

# Matthew 4 - God is with us and the Devil is not happy!

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 19 September 2021

Preacher: Sandy Fitton

[ 0 : 00 ] You've got your Bibles with you. I'd like you to turn to Matthew 4. And this is when Jesus is in the wilderness and met with the devil and goes through his time of temptation.

So we're going to read from Matthew 4, start with 1. So this is the series on following the way of Jesus and that God is with us and the devil is not happy.

I'm sorry about the writing, but on my Apple Mac, it is actually a lot bigger than that. And when it transferred to this system, which is PowerPoint, it shrunk.

So if you can't see that, I'm very sorry. I hope you've got your Bibles with you. Or your telephones if you're young and modern. Or older and modern. Matthew 4, verse 1.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. Now the Greek word for that is periasros, which means also tested. And this is where he was going to be tempted and tested by the devil.

[ 1 : 01 ] After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. Remember that. The tempter came to him and said, If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Jesus answered, It is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against the stone.

Jesus answered him, It is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of all the world and their splendor.

All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan. For it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

[ 2 : 12 ] Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. So this passage in Matthew parallels that giving in Mark and Luke.

And it comes right after the time when Jesus was baptized. And as he rose out of the water, John spoke to you last week, and a voice from heaven said, This is my Son.

Now by the way, this voice from heaven can only be God. This is my Son, whom I love and I am well pleased. And we may be fooled into thinking that this was the time that the devil began persecuting Jesus.

But we must know that this wasn't. He'd tried long before that. Even back to when Mary was pregnant with Jesus. And Joseph knew that this wasn't his son.

He could easily have had Mary stoned to death. But he didn't. Even when all of the babies under two were killed mercilessly by Herod.

[ 3 : 16 ] That was when the devil decided he also wanted to have a go at Jesus. And even when Jesus as a young boy was missing for three days. Jesus was okay.

He was about his father's work and about his place. But again, right before he was going to be baptized, even John said this.

He said, I shouldn't be baptizing you. You should be baptizing me. And Jesus said, No. No, we must do this to fulfill all righteousness.

What he was saying there is, This is so very important. This is to fulfill all that was in scripture before and all that will be in scripture afterwards. This is to fulfill what I am about to do for all humanity.

He knew the importance of this and that it had to be done. And it meant a sacrifice that would be something that would not be understood then by the people there.

[ 4 : 14 ] And he's not even understood to the full now by a lot of people. Recently, when Joshua got baptized in the sea, it was just an incredible moment for us all.

All that could be there. And if anybody hasn't seen it, it is on the WhatsApp group, I believe. It was a sight to behold. But what was really amazing was that this young man stood up before God and before everybody else and declared his stance before the world, that he was going to be Jesus' disciple, Jesus' follower.

And he nailed his colors to the cross. It's amazing. It's amazing. It's amazing. And you know, just before, after he was baptized, that was when Jesus was led into the wilderness.

In Matthew, he said he was led into the wilderness. And being tempted in the wilderness was not being tempted to a cream cake or something quite delightful. Being tempted in the word means to suffer.

Do you get that? To be tempted is to suffer. And Mark's gospel, Matthew 1, states it beautifully because it says here, the spirit compelled Jesus to go.

[ 5 : 25 ] He was compelled to go to the wilderness. And he was led by the spirit. It means he was obliged to go there. Satan knew the importance of this too.

He tried his very, very best and he was going to get up close and personal with Jesus and do his very, very best or his very, very worst to make sure Jesus didn't complete this mission.

He'd failed so many times. He'd failed with the baptism and he was going to do his best to stop this working. So this one-on-one attack was resting, Satan was resting his own future on this and his actions and on Jesus' response.

You know what he does that with us when we get baptized? He looks for your weak points. I want you to listen to this so clearly because if you've been baptized or about to be baptized, this is for you.

And if you want to know Jesus, this is for you too. You know, I still find it hard to imagine that Satan could believe he would win. Billy Graham wrote, I love this, he was quoted as saying, I've read the last passage of the Bible and it's all going to turn out all right.

[ 6 : 39 ] But to be fair, Satan actually didn't have the New Testament or Revelation then. But he's not God. He is not outside of all time and he has no control of what's going on.

He might think he does, but he doesn't. And note this, Satan thought this was worth fighting for, for himself, for his glory and his power. But for Jesus, this was worth fighting for, for all humanity, for God's power and for God's glory.

Now that is an amen moment. It really is. And it was a lull of 40 days and 40 nights, wasn't it, before Satan had his attack. But it really was in the wilderness.

There was no, what was it, Premier Inn. There was no Toby Carvery that he could nip to. And there was no friend to have a little natter with. He was alone, we think, for 40 days and 40 nights.

On really hot days and really cold nights. Because trust me, in the desert, it is really hot in the day and it's really cold at night. All he had was a rock for a pillow, sand for a bed. But this was time for Jesus to prepare for what was ahead.

[ 7 : 47 ] And that's a good lesson to us too. And Jesus was prepared and he wasn't alone. Because in Matthew, in Luke, sorry, it says, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River and was led by the Spirit to the wilderness.

So he was led by the Spirit and full of the Holy Spirit. God was with him. He wasn't alone. And when we get baptized, that's for us too.

When we get baptized, when we give our life to Christ, God is with us. Right from that very moment. But let me tell you, he wants to be with you way before that.

And if you're listening to this today, you will hear that just now. So when we get baptized, we're telling the world, I'm Satan. Because he is listening. He is watching.

That we are God's child and we are serious about being his disciples. His followers. Now the bad news is that Satan knows this. And that the battle is on.

[ 8 : 51 ] It's at the ante when you've been baptized. But the good news is that if you are Jesus' follower, you are never truly alone. And God is with you. You are full of the Holy Spirit.

And you can and will overcome. Jesus' lesson to his disciples and to you and us is to be prepared. Satan isn't happy with your choice when you become a Christian.

And when you get baptized. And he's going to do everything he can to make you change your mind and give up. So, so far I've talked about being a Christian, about Christians.

But what about anyone that doesn't believe in God? Or is sitting on the religious fence? Well, listen closely to this. Because what I'm saying here is that by the very fact that you are either sitting in church today and listening.

Or listening via virtual media. That you are making Satan very unhappy indeed. This means that he will do all he can to ensure you don't listen.

[ 9 : 52 ] And if you do listen, you will find something that you don't like. That you disagree with. That is unbelievable. That it will even offend you. To stop you.

And make you blind to the truth. And prevent you from being saved. In 2 Corinthians 4.4 it says, The God, a small g by the way, of this age, that's Satan, has blinded the minds of unbelievers. So they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. Don't let that be you. Whoever you are, if you're sitting here and you don't know Jesus yet, don't let Satan blind you.

Listen to what I'm saying today. Because I'm not saying it, God is. Now everyone understand this too. That Satan will try very hard to steal God's word.

And with that, God's promises to you and I. And that he will try to make you question the word too. He will use the word and he will either distort it, miss something out.

[ 10 : 53 ] Or present something that looks like the truth, but it isn't anyway. And just like a mutated gene. Because that's what he's doing with that. He's mutating the word. Just like a mutated gene, there is no advantage whatsoever.

People will tell you that mutations lead to advantage. There is no such thing. There is no such proven thing. And the mutated word is not going to lead to an advantage.

He will also present some truth in the midst of his lies. He will prey on what are his own weaknesses and hopes are yours. Do you get that? He will find your Achilles heel.

He will know it. And he will try his very best to get you on that. He will promise you the earth. and if you take it, it will be the stuff of the earth and it will hold no kingdom value whatsoever.

So don't take it. He did all of this, by the way, with Jesus in these temptations, in the testing in the desert. But I know that God's word will never return void.

[ 12 : 02 ] You'll notice I closely look at my notes when I read God's word because I don't want to distort it. I want to give you the truth as it's written. And I know that if you are listening to God's word, that you will hear the nugget of truth if you open your heart and your eyes and your ears to know that, to listen.

So let's look at these three things that Satan tried to tempt Jesus with. I love that app that's called What Three Words. What Three Words gets you to a destination better than the old sat-nav.

Old sat-nav can get you in all sorts of unheard-of places, but apparently What Three Words gets you right to the spot. So I'm praying that these What Three Words that I'm going to give you today will get you to the place that God wants you to be, to understand that he provides, that he protects, and it is his power and not our own.

So the first line that Satan gave was, does God provide and are you the son of God? He says in here, Matthew 4, 3, the tempter came to him and said, that's Jesus came, the tempter came to Jesus and said, if you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Now Jesus was at the end of a 40-day fast. It's no Einstein moment to realize that he was hungry, is it? In fact, the word tells us he was hungry.

[ 13 : 26 ] And scripture shows us that Jesus could produce food like that if he called to God from heaven. But Jesus chose to fast.

Jesus chose to be hungry. And physically he knew he needed bread. But he also realized that this wasn't about his tummy. In fact, he said with a rumbling tummy, I'm sure, that he saw right through Jesus' ploy and he struck right at the heart of the matter and he said, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word, get that, every word that comes from the mouth of God.

We are to take the whole of the Bible in context, not just split little bits up. And you've heard that before as well. So what Jesus was saying here is, this isn't about my physical need.

This isn't about my physical hunger. This is about the spiritual hunger of the world to receive the word, to nourish on the word, to feed on the word, and to grow on the word.

He was quoting Deuteronomy 8.3. He was reminding Satan that the Israelites, on their journey, were humbled and hungry and called to God for bread, for something.

[14:40] And God produced manna, that wafer-like substance that came down from heaven every day, every morning, new, fresh every morning, and was picked and eaten.

But whatever was overpicked turned to rot. It was to show that he was providing. It was to show that they should believe in him. And by God providing the manna, he was providing physical and spiritual food that only he could provide.

Because without God's provision, the Israelites couldn't believe in him and they couldn't trust him either. Now man can make bread. We've seen that. But man cannot make manna.

It's never been made since. And it never will. And guess what? Man can't make Jesus either. Listen to this. In John 6.33-34, Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth.

It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. He was talking about himself. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

[15:48] You see, without Jesus becoming Emmanuel, God with us, and being here and being in obedience to God, we wouldn't have a relationship with God, the relationship that we're offered right now.

So Jesus was saying to them, you may be picking on my rumbly tumbley, but I know you are desperate to stop God's word having an effect, and I'm not going to allow it.

God's word will endure. We know that. That's scriptural. And more than that, John 1 says that Jesus was the word, is the word. And Jesus was saying to him, listen, I'm the word, and I will endure, and I'm not going to give up.

So the first attack also out of Satan's mouth was to question not only God's provision, but God's word, because he said, if, didn't he, if you are the son of God.

Well, the whole of scripture pointed to Jesus coming, didn't it? Jesus' authority and heavenly status, and he had to just try and dig and prod at that.

[16:54] He had to cast them doubt at that. So God had just said at the baptism, this is my son in whom I am pleased. But Satan prodded with the opening line, if you are the son of God.

Well, nothing gets us moving quicker than a prod, does it? If we knew something about the truth, if we know that it's true, we are, our eyes rise up, doesn't it?

And especially if somebody's questioning God's truth in the face of evidence, it can even make the most meek of us rise up, but it also can make the most weak of us question it.

So I want you to be strong and listen to what Jesus did, because guess what he did? He ignored it, didn't he? He didn't answer that question. And in fact, he did that on the cross at the time as well.

That's another story. Do you know that would have made Satan really unhappy? Because if he prods, he wants a response. There's nothing worse than prodding someone and not getting the response that you want.

[18:00] So if you are here today and you are being prodded by Satan and you are being prodded on God's promises, I want you to do this. Don't rise.

Ignore it. Trust God, because Jesus did. And when we ignore Satan's ifs and prods and we hold on to God's promises and truths, in his word, it makes Jesus glad and Satan mad and sad.

And Satan had prodded and got no response and so he tried again. The lie, the second lie, Joshua, have you got it already? Oh, do you know he's super as me?

The lie was God does protect him. Are you really the son of God? Matthew 4, 5 reads this. Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down, for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

[19:07] Once again, Jesus ignored the prod against his heavenly status and his position of authority and he got straight to the point. It is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Now, note this. Satan deliberately misquoted Psalm 91, verses 11 to 12. And he did this to meet his own ends. So let's read the full version.

Joshua can press the thing now. It said, for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

The missed out bit was to guard you in all your ways. And by misquoting the word, he was misrepresenting what God was saying because what he was trying to say is that anything you did, if you wanted to jump off a cliff, if you wanted to do something really stupid, that God will just fix it. Well, we know by experience that's not true. Don't we? I've tried. I've made a few silly mistakes and I know that God is just thinking, Sandy, come on.

[ 20 : 20 ] The promise is only qualified by these words, to guard you in all your ways. Put simply, Jesus was saying to Satan, he also says to you and me that God keeps his promises when we keep God's ways, not our own.

Satan was hoping that Jesus himself would miss this point, but Jesus was the word, is the word. He couldn't miss the point, he wrote it. It's a bit daft, isn't it, really?

So we must, by this point, make every effort to ensure we read the truth so we can spot the fake. If we don't read the truth, we will never spot the fake.

We will be caught up in Satan's lies because we'll miss the all-important bit that God puts in there for our benefit. And it's important to know that if you put your trust and your faith in Jesus as your saviour, you are under God's protection from eternal harm and death.

that means hell. And here's a few lies that Satan uses to blind you to the reality of this. Number one, God doesn't exist, and even if he does exist, you don't need him.

[ 21 : 32 ] Lie. There are many ways to get to heaven. Lie. I've got all the time in the world before I make a decision about Jesus. Another lie.

I won't die. I'm too young, too healthy, too fit, and too clever. No one is too clever for God, let me tell you. We will all go through tough times.

We are all going to die one day. But hopefully, it won't be by foolishly testing whether God exists or not. Or whether we test his provision and his protection outside of his ways.

I hope we get that clear. You see, not only did Satan misquote the Bible, sorry, he had Jesus stand on the highest point of the most holy place.

So this tells us clearly, and Matthew Henry and lots of theologians will warn you about this, that he will take you to the pinnacle of your career, of your desire, and he will defile what is holy.

[ 22 : 37 ] He will to get you on his side. But let me tell you this, the higher you climb in your own strength, in your own power, without God's protection, without God's power, the harder the fall will be.

We do not do anything without God. We do not do anything without his power. We do not do anything without acknowledging his power. Now the bad news about this is that it's devastated so many lives when people just from high profile places in Christian circles and in other, get to the top of their career and fall so badly because they've done it without God.

Proverbs 12, 15 says, the way of fall seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice. And so the good news is that this wise advice is readily available in the word.

1 Corinthians 10, 13 says, no temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. It's common. You think your temptation might be tough, might be only you.

It's not. It's common. Happened before and it will happen again. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

[ 23 : 52 ] Am I booming with this? Is this alright? I'm okay. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way that you can endure it. He will provide a way out.

You don't have to be tempted. You don't have to give in. You look to God, look to his word and he will provide a way out. And the lesson for us to learn by this is that we mustn't get too big for our boots that God has provided us with.

Now I've got size two feet. I've got very, very small feet. So I've got no qualms about the fact that my feet are not going to be size ten. They're size two.

I'm comfortable in my size twos. Thank you very much. And I know that it's not wise to test God with my temptation. In fact, I know it's not wise to test God at all.

Because if I do, I will lose. Satan did. And he wasn't happy. And so he tried again. And the third lie was that, does God deserve all the power?

[ 24 : 55 ] Matthew 4, 8 says, again, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me.

Now again, I find this totally incredible, that he took the creator of the world, of the universe, to his mountain and pointed to all of the kingdoms that were going to be his in the end anyway. And Jesus knew it and said, I'll give it to you if you worship me. Jesus knew that this was going to ultimately belong to him. But not until the prophecies that were written in the Bible had been fulfilled. He knew. He'd got it. Jesus knew we'd have to suffer even more than this time of temptation. He would suffer ridicule and condemnation. He would suffer rejection and humiliation. And get this, please, I pray, that he would suffer for crucifixion for all the sin of all the people of all the world for all time in the past and the future even though he'd never sinned himself. [ 26 : 04 ] But he also knew through his suffering that he would overcome sin and death completely when he went to the cross. As the son of God, he would sit at the right hand side of the father and he would intercede in prayer for us.

Because his battle didn't stop when he died and when he rose again and went to heaven. It's still there. He's still fighting for us today. Isn't that wonderful? Jesus knew that all of this, all of this temptation was for him not to go to the cross and bear those sins. That's what this was about. It was about bread and provision and protection and power. But it was all about I don't want you to get to that cross, Jesus, and I'm going to do the very best I can and the very worst I can to stop you getting there. Jesus' sole purpose was to save our soul. Jesus' sole purpose was to save your soul. And I believe this passage shows us that Satan was hoping Jesus was as greedy for God's power and glory as he was.

He was hoping Jesus would have no need for God as he thought he did. He couldn't be more wrong. And it probably devastated him when Jesus said to him, away from me, Satan, for it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only. [ 27 : 34 ] Worship him, worshiping the Lord your God and serving him means that all the power and all the glory is, is. Jesus came down from heaven, he lowered himself to human form to demonstrate God's power and God's glory.

Yes, he provided miracles but he always called upon God for those. When we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind and strength and demonstrate that to the world as Jesus' disciples, Satan isn't happy but God is. we need to be encouraged, we're nearly finished now, that Jesus overcame temptation and his reward is that, is us in heaven. His disciples, his followers are going to be with him in heaven. That's his reward. Wouldn't it be lovely if all of us thought about the fact that our reward is our doing our very best to carry along a whole load of people with us to make sure that heaven is populated and Satan didn't win? A wonderful conclusion to this passage is that the angel did tend to Jesus at the end of this but that's because he lived by the word he preached and the word he was and he followed God's ways. [ 28 : 53 ] The devil lost that round and he would lose many more but that didn't mean he gave up because in Luke it said when the devil had finished tempting Jesus he left him until the next opportunity came.

Trust me the devil is always looking for an opportunity with you and I and it's always important that we will look at an opportunity to read the word and make sure we're armed against it and he did do that didn't he? Remember when Peter tried to stop Jesus being taken to be crucified? Jesus said something really strange there. He said to Peter get thee behind me Satan because he knew it wasn't Peter that was talking it was Satan that was talking. Satan was trying yet again to stop him getting to the cross being crucified dealing with sin dealing with death and saving you and I. Hebrews 5.8 says that even though Jesus was God's son he learned obedience from the things he suffered even though we are God's children we learn obedience from the things we suffer. [ 30 : 04 ] Amen. So to finish isn't it encouraging that you and I we can keep fighting against Satan because he will keep trying but we've learned through these temptations that God is our provider he's the provider of the physical and the spiritual food that we need and he's the spiritual nourishment that we must feed upon in the word.

In Jesus we have no fear of harm or death but we are to follow his ways. don't test God whether you're a Christian or not you will lose.

He will protect us but we have to follow his ways and we must remember that all power and glory are rightfully God's not ours. We should stay in the boots and the size that we've been given. God has put us in those boots for a very big reason and the higher we climb in our own strength and our own power the harder the fall. so let's all just stay in the boots we've been given. And our main lesson from this passage is that the devil will never give up. He will never give up trying but that shouldn't make us scared that just make us run to the word and read it so that we can fight and overcome.

[ 31 : 25 ] Amen?