

PM Matthew 3:13-4:11 The Temptations of Jesus

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[0 : 00] To the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 4. Matthew, Chapter 4. We shall begin our reading in the previous chapter, Chapter 3, at verse 13.

! Matthew 3, verse 13. It's on page 975. Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him.

John would have prevented him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? But Jesus answered him, Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water.

And behold, the heavens were opened to him. And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. And behold, a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

[1 : 32] Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

[2 : 53] Again the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. And he said to him, All these I will give you, if you will fall down, and worship me.

Then Jesus said to him, Be gone Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.

Then the devil left him, and behold angels came, and were ministering to him. Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his word, and to his name, be the praise.

Turn back in your Bibles, to the passage we read, Matthew chapter 4, The Temptations of Jesus. Jesus. This evening we turn to, what is a familiar passage, of God's word, as we look together, at the temptations, which our Lord Jesus faced, at the outset, of his public ministry.

[4 : 24] It's a familiar passage, but that doesn't necessarily mean, that it's an easy passage, in some respects. That is something, I have found to my cost, as I have been working, on the passage.

I'd like to look with you, this evening, at three things, in particular. First of all, the context, of the temptations.

Secondly, the challenge, of the temptations. And finally, the consequences, of the temptations.

The context, the challenge, and the consequences, of the temptations. First of all then, we have, the context, of the temptations.

We read in chapter three, how Jesus came, from Galilee, to the Jordan, to be baptized, by John. John the Baptist, was baptizing people.

[5 : 33] It was a baptism, of repentance, for sin. And when John, saw Jesus, he was unwilling, to baptize him.

He was fully aware, of who he was. And, he felt, he needed to be baptized, by Jesus, rather than, the other way round.

But Jesus, insisted, that John, baptize him. Let it be so, now, he said. For thus, it is fitting, to fulfill, all righteousness.

Jesus, had no, sin of his own. He had no, personal sin, to repent of. He had no, personal sin, that needed, to be forgiven.

But, by undergoing, baptism, at the hands of John, he was, endorsing, John's, ministry, and message. And, more importantly, he was, identifying, with the people, he had come, to save.

[6 : 46] The people, whose sin, he was willing, to take upon himself, and carry, all the way, to the cross, of Calvary. He had no sin, of his own, but, he was, made sin, for us, so that, in him, we might, become, the righteousness, of God.

After, he was baptized, Jesus, came up, out of the water, water, and, the heavens, we're told, were open, to him.

Two other things, happened. One was, that the Spirit, of God, came down, upon him, like a dove. And, the other was, that a voice, from heaven, said, this, is my beloved, son, with whom, I am well, pleased.

Jesus, was visibly, empowered, by the Holy Spirit, for the work, he had come, to do. And, God, the Father, confirmed, his identity, as his, dearly, loved, son.

This, is my beloved, son, with whom, I am well, pleased. I think, we're, meant to see, in these words, echoes, of Old Testament, scriptures.

[8 : 25] Psalm 2, recounts, how, in the midst, of a world, of turmoil, God, installs, his king, on Zion, and says, to him, you, are, my son.

So, in declaring, at his baptism, that Jesus, was, his son, God, was, effectively, endorsing, him, as the, messianic, king, of, Old Testament, prophecy.

The words, with whom, I am well, pleased, are, are, also, an echo, of, the description, of the suffering servant, Isaiah, speaks about, in chapter 42, of his prophecy.

The suffering servant, is described, as my chosen, in whom, my soul, delights. And, God, also, declares, that he will put his spirit, upon his servant.

And, that's what has just happened, at the baptism. So, we see, that this, was a momentous event, in the life of Jesus.

[9 : 52] Putting, everything together, we see, that, Jesus, was anointed, by the Holy Spirit. He was, confirmed, by God the Father, as, on the one hand, the messianic king, who would receive, the ends of the earth, as his possession.

And, on the other, as the suffering servant, who would be, wounded, for our transgressions, and crushed, for our, iniquities.

This, was a very, significant, event, in Jesus' life. It, marks the start, of his, public ministry, which would, of course, end, at Calvary.

And, yet, as we move, into chapter 4, Matthew, tells us, that, Jesus, was led up, by the spirit, into the wilderness, to be tempted, by the devil.

As Jesus, begins, to establish, his messianic kingdom, the same spirit, who descended, upon him, in his capacity, as God's servant king, leads him, into the wilderness, to be tempted, by God's, arch enemy, the devil.

[11 : 33] The spirit, leads Jesus, into the wilderness, to be tempted, by the devil. What are we to make, of that? At first blush, this seems, very hard, to understand.

Well, James writes, in his epistle, that God, himself, does not himself, tempt, anyone.

But, the Greek word, for tempt, can also mean, test. God never, tempts anyone, to do evil. But, he does, use circumstances, to test, a person's, character.

And, in his, inscrutable wisdom, he may use, the devil, in that. He may allow, the devil, to play a part, in that.

I think, it's significant, what the writer, to the Hebrews, says, about Jesus. He says, although, he was a son, he learned, obedience, through what he suffered.

[12 : 48] Although, he was a son, he learned, obedience, through what he suffered. While Jesus, was fully divine, he was also, fully human.

And, as a human being, he had to, learn, obedience. He had to learn, first hand, what it cost, to be obedient, in the midst, of suffering.

And, no doubt, to be tempted, by the devil, was part, of what he had, to undergo, as he learned, obedience, as our Savior.

Not only, does James say, that God himself, does not tempt anyone, He also says, that God, cannot be tempted, with evil.

How then, can the Son of God, God in human form, be tempted, by the devil? Well, I think, the answer to that, is, that Jesus, was God, in human form.

[14:00] He, was, a man. He, didn't have, a fallen human nature, but, he lived, as a man, among men.

And, as a man, he had, limitations. He, had sinless, human weaknesses. For example, he, suffered hunger. He, could be, tempted, by hunger, as was the case, here.

Hunger, is not sinful, in and of itself. But, it could generate, strong pressure, for Jesus, to deviate, from the path, which his father, had prescribed, for him.

There is also, a sense, in which Jesus, could be tempted, through his sonship. The, the relationship, with his heavenly father, which he prized, above, everything else.

The temptations, recorded here, in Matthew 4, reflect that. Jesus, you see, had to cope, with human limitations, and with the absence, of so much, that was his, by right, as the son of God.

[15:15] So, as the God, man, the Lord Jesus, was subjected, to temptation, at the hands, of the devil. and there is no doubt, these temptations, were real.

I remember, being struck, by an illustration, that a minister, I had many years ago, gave. He, made the point, that in a storm, some trees, may bend, and break, other trees, may bend, but not break, which of these trees, bears the greater force, of the wind?

It's surely, the trees, that bend, but don't break, because they, have to cope, with the full force, of the wind. The other trees, break, under the pressure.

And the point, was made, that, the Lord Jesus, was tempted, by the devil. And the force, of the temptations, he suffered, was far greater, than anything, we experience.

Because, he refused, to succumb, to the devil's attacks. This, was not the first time, that, sons of God, faced temptation.

[16:56] Jesus, of course, is the unique, son of God. He's the only, begotten son of God. But there are, others in scripture, who are described, as sons of God.

For example, Adam, and the nation, of Israel. In his gospel, Luke describes, Adam, as the son of God.

And the book, of Exodus, describes Israel, the nation of Israel, as God's, first born son. And it's interesting, that both, Adam, and Israel, face temptation.

As we all know, Adam, was tempted, by the devil, in the garden, of Eden. And he chose, to heed, the devil's lies, rather than, to obey, God's instructions.

He ate, the fruit, of the one tree, in the garden, that he had been told, was off limits. The Israelites, too, faced temptation, and testing, during the 40 years, they spent, in the wilderness, on their way, from Egypt, to the promised land.

[18:12] Shortly, before they, entered the promised land, Moses, spoke to them, and he, urged them, interestingly, to remember, the whole way, that the Lord, your God, has led you, these 40 years, in the wilderness, that he might, humble you, testing you, to know, what was in your heart, whether you would, keep his commandments, or not.

The fact is, that time and again, the Israelites, failed the test. They grumbled, against the Lord. They failed, to acknowledge, his goodness, to him, to them, and they, even fell, into idolatry.

Jesus, was tested, just as, Adam, and the Israelites, were tested, but with a, very different, outcome. They failed, the test.

Jesus, didn't. The context, then, of Jesus, temptations, is, his baptism.

It was a, significant stage, in his obedience, to the Father's will. And, immediately, he is subjected, to the attacks, of the evil one.

[19:40] That's the context, of the temptations. But, secondly, let's consider, the challenge, of the temptations. The challenge, of the temptations.

Matthew tells us, that after fasting, for 40 days, and 40 nights, Jesus, was not surprisingly, hungry. In his weakened, physical state, the devil came to him, with a challenge.

If you are, the son of God, command these stones, to become loaves, of bread. The premise, of the challenge, is noteworthy.

If you are, the son of God. If you are, the son of God. Just a few weeks, before, a voice, had come from heaven, declaring, that he was, the son of God.

Now, the devil, is challenging him, to act, on the basis, of that apparent fact. If you really, are the son of God, turn these stones, into bread.

[20 : 50] At one level, it sounds, so reasonable. If you are, the son of God, you don't need, to go hungry. You have the power, to turn stones, into bread.

Go on, and do it. It's true, that Jesus, has the power, to turn stones, into bread. But he discerns, the subtle temptation, that's bound up, in the devil's challenge.

The devil, wants him, to use his divine, prerogative, to make things, easier for himself. To sidestep, the suffering, that was his lot, as God's Messiah.

And so, deviate, from the path, of strict obedience, to his father's will. Jesus replies, to the devil, it is written, man shall not live, by bread alone, but by every word, that comes, from the mouth of God.

These words, come from the book, of Deuteronomy, in which Moses, from a passage, in which Moses, reminds the Israelites, how during, the wilderness journey, the Lord, had humbled them, and let them hunger, and fed them, with manna, that he might, make them know, that man, does not live, by bread alone, but by every word, that comes, from the mouth, of the Lord.

[22 : 26] Moses tells, the Israelites, that the Lord, deliberately, humbled them. He wanted them, to experience hunger, and then, provided them, with manna, from heaven.

Why did he do that? Because he wanted, to foster in them, dependence, and trust. He wanted them, to see, that it was, more important, to trust, and obey him, than to have, even their physical, needs met.

By quoting, these words, at the devil, Jesus, is showing, that he, is choosing, to live, in dependence, on his heavenly father, and in accordance, with his will, rather, than pleasing himself.

He is prepared, to learn, obedience, through what he suffers. That was the first, temptation.

But the devil, didn't stop there. He took Jesus, to the pinnacle, of the temple, in Jerusalem, and challenged him, to throw himself, down to the ground, beneath. This time, the devil, has a scripture text, of his own, to quote.

[23 : 49] It comes, from Psalm 91. God will command, his angels, concerning you, to guard you, in all your ways. On their hands, they will bear you up, lest you strike, your foot, against a stone.

Again, the devil, prefaces, the temptation, with the words, if you are, the son of God. And again, there is a certain logic, in what he says.

Psalm 91, speaks of the security, of the person, who dwells, in the shadow, in the shelter, of the most high. To whom could, the words of the psalm, be more readily applied, than to the son of God, himself.

But again, the devil, is misapplying, scripture, for his own ends. He is trying, to misdirect, Jesus ministry.

I have often, heard it said, that, the point, of the temptation, was that, if Jesus, had jumped, from a great height, without being harmed, this, would have been, a spectacular, and dramatic display, and it would have, gained Jesus, an instant following, at least, in the short term.

[25 : 14] But that, would have been, at odds, with the father's plan, for his Messiah, which was, not to be, the slave, of popular, expectations, but rather, to win the crown, by way of the cross.

Now, there is an element, of truth in that, I am sure, but, it seems more likely, that this particular, temptation, was aimed, at Jesus, own sense, of sonship.

After, 40 days, and nights, of fasting, he was, physically weak. How, did that, square, with his being, the son of God?

And so, the devil, comes along, with the suggestion, that, there is one, easy way, of proving, to himself, that he is, the son of God, all he has to do, is to throw himself, off, the pinnacle, of the temple, and that, would provide, proof, that he was, the son.

But, Jesus, refuses, to do this, instead, he replies, you shall not, put the Lord, your God, to the test.

[26 : 51] These words, also come, from the book, of Deuteronomy. They, they were first, used by Moses, when, he was, urging, the Israelites, not to repeat, what they had done, at Massa.

At Massa, in the wilderness, the Israelites, had been thirsty. There was no water. And, they angrily, demanded, water.

Not only that, they questioned, whether God, was among them, at all. That's how serious, it was.

They were, questioning, whether God, was with them. They were, challenging God, to meet, their demands, in accordance, with their timetable.

In effect, they were, putting God, to the test. And, in quoting, these words, at the devil, Jesus, is making, the point, that, his role, as the Messiah, is to submit, to the Father's will.

[28 : 11] He's not, to set the agenda. His, own will, has to be, subordinated, to the will, of the Father, who sent him.

He has come down, from heaven, not to do, his own will, but the will, of his Father. that's, the second challenge.

And, in the third temptation, the devil, takes Jesus, to, a very high mountain, and shows him, all the kingdoms, of the world, and their glory.

He says, to Jesus, all these, I will give you, if you will fall down, and worship me. The words, if you are the Son of God, don't preface, this particular temptation, but, it too, is directed, at Jesus, unique, messianic calling.

Of course, the offer, of the kingdoms, of the world, by the devil, was a lie. The kingdoms, of the world, weren't the devils, to offer, in the first place.

[29 : 27] God, hadn't abdicated, authority, over the world, he had made, and he never has. But, the devil, is the father, of lies, and it suited, his purposes, to make this, bombastic claim.

What he was, dangling, before Jesus, was the prospect, of his becoming, king, of the world, without having, to undergo, the agony, of the cross.

He was being, offered the prospect, of becoming, the king, of the world, without having, to undergo, the agony, of the cross.

Of course, as the devil, put it, what he had, to do, was, to, give him, his worship.

to exchange, his love, of the father, for the worship, of Satan. It was, an outrageous, temptation, but it was, very real.

[30 : 38] The devil, knows, which buttons, to press. Again, Jesus, stood firm.

He resisted, the devil, and he, again, quotes, words, from the book, of Deuteronomy. You shall worship, the Lord, your God, and him, only, shall you serve.

These words, are words, of Moses, again, from Deuteronomy. Moses, is giving instructions, to the Israelites, before they enter, the land of Canaan, the promised land.

And he's telling them, that they should worship, the Lord, their God, only. Previously, in the wilderness, they had ended up, worshipping the golden calf.

They did so, while Moses, was on Mount Sinai, receiving the law, from God. And Jesus, uses these words, to resist, the devil's temptation.

[31 : 47] He will give his worship, to his father, alone. He will not, bow down, to Satan, and worship him.

One day, he would receive, the name, that is above every name. One day, every knee, would bow to him, and every tongue, confess, that he is Lord.

But in the meantime, he is prepared, to make the costly choice, of enduring the cross, despising the shame.

Without the cross, there could be no crown. Jesus, was prepared, to run the race, marked out for him, and glorify, his father.

So we see, that the temptations, posed a challenge, to Jesus, sense of identity, and, his, God given mission, as savior, and Messiah.

[33 : 02] At the outset, of his public ministry, the devil, was doing, all he could, to derail, that mission. And at the same time, God the father, was allowing, his son, to experience, the full force, of temptation, as he learned, obedience, through, what he suffered.

the context, of the temptations, the challenge, of the temptations. Thirdly, we turn, to the consequences, of the temptations, the consequences, of the temptations.

Here, in the wilderness, Jesus, won, an outstanding, victory, over sin, and the devil.

A victory, which anticipated, his decisive, once for all, victory, over sin, and death, and Satan, at the cross.

In recent years, I've enjoyed, reading, about, 20th century, history. At the height, of the second, world war, as Europe, was slowly, falling, to Hitler, a nation, after nation, was coming, under, Nazi control.

[34 : 37] A surprising, victory, was won, by the allied, troops, in the sands, of North Africa, at a place, called, Alamein. It would be, another, two and a half, years, before the war, would finally, be over.

But, the battle, of El Alamein, proved to be, a decisive, turning point, in the war. Sir Winston Churchill, later wrote, before, El Alamein, we never, had a victory.

After, El Alamein, we never, had, a defeat. in some ways, Jesus, victory, over the, devil, in Matthew, chapter 4, was like, the battle, of El, Alamein.

It wasn't, the decisive, victory, he had not, yet, gone to the cross, he would suffer, yet more, temptations, but, whereas, Adam, had succumbed, to temptation, whereas, Israel, had time, and again, fallen prey, to the devil's, wiles, Jesus, was victorious, and that, victory, guaranteed, the future, course, of his, mission.

It showed, he was uniquely, qualified, to rule, God's, kingdom. So, the most basic, application, of this passage, is, that in Jesus, we have one, who is utterly, suited, to be our, savior.

[36 : 24] He was completely, unstained, by sin. He resolutely, refused, to succumb, to it, despite the devil's, best efforts. He was able, to fulfill, all righteousness, and so, lived the life, we should, have lived.

And having, no sin of his, own to atone for, he was able, to bear, our sins, in his own, body, on the cross, and make, full, and free, atonement.

That is, why he is able, to save, to the uttermost, all, who come, to God, by him. He offers, himself, as savior, to all, who will, turn, from their sin, and trust, in him.

And if he, is our savior, what, other things, can we learn, from this passage? One is, that we, shouldn't be surprised, when temptation, and testing, come our way.

If the Lord Jesus, learned obedience, through what he suffered, those, who are the Lord's, adopted sons, and daughters, can expect, to be tested, and tempted too.

[37 : 41] In his first letter, to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes, that his readers, should be on their guard, against the attacks, of the evil one.

He reminds them, that no temptation, has overtaken them, that is not common, to man. I like the comment, by the Bible scholar, Michael Green.

He writes, we are not meant, to live, on spiritual highs. We are meant, to live, on the bread, that comes from God alone, even if it is, bread, in the desert.

God deliberately, allows temptation. Its arrival, doesn't mean, that God's blessing, has evaporated. No temptation, builds, spiritual, muscle.

Like Jesus, we too, need to learn, obedience, from what, we suffer. And there is good advice, in an old hymn, that is not often sung, these days.

[38 : 53] Yield not, to temptation, for yielding his sin. Each victory, will help you, another, to win.

Temptation, builds, spiritual muscle. We shouldn't be surprised, when temptation, and testing, come our way. They are, in a sense, to be expected.

But we should, take heart, that Jesus, knows, what it is like, to face, these things. He knows, what it is like, to be tempted, from his own experience.

He is, sympathetic, in the true sense, of that word. As the writer, to the Hebrews, points out, because he himself, has suffered, when tempted, he is, able, to help, those, who are, being tempted.

We shouldn't, be surprised, when, temptation, and testing, come our way. But we should, be encouraged, that in Jesus, we have one, who understands, from the inside.

[40 : 10] And in, conclusion, we should also, note, how Jesus, countered, the devil's temptations. Each time, he responded, with God's word, it is written, it is written, it is written.

Because, each of the, scriptural, quotations, Jesus uses, comes from, Deuteronomy. Perhaps, he was, meditating, devotionally, on the book, of Deuteronomy, at the time.

He clearly, had learned, the material, that he quoted, at the devil. And the spirit, who came upon him, so powerfully, at his baptism, was able, to take, these scriptures, and use them, in spiritual warfare.

After all, the sword, of the spirit, is the word, of God. And the lesson, for us, is that, if we don't, know our way, around the scriptures, if we don't, trust the spirit, in warfare, against Satan, we, will not share, in the victory, of God's, son.

We, have a savior, who stood, firm, in the face, of temptation. May we, trust, this, great, savior, and may, we learn, from, his, example.

[41 : 48] Shall, we pray.