

Chapter 5: Christ Begins His Ministry

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 - John 1:35-51; 2:3-13
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1. Introduction

In the prior chapter, we addressed the mission of John the Baptist, his foreordained mission to prepare the way for the Messiah, including his baptism of Jesus. We also explored why John the Baptist was referred to by Jesus as being the greatest prophet (see Luke 7:28).

We turn now to the major events surrounding the commencement of the Saviors' three-year ministry. These events include: (1) His 40 days in the wilderness; (2) The selection of five of His disciples; (3) His first miracle, and, (4) His choice of Galilee as the region of His ministry.

2. Jesus Spends 40 Days in the Wilderness

JST, Matthew 4:1-2

1 ...Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, to be with God.

2 ...[here He] fasted forty days and forty nights, and ...communed with God, ...

The scriptures teach that Enoch (PGP, Moses 6-7), Moses (PGP, Moses 1), Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1-4), and Joseph Smith (PGP, Joseph Smith-History 1; Doctrine and Covenants 76:137), are among those who have had the privilege of communing with God the Father and/or His Son. Jesus Christ while in the flesh. They received instructions and were in turn strengthened for their missions.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“If the veil has been rent for lesser men, and they have seen inconceivable glories and heard unspeakable words, what should we suppose was seen and heard by the greatest Man? ...Surely there

was purpose and preparation, refinement and testing, growth and development, during this period when the Lord’s body was made subject to his spirit.”¹

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“For forty days Jesus pondered upon the things of the Spirit, poured out His soul to his Father in prayer, sought diligently to receive revelations and see visions, was ministered to by angels, and was enwrap in the visions of eternity—during all of which time he was subject to temptation. We may also suppose that during this period he was ‘with God’ in the literal sense of the word, and that the Father visited him.”²

Mark 1:12-13 compared to JST, Mark 1:10-11.

Mark 1:12-13	JST, Mark 1:10-11
<p>12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.</p> <p>13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and angels ministered unto him.</p>	<p>10 And immediately the Spirit <u>took</u> him into the wilderness.</p> <p>11 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, <u>Satan seeking to tempt him</u>; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.</p>

From a comparison of these two scriptures, two important differences are noted. The first is that Jesus was “taken by the Spirit” into the wilderness rather than driven. It is interesting to note Luke states that Jesus, “being full of the Holy Ghost...was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1). And the second addition is, while He was there, “Satan [was] seeking to tempt him.” It is important for us to understand why Jesus went to the wilderness for forty days.

Some have concluded Jesus went to the wilderness so He could be tempted of Satan. While Satan did tempt Him during this period of time, it would seem this is but a continuation of Satan’s continued effort to tempt Him, rather than his waiting to do so until Jesus was thirty years of age. It is my belief Jesus, like every other mortal who reaches the age of accountability (age eight), is subject to Satan’s temptations. In fact, it seems to me it is likely due to Satan’s unique knowledge of who Jesus is and the threat He poses to his evil ambition, Satan would have lost no time in beginning his assault upon Him. Since our pre-mortal existence, it had been Satan’s desire to derail Jesus from performing the very purpose of His mortal birth, to bring about the Atonement, and to weaken the grasp of Satan’s power upon His Father’s children.

This information is not meant to minimize the seriousness of Satan’s continued temptation of Jesus during this time, or going forward. It is to put the main purpose of Jesus’ retreat in proper perspective.

James E. Talmage states,

“It is not given to the rest of us, nor was it given to Jesus, to meet the foe, to fight and overcome in a single encounter, once and for all time. The strife between the immortal spirit and the flesh, between the offspring of God on the one hand, the world and the devil on the other, is persistent through life.”³

Why then did Jesus come to the wilderness for forty days? It is my belief He came for the express purpose of spiritual retreat. He also came to receive further instructions and support from His Father in a setting apart from distraction.

We read during this time, “he had fasted for forty days and forty nights” (Matthew 4:2), which underlines that this was a time of spiritual communion for Jesus. Fasting was a part of His spiritual preparation.

We know that Moses fasted twice for “forty days” (Exodus 24:18; 34:28), prior to his meeting with Deity, and John the Baptist had also gone to the wilderness prior to beginning his ministry (see Luke 3:2). It is likely all the prophets, following their prophetic calling, sought a period of solace and meditation in order to contemplate the unique charge they had received. A modern-day prophet leaves us these words regarding his call to be an Apostle.

Spender W. Kimball recorded in his journal,

Following the call, “...I wept and wept. It seemed that all the conflicting thoughts of my mind were trying to wash themselves clear with tears. I was in convulsions of sobbing. My wife was sitting by me on the floor stroking my hair; trying to quiet me...

“The night, but no sleep... How I prayed for forgiveness of my weaknesses and imperfections, prayers for strength to do the right, prayers that the family would all make the necessary adjustments in their feelings, but above all, prayers that I might feel that I was called by the Lord through His Servants and an assurance of acceptance. My wife was my salvation...

“It was just breaking day this Wednesday, the 14th of July. No peace had yet come, though I had prayed for it almost unceasingly these six days and nights. I had no plan or destination. I only knew I must get out in the open, apart, away. I dressed quietly and without disturbing the family, I slipped out of the house. I turned toward the hills. I had no objective. I wanted only to be alone. I had begun to fast.

“My weakness overcame me again. Hot tears came flooding down my cheeks as I made no effort to mop them up I was accusing myself, and condemning myself and upbraiding myself. I was praying aloud for special blessings from the Lord. I was telling Him that I had not asked for this position, that I was incapable of doing the work, that I was imperfect and weak and human, that I was unworthy of so noble a calling, though I had tried hard and my heart had been right. I knew that I must have been at least partly responsible for offenses and misunderstandings which a few people fancied they had suffered at my hands. I realized that I had been petty and small many times. I did not spare myself. A thousand things passed through my mind...

“...There was one great desire, to get a testimony of my calling, to know that it was not human and inspired by ulterior motives kindly as they might be. How I prayed! How I suffered! How I wept! How I struggled!

“Was it a dream which came to me? I was weary and I think I went to sleep for a little. It seemed that in a dream I saw my grandfather and became conscious of the great work he had done. I cannot say that it was a vision, but I do know that with this new experience came a calm like the dying wind, the quieting wave after the storm passed. I got up, walked to the rocky point and sat on the same ledge. My tears were dry, my soul was at peace. A calm feeling of assurance came over me, doubt and questionings subdued. It was as though a great burden had been lifted. I sat in tranquil silence surveying the beautiful valley, thanking the Lord for the satisfaction and the reassuring answer to my prayers. Long I meditated here in peaceful quietude, apart, and I felt nearer my Lord than ever at any time in my life.”⁴

These words were penned by a mortal man in response to the sacred call to serve as a special witness of Jesus Christ upon the earth, as one of His modern-day Apostles. It provides insight as to the introspection and doubts that arose as he became acutely aware of his mortal weaknesses in response to his receiving a sacred call. It was only through the whispering of the spirit that his burden was lifted and peace restored to his doubting heart. Only then was his confidence restored through heavenly confirmation and he could then move forward to fulfill his divine calling to serve as an Apostle.

Mark records, “and angels ministered unto him” (Mark 1:13). This leads me to believe that with Jesus, not only was His Father there to give Him solace and strength, but also others. Did they include those who had previously served as heads of prior dispensations including Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, as well as other prophets including those of our time? The record is incomplete, but this event marked a most special occasion for at its conclusion, the Savior would then commence his three-year ministry upon the earth! It should not be surprising that when Jesus was most vulnerable, at the conclusion of his forty day fast, Satan would make yet another effort to destroy Him.

Matthew 4:2-3

**2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.
3 And...the tempter came to him, ...**

Matthew (Matthew 4:2-3) and Luke (Luke 4:2-3) agree that it was when Jesus was most vulnerable the recorded three temptations followed. Mark only records that Jesus was tempted of Satan (see Mark 1:13). John’s record is silent.

It is true with most of us when we are the most vulnerable, most susceptible, most exhausted, and most alone, that Satan’s alluring offers seems most desirable to us. Surely this was also true for Jesus.

Bruce R. McConkie notes,

“Our Lord, as a mortal, was subject to the same laws of trial and testing that govern all mortals...Man must have a choice: they must be able to choose; there must be opposites; they must have agency;

they must be free to worship...[the Father] or to follow Satan...And unless men have the agency to choose to do good and work righteousness—and, in fact, do so—they cannot be saved. There is no other way...There is, then a law of temptation. It involves the Eternal Christ, by whose power Lucifer fell as lightening from heaven, and it involves the mortal Jesus, who was subject to the wiles of the spirit Lucifer as he dwelt as a man among men.”⁵

We will now explore the three noted temptations of Jesus by Satan.

2.1. First Temptation

Matthew 4:3

3 ...If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

“If.” These two letters combined to convey doubt as to the verity of Jesus' divine Sonship. If you truly are the Son of God, prove it! You are hungry. Why don't you exercise your divine power and provide bread for yourself from these stones? He, who twice a day, six days a week, fed the children of Israel as they were in the desert for forty years and will later use His divine power to provide bread for five thousand, and on a separate occasion for four thousand, refuses now to feed Himself. He replies to Satan. (see McConkie, Bruce R. *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. 411-412).

Matthew 4:4

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.

His reply first conveys to the devil that He will not use His divine power to prove His divine Sonship. Secondly, Christ stresses the importance of spiritual food over temporal food.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Those who make the search for earthly bread their chief concern [often] lose sight of eternal values, fail to feed their spirits, die spiritually and lose their souls...as the Son of God, chooses the bread from heaven and will find earthly food when his circumstances permit. He is master over the flesh; his appetites will be kept within the bounds set by divine standards."⁶

2.2. Second Temptation

Matthew 4:5-6 compared to JST, Matthew 4:5-6.

Matthew 4:5	JST, Matthew 4:5-6
<p>5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,</p>	<p>5 Then <u>Jesus was taken up into the holy city, and the Spirit setteth him on the pinnacle of the temple.</u></p>
<p>6 And he saith unto him...</p>	<p>6 <u>And the devil came unto him and said...</u></p>

A comparison of these two scriptures provides distinct differences. The first is by what power Jesus is taken to the pinnacle (highest point) of (Herod's) temple? One identifies the power as emanating from the devil; the other identifies this power as from the Holy Spirit. It is important to understand while the devil has power to tempt Jesus, he does not have the power to transport Him.

The second difference is the devil having taken Jesus to the highest point of Herod's Temple, proceeds with his next temptation. The Joseph Smith Translation states that it is while Jesus is already at the temple site, Satan comes with yet another temptation. One reason for the Spirit bringing Jesus to the temple at this time may have been that it was a continuation of Jesus' on-going spiritual instruction. The record is silent.

Matthew 4:6

6 And [the devil] 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.

Satan's diabolical temptation is directed not only to Jesus, but to His Eternal Father! Jesus is to bodily throw Himself off the temple which would then require God to invoke His omnipotent power in order to miraculously preserve the mortal life of His Son. If the Father failed to act, scripture would go unfulfilled making God a liar, and His only begotten Son in the Flesh would be killed thereby frustrating the whole purpose of His earthly mission!

Jesus' answer is direct and to the point.

Matthew 4:7

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Neither the power of the Father or the Son is to be invoked for the sole purpose of providing a miracle for the faithless. It is not to be used to provide bread from stones or to provide a miraculous demonstration for those individuals who may be present at the temple, including Satan, of Jesus' divinity. The power of deity may be invoked by those who exercise the prerequisite faith in righteousness, but its manifestation is determined solely by the Father or the Son.

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

"Seductive as the appeal was, he would not yield; his divinity was not to be proved by a plunge from the temple pinnacle, nor was his ministry to be announced by such a dramatic occurrence. He was his own witness, and the people, as in all ages, must come and hear a prophet's voice and choose for themselves whether to believe or to rebel."⁷

2.3. Third Temptation

Matthew 4:8-9 compared to JST, Matthew 4:8-9.

Matthew 4:8-9	JST, Matthew 4:8-9
<p>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;</p>	<p>8 <u>And again Jesus was in the Spirit, and it taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.</u></p>
<p>9 And saith unto him...</p>	<p>9 <u>And the devil came unto him again, and said...</u></p>

Once again, we contrast the difference in Matthew’s account and the Joseph Smith Translation. The question is who is transporting Jesus? It is my position that it is the Spirit transporting Jesus, not the devil, for a valid purpose. We are, however, not given the reason why the Spirit has transported Jesus to this particular location. The second difference in the account is while Jesus is there, communing with the Spirit, again Satan appears.

Matthew 4:9 compared to JST, Matthew 4:9.

Matthew 4:9	JST, Matthew 4:9
<p>9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.</p>	<p>9 <u>And the devil came unto him again, and said, All these things will I give unto thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.</u></p>

The Devil has now issued his third temptation to the Christ, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9).

Bruce R. McConkie notes,

“In practical reality this must have been the crowning test of the three. Jesus was a mortal man, and every mortal has planted in his heart the desire for wealth and power. One of the greatest purposes of mortality is to bridle this desire and to keep it under control.

“Cain slays Abel to gain his flocks and herds. Esau sells his birthright for a mess of pottage. Joseph’s brothers sell him to the Ishmaelites for a few pieces of silver; Judas plants the traitor’s kiss for thirty pieces of silver...such has always been the way of mortals. [Cain had been so tempted and he murdered his brother, Abel. Esau had sold his patriarchal birthright to his brother, Jacob, for a mess of pottage; the Apostle Judas would betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. And the list goes on]. ...And since our Lord’s temptations were real and a part of his necessary trials and tests, we cannot do other than suppose that all the kingdoms and wealth and power of Satan’s world must have seemed desirable to him. [Both]Men [and women] have the potential of becoming joint-heirs with him of all

that his Father hath, and yet they sell their souls for naught. Why should [Jesus] be subject to any less testing?"⁸

The succinctness of Jesus' reply is immediate and direct.

Matthew 4:10

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.

Earlier in time, Satan had hoped to obtain the glory and honor of the Father by forcing all mankind to be righteous. Even now, he appears to believe that spiritual honor and glory can be purchased through the temporal wealth and glory he momentary controls. He continues in his rebellion. Eternal honor, power and glory are only available to those who chose to do the will of their Heavenly Father. It cannot be obtained in other ways or by any other means.

Luke 4:13

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

Both Mathew and Mark note following the departure of the devil, "behold angels ministered unto him" (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13).

Bruce R. McConkie concludes,

"Jesus was tempted...to fulfill all righteousness. It was part of the eternal plan. It gave him the experiences he needed to work out his own salvation, and it prepared him to sit in judgment upon his erring brethren, who, in a lesser degree, are tried and tested as he was."⁹

The Apostle Paul records.

Hebrews 4:15

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but [he] was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin.

James E. Talmage notes,

"...we affirm that the temptations were real, and that the trials to which our Lord was put constituted an actual and crucial test...Had there been no possibility of His yielding to the lures of Satan, there would have been not real test in the temptations, no genuine victory in the result. Our Lord was sinless yet peccable; He had the capacity, the ability to sin had He willed so to do. Had He been bereft of the faculty to sin, He would have been shorn of His free agency; and it was to safeguard and ensure the agency of man that He had offered Himself, before the world was, as a redeeming sacrifice."¹⁰

The Apostle Paul testifies,

Hebrews 5:8

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

As noted previously, following the conclusion of the third temptation, “the devil departs from him for a season” (Luke 4:13) and “angels ministered unto him” (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13).

James E. Talmage notes,

“It is not to be supposed that Christ’s victorious emergence from the dark clouds of the three specific [recorded] temptations exempted Him from further assaults by Satan, or insured Him against later trials of faith, trust, and endurance... This victory over the devil and his wiles, this triumph over the cravings of the flesh, the harassing doubts of the mind, the suggested reach out for fame and material wealth, were great, but not final successes on the struggle between Jesus, the embodied God, and Satan, the fallen angel of light. That Christ was subject to temptation during the period of His association with the apostles He expressly affirmed [Luke 22:28]. That His temptations extended even to the agony in Gethsemane will appear as we proceed with this study.”¹¹

For now, the battle with Satan has been won, but it is not over. It may have been for this reason angels attended Him, not only to celebrate His immediate victory, but also to strengthen Him for all that was yet ahead.

3. Jesus Selects Five to be His Disciples

It is important to note Jesus selected and then invited His original disciples. These disciples must be chosen carefully for they will be amongst those who will later qualify to be numbered among the Twelve Apostles. The twelve will, as one of their responsibilities, preach the gospel to all the world. They, along with Jesus Christ, will form the spiritual foundation upon which Christ will build His church (see Ephesians 2:19-20). He will also lay hands upon their heads and give them the authority to act in His name. They will, upon His death, be special witnesses of His name. But first, they must be selected and taught.

Following Jesus' return from his forty-day communion with God, John the Baptist, while standing with two of his disciples, saw Jesus as He walked by. John spoke directly to his disciples.

John 1:35-39

35 Again the next day after John stood, ...[with] two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?

They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

Who were the two disciples of John the Baptist, who upon John's declaration had become followers of Jesus? The scripture identifies one as "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother" (John 1:40). Who is the other? The other who is not identified by name, but is believed by many to be the recorder of the event himself, John, the future Apostle and revelator.

Bruce R. McConkie asks,

"Why did Andrew and John leave their Baptist friend--those doctrines they believed...to follow another whom as yet they did not even know? ...The answer: they have...a testimony; they know in their souls of the truth of the Lord's work; and they are willing to forsake all else to follow the new light that has been kindled in their souls."¹²

It is important to note both Andrew and John had, through the teachings of John the Baptist, become sensitive to the whispering of the spirit. They had also learned when the spirit speaks, it is important to act, and they did.

This is likewise these are important lesson for each of us. First, to live our lives so we may be sensitive to the whispering of the spirit. Second, when He whispers, we are able to hear His voice from the myriad of distractions around us. And third, to act upon His promptings.

Andrew acts.

John 1:41-42

41 He [Andrew] first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah [Messiah], which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

What an unusual action for Jesus to take with someone He does not know? It would be a curious were it not for the visionary insight that Jesus has regarding Cephas, who will later become known as Peter. The Joseph Smith Translation adds the following insertion, "a seer, or a stone" (JST, John 1:42). The Book of Mormon prophet, Ammon, offers the following clarification regarding the gifts of being a seer.

B/M, Mosiah 8:16-18

16 And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God.

17 But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.

18 Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.

Bruce R. McConkie observes,

"Peter, the Rock and the Seer, who would yet hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Peter, to whom the Lord would one day say that the gates of hell should never prevail against the rock of revelation and the seership of eternal vision--Peter has now come into the fold."¹³

Andrew, John, and now Cephas or Peter have now been chosen as disciples by Jesus.

John 1:43

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and said unto him, Follow me.

Philip, like Andrew, acts upon the witness he has received.

John 1:45-46

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Philip brings his friend Nathanael to meet Jesus himself. Immediately upon meeting him, Jesus identifies him by stating, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! [deceit, fraud]" (John 1:47).

The LDS Bible Dictionary states,

"He is generally identified with Bartholomew on the ground that Nathanael is always mentioned along with apostles... as though of apostolic rank...."¹⁴

Nathanael is surprised for this was his first meeting with the man from Nazareth. How could Jesus know of his character? While he is pondering his insight, Jesus adds the following visionary insight.

John 1:48-49

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

Nathanael immediately recognizes that Jesus is no ordinary man for He had accurately determined the location where Philip had spoken to him.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Perhaps our Lord went on to reveal to the future apostle what had actually taken place under the fig tree; and certainly, as Philip and Nathanael had traveled together to the place where Jesus was, there had been extended discussion of the testimony of the Baptist, of the reactions of Andrew and John and Simon, and of Philip himself. All this coupled with Jesus' seeric declaration, caused the guileless Nathanael to formulate in words what already he had been phrasing in his heart (John 1:49): 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.' The fifth new convert had been added...Nathanael now knew as the others knew of the divinity of Him whom they had chosen to follow."¹⁵

Jesus confirmed the witness that Nathanael had received and then told him there are yet more spiritual experiences ahead for him.

John 1:50-51

50 ...Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

James E. Talmage states regarding Jesus referring to Himself as the Son of man,

"The Lord's use of the title "The Son of Man"...lies in the fact that He knew His Father to be the one and only supremely exalted Man, whose Son Jesus was both in spirit and in body--the Firstborn among all the spirit-children of the Father, the Only Begotten in the flesh--and therefore, in a sense applicable to Himself alone, He was and is the Son of the "Man of Holiness," Elohim, the Eternal Father."¹⁶

PGP, Moses 6:57

57 ...in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, ...

James E. Talmage concludes,

"It was customary with rabbis and other teachers of that time to strive for popularity, that many might be drawn to them to sit at their feet and be known as their disciples. Jesus, however, selected His own immediate associates...He summoned them. They were the servants; He was the Master (John 15:16)."¹⁷

4. Jesus Turns Water into Wine

It is while Jesus is in Galilee with His five disciples that, according to John, "both Jesus was called, and His disciples to (attend) the marriage (in Cana of Galilee)" (see John 2:1-2). Mary, the mother of Jesus, is also in attendance.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Scholars generally feel that some member of the Holy Family was being married, and that Mary was supervising and guiding what went on.”¹⁸

As the wedding proceeded, it reached a point when there was no more wine. Mary, obviously aware of Her son’s divine powers, notified Him directly.

John 2:3

3 ...the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

John 2:4 compared to JST, John 2:4.

John 2:4	JST, John 2:4
4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.	4 Jesus said unto her, Woman, what <u>wilt thou have me to do for thee? that will I do; for mine hour is not yet come.</u>

The two concerns this verse raises are Jesus’ referencing his mother as “Woman” followed by the phrase, “what have I do to with thee?” The insight provided by the Joseph Smith Translation clarifying His willingness to do for His mother, as she requests, affords us the opportunity to consider the term, “Woman” in a different light.

James E. Talmage notes,

"...though the title of 'Mother' belongs to every woman who has earned the honors of maternity, yet to no child is there more than one woman whom by natural right he can address by that title of respectful acknowledgment."¹⁹

It is important in our evaluation to recall the words of Jesus from the cross to His mother as He directed His Beloved Apostle John, the care of His mother with the words, “Woman, behold thy son!” (John 19:26). As He shortly will be separated from His earthly mother by death, how could one assume that Christ was conveying any other emotion to His mother than that of honor, tenderness, and love?

James E. Talmage continues,

“It is not the function of his mother, to direct or even to suggest the exercise of the power inherent in Him as the Son of God...He would act only when the time was right for the purpose, and that He, not she, must decide when the time had come.”²⁰

Mary, acting as supervisor to the servants, instructs them, “Whatsoever He [Jesus] saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

John 2:5

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

We are told by John there are “six waterpots of stone...containing two or three firkins apiece” (John 2:6).

Smith’s Bible Dictionary states,

“...the amount of liquid in six stone jars, containing on the average 2 ½ *metretae* each, would exceed 110 gallons [or if] taken at the lowest estimate assigned to it, the amount would be reduced to about 60 gallons.”²¹

Jesus now instructs the servants.

John 2:7-8

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they did it.

We may learn two important lessons from the actions of the servants. First, they followed Jesus’ directions exactly. Second, they then, without objection or questioning, presented it to the governor. They acted in faith, trusting if they did as Jesus instructed, they would be blessed. It must have seemed irrational to them that one could put water in a pot, and draw wine out, but that is exactly what occurred.

John 2:9-11

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10 ...thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies, “and the faith of his disciples was strengthened in him” (JST, John 2:11). It is important to remember the seed of faith had already been planted in the hearts of His disciples through the previous witness of the Holy Ghost. This first recorded miracle of Jesus served only to further nourish their faith. The effect of the miracle the servants had witnessed may have led them to inquire further as to the power of this man. Unfortunately, the record is silent.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“We can well imagine the sense of reverential awe that came into the hearts of the revelers as the servants let it be known what Mary's Son had done. And we can suppose that all the villagers wondered and asked, as they heard the account, 'What manner of man is this? We thought he was a carpenter of Nazareth; can he be the Messiah, as some say?'”²²

5. At Capernaum

John 2:12

12 After this [wedding feast], he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

This scripture might be overlooked were it not for the valuable information that we gain from its contents. The first is there is no reference of “Joseph” suggesting he has passed away. There is also the reference to His family including brothers and one would think upon leaving the feast the family would have then returned to their home inferring that Capernaum is now the hometown of Mary and her sons.

Bruce R. McConkie notes,

“We are left to suppose that Mary and her other sons also now lived in this beautiful spot on the shores of the Sea of Galilee... We know it was the home of Peter and Andrew, and of James and John, and that it was the place where Matthew sat as a collector of customs.”²³

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“Jesus’ choice of Capernaum as the city of his abode, placed him in the mainstream of Galilean life, in the midst of a people--part Jewish, part Gentile--where he, as the Light sent forth 'to lighten the Gentiles,' could fulfill Isaiah's Messianic utterance.

“Isaiah 9:1-2

1 ...[In] the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali...beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.
2 The people that walked in darkness [shall see] ...a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them [shall]...the light [shine]].

“And shine it did...for a short season.”²⁴

John 2:12-13

12 ...and they continued there not many days.

13 And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Jesus will go with His disciples and family to attend the Feast of the Passover which was held in Jerusalem each year.

6. Conclusions

Within this chapter, four important events in the life of Jesus Christ have been addressed. These included: His 40 days in the wilderness, the selection of his first five disciples, the performing of his first recorded miracle and the re-location of his ministry to Galilee. I will now review each of these significant events.

In contrast to the King James Bible, we learn through the Joseph Smith Translation, the purpose of the Savior going to the desert was to commune with His Father and He was there “led up of the Spirit” (JST, Matthew 4:11). In order to enhance this period of spiritual preparation, He had been fasting. It was following His forty days fast, while He was in a weakened physical state, the devil came to tempt Him. Just as temptations are real for us, so were the three specific temptations real that Jesus experienced.

James E. Talmage states,

“...we affirm that the temptations were real, and that the trials to which our Lord was put constituted an actual and crucial test...Had there been no possibility of His yielding to the lures of Satan, there would have been no real test in the temptations, no genuine victory in the result. Our Lord was sinless yet peccable [def. capable of sinning]; He had the capacity, the ability to sin had He willed to so to do.”²⁵

The Apostle Paul testifies.

Hebrews 5:8

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

David O. McKay observes,

“Now, nearly every temptation that comes to you and me comes in one of [these] forms. Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted, ever so little maybe, comes to us as (1) A temptation of the appetite or passion [“command that these stones be made bread” (Matthew 4:3.)]; (2) A yielding to the pride and fashion or vanity of those alienated from the things of God [“cast thyself down [from the highest point of the temple] for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee” (Matthew 4:6)]; (3) A desire for the riches of the world, or power among men [“the devil...sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and [their] glory...all...will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8-9)].”²⁶

Our response to the temptations that will come to us in whatever form, is we too must stand firm and state, “Get thee hence, Satan” (Matthew 4:10). Likewise, we, like Joshua of old, must declare, “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

Following His departure from the wilderness, Jesus returned to the desert where John the Baptist was preaching. John, upon seeing Jesus, testified anew to His disciples Andrew, and probably John the Beloved, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:16). Touched by the spirit, they now left John the

Baptist, whom they knew and loved, to follow Jesus. Andrew and John will both be selected as Jesus' first disciples. Later, Andrew would introduce his brother, Simon, to Jesus who would rename him Cephas or Peter the disciple. Jesus upon saying to Philip, "Follow me" (John 1:43) would also become one of Jesus' disciples. Philip sought out Nathanael/Bartholomew, who came, and following a brief conversation with Jesus, became the fifth disciple of Jesus.

James E. Talmage reminds us,

"Jesus...selected His own immediate associates...He summoned them. They were the servants; He was the Master."²⁷

Jesus and His disciples were called or summoned to attend a wedding feast in Cana. It was during this event Jesus chose to respond to a request by His mother, Mary, to provide wine for those in attendance when the existing supply is gone. The interaction between He and His mother and His subsequent decision to supply the wine has often been a subject for discussion. With the aid of the Joseph Smith Translation, greater clarity has been provided to the request by His mother, and His response to her. It is important we understand the decision to provide the wine in a miraculous manner was entirely His. As noted, He, not others, would determine how and when He chooses to exercise His power and divine authority.

In conclusion, we noted that following the marriage feast Mary and her sons returned to Capernaum and Jesus and His disciples accompanied them. Capernaum of Galilee is also the home of Andrew, Peter, James, and John. It had also been referenced by Isaiah, many centuries previous, as the place where the Light will be sent forth to lighten the Gentiles (see Isaiah 9:1-2). It is in the Galilee region where Jesus will spend the majority of His time teaching, testifying, and ministering to the people.

Footnotes

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- ¹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 409-410.
- ² *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 410.
- ³ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 133.
- ⁴ *Spencer W. Kimball*. Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977, [12th Printing, 1978], 191-195.
- ⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 406-408.
- ⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 413.
- ⁷ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 415.
- ⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 416-417.
- ⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 417.
- ¹⁰ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 134.
- ¹¹ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition], 1963], 133.
- ¹² *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 439.
- ¹³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 441.
- ¹⁴ **Nathanael**. LDS Bible Dictionary. *Holy Bible*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 737.
- ¹⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 443.
- ¹⁶ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 143.
- ¹⁷ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 140-141.
- ¹⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 449.
- ¹⁹ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 144.
- ²⁰ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 145.
- ²¹ *Smith's Bible Dictionary [A Dictionary of the Bible]*. Revised and Edited by F.N. and M.A. Peloubet. Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1986, 742.
- ²² *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 453-454.
- ²³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 455.
- ²⁴ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 1*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 456.
- ²⁵ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 134.
- ²⁶ *Gospel Ideals*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1953, [Thirteenth Printing, July 1966], 154.
- ²⁷ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 141.