

## **“An Encounter With Satan”**

Matt 4:1-11

1.16.22

In our “Encounters With Jesus” series we have seen how people are impacted by Jesus. Lives are transformed. Destinies are changed.

This morning we are going to see an encounter with Jesus that is different. It wasn't an encounter of life change for others. Rather, it was a difficult encounter that Christ had to go through. It was an encounter with Satan. The passage is found in Matthew 4 starting with verse 1. Page 809 in the Red Bibles.

Matthew 4:1–11 (ESV), “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” <sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup> 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.’ ” <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup> 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.’ ” <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”

To set the stage for this encounter,

**Christ had just been baptized beginning the start of His public ministry.**

Matthew 3:16–17 (ESV), “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; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus and then God the Father spoke audibly for all that witnessed Jesus’ baptism. God the Father spoke an incredible affirmation- “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Parents, do your kids know how you feel about them? Do they know that you believe in them? Don’t let your kids wonder how you feel about them. Use words. Be clear. Tell them often. Text them. Write it on a sticky note and put it in their lunch or on their bedroom door or bathroom mirror. They need to hear that you love them and believe in them. Our teens especially need to hear from us.

After hearing the affirmation from God the Father,

**Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness.**

Matthew 4:1–2 (ESV), “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”

Loving God led by His Spirit removed Jesus for any other person, away from towns or cities into the wilderness.

It was the will of God that Jesus go to the wilderness. The wilderness would be the location where satan would come and tempt Jesus.

It is important to know that God did not tempt Jesus. **God never tempts.** James 1:13 (ESV), “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”

Temptations are designed to trip us up to sin. God doesn’t tempt because He doesn’t want us to sin.

Because Jesus didn't have an earthly father, He was not born with a sin nature. He was like Adam prior to the fall. Because Jesus had a sinless nature, He did not have any internal temptations like we do. Only external temptations were possible.

**The sources of our temptations are threefold: Satan, the world, and our own sin nature.** Satan is the great deceiver. He is our enemy and wants us to sin. He wants to ruin our reputations and create havoc in our lives. Thomas Brooks wrote, "Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure and pays with pain; he promises profit and pays with loss; he promises life and pays with death"

The world consistently tries to tempt us to follow its ways and morals. It tempts us to water down the truth of scripture in order to fit in with the world. It tries to seduce us into thinking it is okay to do whatever feels good.

We are also tempted by our own sin nature. It pleads with us to focus on our own needs and wants- to be selfish and to look out for numero uno. James 1:14 (NLT) describes the battle inside us, "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away." Our sin nature is like that little red devil on our shoulder saying anything and everything is okay.

God does not want us to fall to temptation. What does God do when we are tempted? He gives us a way out so that we can say no to temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. **God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability**, but with the temptation he will also **provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.**"

Jesus was not tempted so that the Father could learn anything about His Son, for the Father had already given Jesus His approval. Jesus was tempted so that He could relate to us in every way. Hebrews 2:17 (NLT), "Therefore, it was necessary for him to

be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.”

While in the wilderness, Jesus did not eat any food; He fasted for 40 days and nights.

Have you ever fasted? Fasting more than one day is difficult. Imagine fasting for 40 days. The text says that “After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.”

Nothing that God does is accidental or coincidental. That Jesus was led into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days was intentional and connected the Messiah back to the Israelites. The number 40 represents the 40 days Moses fasted before bringing the 10 Commandments down from Mt. Sinai.

40 also represents the years the Israelites wandered **around the what?** The wilderness. The Israelites were tested in the wilderness for 40 years; Jesus for 40 days. Deuteronomy 8:2–3 (NLT), “Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. <sup>3</sup> Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” The people experienced hunger. So too did Jesus.

In this encounter between Satan and Jesus, the adversary presents three different temptations before the Lord.

Temptation #1 is found starting in verse 3, “And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” Jesus was hungry. Satan knew that and tried to use that fact against Jesus.

Satan most likely heard God the Father's endorsement. He also knew the truth about Jesus- that He is the Son of God.

Temptation #1 was a temptation to:

**Use His divine power to meet His own needs.**

Jesus had been in the wilderness all this time and had no food to eat. Satan wanted Jesus to question why wouldn't God the Father give His own Son bread? Maybe, He didn't care? Satan told Jesus to take care of Himself since the Father would not.

Satan used that same temptation with Eve. Gen 3:1 Satan said, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" The serpent planted the idea that God was not generous; that God likes to hold things from us. Eve was encouraged to look out for herself.

What is more important? To satisfy your human desires or to obey God? Adam and Eve chose their own desires over obeying God.

Though Jesus was hungry, His personal needs and desires always took a back seat to His desire to obey His Father.

How did Jesus respond to this temptation? Did He reason or debate with Satan? No, He recalled and utilized God's Word. Verse 4, "But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Jesus quoted Deut 8:3, which we saw earlier.

Jesus' food was to do the will of His Father. When Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman at the well, He was tired and hungry. The disciples had left Him at the well and went into town to get food. They came back with food and saw Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman. They told Jesus to stop and eat something. Remember His response? "Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work." John 4:34 (NLT)

Satan was unsuccessful with this first temptation so he tried another. Verse 5. “Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup> 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.’ ”

Temptation #2 was a temptation to:

**Test His Father’s protection and love.**

Satan brought Jesus to the highest point of the temple area. The spot most likely would look over a deep cliff into the Kidron Valley. From this vantage point, satan quotes part of Psalm 91:11-12. Satan did what many false teachers and cult leaders do. They take scripture out of context and use it for their benefit.

If you are crafty enough you can make the Bible sound like it supports things that it absolutely doesn’t support. Here satan is saying, “You are the Son of God. God’s Word says He protects those He loves. So prove His love by jumping and watch Him rescue you.”

Satan purposefully left out an important phrase in these verses. The phrase is, “in all Your ways.” According to the psalmist, a person is protected only when he is following the Lord’s will. For Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple would not be in concert with God’s will.

Instead of debating satan, Jesus quotes scripture. Verse 7, “Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

To do something contrary to God’s will and then expect Him to show up and rescue you is testing God. To question God’s reliability because He doesn’t answer your prayers in your timing is testing God.

Does God owe you anything? Does He need to jump when you say jump? If you have that perspective you are testing God. And you are placing yourself higher in importance than God Himself. He is not your butler or servant.

The old adage goes, "If you first don't succeed, try, try again." Satan tried a third time. "The third time is a charm right?"

Verse 8, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Temptation #3 was a temptation to:

**Take an easier path to become king.**

Jesus called satan "the ruler of this world" in John 14:30. God owns the world and is ultimately over all the universe, but He has given satan some authority to rule kings and kingdoms.

Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain to look over all the land below. Satan knew that Jesus was going to be King over all. So satan offered Jesus a short-cut to becoming king. He offered Jesus a kingdom without the cross. No beatings. No ridicule. No betrayal. No suffering. No cross. All Jesus needed to do was just bow before satan and then He would be given several kingdoms.

Ever been tempted to take the short-cut to get something now that would require more effort and time to get it the right way?

Many years ago, when I was in seminary in the suburbs of Chicago, Andrea was based in New York. We so wanted her to get based in Chicago because it would be a lot easier on her and us. But Chicago's base was closed. There were no transfers going through. And the transfer list was a mile long. There were literally 800 flight attendants ahead of her.

During that time, American Airlines flight attendants were frustrated with their outdated contract that was far inferior than many of the other major carriers. Andrea's union of flight attendants chose to go on strike.

The company tried to divide the flight attendants by offering the base of their choosing if they broke from their fellow employees and union and went back to work.

Here was an opportunity to get something we had been praying for for years- an opportunity to get based in Chicago. All Andrea had to do was cross the picket lines.

But neither of us believed it was loving or right for her to jump in front of others who were waiting longer than her to be based in Chicago.

Sadly, a good friend of hers did cross the lines in order to get to Chicago. Her friend was based in Chicago for 2 1/2 years before Andrea was finally able to get based there.

Short-cuts may have immediate perks but there is a cost later for those decisions.

This flight attendant who crossed the picket line lost her joy in flying because she lost many friendships. She lost trust with her co-workers and was treated quite poorly by some of them.

You want good grades in high school or college. There is a big test coming up that would require a lot of extra study in order to get a good grade. You don't have "time" but suddenly, out of the blue you are offered answers to the test. It would be stupid not to use those answers right?

You want to be married to this guy but he is not ready. So he invites you to live with him instead. You take the short-cut and move in. That step will most likely prolong the time before a ring is put on your finger. Or in getting a ring at all.



If you do move forward in marriage, it will not feel as special to you or to those you invite to the wedding as it would have been if you waited to live together until after becoming husband and wife.

There are few short-cuts in life that are better than putting in the time or work for the results you need or want.

Jesus was presented with a short-cut. His response was to quote scripture. Verse 10, “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.’ ”

Jesus knows that what you worship is what you serve. Worship money then you serve money. Worship a job then you serve that job. Worship a dream then you serve that dream.

For Jesus, there is no one other than the Lord God who deserves worship.

What about you? Who gets your worship and service?

Satan did not succeed in causing Jesus to sin so verse 11, “Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”

Hungry Jesus had won that battle. After the win, God sent His angels to serve Jesus. God sent a raven to bring food to Elijah. God most likely sent the angels to bring Jesus food and to celebrate.

Application: I am going to encourage us to do three things in response to this passage.

**Know God's Word.**

Jesus knew God's Word. He didn't acquire it supernaturally. He heard, read, studied, meditated and memorized it. So when satan tried to tempt Jesus, the Lord was able to recite scripture fitting to the situation at hand.

Satan, our adversary, also knows God's Word. He has studied it as well.

How about you? Are you spending daily time in God's Word? Are you getting a handle on parts of scripture through study and memorization? Each month are you gaining in your knowledge of God and His will through God's revealing Word?

Are you too busy to read God's Word? We make time for the things that matter most to us. If you are not growing in your reading of God's Word you are a sitting duck to false teaching and satan's schemes.

Or is your reason for not reading God's Word because you do not like to read? There are things that I do not like to read. I don't like reading instruction manuals for technology or furniture that I buy. But I tell you what, I will gladly read it when I don't know how to put something together.

God's Word is our instructional manual in how to see God, ourselves and how to live this life victoriously. There really is nothing more important to read. If you struggle to read, choose to listen to God's Word. There are many Bible apps that will read the scriptures to you.

We cannot afford to be Bible illiterate.

The second and third application come from James 4:7–8 (ESV), “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...”

**Draw near to God.**

As a result of the temptations that Jesus experienced in the wilderness and throughout His life- especially in the garden of Gethsemane, we can hold tight to these verses. Hebrews 4:15–16 (ESV), “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Jesus is willing and encouraging you to come to Him- even when you have sinned. He will not condemn you. He will welcome you with open arms. Come near to Him. Stay near to Him. Abide in His Spirit consistently.

As you draw near the Lord then also:

**Resist the devil.**

The devil can be resisted. Though he is stronger than you; he doesn't have authority over you. The Lord has given you authority over him. So resist. Send him away. “Be gone satan.”

To minimize the effectiveness of satan's temptations, it is wise to know your weaknesses. The devil already knows them. What triggers or factors make you more vulnerable to temptation?

When you are tired? When you are under a lot of stress? When you are alone or away from your family? When you are bored? After a spiritual high? Or is there something else that puts you in more of a vulnerable situation and more likely to fall to temptation? If you know what your triggers are, do what you can to mitigate them.

Take steps to minimize the times when you are weak. And keep watch for the adversary's crafty schemes.

Let's pray o.b.g.