

Madness: The King's Choice

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Bible Text: Matthew 4:1-11

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Beginning in Matthew chapter four it says:

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness.”¹

We are about to read, we are about to study the first true event in the ministry life of Jesus Christ. You may be wondering to yourself, why did we skip chapter two? Why did skip chapter three?

If this is your first time with us, our study this season is not a strict exposition of all the chapters and all the verses of Matthew. Let me warn you in advance. There are going to be some fabulous stories, fabulous messages, yes, miracles and parables that we are not even going to touch, we are not even going to address this season. Our entire purpose of studying Matthew up until what we know as the Easter season is to see the coming of the King, the King of creation, the King of the Jews, the King of us all. The coming of the King was so dramatically different from the coming of any king in an earthly realm. Different kings and queens and monarchs and royalty come and go, but the true King of kings and the Lord of lords came so dramatically different.

Today as we come to Matthew chapter four we are going to see the temptation of Jesus Christ. We are going to see him presented with an opportunity that every earthly king would have fallen to. But this is no earthly king. This is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And I want to invite you to turn with me to Matthew chapter four where we find ourselves in the wilderness with the famous temptation of Jesus.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the

¹ Matthew 4:1.

glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.²

This famous event known as the Temptation of Jesus Christ for forty days in the wilderness and then these well-known, three specific temptations. For us to get a grasp of what is really happening in this story, to see the madness of the King's coming, I think there are three items that we need to address. The first thing we need to look at is the characters that are involved in this story. The second thing we need to look at is what are the challenges that the devil actually gives Jesus in Matthew chapter four? And finally and I would say most importantly, what are the specific conclusions that we can draw from this passage that not only give us insight into the person and the purpose of Jesus Christ, but give us insight on how we are to live our lives upon exiting this place.

So let's begin with the characters. Who are the characters involved in this famous story? And, by the way, there is also a parallel in the book of Luke 4:1-14. But the characters we know them well. The first one, the Christ. Jesus Christ. And you may never have thought of the actual meanings of those words, but let me break them down for you. The term Christ literally means anointed, one who is the anointed one. The name Jesus means one who redeems, one who saves, one who is able to make an exchange for us. So when you say the term Jesus Christ you are saying the Redeemer who is anointed or the anointed one who is capable of redeeming.

Here he is in the wilderness for forty days and it specifically says and he hungered. Now if we take a step back and look at the totality of who Jesus Christ is, you understand the Bible makes it very clear. There has never been a time where he has not been. He has always been and yet the Bible makes it clear in Colossians 1:15 and 16 and John 1:3 that everything that we know about creation was fashioned and formed from his hands.

When Genesis 1 says, "Let there be light," it was Jesus Christ who spoke those words. When the Bible mentions the Lord stooping down and taking the dirt and forming whom we know as Adam, it was Jesus Christ who formed, it was Jesus Christ who created. And here we have Jesus Christ forty days not partaking of any of the food that ultimately in the beginning he established and on the dust of the wilderness which he formed.

Yes, he had been born of a virgin some 30 years earlier, but he had always been. For 30 years he had been without sin. Recently, yes, he had been in the Jordan baptized by John the Baptist declaring to all that he was the Messiah, declaring to all that he had come as the ultimate high priest after the order of Melchizedek. And yet here is the Creator. Here is the one that according to Hebrews chapter one verse three keeps the earth moving literally by the power of his words. And he is ahungered and he is in the dust.

² Matthew 4:1-11.

This is Jesus Christ the Messiah 40 days without food in the middle and on the backside of nowhere. Keep that in perspective when we address the second character. Today I want to refer to him as the con artist. Now we know him by his fancy name the devil. In this particular Scripture it calls him the tempter. We know him best as Satan. It literally means accuser. If you go into Revelation chapter 12 he is called that old serpent, the red dragon, the worm in Job chapter 41, all types of different definitions for who he is. But if you study him in the same manner that we study Jesus Christ, he has not always been, but when he came into existence, when he was formed, when he was fashioned, according to Ezekiel chapter 28 it said he was perfect in all of his ways and his {?} exalted the glory of God. I fact, Ezekiel 28 calls him the cherubim over the throne of God.

In simplistic terms, he was in the second highest position. He was riding in the passenger seat. He was riding shotgun, whatever passage you want to allude to. But the Bible also makes it very clear in Isaiah chapter 14 that there came a point where he decided he would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven as John Milton so eloquently posed it years ago. And he said, "I will exalt my throne. I will go above the heavenlies. I will go above the heavenlies. I will take over the kingdoms of the universe. And we know that he was cast down. We know that he was defeated. We know that he fell. And he went from, according to Isaiah 14, Lucifer the lighted to Satan, the accuser.

The next time we see him physically show up in Scripture it is Genesis chapter three. Adam and Eve have been formed there in the Garden of Eden. Life is good. They are walking with the Lord in the cool of the day and the reason I want to call him the con artist is because that is what happens in Genesis three. A con artist is someone who tries to sell you something as more valuable and more purposeful and better than it actually is. He shows up in Genesis chapter three verse one and it says:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field."³

And according to the book of 1 Timothy he would deceive Eve and eventually Adam. He comes to her. And he says:

"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"⁴

if you look in your English translation of the Bible in Genesis chapter two verse 16 God gives a 10 word commandment. In chapter three verse one Satan comes back with nine words. He left one key word out. Do you know what word that was? Freely.

You know, the Lord said, "You may eat of every tree freely, but this one."

And that is what a con artist does. That is what Satan does. He promises ultimate freedom. He promises unlimited capabilities. And what does he actually provide? Bondage and horrific consequences. We know the story of Genesis three. We know that she believed that it was pleasant to the eyes, it was good to look upon. It would make her wise as the gods and when she ate they knew they were naked and it has never been the

³ Genesis 3:1.

⁴ Ibid.

same since. Humanity had been conned. Humanity had been tricked. Humanity had been deceived.

And now it is Matthew chapter four and the con artist is back. This time it is a three fold opportunity. This time he comes to Jesus Christ with a deal. We know those two characters and we have studied those two characters. We have got the King of creation and the highest of creation to ever fall face to face in the middle of the wilderness.

But there is a third character here that we need to implore. And I want to call it the character of the crowd.

Now I want you to think back with me for a moment. Do you realize that Jesus Christ incarnated 30 years earlier you realize that over and over in the Bible it mentions so many times the angelic host. They spoke of his coming to the shepherds. It says in the book of Revelation they shouted holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty 24 hours, seven days a week for infinitum and eternity. You think after 40 days in the desert being ahungered here is their maker, here is their king, do you think the angelic beings are just somewhere else going, "I have got something better to do"?

Let me tell you where they are. Watching. The Bible speaks, in fact, that the number of angels is innumerable. The Bible says they are ministering spirits. I think we would have to have our theological heads in the sand not to say that there was a massive, not total presence of the angelic host at this event. But then there is the other side of the equation. Remember the con artist. The Bible makes it clear in 2 Peter chapter two verse four that the angels which left their first estate, Jude verse six talks about those angels who fell with Satan. Don't you think that this is the opportunity of, quote, their eternity? This is the opportunity for their king, the one who we know as Satan to challenge the true king. Don't you think they would have gathered? Don't you think they were there? Every minion, every principality, every power. If you want living proof of there had to be a massive crowd there at this event just go to any rival college football game at any time. Why? People will spare no expense, no amount of travel to go somewhere to watch the team they love battle the team they hate.

It doesn't matter what is on the schedule. It doesn't matter what is on the calendar.

Now when I grew up I grew up with a dad who just so happens to be a graduate of the University of Texas. And he made sure that I grew up wearing orange footed pajamas. He made sure that I had light switches with {?}. He made sure that I never ever, ever with all due respect to friends in the room, that I never rooted for the Oklahoma Sooners. He made sure that that would never happen.

For a high school student to get a ticket to the Texas OU game, you got a better chance of winning the lottery. I was not endorsing it. I was just saying there is a better chance. In fact, my church that I grew up in one of the fundraisers that we did as students to go to camp and to go on mission trips is we worked the concession stand at the cotton bowl. That is what we did. And there is all kinds of different games. Obviously there is the actual

cotton bowl, but there is also the Texas OU game. And so for years and years and years I grew up as a young person going to the game but never seeing the game.

Then it happened. You know it is not what you know, it is who you know. And somebody that my mom knew, knew somebody who had tickets and that year instead of being in the concession stand, I was going to have the privilege, I was going to have the opportunity not just to go to the Texas OU game. That game that my family so loved one side, versus the other side, but the game I had always wanted to go to I was going to spare no time, no expense. I didn't mind losing money in the concession stand. I would go mow more yards. I didn't care. And then I found out. The ticket was on the 50 yard line. Yeah, I am thinking, mom paid off somebody well. This is good. But there was something that had eluded my young immature mind. You know, different rivalry games do different things, but if you ever see a picture of what we know as the Red River shoot out, the Texas OU game at the cotton bowl, the way that they organize the bands is from the 50 yard line to the 50 yard line. In other words, from one 50 wrapping around the south end of the stadium to the other 50.

I mentioned that person my mom knew got two tickets, right? She gave one to me on the Texas side and one to somebody else beside me on the Oklahoma side.

I thought that this was going to be a wonderful event. I thought, wow, this is going to be great. I did not realize that I had literally stepped into some type of arena that was—well, can I just be honest—words I have never heard before. Things said and things described. I mean, I was right there on the battle lines. Why? Because based on what side of the 50 yards line you were on, you either absolutely loved or absolutely hated what was taking place on the field.

Let's go to the wilderness for a moment. Let's think about those angels. Let's think about those demons. There was absolute devotion and love for one and vile hatred for the other. If there was ever a time in the history of the world where all the cosmos and all the {?} gathered together, this would have been it. This is the rivalry game of all rivalry games.

Now I give you that set up so that we can understand the challenges. I mean here is the devil. Here is Satan. Here is the fallen one face to face with the one who he used to worship, face to face with the one who he used to sing to, face to face with the one who he used to bow down to and now the opportunity of an eternity, the opportunity of a lifetime he can offer, he can present anything and he presents three challenges. Now, remember. He is the con artist.

The first challenge is the challenge of feeding. He says, "Turn this rock into bread." The opportunity to turn that which cannot nourish into that which can. The second opportunity is what I want to call the opportunity or the challenge to create a frenzy. The Bible makes it clear that they go somehow supernaturally from the wilderness unto the holy city, unto the place of Jerusalem. It says they sit upon the temple.

If you never had the privilege to go to that exact spot geographically that holy site that is no longer physically, structurally there it is built not only on a very high peak, but it is built in such a manner and it was created so that on many, many days there in the Middle East the top of that temple would extend into the clouds, extend into the haze. Why? Because if we wanted a perspective when they were offering the sacrifices, when they were offering their prayers that they were literally going straight into the throne room of God their Creator.

You know, we live in world today where somebody on the back side of nowhere, New Mexico can bet video footage of a light in the sky moving like it shouldn't move and everybody goes nuts. Somebody, something might be out there. Can you imagine this scene when the devil says, "Hey, I will tell you what. Why don't we go to the top of the temple that is hidden by the cloud cover and why don't you throw yourself off and get caught by the angels?"

Now I don't know about you, but that wouldn't make the front of the tabloids. It would create such a frenzy. It would be one of those, "Did you see that? Did you hear about it?" They would have printed a massive, incredible frenzy.

So there was an opportunity to feed. There was an opportunity to create this frenzy, but last, but not least, there is this falling down. The Bible says that he took him to a place where he could see all the kingdoms of the world and I will confess to you there is one of those great theological arguments. Where is this? Is it Mount Sinai? Is it the Mount of Olives? It says he took him to where they could see all the kingdoms of the world and his glory.

You know, the book of Job chapter one says that the devil has the opportunity to go to and fro between the throne of God and here. I just believe that they had the possibility. They had the ability to somehow be transported in some supernatural way where they had an unbelievable shot of what we know as planet earth and the devil says, "All right, buddy, it is all yours. All you have got to do is bow down."

Why these three? Why are these the challenges that were offered? You know, it is interesting that you look in the book of Genesis chapter three when the con artist shows up and when he presents his case to humanity in verse six of Genesis three Eve makes this statement. She says it is pleasant for food. It is appealing to my eyes. And it will make me like the gods.

Interesting if you go to 1 John chapter two beginning in verse 15 it says:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is

not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.⁵

Interesting that in Genesis three and in 1 John two and here in Matthew chapter four you have got the same basic three challenges. That which appeals to the flesh, that which appeals to the eyes and that which appeals to our ability to have more, the pride of life, to be like the gods in Eve's case or to fall down and inherit the kingdoms of the world in Jesus'. Why these three specifically? Let's go to the third point and we will clarify that in a moment. We have got the characters. We have got the Christ. We have got con artist. We have got he crowd gathered. The challenge is a rock to bread, falling off or coming off the temple and inheriting the kingdoms of the world. What are the conclusions? What are the things that we can draw from this?

The first one is this and these build on one another. The definitiveness of Scripture. I want you to notice what Jesus says when tempted. Verse four.

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."⁶

Verse seven:

"Jesus said unto him, It is written..."⁷

Verse 10.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written..."⁸

If there was every anybody who had the ability or the capacity or even could gather up the gall to say, "You know, I have been thinking about it and from my perspective, this is what I think." And yet we live in a world today where whether it is our social standing or maybe it is our academic prowess or maybe our cultural perspective or whatever it may be, is we often times come to the Bible and say, "I know what it says, but..."

How many times have you ever heard that or how many times have you ever caught yourself saying that? I know what it says, but...

You realize that in the book of Acts chapter four verse 12 it says that if there is neither any other name by which we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. It says in Philippians chapter two at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. But in Psalms 138 verse two it says, "Your word is exalted above your name." Jesus Christ without sin, God in flesh comes to this experience and says, "Whatever is written is good enough for me."

⁵ 1 John 2:15.

⁶ Matthew 4:4.

⁷ Matthew 4:7.

⁸ Matthew 4:10.

And I am going to share with you what I think is the epitome of arrogance. If Jesus Christ conformed his life to Scripture, who are you to say I don't need to? If Jesus Christ said, "Hey, I may not like it, but it is written..." Don't you know he just wanted to squash him like a bug? Don't you know he just wanted to go thump? I should have done that a millennia ago. But he said, "No, it is written..."

And we live in a world, we live in a culture that we want to justify and we want to somehow beat around the bush and say, "Yeah, but if you look at it from this perspective and if you look at it here and you look at it there..." Jesus said, "No, no. It is written." He conformed himself. In fact, in the second temptation the devil tries his hand at quoting Scripture. By the way, he is pretty good. He says, "Don't you know it is written?" And he goes back to the psalms 91 verses 11 and 12. The only problem is he leaves out the last half of verse 12.

You know, sometimes when we try to go around the Scriptures sometimes we just conveniently kind of leave some out. It is written.

If the Bible was good enough for Jesus, then surely it ought to be good enough for us. So the first conclusion that we need to draw from this temptation, the madness of this coming of the King is if we live in a world that says, "It is madness to place the Bible over anything else. It is madness to put the communication of God over anything else." Listen. Jesus did it and so should we.

But here is the second conclusion, not just the definitiveness of Scripture, but the act of delayed gratification. Now here is where I want to have some fun and I wish for the sake of time I wish we had about another four hours, but we don't. But delayed gratification. I mentioned to you there is a reason that there are so many of these specific temptations. I have mentioned that there is a parallel to Genesis 3:6. There is a parallel to 1 John chapter two verses 15 through 17. But those of you who are note takers, just work with me here, because if we went and looked up all these verses we would be here through lunch and that wouldn't make any of you happy, particularly the second service.

So here is the first challenge. Turn these rocks into bread. Supernaturally feed. Is that not what the Lord did in Exodus when manna presented itself? Where is Jesus? The wilderness. Where were the Israelites? The wilderness. And in Revelation chapter 12 it speaks of a time in the future where the Israelites will be chased literally by a person who we know as the antichrist or the beast and it says that she goes into her wilderness. Do you notice the parallel again? Where she is nourished. She is fed for three and a half years.

I don't find it a coincidence at all that the only miracle mentioned in all four gospels is the feeding of the 5000, taking a few loaves and fish and multiplying so that the masses were fed.

You know, there is coming a time in Revelation 12 where the Lord himself will again essentially provide manna for his people supernaturally. The second temptation to come out of the sky in grand fashion, is that not what Revelation 19:11 is? What we know as the actual physical return of Jesus Christ?

Do you know when he comes out of the clouds in Revelation 19 it says there is a sword coming out of his mouth. It says his vesture is put up. It says it is called King of kings, Lord of lords and it says ultimately at that time what we know as the battle of Armageddon comes to a climax and he defeats all the enemies who have been against him for years and years.

Don't you think he would have loved to have done that? Don't you think he would have said, "You know what? It is time to get this over with"?

And then there is that third temptation, the kingdoms of the earth. The book of Revelation chapter 11 verse 15 It says:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."⁹

You know, I think one of the struggles in life that Jesus exemplifies for us is our struggle withy delayed gratification. We want what we want and we wanted it yesterday. If that weren't the case we wouldn't have so many fast food restaurants where three minutes is not fast enough. But how many times do we say, "Well, when you look at it, eventually I am going to get this or receive this or have that so I will just go ahead and do this." It happens with relationships. It happens with finances. I happens with our occupation. It happens in so many different areas. Here is the King of creation who just said three time, "It is written," knowing that it is written that one day he is going to come out of the sky and he is going to whip up on his enemies and he says, "Hey, how about this one?"

This leads to the final point. See, there is a that conclusion of the definitiveness of Scripture. There is this conclusion of delayed gratification. But this is what is most important to us, the destiny of humanity. We go all the way back to Genesis chapter three again, verse 15. Adam and Eve have fallen. They have covered themselves with big leaves. We will find out in just a few verses that is not going into be enough. In verse 15 the Lord makes this prophecy to the serpent. He says, "One day there is coming from the woman a seed who will crush your head."

If we were to do a journey through the Old Testament I am sure that Adam and Eve had high hopes of Cain, he would be that seed. I am sure they had high hopes for Abel. Neither one would be. I am sure they had high hopes for Seth. He would not be. I am sure that people had high hopes for the person of Noah, maybe because he is preserved through the ark. He will be the one who will crush the heads of the serpent that came and went. How about Abraham, that whole Ishmael thing. That messed that whole thing up.

⁹ Revelation 11:15.

how about Joseph? How about David? How about Hezekiah? How about all of these men who came and went?

I want you to understand something. Jesus Christ, God in flesh is, was and will always be the only chance we got. He is it. If Jesus Christ does not conform to it is written, if Jesus Christ does not come and live a sinless life, if Jesus Christ does not get nailed to a cross, if Jesus Christ does not die and raise from the dead, we are in a heap of trouble.

And yet here the devil says, “How about this one and how about this one and how about that one?” We know that he departed and we know that the Bible says the angels came and ministered unto him. And according to Luke 4:14 we know that he departed in the power of the Spirit. But what we also know is this. That upon exiting that wilderness experience he was headed to one place and one place only. Not to receive the crown, not to receive that glory, but to receive a cross, to receive an exchange, his righteousness for our unrighteousness. Because of his obedience to Scripture, because his willingness to delay gratification, your destiny can be a place the Bible calls heaven versus a place the Bible calls hell.