



Part 10: Salvation's Champion Matthew 4:1-11

As salvation's champion, Jesus shows us the way to fight temptation.

I. Salvation's Champion

"The desert is the place of the first showdown between competing kingdoms and their rulers, between two figures who lay claim to the hearts and souls of men and women. Rather than retreat, Jesus now advances the kingdom of God." – Michael Wilkins, *The NIV Matthew Application Commentary*, 153

Here we see the "devil" (Gk *diabolos* = *the accuser or slanderer*), and he will later be called "Satan" (Gk = *the adversary*). He is the one Jesus calls the "prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul called him by several names including "the tempter" (1 Thessalonians 3:5) and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Ephesians 2:2).

"The devil is an intelligent, powerful spirit-being that is thoroughly evil and is directly involved in perpetrating evil in the lives of individuals as well as on a much larger scale. He is not an abstraction, either as a personification of the inner corrupt self or in the sense of a symbolic representation of organized evil." – Clinton Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, 35.

"...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." *1 John 3:8*

We have already seen how Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is fulfilling the role of Israel; that Jesus is the true and better Israel (see "True & Better video" by Dan Stevens in sermon on 1-15-23). Here we see this theme on a couple of levels.

Jesus is the true and better Adam who resists the devil's temptations. Jesus is the true and better Israel that succeeds in the wilderness where Israel had earlier failed. This is especially true as Jesus uses citations from Deuteronomy in his battle with Satan.

II. Testing or Temptation?

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.” *Matthew 4:1*

This raises some questions for us. Is the God tempting Jesus? How are we to understand this scene? What is the difference between a temptation and a test?

The Gk *peirazo* can mean either “to tempt” or “to test.” A temptation is an enticement to get a person to act contrary to God’s will. A test is an occasion where God seeks to have a person reveal their faithfulness to Him with the intention that the person passes the test and strengthens their faith.

The Bible is clear that God never tempts anyone to sin, and He always provides a way out of temptation.

“When tempted no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death.” *James 1:13-15*

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” *1 Corinthians 10:12-13*

“Temptations in the hands of Satan become a test in the hands of God. God will use them as a test and strengthening of our character.” Michael Wilkins, *The NIV Matthew Application Commentary*, 167

III. The Specific Temptations

Overall, we see Satan assaulting Jesus’ identity and calling. He will always do this with us too. Satan is trying to disqualify Jesus as a sinless Savior and obedient Son.

A. Don’t trust God’s leading and provision (Matt. 4:1-4).

Satan is tempting Jesus to use his identity as the Son of God to take something (food) for himself rather than trust God to provide for his needs in God’s way and time.

Note: temptation is not always trying to get us to do something inherently sinful. It can be a temptation to misuse God’s good gifts.

“A serious Christian will realize that sin comes not in the thing itself, but in its wrong use; not in a part of God’s good creation, but in the attempt to use that good creation as though it were our toy, or our trash.”— N.T. Wright,

Following Jesus, 87

“It is written: ‘ Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4 (quoting Deuteronomy 8:3).

- B. Put God to the test to prove He loves you (Matt. 4:5-7).

Satan manipulates scripture to tempt Jesus to act in a way that would seemingly make God act in a way to prove His love and care for him.

Note: The context of Psalm 91 asserts God’s general protection and care for His covenant people (Israel), but it does not guarantee nothing bad will ever happen to those God loves (Jesus promises us trouble if we follow him).

Satan is also tempting Jesus to take a shortcut to gaining a following.

“Jesus answered him, it is written: ‘ Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Matthew 4:7 (quoting Deuteronomy 6:16)

- C. Give your ultimate allegiance and devotion to Satan rather than God (Matt. 4:8-10).

Jesus’ ultimate purpose is to gather the peoples of the world into God’s Kingdom (Acts 2: Matt. 25:31-34). But God’s will is that Jesus go the way of the cross as the Suffering Servant (Matt. 16:21-27; 26:36-46).

Satan is tempting Jesus to take a shortcut and avoid suffering on the condition that Jesus gives Satan ultimate allegiance and devotion.

Satan will use any of the world’s offerings to seduce us to give them and him our ultimate allegiance and devotion (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4-10).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”” Matthew 4:10 (quoting Deuteronomy 6:13)

IV. The Way to Fight Temptation

“Resist the devil in the power of the Spirit through the guidance of the Word to accomplish the will of God.” – Michael Wilkins, *The NIV Matthew Application Commentary*

If we are to love Jesus and follow his Way, we must put into practice the things we see him doing:

- A. In the same way Jesus repeatedly committed himself to honoring and obeying God above all, we must settle the

issue of whether Jesus is truly our Lord (Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 1:1-6; 10:9-10).

- B. In the same way Jesus committed himself to knowing and obeying Scripture as God's Word, we must commit our best efforts to know, memorize and obey Scripture (Isaiah 66:1-2; Matthew 7:21-27; James 1:22-25). We must believe Jesus that feeding on God's Word is more crucial to us than feeding on regular food.
- C. We must build in rhythms of solitude and silence away from the noise and busyness of our culture to keep ourselves living in union with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 46:10; John 15:1-8).
- D. We must grow in discerning Satan's schemes and personal attacks against us so we can resist him in the power of the Spirit and use God's Word as an offensive weapon (Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8-11; James 4:7-10).

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the schemes Satan uses against Jesus to tempt him to forsake his identity and calling?
2. How does Jesus respond to each temptation?
3. What can we learn from this account of Jesus' ministry?
4. How have you experienced Satan's temptations against you personally?
5. Is there something Jesus is calling you to embrace or do in your fight against temptation?
6. Pray for one another.