



Scriptural Background: Mt 4

*"And [Jesus] answered, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' "*Mt 4:4

In Matthew chapter 4 Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There He is tempted by the devil, and there of course He overcomes that temptation. Because Jesus rebuts each temptation with Scripture, it is common for Christians to apply this passage along the lines of, "Ah, see, memorize Scripture and you, too, will be able to overcome sin in your own life." While that is certainly an appropriate and effective strategy to practice, it is important that we do not employ it in a self-reliant way, divorced from union with Christ: "If *you* memorize enough verses or the correct verses, *you* can be victorious." Rather, it is significant to note that each of the Old Testament verses Jesus cites comes from Deuteronomy 6–8. Why does that matter? That is the section of Scripture in which the Israelites have been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and, remarkably, failing the test of each temptation that comes their way. So what is Jesus doing in Matthew 4? He is entering the test in our place: being tempted in the wilderness, in His case for 40 days, *and He is passing the test we never could on our own*. This is what Lent is all about. We remember we are but dust; Jesus secures the victory we need in His life as well as in His death; and only by faith in Him can we experience the victory that only He offers. Jesus is the real Bread of Life, the very Word of God by whom we live. Let's let all our Scripture reading and memorizing point us to Him.

Prayer:

LORD Jesus, praise You for conquering sin, Satan, and death. Praise You, Father, for sending Your Son to live and die and rise again in our place. Praise You, Holy Spirit, for coming to unite us to Christ, that His triumph might be worked out in our lives. We know we need You. Help us, please, to live in that victory over temptation today. Amen.