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The Testing of Jesus in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Intertextual Hermeneutics

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Abstract

This article will seek to interpret Matthew 4:1-11, commonly referred to as the “temptation account” by taking into consideration issues from Old Testament Textual Criticism, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Historical and social contexts, as well as theory on inter-textuality. This article will seek to show how Jesus is seeking to prove his Divine Sonship through creating a comparison between himself and the Second Generation of Israel who inherited the Promised Land after their parents’ failures despite satanic harassment. This will be accomplished through an examination of Matthew’s main argument for the book, and move towards grammatical and syntactical issues within the text of Matthew before proceeding to issues involved with the Dead Sea Scrolls, apotropaism, and intertextuality. It is the author’s hope that after an examination of this article that the reader might come to a fuller understanding of how one can know that Jesus has divine prerogatives at his disposal, but that He can be trusted to use those prerogatives in a way that is pleasing to the Father.

Keywords

Jesus, Christ, Matthew, Sonship, Testing, Temptation, apotropaism, Dead Sea Scrolls, Textual Criticism, Inter-textuality.

Cover Page Footnote

McIntyre is currently a student at Liberty University in the Ph.D. in Theology and Apologetics

Introduction

This article interprets Matthew 4:1-11, commonly referred to as the "Temptation Account," by considering Old Testament textual criticism, the Dead Sea Scrolls, historical and social contexts, as well as inter-textuality theory, in an attempt to understand the Matthean argument of the passage. I argue that Matthew offers an apologetic for the divine Sonship of Christ while arguing against the commonly accepted relationship to the wilderness generation.[1] The study will begin with the literary context, examining the general argument of Matthew's gospel and a brief examination of the passage's sub-genre. I then work through grammatical and syntactical issues within the text of Matthew 4:1-11. Throughout the analysis, issues involving the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), apotropaism, and intertextuality will be explored as they pertain to the textual sub-unit under consideration. It is my intention that the reader might better understand how one can know that Jesus, as the Son of God, has divine prerogatives at his disposal, but also that He can be trusted to use those prerogatives in a way that is pleasing to the Father, in spite of Satanic oppression, because He is the faithful Son.

Matthean Argument

General Argument

The Gospel of Matthew revolves around five of Jesus' discourses, evincing the author's concern with recording and disseminating the content of Christ's teaching. The Great Commission, written by Matthew as Jesus' last will and testament, implies that faithful Christ followers are left with a final and emphatic command to make other disciples by teaching them everything that Christ has commanded.[2] This final command seemingly posits the need for a source document to reference in the endeavor; this is the purpose for Matthew's Gospel as Turner proposes: "The Gospel according to Matthew equipped its original Christian Jewish readers with the teaching of Jesus the Messiah so that

1 For those who view this passage in reference to Israel's testing in the wilderness see representative treatments by Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 61–62; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 352; and Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 83–84. For an alternative view focused on values and not identity see David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 124–125.

2 See Matthew 28:18-20.

they might effectively spread the message of God's reign to all the nations."[3] Though others, such as Osborne and Blomberg, argue for the missional and apologetic nature of Matthew's gospel, most commentators agree that *discipleship*, either as an invitation to the unbelieving Jewish reader, or as a command to the believer of Jewish background, is central.[4] This examination will move forward with the understood purpose of Matthew's Gospel serving as a discipleship manual of sorts, of which the user need not be limited to the unbeliever or the believer.

Literary Context

Many interpreters see Matthew 4:1-11 as a "*haggadic midrash* on Deut 6-8."[5] A *haggadic midrash* is difficult to define, which Maoz points out when he says, "Too often, the term midrash is designated as a single, specific literary form or genre; terms used to define and describe it include figure of speech, technical methodology, interpretation, hermeneutics, exegesis, figurative language, and commentary."[6] Therefore, at its basic level, a *midrash* is an exposition of a biblical text. However, one must wonder how a commentator could consider the text at hand as *haggadic*. Isidor Singer in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* defines *haggadic midrash* thus: "Midrash Haggadah embraces the interpretation, illustration, or expansion, in a moralizing or edifying manner, of the non-legal portions of the Bible."[7] However, Deuteronomy, the second giving of the law authored by Moses, surely would have been considered a legal portion of scripture. Even if the book of Deuteronomy was disputed as legal material, the

3 David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 1.

4 See Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, vol. 1, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 31–32; and Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 48.

5 Osborne, 129-131 as well as W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 352.

6 Daniel Maoz, "Haggadic Midrash and the Hermeneutics of Revealment," *Biblical Theological Bulletin*, vol. 37, https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/pdf/10.1177/01461079070370020401 p.70

7 Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, 12 Volumes* (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 550.

quotations Jesus employed which are commands must be considered *halakhic*.[8] The *midrash* theory can also be rejected for logical reasons. If Matthew were giving a moral exhortation from Deuteronomy 6-8, he seems to have chosen a rather random and inapplicable group of commands to moralize. How many other Jewish believers would be able to sympathize with such grandiose temptations as those by which Jesus was tempted? Miraculous self-provision, protecting from an attempted satanic suicide-assasination, and an earthly kingdom were surely not the average temptations experienced by Matthew's audience. More relevant moral exhortations from these chapters of Deuteronomy were available to Matthew had a moral midrash been his goal. In light of these reasons, another literary form must explain the sub-genre of this account.

Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests a contemporary, or immediately prior, literary form from historical context which would better describe this narrative account.[9] The Ancient Near Eastern people believed that there were two main forces of demonic activity: harassment and possession. Possession was defeated through exorcisms, which are detailed in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other extra-biblical accounts.[10] The Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly fragment 11Q11 (referred to as the "Songs to Disperse Demons") is particularly helpful because it dates somewhat contemporaneous to the time of Christ.[11] Exorcism was considered a liberation from the current demonic oppression.[12]

The harassment of demons, which was the external oppression of a person by demonic influence to include actions such as demonic temptation and testing, was to be remedied through apotropaism.[13] "Apotropaistic activities are preventative measures in which a petition of incantation ensures protection from future demonic harm."[14] There are at present two primary theories of how

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8 The *JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008) offers the following definition for halakhah and its adjective halakhic, "Jewish law; pertaining to the legal aspects of Judaism" on p 226.

9 Michael Morris, "'Apotropaic' Tactics in the Matthean Temptation," *Journal of Postgraduate Research*, Trinity College Dublin, 2014, 134.

10 For a thorough treatment on Demonic views in the ANE and their evidence among magical writings, emulates, and rabbinic texts, see Gerrit C. Vreugdenhil, Psalm 91 and Demonic Menace, Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2020, specifically pp. 53-63.

11 Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., Edward Cook, *A New Translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 588-590.

12 Morris, 134.

13 Wise, Abegg, and Cook, Ibid.

14 Ibid., 135.

apotropaistic endeavors were to be conducted, with David Lincicum and Menahem Kister representative of the two methods, respectively. They assert that apotropaism is conducted effectively through either quoting (Lincicum) or obeying (Kister) the Torah.[15] Interestingly, Jesus is described in Matthew as engaging in both methods to successfully ward off the devil's attacks. Though it would be mere conjecture to think that this is a practice Jesus employed as a learned tactic, it is interesting to note that Jesus did, in fact, use both means to "resist the devil," which eventually caused the devil to flee.[16] That the Lord engaged with Satan in an apotropaistic encounter is clear, however, the question then becomes whether this text is a narrative account describing an apotropaistic encounter as a model for employing apotropaistic methods for the reader, or if there was some other purpose for the inclusion of the narrative. To posit any hypothesis as a resolution to this question a detailed exegesis is required.

Matthew 4:1-11 Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis

Introduction- Matthew 4:1-2

Matthew 4:1 begins with the adverb of subsequent time τότε, translated as "then," which marks a direct succession of the events previously described at the end of Matthew 3, specifically the baptism and divine affirmation of Jesus' identity.[17] This affirmation of Jesus' Divine Sonship by God in 3:17 is of critical importance for understanding the nature of Satan's upcoming challenges, as will be seen below. The use of the title of "Son" in v. 17, echoed in vv. 3 and 6 cohere the account and strengthen the use of τότε as a conjunction which denotes a direct succession of the events described in the author's narrative. Matthew then uses the term ἀνήχθη in the passive aorist ("to bring up/to lead up"[18]) to describe Jesus' movement into the wilderness by the Spirit, "to be tempted by the devil."[19]

15 Ibid., 137-138

16 See James 4:7.

17 For discourse function of τότε see Steven H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek,* 2nd ed., Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2000 pp. (95-97), for its use in Matthew in direct succession of time see Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 83.

18 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 203.

19 Matthew 4:1, ESV.

The use by Matthew of a term that can be translated as "tested" or "tempted" gives reason for pause. Matthew employs πειρασθῆναι as an infinitive of purpose.[20] The term means "to obtain information to be used against a person by trying to cause someone to make a mistake—'to try to trap, to attempt to catch in a mistake,'"[21] and is often translated as "to be tempted" in contexts involving the devil.[22] Though the gloss offered in the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* has merit, this particular entry, as applied to our present passage, poses significant challenges to the modern interpreter.

Although Bauer gives many more translation options for the term, he opts for "to entice to improper behavior, *tempt*,"[23] which heavily weighs his selection on the agency of the devil. Such reasoning ignores the agency of God, whom the text asserts as superintending the event through His Spirit. Though the express interest of this paper is the Matthean text, James is clear that man should not charge God with tempting any man, and God's agency in superintending a situation for the purpose of "tempting" poses logical and theological problems. However, there are other practical difficulties beyond the theological conundrum for the gloss of "temptation," which are eliminated through using the gloss "test/testing." There has been a semantic shift in English since the appearance of the lexicons noted above. "Temptation," in current idiom, implies seducing one towards a goal which they are already inclined towards intentionally; it has been defined as "the desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise."[24] With this understanding, one cannot be tempted by that which they are not inclined to desire. However, the idea of trapping or inclining towards a mistake implies the sense of "testing" to see the limits of Jesus' worth as the Son of God. For that reason, it is probably better to opt for the second sense of the Greek word generally, which Bauer lists as "to endeavor to discover the nature or character of

20 Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019, 56.

21 Louw and Nida, 329.

22 See Matt. 4:1-11 in the major English translations.

23 William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 793. Hereafter referred to as "BDAG."

24 Oxford University Press: The Oxford English Dictionary, 2021, www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=temptation%2Bdefinition&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8., Accessed via google search on March 3, 2021.

someth. by testing, *try, make trial of, put to the test.*"[25] The verse is clear that the devil, τοῦ διαβόλου, "the slanderer" is the controlling noun for ὑπὸ, showing that this testing was to be performed under control of the devil, though on behalf of God's express purpose. By avoiding the term "temptation," which English idiom uses differently than the wider semantic domain enjoyed by the Greek term, and using the term "test," one is safeguarded against the idea that Jesus desired to sin while also denying the idea that God used Satan in an attempt to entice Jesus towards improper behavior.

The rest of the prologue (vv. 1-2) is hastened through the use of the connective conjunction καὶ, which continues to denote subsequent sections of the narrative in rapid fashion. A certain amount of time elapses between Jesus arriving in the desert and his actual testing by the devil. Verse two gives a deictic marker of time in the term νηστεύσας, translated as "after he was fasting." Turner describes the emphasis here when he states, "The aorist participle, in this case νηστεύσας (*nēsteusas*, having fasted) normally refers to action prior to the aorist verb, in this case ἐπείνασεν (*epeinasen*, he hungered). The adverb ὕστερον (*hysteron*, afterward) also supports this notion, which places Jesus's testing after, not during, his forty-day fast."[26] Although one would assume that Jesus became hungry during the forty days of his fast, this verse stresses his hunger at the end of the forty days, most likely in an attempt to stress Jesus' human frailty and subjectivity to temptation at this particular point. Jesus is weak, Jesus is hungry, and Jesus is alone. This is optimal timing for the testing of Christ's mettle.

The amount of time that Jesus fasted is incredible for a few reasons. The text shows that Jesus was fasting for forty days and forty nights, with these two terms of time deixis forming a merism, showing comprehensive duration. Forgoing food in the hostile weather of the wilderness is physically draining. Jesus would have been traveling through hills and mountainous terrain during the heat of the desert day and the bitter cold of the night. However, there is also a spiritual element to this forty-day time frame which emulates the amount of time Moses fasted when he ascended the mountain to receive the law.[27] The correlation with Moses is natural to Matthew, who seems to submit Jesus as the prophet like Moses through the first few chapters of his gospel. Both children are delivered

25 William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 792.

26 David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 127.

27 Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1907), 30–31.

from the attempted infanticide of a gentile king (Exod. 1:15-2:10, Matt. 2:13-18) both children are delivered within the auspices of Egypt (Ex. 2:6-10, Matt. 2:13-14). Both Moses and Jesus pass through a body of water before starting their teaching ministries (Moses at the Red Sea in Ex. 14:15-31, Jesus in the River Jordan in Matt. 3:13-17), both fast forty days before delivering the law to their people (Moses receives the commandments at Sinai, the first forty days without fasting expressed in Ex. 24:12-18, and the second reception which includes fasting expressed in 34:28, compared to Jesus delivering the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:1-7:27.) Moses makes the stronger connection to Christ for these reasons and more.

However, if one desires to link the testing of Christ to the generation who was wandering in the wilderness there are important correlations left unfulfilled and in need of answer. The most difficult issue to resolve is the fact that Israel was forced to wander in the wilderness as punishment for their sin of faithlessness (Numbers. 14:20-25), while Christ had never sinned. There was no testing inherent in those forty years of wandering except for the testing of God ten times by the sinful generation, yet God had not tested them in such a manner. The only two occurrences of God testing the people were before their curse to wander the wilderness in Exodus 15 (the bitter water made sweet) and Exodus 16 (the provision of Manna). With this wealth of narrative structural similarities between Moses and Jesus, and the differences in purposes between the lost generation's forty years and Christ's forty days, it is hard to maintain the theory that Matthew intended to draw a connection to the Exodus generation and Christ. Instead, it appears that Matthew was drawing the emphasis to Christ's preparation to deliver the law, which he will do in the Sermon on the Mount. With the plot's conflict foretold by narration, and appropriate illusions to Christ's Old Testament predecessor Moses, Matthew now continues to the testing account proper.

Temptation 1 – Matthew 4:3-4

The first temptation begins with the arrival of the tempter, "καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ πειράζων." Here the devil is described by use of the participle form of πειράζο, derived from the term used in verse one to describe the purpose of Jesus' wilderness excursion, meaning "one who tempts" or "the tempter," and by the context of v. 1, a reference to the devil. Satan immediately issues a challenge in the form of a first-class conditional statement to Jesus, "If you are the son of God speak in order that these stones become loaves of bread."[28] This is a first-

28 Matt. 4:3, my translation; for information on the nature of the challenge offered by Satan, see Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the*

class condition marked by the "εἰ." The nature of first-class conditionals is that the *protasis* is assumed to be true for the sake of the argument, followed by the truthfulness of the *apodosis*. It could be understood as, "If you are the Son of God, and I believe that you are, speak in order that these stones become loaves of bread." Satan's challenge would then have the same rhetorical effect as saying "I believe you're the Son of God; now prove it to me." The way that Jesus is challenged to prove his divine Sonship to Satan is by meeting his own physical needs by turning stones into loaves of bread. Craig Blomberg makes the same conclusion: "The first-class conditional clause, 'If you are the Son of God," does not imply any doubt on the devil's part (cf. Jas 2:19). Rather, what is in doubt is what type of Son Jesus will be.'"[29] This idea is extremely important for understanding the force of Satan's request. Satan is ascertaining whether or not Christ will operate under his own power and authority to meet his own needs or whether he will rely on the provision of his Father.

Jesus refuses to lose honor in Satan's challenge and responds honorably by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 verbatim from the LXX.[30] Describing the context off Deut. 8:3, Turner notes that, "The first half of Deut. 8:3 alludes to God's purpose in permitting Israel's hunger in the wilderness: it was so that the people might learn that they needed not only bread but also God's word to survive."[31] By quoting scripture, Jesus in effect rebuffs Satan's attempt to incite him towards sin while simultaneously displaying his quality as the divine Son. The repetition of the term "Son," providing cohesion to the narrative of Matthew 3:17-4:11, now stresses Christ's quality as Son evidenced through His obedience, a typical Mediterranean virtue.[32] Jesus proves that He will not dishonor His Father by

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Synoptic Gospels, Second Edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003) which describes the honor-shame culture and challenge riposte scenario in particular on p. 34. In summary, during the Second Temple Period, which operated on honor-shame principles, to issue such a conditional to Jesus was in effect a type of "Challenge and Riposte" scenario. Someone was going to gain honor, and someone was going to lose honor. If Jesus submitted to the Devil's line of logic, he would have been therefore asserting Satan's rule over himself. Jesus could only respond and save honor by a rebuttal. One of the most effective forms of rebuttal in "challenge-riposte" was to quote scripture (see p. 334).

29 Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 84.

30 Craig L. Blomberg, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* , Ed. By G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. 15.

31 Turner, 129.

32 For information on this idea of loyalty and obedience in children in regards to human perspective see Malina and Rohrbaugh, 387, and for the divine perspective see Hagner, 61.

failing to trust in His Father's provision by meet his own needs out of immoral self-aggrandizement.

Christ's use of the Old Testament passage here is quite often the reason that many interpreters, including Blomberg, see the parallel to Israel's wandering.[33] However, this is mistaken for a few reasons. First, the testing of Israel, lasting forty years, was punishment on the Exodus generation, and Deuteronomy was given as a sermon to the children of those who were punished on the eve of their entering the promised land. Had Jesus wanted to make an illusion to the wilderness wandering it would have made more sense for him to employ God's miraculous provision of manna in Exodus, which he does later in his ministry. Jesus could have quoted from Numbers 11 about the punishment of those who ate the quail after grumbling against God, by those who were unhappy with God's provision. Both accounts would have included Halakhic sources and provided grounds for his rejection of Satan's offer, while also developing a link to the wilderness generation. Instead, Jesus employs Deuteronomy 8:3 as a literal command, which he obeys literally. The original command was given to a people on the eve of receiving their inheritance which in context is contrasted with their parent's disobedience.[34] Jesus, likewise, is on the verge of entering his own inheritance with the beginning of his ministry.[35]

The similarities between Jesus and the second generation of Israelites, though apparent, does not exhaust the intertextual allusions for this passage. Indeed, the very idea of temptation alludes to the garden of Eden and the fall of the first humans. In both instances of testing the devil appeals to human hunger. However, in Eden, Satan tempts the woman, who is in a state of abundance (fruitful garden) whereas Jesus is in a state of dire need (desolate wilderness). Even Satan's proposition is similar in his direct challenge to God's spoken revelation. In Gen. 3, Satan begins the test of Eve by distorting God's command and posing a question: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"[36] Likewise, in Matthew 4, Satan questions a divine revelation, namely

33 Blomberg, 83-84.

34 See particularly Deut. 1:32-37, 2:15-16, 4:1-14.

35 Psalm 2:8 refers to the nations as the inheritance of the Messiah, which Christ throughout the book of Matthew will begin to inherit as he ends his book with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20), inviting every nation to the ends of the earth to become part of his kingdom.

36 Gen 3:1 (ESV).

the status of Christ as Son which God asserts in Matt. 3:17, when he issues the challenge, "If you are the Son of God…"[37]

This first testing account shows that Christ proves his sonship in qualitative terms as seen through virtue of his obedience. In quoting Deuteronomy, Jesus gives a halakhic rebuff to Satan, and an explanation of his actions, while drawing a similarity to the second generation of Israelites. This second generation of Israelites is contrasted in Deuteronomy with their sinful and unbelieving parents who did not wait on the Lord's provision of food, but grumbled and were judged, while their children survived a horrible plague (Numbers 11:31-34). Satan, realizing he has been bested, immediately progresses to the second temptation.

Temptation 2 – Matthew 4:5-7

In the second temptation in Matthew Jesus is moved by the Devil to Jerusalem. The identity of the "holy city" (v. 5) as Jerusalem is coherent with the reference to the Temple in the same verse. The last spatial marker of any clarity in the account is the baptism scene at the Jordan River, with vague location deictic markers of Jesus' wandering towards the wilderness under the guidance of the Spirit. The verb used here, παραλαμβάνει ("to take, to bring along with"), suggests that Satan is exerting some authority over Jesus. This forced movement would have been at least the distance from the Jordan River crossing to Jerusalem, or about 20 miles.[38]

Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Satan places (ἔστησεν) Jesus upon the pinnacle of the temple. Again, the reader must note that Satan is actively controlling, or at the very least influencing, Jesus' movements throughout this scene.[39] Satan then issues a second challenge, in the first-class conditional, tempting Jesus to prove

37 Ibid., Mt 4:3.

38 See table 106 in Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 218.

39 This point of physical movement is debated. Turner does not see that the second Matthean temptation be taken literally (see p. 129 of his above cited commentary), and Hagner does not believe that the third should necessarily be taken literally (Hagner, p. 68 of below cited commentary). However, if a literal movement did not occur then this begs the question if Jesus was really tempted to physically endanger himself, or if this was all simply a façade? If the literal and physical movement of Christ does not occur, then the testing is nothing more than a vision, and this poses a greater theological problem than accepting the face-value literal interpretation of physical movement to a specific location.

his divine Sonship: "If you are the son of God, cast yourself down. For it is written that, 'His angels he will command concerning you, and upon their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Here the devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12.[40] By Jewish rhetoric, argumentation by the writings and prophets (*haggadic*) were considered less binding, and authoritative debate was only through appeal to the Torah.[41] Turner points out Satan's faulty logic, "Satan tempts Jesus to capitalize on his unique messianic status as a way out of self-induced mortal peril, perhaps as a stunt to appeal to the masses. But since Jesus receives the Father's approval by serving as an obedient Son, the proposed leap from the pinnacle of the temple would amount not to trusting God [sic] but to testing God."[42]

Satan's employment of Psalm 91 may be a greater challenge than it seems in light of its use as a common apotropaistic text, as referenced above from 11Q11. Satan's quote of Psalm 91 during the testing of Jesus presents certain issues that text-critical evidence, particularly the Gottingen LXX of 91:6 (90:6 in the LXX), may speak to. The Gottingen LXX supplies a variant reading with the Greek term δαιμονίου from the Hebrew word ושד, which is also attested in Aquila and Symachus.[43] This particular reading from the LXX would have significant implications for the future of interpretation as evidenced in 11Q11, and later rabbinic literature.[44] It is probable that this septuagintal reading, found in the

40 Though some would want to debate whether "Satan" and "the devil" are the same individual in Matthew's mind, the fact that Jesus refers to the one Matthew calls the devil is referred to as Satan in the pericope should be sufficient to establish that the individual is the same in Christ's perception.

41 See Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 1979. "An Analysis of Jesus' Arguments Concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 1 (2): 31–41. This article discusses Jesus' methods of argumentation from Mark 2 in light of contemporary rabbinic practices, showing that Jesus' use of a *gezerah shava* form of argumentation from a *haggadah* source as opposed to a stronger *halakah* source in discussions on the Sabbath was considered less authoritative. However, from Cohn's research, one can see that Jesus does use the authoritative halakah evidence structure against Satan in Matthew 4.

42 Turner, 129.

43 See "Text Critical Apparatus" in Alt, Albrecht, Otto Eissfeldt, Paul Kahle, Rudolf Kittel, Hans Bardtke, Hans Peter Rüger, Joseph Ziegler, et al. 1997. *[Torah, Nevi'im u-Khetuvim] Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

44 Vreugdenhil notes the use of Psalm 91 in targumic literature as having apotropaistic features in the post-exilic era, noting 5th-6th century archaeological evidence such as amulets and magic bowls (see pp. 3-10).

Gottingen LXX due to Aquila's and Symmachus' influence, resulted in Psalm 91's latter employment in apotropaistic practices.

Aquila and Symmachus were both revisionists of the ancient LXX (the old Greek), though Aquila's work was considered superior.[45] The fact that both of these revisionists were working from an original Hebrew document gives credence to some form of Hebrew vorlage that translated ושד as opposed to the ישוד seen in the MT.[46]

DSS fragment 11Q11, known as "Songs to Disperse Demons," is particularly worthy of attention for this account not only for the literary reasons mentioned above but also for text critical evidence, which may help validate the LXX reading as a known variant extant at the time of Christ.[47] There are six columns of different incantations that are salvageable from 11Q11, sharing many points of comparison with Psalm 91 including a contrast between light and darkness, imagery of the one thousand, an attack during the night by demonic foes, and the contrast between the wicked and the righteous.[48] One column is clearly attributed to Solomon (column 2, lines 1-12), and the last is clearly attributed to David (column 5, lines 4-13).[49] The columns in the middle are extremely fragmented, and they may denote separate incantations, or larger parts of any text preceding it. The sixth column, however, includes the text of Psalm 91. Though the text of the DSS has the same reading for the term, against the evidence of Symachus and Aquila, by using ישוד,[50] the use of the text for inclusion among other apotropaistic texts establishes a common use of Psalm 91 for apotropaistic incantations. From a historical interpretation standpoint, 11Q11, and other texts such as 4Q511, show that there was a growing fascination with apotropaism and establishes a contemporary link between apotropaism and Psalm 91 at the time of Christ.

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45 Ralph W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: From the Septuagint to Qumran* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

46 The reason for discussing this LXX background information is because the discovery of the DSS resulted in Hebrew texts which validated the theory of the Septuagint's Hebrew vorlage which was previously relegated to conjecture. See Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 93-110 & 127-146.

47 Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., Edward Cook, *A New Translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 588-590.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 *11Q11 Apocryphal Psalms* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), Ps 91:5–6.

11Q11 is dated between 50-68 CE and it can be assumed with some degree of certainty that there would have been at least a popular contemporary interpretation that Psalm 91 held apotropaistic value for the Jewish religious communities surrounding that very desert area where Christ was fasting and praying immediately before this scene.[51] In this case, Satan would not merely be telling Jesus that he should put the lord God to the test by casting himself to the ground, but may be implying that Christ's failure to do so would betray his trust in the Hebrew Scriptures which should safeguard Him from this very form of demonic oppression. This is not only an attempt to prove that God would protect Jesus from the harm of falling, since Jesus was abiding in the Lord as his dwelling place. It is also an attempt to see if God would in fact defeat Satan on Jesus' behalf through Jesus' supposed obedience to this Psalm's contents as commonly understood. By Satan's logic, Christ is willing to engage in apotropaism (through quotation and obedience) to defeat him. Satan therefore brings up an apotropaistic text in an attempt to see if Christ will obey that text's implications. If Christ obeys the scriptures as Satan intends, then in Satan's understanding Satan himself should be driven away by the God who has placed Satan there for the purpose of testing Christ. If Christ does not obey the scriptures as Satan supposes, then Christ must have a faulty view of this apotropaistic text, which would be contrary to local interpretation, and he would no longer be the obedient Son which he has proven to be in Matthew's narrative to this point.

Jesus is now forced to respond to Satan, and does so honorably, by again quoting from *halakhic* material found in Deuteronomy 6:16. When Moses speaks of testing the Lord, he does so by referring to the murmuring of the people against God at Meribah/Massah where the people complained about God's ability to provide water for them. Here there is nothing about which Jesus can complain of lacking, compared to the Israelites who were without water. The Israelites should have trusted in God to provide for their needs in light of God's faithfulness throughout the desert wanderings, but they were at that time without visible show of God's provision. Satan however has asked Jesus to recklessly endanger his life by challenging God's provision of safety. This particular quotation shows Jesus utilizing the Old Testament principle by way of *kal vechamer*.[52] If it is sinful to test God in the apparent absence of provision (when life is in danger), then how

51 Peter W. Flint, "Appendix I: 'Apocryphal' Psalms in the Psalms Scrolls and in Texts Incorporating Psalms," *The Oxford Handbook of Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown, July 2014, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199783335.005.0001 accessed March 17, 2021.

52 Brian Baucom, "Hillel, School of," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). This article describes the seven rules of Hillel, the first being קַל וָחוֹמֶר where it has the following entry, "(*qal wachomer*, "light and heavy"): the deduction from a minor case to a major case (i.e., *a fortiori* argumentation)."

much more sinful is it to test God in the abundance of provision (when Jesus' life is not in danger).

Satan attempts to incite Jesus towards sin by twisting a well-known *haggadic* passage with apotropaistic overtones. This test attempts to entice Jesus to foolishly test God's protection over His Son's safety, by an appeal to scripture, which Jesus was Himself attempting to quote and obey. Jesus as the trustworthy Son proves his quality again by countering Satan's abused haggadic challenge with an accepted *halakhic* response, utilizing an argument approved of by contemporary Rabbis, while staying free from sin by trusting completely in God's protection without the desire to test the boundaries of divine provision.

In the second temptation, there is yet again an illusion to the garden of Eden. Where it has been argued above that Deuteronomy was given to a subsequent generation in light of the parent's failures, the question then is, who is Jesus' failed predecessor? However, with the second temptation and the twisting of scripture by Satan, the answer becomes clear. Jesus is overturning the failures of Adam and Eve. When Satan tempted Eve, he purposely twisted the command of God to entice the woman while the man idly stood by watching his wife partake. Adam refused to respond to the attack on his wife by the Serpent by recalling and interpreting the word of God rightly and rebuking the attacker, thus Adam falls into sin, incurring upon himself a curse. In the second test, Satan explicitly challenges the word of God through distortion. Satan enticed the woman in the garden with the words, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."[53] As the second test of Christ is compared with the temptation of Genesis, there are parallel themes, with Satan quoting (Matt. 4:6), or rather misquoting (Gen 3:1), a command of God that is meant to have murderous effects. In Genesis 3, the reward for disobedience is death (Gen 2:17), and the reward for answering Satan's challenge in Matthew 4:6 is an invitation to suicide upon the misinterpretation of scripture. In either case, Satan is misrepresenting the word of God for the express intention of ending his Jesus' life.

In vv. 5-7, Christ is tasked with both refusing to partake in the sinful behavior implied by the test of Satan as well as giving a defense by rightly interpreting the word of God. By doing so, Christ is able to overcome the failure of the "Mother of all living" (Gen 3:20) who entertained and eventually fell into sin during her time of testing. And yet, the Bible also holds Adam responsible for the sin, apparently for his failure to exercise his role as vice-regent by defending

53 Ge 3:4–5.

his Father's honor, or protecting his divine charge (his wife, and the garden). Adam failed to exercise his role as the defender of the woman, the garden, or his Father's honor by failing to give a defense of God's words and will. Only a proper defense of God's word would have befitted a loyal son and prevented the woman's fall into sin. Instead of fulfilling his role as vice-regent, Adam joined the rebellious conspiracy of Satan, alongside of his wife, in the attempted usurpation of God's prerogatives, hoping to be like him (Gen 3:5). Christ, however, refuses to allow Satan to misquote the scriptures, and gives answer (as Adam should have done) by properly quoting the commands of God and abstaining from sin. Satan is bested, and now moves on to the final test.

Temptation 3 – Matthew 4:8-10

The final temptation begins with the adverb πάλιν meaning "again." The use of this term serves as a temporal deixis marker showing the cohesion of the events in succession. Now Satan will test Jesus for the third and final time, keeping with Matthew's penchant for triads which is well documented by Davies and Allison.[54] Satan again physically moves Jesus, παραλαμβάνει, for his testing. This time, Jesus is taken to a mountain top and there Satan makes "known to him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (4:8) This sets the scene for the final test.

Satan posits his concluding challenge differently than the previous two challenges. Matthew describes the account thus: "And he said to him, 'All this I will give to you if you will bow down and worship me.'" There are three important details missing in this verse that one would expect after the previous accounts. One absentee element is the challenge to Jesus' identity; there is no reference to Sonship. The series of tests, enhanced by the term πάλιν, leads the reader to expect what has become the typical introduction, "If you are the Son of God . . ." Satan seems unconcerned at the present juncture on Jesus' identity as the Son of God. This departure from the expected format would move the emphasis to this test, since it is the structural outlier which now catches the reader's attention through unexpected formulation. It can be inferred that Jesus has now proven to be the Son of God in Satan's eyes. The issue is not one of

54 W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 66–70. Speaking of the current pericope, Davies and Allison note that, "Chapter 4 continues the story and the string of threes by telling us first about Jesus' temptation (4:1–11)." He says later, after a structural analysis that, "The Matthean proclivity for the triad just cannot be denied."

identity in this test, and probably the previous, but is at least now a test of fidelity. Will Jesus prove to be the faithful and loyal Son of God? The second departure from expectation is that this conditional is a third class conditional expressing potentiality, since it is missing the expected "εἰ." Through the use of the subjunctive ἐάν Satan displays his uncertainty; will Jesus actually bow down and worship him to receive the power and dominion over the earth's kingdoms? The nature of this test is unique. In the first two tests, Jesus is tested in regard to God's providence for daily needs; in the second test pertaining to God's providence of protection; in the third test with God's prerogative as sovereign. The first two tests ask Jesus to abuse his own use of divine prerogatives through faithlessness. The third test is outright blasphemous, encouraging Christ toward rebellion to obtain the right to rule. Daniel 2:21 is clear that God alone raises up and removes rulers, and it is impossible to obtain a kingdom without His sovereign provenance. This is the climax to the testing account, where the reader through Matthew's literary structure has enveloped the reader in emotional investment. The reader is left to wonder with Satan, how will Christ respond?

The reply from Christ is emphatic: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Leave Satan! For it is written, the Lord your God you shall worship, and him alone will you serve.'" At this point Jesus refuses to entertain Satan's testing any longer. Satan has struck at the nerve of Christ's priorities, attempting to incite Jesus to break the first commandment of the Decalogue. Satan attempts to usurp the place of devotion and worship, of which God alone is worthy. Jesus commands Satan to depart, to leave, and quotes Deuteronomy 6:13, demonstrating his ultimate allegiance is to His Heavenly Father. It is interesting again that Christ quotes the passage from Deuteronomy, as opposed to Exodus, which is surely more familiar. This text has a clear correspondent halakhic command in Exodus 20:3, yet Christ chooses again to cite Deuteronomy. Though alternative verses to make identical points were offered above for the other tests, the third test clearly shows that a deuteronomical allusion is pursued by Jesus. The first of Christ's two references in Deuteronomy might be argued as optimal passages without equal for his argument, but the text employed in this third test does have an explicit equal—and one which is more familiar. Christ's appeal to Deuteronomy is thus emphatic. As is argued above, Christ seeks in some way to correlate his own ministry to that of the second generation of Israelites who were the original recipients of this constitution on a mountain in the vicinity of the Jordan river. That second generation was found to be obedient to the covenant by going in to possess the land their fathers failed to possess through obedience. Likewise, Christ obeys God's revelation where his (and all of the human race's), parents failed in the garden of Eden, allowing him to take possession of a greater promise. By taking a literal statement of halakhic material, quoting it, and obeying it, Christ not only gains honor over Satan, but maintains fidelity to his Father. With Christ's final

apotropaistic employment of scripture and obedience, the narrative reaches its resolution as the power structure of the narrative shifts, brought to the expected equilibrium as Satan retreats in 4:11.

Denouement – Matthew 4:11

The text of Matthew 4:11 shows Satan's submission to Christ's final command, "Then the devil departed from him, and behold angels came and were ministering to him." The narrative section of 4:1-11 ends with the defeated departure of the antagonist and consolation of the conquering protagonist. Jesus passes the test and is rewarded by his Father through the ministrations of angels. With the arrival of the angels in verse 11, there is a concluding irony in light of the second test, so that after Christ's cummulative testing he receives the corresponding divine attestation through the arrival and ministry of the angels, a concluding reminder that, in keeping with the apotropaistic use of Psalm 91, the Son of God was indeed lifted up by angels who cared for his physical needs.

Interpretative Argument

The Reply to Temptation via Scripture

Perhaps the most widely agreed upon aspect of this passage is the idea that Jesus quoted Deuteronomy intentionally; the *nature* of that intention is what is disputed. The very idea of communication denotes a certain level of intentionality. If there is communication one must assume both authorial intention and that this intention can be ascertained through the deliberate choices an author/speaker makes to express himself in method and substance.[55] In Constantine Campbell's *Advances in the Studies of New Testament Greek*, he describes the idea behind system theory. Though Campbell only applies this theory to the use of verb tenses, his premise is expandable to the whole of communication. Campbell notes, "Meaning is created through meaningful choices within a system of options. When a language user chooses a certain word, she is also 'unchoosing' other options that might have been chosen. . . Each choice says

55 See Kevin Vanhoozer's *Is There Meaning in This Text*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) for an apologetic on authorial intention and its relation to communication theory for an expanded argument. For an abbreviated form on the insufficiency of modernism, postmodernism, and deconstructionism for ascertaining truth, see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 25-31.

as much about those not chosen as those who are."[56] With this idea in mind the exegete must grapple with the key question: why did Jesus choose Deuteronomy in response to Satan instead of other available options?

One of the major choices Christ makes in the narrative is which material to quote in his refutation of Satan's tests. 11Q11 shows that haggadic material (particularly Psalm 91) was often employed in apotropaism. However, contemporary challenge-riposte etiquette gave preference to halakhic argumentation. Christ made a choice to argue in the most honorable and authoritative way possible through citing the Mosaic law. However, within the Mosaic law, Christ still had multiple options to make his case and thus to gain honor over Satan while defending his and the Father's honor.

Regarding the New Testament's use of the Old Testament it has been postulated that the entire OT context is implied, from which the quoted/alluded to passage is taken. In describing this aspect of intertextuality within the Old Testament itself, Abner Chou notes how "The prophets do not merely make allusions to individual verses, phrases, or even words, but also to the main ideas of large sections of texts."[57] If this is the case for Christ's use of Deuteronomy, it follows that Jesus is alluding to more than the individual verses He is quoting but is also referring more widely to certain aspects of the original context, author, audience, and purpose for writing. Above I discussed the issues of Matthew's showing Christ as the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15), as well as the fact that Deuteronomy was written to the second generation after the wilderness generation's demise. The contexts of Deuteronomy and Matthew 4 are not similar enough to warrant a wilderness generation illusion, as was also argued above. In fact, the narrative structure suggests that the contextual situation is closer to Moses on the mountain alone fasting for forty days before receiving the Law. However, the main thrust of Deuteronomy could provide an interpretive clue as to why Christ would utilize this material exclusively as opposed to other material.

The argument of Deuteronomy was to serve as an admonition to the second-generation encouraging covenant faithfulness in contrast to their parents' covenant unfaithfulness expressed through their disobedience regarding entering Canaan (Numbers 14:1-38). Deuteronomy alludes to this intention in multiple places such as Deuteronomy 1:34-37, where Moses reminds the Israelites of the consequences of disobedience. Moses reiterates the point in Deuteronomy 4:1-3

56 Constantine Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 98.

57 Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 54.

by reminding the Second Generation of the subsequent moral failures of the Wilderness Generation while exhorting them to obedience. These passages serve as a small sampling of Moses' authorial intention in Deuteronomy, where Moses urges the second generation towards covenant faithfulness in light of their parents' failures; but the argument is made clearly, and early.

Questions about the larger context of Deuteronomy should include if Moses' exhortation was efficacious. Joshua 24:31 shows that Moses' intention for the book of Deuteronomy was realized when the text states, "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel."[58] The greater context of the people who made up the second generation shows that they were proven to be faithful to the covenant in God's sight from the scriptures. Surely Jesus would have known this and understood it whenever he referred to Deuteronomy. The second-generation heard the words of the law, they remembered the words of the law, and they obeyed the words of the law, resulting in their successful conquest of Canaan.[59]

By quoting Deuteronomy, Jesus links himself to a second generation who succeeds after their parents' failure to obey God in faith. Allusions withing the testing account to the garden of Eden show that Adam and Eve, like the Wilderness Generation, failed in their time of testing resulting in drastic ramifications for their descendants. The question could be posed, "If Jesus is seeking to contrast himself with the first generation of humanity, why would he link himself to an entire nation through his quotations of Deuteronomy?" Here the idea of federal headship comes into play, as argued later by Paul in Romans 5:18-20. If Jesus could keep the law on behalf of a nation, abstaining from sin, He could replace their previous federal head who failed. In so doing, Christ proved to be the faithful second generation of the Son of God (Luke 3:38). Like the second generation of Israel, Christ's covenant obedience leads to an inheritance of the promise of God, and like Adam, his inheritance is passed down to the entire nation.

58 Josh. 24:31.

59 See Joshua 24 contrasted with the book of Deuteronomy cited above.

Conclusion

The question left to answer is why is this message of Jesus' apotropaistic encounter important for Matthew's readers? If Matthew's goal is to give an authoritative teaching manual to his Jewish audience, he must prove that Jesus is the Son of God. This is evident in Satan's series of tests. The question of the first two tests seeks to answer if Christ is indeed the Son of God. The third test seeks to ascertain what kind of Son Christ would be. Matthew will go on to show that Christ has the ability to exercise divine prerogatives which could only be exercised by God himself (See particularly Matt. 8:23-27 and 9:1-8). However, before Christ could begin to exercise these divine prerogatives, he had to prove himself worthy of the responsibility of conducting business on his Father's behalf. Contemporary ANE practices included the idea that a mature son was able to conduct business on behalf of the Father, since all prerogatives of the Father are within his future inheritance.[60] Therefore, before Jesus begins to utilize his divine prerogatives, he must first successfully show that He is the heir to the divine prerogative (thus the questions of identity in the first two tests), and secondly that He is mature enough to handle the responsibility that comes with them. Christ evinces this by showing his devotion to His Father's will, revealed in the law of Moses, verified through testing. As such, Matthew's argument through chapters one through four is that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, in natural (by the Spirit-consummated virgin birth, Matt. 1–2), supernatural (by divine empowerment, Matt. 3), and now qualitative means (by his successful testing, Matt. 4:1-11); and He is trustworthy as the faithful Son to employ those divine prerogatives.

This particular pericope has enduring worth for evangelical thought and for ministry practice in a few ways that have been neglected among cessationist evangelicals. Matthew 4:1-11 makes clear that supernatural warfare is a reality in the Christian life; if Christ was engaged in spiritual warfare with Satanic oppression, so too should the contemporary Christian expect to be engaged in spiritual warfare. Christ has set forth an example of how to fulfill the command issued by his brother James in subsequent revelation (James 4:7) by showing the Christian how to resist the devil. This resistance of the devil was found in both of the apotropaistic means found in rabbinic literature of the Second Temple period by quoting the scriptures and subsequent obedience to those scriptures. Though the theme of demonic oppression and its defeat through proper methods are evident in this passage, the main emphasis, and that which should be emphasized

60 See Malina and Rorbaugh, pp. 38 and 409; also see the Parable of the Wicked Tenants in Matthew 21:33-46.

in preaching and teaching, however, is the goal of Matthew's argument. Satan, and therefore Matthew, are both concerned with answering the question of the identity of Jesus. Is Jesus the Son of God? If so, how does Jesus prove it; and what manner of Son is he? This answer is apparent in the text and should be apparent in sermons on this text. Jesus proves to be a faithful Son of God through his obedience to the Father in the face of affliction. Too often, when faced with temptation, those given the right to be called "children of God" (John 1:12-13) falter. Jesus as the supreme example has given the children of God, who believe in his name, an encouragement that He has defeated Satan on the Christian's behalf through his filling with the Spirit (Matt 3:16) and obedience to God's word, which he has now entrusted to all believers who have come after him.

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