

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 4

by John Wesley

John Wesley's sermon explores Jesus' temptations in the wilderness, emphasizing reliance on Scripture and the importance of repentance in establishing God's Kingdom.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:16, Deuteronomy 8:3, Psalm 91:11-12, Isaiah 9:1-2, Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 4:23, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1, John 1:43

Topics: "Spiritual Preparation", "Temptation"

Description

John Wesley expounds on Matthew 4, illustrating how Jesus, after receiving divine affirmation, faced intense temptations. He emphasizes the importance of spiritual preparation, as seen in Jesus' fasting, which strengthened Him for the trials ahead. Wesley highlights Christ's responses to temptation, showcasing the power of Scripture in overcoming the devil's suggestions. The sermon also notes the significance of Jesus' ministry beginning in Galilee, where He preached repentance and the coming of the kingdom of heaven. Ultimately, Wesley encourages believers to rely on God's word and strength in their own spiritual battles.

Transcript

IV. 1. Then - After this glorious evidence of his Father's love, he was completely armed for the combat. Thus after the clearest light and the strongest consolation, let us expect the sharpest temptations. By the Spirit - Probably through a strong inward impulse. Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1.

Verse 2. Having fasted - Whereby doubtless he received more abundant spiritual strength from God. Forty days and forty nights - As did Moses, the giver of the law, and Elijah, the great restorer of it. He was afterward hungry - And so prepared for the first temptation.

Verse 3. Coming to him - In a visible form; probably in a human shape, as one that desired to inquire farther into the evidences of his being the Messiah.

Verse 4. It is written - Thus Christ answered, and thus we may answer all the suggestions of the devil. By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God - That is, by whatever God commands to sustain him. Therefore it is not needful I should work a miracle to procure bread, without any intimation of my Father's will. Deuteronomy 8:3.

Verse 5. The holy city - So Jerusalem was commonly called, being the place God had peculiarly chosen for himself. On the battlement of the temple - Probably over the king's gallery, which was of such a prodigious height, that no one could look down from the top of it without making himself giddy.

Verse 6. In their hands - That is, with great care. Psalms 91:11,12.

Verse 7. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God - By requiring farther evidence of what he hath already made sufficiently plain. Deuteronomy 6:16.

Verse 8. Showeth him all the kingdoms of the world - In a kind of visionary representation.

Verse 9. If thou wilt fall down and worship me - Here Satan clearly shows who he was. Accordingly Christ answering this suggestion, calls him by his own name, which he had not done before.

Verse 10. Get thee hence, Satan - Not, get thee behind me, that is, into thy proper place; as he said on a quite different occasion to Peter, speaking what was not expedient. Deuteronomy 6:13.

Verse 11. Angels came and waited upon him - Both to supply him with food, and to congratulate his victory.

Verse 12. He retired into Galilee - This journey was not immediately after his temptation. He first went from Judea into Galilee, John 1:43; . Then into Judea again, and celebrated the passover at Jerusalem, John 2:13. He baptized in Judea while John was baptizing at Enon, John 3:22,23. All this time John was at liberty, John 3:24. But the Pharisees being offended, John 4:1; and John put in prison, he then took this journey into Galilee. Mark 1:14.

Verse 13. Leaving Nazareth - Namely, when they had wholly rejected his word, and even attempted to kill him, Luke 4:29.

Verse 15. Galilee of the Gentiles - That part of Galilee which lay beyond Jordan was so called, because it was in a great measure inhabited by Gentiles, that is, heathens. Isaiah 9:1,2.

Verse 16. Here is a beautiful gradation, first, they walked, then they sat in darkness, and lastly, in the region of the shadow of death.

Verse 17. From that time Jesus began to preach - He had preached before, both to Jews and Samaritans, John 4:41,45. But from this time begin his solemn stated preaching. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand - Although it is the peculiar business of Christ to establish the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men, yet it is observable, he begins his preaching in the same words with John the Baptist: because the repentance which John taught still was, and ever will be, the necessary preparation for that inward kingdom. But that phrase is not only used with regard to individuals in whom it is to be established, but also with regard to the Christian Church, the whole body of believers. In the former sense it is opposed to repentance; in the latter the Mosaic dispensation.

Verse 18. Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1.

Verse 23. The Gospel of the kingdom - The Gospel, that is, the joyous message, is the proper name of our religion: as will be amply verified in all who earnestly and perseveringly embrace it.

Verse 24. Through all Syria - The whole province, of which the Jewish country was only a small part. And demoniacs - Men possessed with devils: and lunatics, and paralytics - Men ill of the palsy, whose cases were of all others most deplorable and most helpless.

Verse 25. Decapolis - A tract of land on the east side of the sea of Galilee, in which were ten cities near each other.

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