

Week 39 – A Tested King

Matthew 4:1-11

September 28-29

Summary & Goal:

We should never be surprised when we are tempted. In fact, we should be prepared for the sly tricks of deception by Satan just as Jesus was in the wilderness. The Word of God is exactly what we need to make a stand against any temptation.

Main Passages:

Matthew 4: 1-11

Session Outline:

1. TEMPTATION 1: PRIVATE-- (MATTHEW 4: 1-4)
2. TEMPTATION 2: PUBLIC-- (MATTHEW 4: 5-7)
3. TEMPTATION 3: UNIVERSAL-- (MATTHEW 4: 8-11)

Session in a Sentence:

When we are at our weakest and most vulnerable, we can still be strong and invincible when we rely on the Word of God as our strength and foundation. We can always be prepared for whatever comes our way through the Word of God.

Kingdom Connection:

Jesus began His ministry by modeling how we should handle temptation. Jesus, the Son of God, relied on the same scripture we have access to in 2019. The temptation and deception of Satan began in the garden, continued in the wilderness and is still in motion today.

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It is hard to believe we are in the Fall of 2019; just a few months from 2020. That means college freshmen and sophomores were not even born when the world was consumed by the potential of the Y2K Millennium Bug in the Fall of 1999. They had not been born when we were wondering whether or not we would have enough water and canned goods to last us for days, weeks and even months if there was a complete breakdown of power, energy and water systems. The potential disaster was truly feared by many people, while profiteers took advantage of that fear all the way to the bank!

Most of us were prepared to some extent, or at least mindful of the possibilities. I remember watching Peter Jennings and ABC News on December 31, 1999. Throughout the day I watched as the New Year was celebrated around the world. With each passing hour, it became more and more evident that we were all going to be okay.

It was a time for us as Christians to consider the depths of our faith, our trust, and our obedience to God. I will admit that it was easier to be calm and enjoy the celebrations once I watched other parts of the world bring in the year 2000 without disaster, loss of power, failed energy or water systems. Instead of a disaster that shut down civilization, there were landmark celebrations filled with music, fireworks and more.

There was an element of true heartfelt relief because the potential “what if” never happened. And I am of the belief that part of what prevented any sort of disaster was preparation and awareness. The company I worked for at the time was “Y2K compliant”, so there was a very real investment of time, money, awareness and preparation for Y2K.

Today we are going to look at a potential disaster. It comes at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and it quite literally could have been the end of the world as the people knew it in the 1st Century.

INTRODUCTION

We are beginning the Gospel Era. Since January we have seen God move in mighty and miraculous ways. God has been faithful, patient, merciful and just. Last week we celebrated the Return Era after 70 years of Exile when God's people returned to Jerusalem and re-established the Temple and fortified the city while re-engaging with God's Word. It was a time of rebuilding, followed by 400 years of silence.

In our Bibles, there is typically one thin piece of paper separating the Old and New Testaments, but it is important to remember that piece of paper represents 400 years of silence. However, the silence of God does not equate with the absence of God.

God was still moving in His Kingdom, preparing the world for the coming of His Son, Jesus, who was born in the little town of Bethlehem, which introduced the world to the Gospel Era, the time of Jesus on this earth, establishing the heavenly kingdom through an earthly ministry.

Today we are going to look at an event following the baptism of Jesus.

At this point Jesus is about 30 years old, and though we do not know a lot of specifics about Jesus growing up, here is what we do know based on scripture:

- His birth and heritage were prophesied in the Old Testament
- His parents were Mary and Joseph, it was an immaculate conception and His birth was in Bethlehem
- His parents took Him to Egypt because Herod was killing all Jewish baby boys under the age of 2 because he felt threatened by the "King of the Jews" being born.
- At 12 years of age, Jesus was found in Jerusalem talking to the Priests and other adults about scripture; so we know He not only could recite scripture, but He understood scripture and its importance to one's life.
- We know His father, Joseph, was a carpenter and based on the Jewish culture of that day, fathers would teach their sons the "family business" around 12 years of age.
- More than likely, Jesus was in the carpenter business during His teenage years and as a young adult.

For His first 30 years, honestly, there was not anything too extraordinary about Jesus. In fact, the life of Jesus has been very ordinary, with the exception of a 12-year-old in the temple listening, asking and even answering questions about scripture.

TEMPTATION 1: PERSONAL

Read with me Matthew 4: 1-11:

Matthew 4: 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

⁵ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’ ”

⁸ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”

*¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.
(Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)*

This is a very familiar story for most of us commonly known as, “The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness.” But if we are not careful, we might skip over the context of this familiar story, especially since this is our first lesson in the Gospel Era, after spending 9 months in the Old Testament. Reviewing the end of Chapter 3 is vital for understanding and fully appreciating Chapter 4 and the Temptation of Jesus.

At the end of Chapter 3, Jesus approached John the Baptist and asked to be baptized, which is a reminder that baptism is not part of salvation; but it is an act of obedience and represents surrender to God. Jesus was baptized as an example for us to do the same.

Look at the last 2 verses of Chapter 3:

***Matt. 3: 16** When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Chronological Bible, Sept. 26; pg. 1282)*

Though the word “Trinity” is never used in Scripture, this is a picture of the Trinity: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit descending as a dove. Notice the words of God the Father, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Jesus was not just a well-known teacher; He was not just some prophet; nor was He just a grown-up carpenter. Jesus was the Son of God and He was doing exactly what God wanted Him to do, even though for about 30 years there was little evidence that Jesus was divine and extraordinary.

And yet, look at what God said about His Son, “this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus had just been baptized and God was well pleased with His beloved Son.

We often forget about that unique relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. There is something special about the relationship between a father and son; especially a Heavenly Father who allowed His perfect Son to become human; both fully divine and fully human. God, the Father allowed His Son, Jesus to live on this earth in full humanity to model for us how we are to live our lives and depend on our Heavenly Father through a relationship as His child.

***Romans 8:14-17** ...¹⁴ “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

So, as we look at this familiar story of the Temptation of Jesus Christ, think of it in terms of a Son and Father relationship. In fact, think of it in terms of you being a “co-heir” and your family member is going through this temptation.

Now in this context, following the baptism of Jesus, following the Spirit descending as a dove at the baptism, following God claiming Fatherhood of His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, let's look at this temptation a bit closer.

Matthew 4: 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. (Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Satan did not initiate this time in the wilderness; it was not the Devil that snuck in and kidnapped the Son of God and took Him into hiding, forcing Him to stop eating.

From the very beginning of this story, we see who IS in control and who is NOT in control.

The Spirit of God is in control. The Spirit of God either literally or figuratively took Jesus by the hand and led Him into the wilderness.

The wilderness was the kind of place that people wanted to travel through quickly or stay away from altogether. The wilderness was not a comfortable resort setting that families went to for relaxing camping trips.

Jesus had just gotten baptized in the Jordan River and was not led into the comfort of a city or a village. Rather Jesus was led into the wilderness. Wind. Dust. Animals that come out only at night. The wilderness was an environment that seems a bit odd after God had just said from the heavens, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

And yet, Jesus did not resist. Jesus did not step up and say, "Dad, are you serious?" There is no indication that Jesus was surprised or put off with being led into the wilderness. He went willingly away from the crowds, away from the comforts, away from the calm of familiarity. Jesus knew something that we ought to know, **the wilderness is part of the journey of life.**

Each of us will go through wilderness experiences as we draw to the end of 2019 and face 2020. In fact, throughout scripture, we see this proven time and time again. You can name almost any Prophet in the Old Testament, and see that they had a "wilderness" experience. Moses had a famous wilderness experience. Elijah and Elisha had a wilderness experience. Jonah had a

wilderness experience in the belly of a whale. Daniel had a wilderness experience in captivity in Babylon. The wilderness has always been part of the journey of life.

Jesus knew this was part of His journey; as well as it is part of ours. So, we see that the Spirit is in control and the purpose is shown in the very first verse, “to be tempted by the devil.” No hidden meaning; very clear, very plain, though we might argue not very fair.

The word “tempted” in Greek is, “Peirazo.”

It literally means:

1. to try whether a thing can be done
2. to try, make trial of, test: for the purpose of ascertaining his quantity, or what he thinks, or how he will behave himself

Commentator Dr. Thomas Constable says this pertaining to Matthew 4: 1-11:

Jesus' genealogy and virgin birth prove His legal human qualification as Israel's King. His baptism was the occasion of His divine approval. His temptation demonstrated His moral fitness to reign.

Jesus had come to establish the Kingdom and part of that journey was going through the wilderness. Look at verse 3.

Matthew 4: 3 *Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” (Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)*

It had been 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness that Jesus had been fasting, which means that physically He was hungry, exhausted and likely very weak. Satan, the “tempter” came to Him in this time in the wilderness when Jesus was at His most vulnerable and questioned His Father/Son relationship.

The word “If” could also be translated “Since”, though there are other Greek words more often used for “Since”; but I tell you that because the word “if”, typically makes us think “doubt”.

Satan, the Tempter had no doubt whatsoever that Jesus was the Son of God. He knew who Jesus was and He KNEW who God was, but just like someone who wants to kick you when you are down; Satan knew what buttons to push. Dr. Constable notes:

The form of Satan's question in the Greek text indicates that Satan was assuming that Jesus was "the Son of God". It is a first class conditional clause.

When Jesus was down at perhaps His lowest and weakest, Satan, the tempter, pushes that button and pushes it hard. "If (*Since*) you are the Son of God, look at what's at your disposal." Feeling hungry? Feeling weak? Feeling tired? All you have to do is simply command these stones to become bread.

The temptation was not for Jesus to "doubt" He was the Son of God. It was for Jesus to take action "because" He was the Son of God. We think the term "entitlement" is something new for our culture. Satan was pushing the "entitlement button" in the wilderness with Jesus during the 1st Century.

But Jesus did not fall for it. In fact, Jesus pushed back with a more powerful button, the Word of God. Look at verse 4:

***Matt. 4: 4** But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "* (Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)

Jesus knew that if He gave in to this temptation, it would be for temporary satisfaction and result in long term regret. Jesus relied on what He had been taught as a child growing up, knowing scripture even at the young age of 12, and He had likely been taught over and over again to rely on God's Word.

Perhaps during this wilderness time even in His vulnerability, Jesus was thinking of the Psalmist in Psalms 119:11:

***Ps. 119:11** "I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might sin against you."*

The first temptation did not work, but that did not mean that Satan gave up. Just like any good salesman, Satan likely reasoned that if Jesus was not willing to buy the first time, he would try a different angle.

TEMPTATION 2: PUBLIC

Matt. 4: 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’ ” (Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)

This time Satan changed his angle from the private to the public. It is almost as if Satan was saying, “Okay, so you don’t want to turn stones into bread privately...no one will see it....so what good is it....I get it. But if you are to have a public ministry....and you are just getting started, what better way than to do something dynamic and public...something everyone will see.” Jerusalem was the Holy City, the center of Israel; politically, legally and religiously.

Satan, like a good tempter, listened to Jesus the first time; he heard that Jesus had quoted scripture, so this time he uses scripture in the temptation. Some people will argue that he omitted part of the scripture as a way to “trick” Jesus. However, in that time it was not uncommon for people to conversationally talk about scripture; we do it today and simply call it paraphrasing to make it conversational.

In this instance, I do not think it was so much a trick as it was to be conversational, but Satan did take the verse out of context to prove his own point. And that is dangerous even today to take scripture out of context. You can literally prove any point, choice, behavior or lifestyle you want by isolating a verse and taking it out of context. Scripture should always be interpreted with the totality of scripture in context.

You can see in the response of Jesus that He is getting a bit more frustrated. No doubt that if Jesus had given in to the temptation, He would have become an instant leader to the people. It would have been a spectacle like they had never seen before.

But that was not God's plan. And Jesus, as the Son wanted to not only please the Father but do the will of the Father. We see this further in John 4:34, as Jesus was talking to His disciples right after the encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well and says, "My food is to do the will of the Father and to accomplish His good work."

After 40 days and 40 nights of fasting, the food Jesus was most concerned with was doing the will of His Father. Even in the wilderness of life, in this part of His journey, Jesus knew that God had plans for Him to accomplish. As referenced above, His response to Satan was brisk, to the point and scriptural, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16.

TEMPTATION 3: UNIVERSAL

The final temptation scene took place in the mountains. The first temptation was very personal and private. The second was more national and public in nature. But the third is more universal, taking it to a level beyond that which is seen.

Matt. 4: 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " (Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)

You can almost visualize the two of them quipping back and forth; taking it up a level each time with intensity and boldness.

Satan makes a legitimate sounding offer. God had given Satan authority on this earth, it is a limited authority, but nevertheless, Satan has authority on this earth. And Satan pushes the button; pushes the boundaries from private, to public, and now to universal.

You can HAVE IT ALL. Look over the horizons in any direction, any region, any political regime, any city, any village, any nation, the universe... YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL.

Only one minor detail, "You have to fall down and worship me." These are the kingdoms that Jesus would someday possess, and Satan was saying "why wait? That *someday* can be *today*."

I can almost hear Satan trying to persuade Jesus, "*Think about the journey ahead; John the Baptist had called you "The Lamb" who would take away the sin of the world. You know what*

happens to lambs to take away the sin? They suffer. They die. They shed blood. You can go through all that suffering and THEN...sometime in the future....one day...get all these things; OR...You can bypass ALL of that and have it NOW.”

Nothing like a short cut to push our buttons of temptation.

And all Jesus would have to do for a brief moment is to turn His back and merely bend a knee in Satan’s direction. Who’s looking? Who would notice? That’s all He had to do; quick and simple, and most importantly painless.

Ken Gire writes this about the third temptation:

But it is “who” He would have to turn His back on that keeps His knees locked. His own Father. His Father who loves Him and delights in Him. How could He bend even a knee, even for a moment, in betrayal of such a relationship? (Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire)

The relationship between father and son; Heavenly Father and Beloved Son.

This time Jesus had had enough. Look at verses 10-11:

Matt. 4: 10 Then Jesus said to him, ***“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”*** (Deut. 6:13) ¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. (Chronological Bible, Sept. 27; pg. 1282)

Notice what Jesus did with confidence, boldness, and authority He stopped listening to Satan and spoke directly to Satan. And what happened? The devil left.

Listen to this quote from William Barclay:

What we call temptation is not meant to make us sin; it is meant to enable us to conquer sin. It is not meant to make us bad, it is meant to make us good. It is not meant to weaken us, it is meant to make us emerge stronger and finer and purer from the ordeal.

Temptation is not the penalty of being a man, temptation is the glory of being a man.

(Barclay, William. *The Gospel of Matthew*. 2 vols. The Daily Study Bible series. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1964.)

We each face temptation in various ways weekly and even daily. We have things we want to celebrate and accomplish in our lives. And yet, each of us at some point will find ourselves in the wilderness. We will be literally or figuratively tired, exhausted, hungry and vulnerable.

Scripture tells us that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). If you have ever watched any of the nature channels and seen how the lions catch their prey, they look for the weakest, slowest, most vulnerable that are isolated from the herd.

Back in 1999 we prepared for a potential disaster. In Houston, in the midst of hurricane season, we know what it is like for a storm like Harvey or Dorian to hit; we now get prepared like never before. I don't know how you or I will be tempted; but it is not a question of "if" you will be tempted, it is a matter of "when" you will be tempted. Will you be prepared?

A great way to do that is to read and study God's Word. If you have not been reading through chronologically, now is the perfect time to join the journey as we are beginning the New Testament. What better way to learn how to face temptation than from Jesus Himself?

Jesus stood strong in the wilderness by knowing God's Word. Yes, He was the Son of God, but He was fully human as well. Jesus modeled for us exactly how we are to make a stand in the face of temptation and come out victorious.

Resources:

www.biblestudytools.com

Warren Wiersbe New Testament Commentary on Matthew 4

Dr. Thomas Constable, Commentary on Matthew 4

Gire, Ken. *Moments with the Savior: A Devotional Life of Christ*. Zondervan, 1998.

Barclay, William. *The Gospel of Matthew*. 2 vols. The Daily Study Bible series. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1964