (Matt 4:6).

Even the devil gets in on the act of quoting Scripture; here Ps 91:11-12.



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIGGING



Psalm 91: God is protector.

He shelters his people from
enemies, near and far, human and
otherwise.

Ps 91: One of the places from which we
get the idea of “guardian angels”

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

Josephus (*Ant.* 15.412) on the Royal Portico overlooking the ravine:

“the height of the portico standing over it was so very great that if anyone looked down from its rooftop, combining the two elevations, he would become dizzy and his vision would be unable to reach the end of so measureless a depth.”



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG



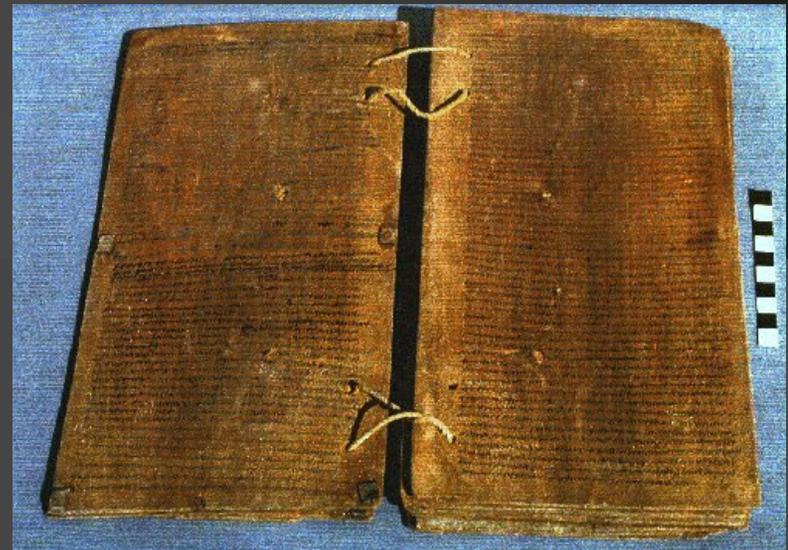
Had Jesus complied, he would immediately have the attention of the crowds. Stories of his fall and miraculous soft landing would have echoed in the streets. No one could survive a fall like that; but Jesus did.

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

The Right Stance before
God

”Again it is written, ‘Do
not put the Lord your God
to the test.’”

--Deut 6.16





PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

3rd Temptation

“a very high mountain”

Notice how many
important events take
place on a mountain . . .

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

1. 3rd Temptation (Matt 4.1-11)
2. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5--7)
3. The Transfiguration (Matt 17.1-13)
4. The Commissioning of the Disciples (Matt 28.16-20)

Matthew thematizes the mountain because transcendent moments in Jesus' life require a transcendent location.

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG

The tempter shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor (Luke adds, "in an instant").

Jesus' response:

1. He takes the claim seriously
2. Deut 6.13

It stands written, you are to worship and serve **YHWH, the God of Israel**. All other worship is out of bounds and idolatrous.

The devil knows: his time is short.

When the kingdom of heaven comes, it will undo evil and render untrue every bit of sorrow and suffering the devil has conjured up.

PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG



PASSAGES WORTH THE DIG



Jesus will have none of it. He commands the Satan to leave. He realizes that he is attended by angels.

Earlier, the devil reminded Jesus of Psalm 91. Now it seems Psalm 91 has come true.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. We cannot ignore the reality of **the spiritual world**.
2. **God tests his people**, but you can pass the test.
 - ✓ To humble us,
 - ✓ To train us,
 - ✓ To reveal to us what is inside.
3. **Like Jesus**, we can find instruction, guidance in **Scripture**. It is the **best answer** to the tests, trials, and temptations we face, but

POINTS FOR HOME

4. Like the Devil, people can use Scripture **for just or unjust purposes.**
5. **Go outside!** None of this happened under sheetrock, plywood and roofing. **Find a mountain to climb!!!** Commune with God beneath crystal blue skies and shimmering stars.

Thank you.