

(Matthew) ch.2:23-4:7

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance, a change of nature, and baptism in water and the Holy Spirit as the foundation for the new covenant gospel.

Duration: 54:38

Scripture: Matthew 3:1, Matthew 3:3, Acts 2:14

Topics: "Repentance", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of a deep and genuine conversion experience. He highlights the message of John the Baptist, who called for repentance and a change of heart. The preacher emphasizes that true men of God do not need to advertise themselves, as people will naturally be drawn to those anointed with God's spirit and word. He also encourages believers to live faithfully in the face of temptation, following the path of the cross and dying to self. The sermon references passages from the Gospel of Matthew, including John the Baptist's preaching in the wilderness and Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel chapter 2 and verse 23, the last verse of Matthew's Gospel where we read that Joseph and Mary came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled. He shall be called a Nazarene. We've been seeing in our last few studies some of the things that keep repeated often in the first two chapters of Matthew.

One of the things we've seen again and again is the necessity of not going by human reason, but by faith in the revealed Word of God. It's always safer to go by what God reveals rather than by our own reason. Our reason will lead us astray.

But if we obey God, we can never suffer in any eternal or spiritual sense anyway, though there will be earthly suffering. But notice this, the number of times that we find this repeated in Matthew 1 and 2. That the scripture might be fulfilled, Matthew 1, 22. That the scripture might be fulfilled, Matthew 2, verse 15.

That the scripture might be fulfilled, Matthew 2, verse 17. And that the scripture might be fulfilled, Matthew 2, verse 23. The New Testament begins with the fulfillment of Old Testament scriptures.

And it came through people obeying what God said, and therefore scripture being fulfilled. Joseph obeys God when God speaks to him, and scripture is fulfilled through his obedience. We see that scripture is also fulfilled through people who disobey God.

For example, Herod wanting to kill all the male children in Bethlehem. He wasn't certainly obeying God, he was disobeying God, he was a godless man. And yet we read that all that he did was only the fulfillment of scripture, Matthew 2, 17 and 18.

16 to 18. What do we see from this? That the sovereignty of God is so great, that scripture is fulfilled even through godless disobedient people, like Herod. They may think they are doing what they like in their anger, but they are only fulfilling scripture.

A great comfort for us, that whatever people do will only be for our good. And also, that the fact that Archelaus was reigning in Judea was one reason why Joseph didn't settle down in Judea, Matthew 2, 22. But that too was a fulfillment of God's word, because God warned him in a dream, don't stay here.

He moved off to the regions of Galilee, and he resided in Nazareth, and that was to fulfill God's word again. Again, a scripture which has a very unlikely fulfillment. For this scripture, quoted in Matthew 2, 23, he shall be called a Nazarene, is from Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1, where we read about a branch, a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

In the Hebrew word there is Netzar, from which you get the word Nazarene. It's a fulfillment of a word which is hidden in the Hebrew. Netzar is connected with Nazareth.

There's more to scripture than meets the eye. There's much more in it than our clever human minds can tell us. These are some of the things that we learn in the first two chapters of the gospel of Matthew.

And now we come to chapter 3, Matthew chapter 3, verse 1. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. This also is a fulfillment of scripture again.

The one referred to by Isaiah, the prophet, saying, verse 3, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make his path straight. Notice it says here that John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. It's very significant that true men of God do not have to advertise themselves.

Elijah and Elisha did not advertise themselves. John the Baptist didn't come in the streets of Jerusalem. He was out in Judea, in an uninhabited wilderness.

Think of having special meetings in an uninhabited wilderness when you've got the most important message from God to give to the people. We don't go by reason. John the Baptist, if he had gone by reason, he'd have gone to Jerusalem and begun his ministry there.

He went by the leading of God. There is a very significant verse in Luke's Gospel, chapter 3, which reads like this. Luke 3, verse 1 and 2. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, that was the great king of the whole world, the emperor, Tiberius Caesar.

Here are all the big shots in the secular world mentioned in verse 1. Tiberius Caesar, the greatest big shot in the world. Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea. Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee.

Philip, the tetrarch of Aeturia and Trachonitis. Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene. All the great kings of that time.

And here are the big shots in the religious world. Verse 2. The high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. And here is a wonderful word which says that the word of God bypassed all these secular big shots and bypassed all the religious big shots and came to an unknown, humanly unordained person called John, anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

Not in the temple. In the wilderness. Not in Jerusalem.

In the wilderness. Even today, the word of God bypasses the secular and religious big shots and comes to simple men, unordained by men, anointed by the Holy Spirit, out in some wilderness. God's word comes.

And John proclaimed the word of God there. And it's very wonderful to see in Matthew 3, verse 5, that the whole of Jerusalem went out to listen to him. And all Judea and all the district around the Jordan.

People flocked to him. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. And when God sends a man, God will create the audience.

We don't have to create an audience ourselves. We don't have to advertise ourselves and proclaim ourselves and show off and proclaim that we are great men of God. God will do that.

The ones who advertise themselves are the ones who are not men of God. A true man of God never advertises himself. That's what we learn from Matthew chapter 3, John the Baptist.

All who advertise themselves are not men of God. Repent, he said, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The true man of God always has a message of repentance.

The Old Testament prophets, everyone had it. John had it. Jesus had it.

The apostles preached it from the day of Pentecost onwards. And in the book of Revelation, we read in chapter 2 and 3, Jesus tells John to proclaim it to the seven churches. To five of the seven anyway.

Repent. Repentance is the main message of God's word. Turn from sin.

And that, alas, is the main message which is missing today in much of today's preaching. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Notice that.

He was speaking to the Jews who had spent all their life looking for an earthly kingdom. The Old Testament promised the Jews an earthly kingdom. David was the ruler of an earthly kingdom.

Israel was an earthly kingdom. And they expected earthly blessings. Their barns to overflow.

They would become wealthy. They would have many children. They would be physically healed.

Everything was full of earthly blessings. But now, a new kingdom was going to come. He says it doesn't come yet.

It's coming. It is coming. This is the new covenant.

Dear friends, let's learn this. That the new covenant is leading us not to an earthly kingdom. Not to physical prosperity and many children and physical healing like in the Old Testament.

But to spiritual prosperity and many spiritual children. And to a spiritual kingdom. To spiritual healing.

Salvation from sin. It's the kingdom of heaven. That's why the Bible says if you are risen with Christ set your mind on the things which are above.

Not on the things of earth. Mark calls it the kingdom of God. It's the kingdom of God as opposed to the kingdom of self.

Which Jesus brought. In the Old Testament they were thinking in terms of earthly blessing. Personal blessing.

Self being blessed. In the new covenant we think in terms of God's interest. And heaven's interest.

Not self's interest. And earthly things. This is what repentance means.

I have to turn around. Repentance means turning around from seeking earthly things to heavenly things. From seeking the kingdom of self to the kingdom of God.

Verse 4. John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt about his waist. And his food was locusts and wild honey. He was a man who dressed simply and lived simply.

Like a true man of God does. Not necessarily as an ascetic. Jesus was not an ascetic.

Jesus was not dressed in camel's hair. And eating locusts and wild honey. Jesus wore a seamless robe.

Expensive no doubt. And he ate meat and drank like other people. But his life and way of life was certainly simple.

There we see some characteristics about John. Simplicity of life. Not seeking honor from men.

Proclaiming the truth. Seeking to lead people to God. Even if it means being alone in the wilderness.

Some very good examples there. For us to follow who seek to proclaim God's word today. Let's turn now to Matthew's gospel chapter 3. We read here about John the Baptist.

Preaching in the wilderness of Judea. We read in verse 5 that all of Jerusalem was going out to him without any advertising program on his part. In fact they were taking the trouble to go all the way out into the wilderness.

Because there was a man with God's message. And wherever there is a man anointed with God's spirit. And having the word of God.

People will come out to listen to him. Even if he is warned against by all the scribes and the chief priests. The men who are hungry for God's word will still come.

Even if he is out in the wilderness. They came. And they were being baptized by him.

Verse 6. In the Jordan river. As they confessed their sins. He didn't give baptism.

Just because he had a lust. To count the number of people being baptized. Or to have some type of record.

Of baptizing people every day or every week. Or any foolish thing like that. No.

He wasn't keen on increasing his numbers. Always the mark of a true man of God. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism.

He said to them. You brood of vipers. Who warned you.

To flee from the wrath to come. If John was only interested in baptizing people. And having some glory in statistics.

He would not have bothered. To see whether they had repented or not. He would have just baptized them.

And said, well that's between them and God. No, he had a responsibility as a man of God. To show them their lack of repentance.

And he said, I don't see any fruits of repentance in your life. Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance. And don't suppose that you can say to yourselves.

We have Abraham for our father. For I say to you that God is able from these stones. To raise up children to Abraham.

He did not baptize people. Who did not manifest some fruit of repentance. They may have verbally said.

We have repented but that was not enough. A good warning for us today. Don't go by a verbal statement that someone has repented.

There must be evidence of it. There must be the fruit of repentance. If we are to baptize people.

And he also said, don't glory in your ancestry. Because God can raise up children for Abraham even from stones. From dead matter.

It's a tremendous tendency among religious people. To glory in their heritage. In the case of the Jews.

That we came from Abraham. In the case of Christians. That we are Christians.

We have got God's word. We go to certain such a church. It means nothing.

There must be the new birth. There must be a spiritual experience with God. Before a person can be a child of God.

And he said, the axe is already laid to the root of the trees. And every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Repentance is to allow Jesus to lay the axe to the root of the tree.

The root of the trees are self-centered, earth-seeking life. Which we have inherited from Adam. Every child of Adam is self-centered.

Every child of Adam seeks the things of earth. That is the root. From which come the varied, multifarious fruit of bitterness, jealousy, strife, sexual lust, anger, envy, an unforgiving spirit, love of money and so many other things.

It's not enough to get rid of the fruit. Jesus has come to lay the axe to the root. To repent is to say, Lord, I want to turn from my self-centered life.

I want to live for God. To repent is to say, Lord, I want to turn from seeking after earthly things to seek the things of the kingdom of heaven. And if a tree doesn't bear good fruit, it's cut down.

For a tree to bear good fruit, something has to happen at the root. The root must be good. The nature of the tree must be good.

It's not just a question of hanging good fruit on a bad tree. Not just giving up certain external bad habits and replacing them with good ones. The tree itself must be good.

There must be a change of nature. That's what John the Baptist was proclaiming. A new tree.

A good tree. Jesus spoke about that in Matthew chapter 7. He said about a good tree cannot produce bad fruit. Matthew 7.18 And a bad tree cannot produce good fruit.

There we must remember that good fruit can only come when there is a change of nature in the tree. For that, the axe has to be laid to the root of the bad tree. This is the message of the forerunner of Jesus Christ.

This is the new covenant gospel. Begins here. If it doesn't begin here, what we call conversion is a very shallow conversion.

And the last many Christians have experienced a very shallow conversion. Without the axe being laid to the root of the tree. That's what John the Baptist proclaimed to these religious big shots, the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him for baptism.

He didn't seek their honor. He didn't want to please them. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the big men of religious society in those days.

And John the Baptist could not care two hoots for them. He spoke the truth to people. He was willing to hurt and offend the religious big shots because he wanted to please God.

He was a man of God who lived before God's face and spoke the truth. Whether people liked it or didn't. And he spoke about the axe being laid to the root of the tree.

This is the type of preaching that the world needs to hear today. And notice he spoke about repentance. He spoke about this conversion.

With the axe being laid to the root of the bad tree and a good tree being formed there in place producing good fruit. And then after that he spoke in verse 11 about baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Verse 11 he says, I baptize you in water for repentance but he who is coming after me, that is Jesus Christ, is mightier than I and I am not even fit to remove his sandals.

Notice his humility. There was only one person he would submit to. That wouldn't be the Pharisees or the Sadducees or King Herod or Pilate or Tiberius Caesar or the high priest Annas or Caiaphas.

It would only be Jesus Christ to whom he submitted. He says, I am not even fit to remove his sandals. He says, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John the Baptist admitted. He says, there is something I cannot lead you into. I can lead you as far as water baptism.

But he will lead you to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Notice what the forerunner for the new covenant ministry of Jesus Christ proclaimed. This is the foundation for the new covenant gospel even today.

Repentance, a change of nature, a new tree being planted with the old tree pulled out from the roots. Baptism in water, essential for those who have repented and not for those who have not repented. Not for children but for adults who have repented.

And followed by the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 1.21 we saw the first promise in the New Testament. He shall save his people from their sins.

In Matthew 3.11 we read the second promise in the New Testament. Put these promises together. These are the first two promises in the New Testament.

Jesus will save his people from their sins. Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Fire being a symbol of the Holy Spirit that burns up something inwardly.

And what the Holy Spirit seeks to burn up is the flesh. Not in a day but over a lifetime, progressively. That fire burns the lust of the flesh.

For the Spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit. And if He allowed the Spirit to have His way, it would be like a fire eating up the lust of our flesh and replacing it with the purity of divine nature. And when we put these two verses, the first two promises in the New Testament together, we see clearly what the New Testament teaches as to what God wants to do in our life.

He wants to save us from our sins. He wants to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire so that we can partake of His nature instead of that sinful nature that we inherited from Adam. And John goes on to say in verse 12 that the winnowing fork is in Jesus' hand and He will thoroughly clean His threshing floor.

He is going to do a thorough job of cleaning out all the chaff. He will gather all His wheat into the barn and He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. A picture of the lust of the flesh being burnt up with unquenchable fire, this very fire He spoke of in verse 11, tells us in verse 12 what that fire will do, it's burning up the chaff.

And one day it will be the burning up of those who have not repented, who are also called chaff. But until that day we can experience that burning up in our own bodies with the lust of the flesh being burnt up as Jesus does a thorough work of cleaning up His threshing floor. Our bodies are the threshing floor.

And it says here He will thoroughly clean His threshing floor. He will thoroughly cleanse His body of sin if I allow Him to do it. And this is what we need to take seriously.

Dear friends, the foundation for the new covenant gospel is what we see here in the ministry of John the Baptist who is called the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Repentance, He acts late to the root of the trees, turning us away from self and earth to heaven and God. A new nature, a new tree producing good fruit.

Baptism in water, baptism in the Holy Spirit and thereafter allowing Jesus to thoroughly cleanse the threshing floor of our body so that He can cleanse out the chaff and replace it with the divine nature. Let's turn now to Matthew's gospel chapter 3 and verse 13. We were considering the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ in our last study.

We now see Jesus arriving from Galilee of the Jordan, coming to John to be baptized by Him. But we read here that John tried to prevent Him saying, I have need to be baptized by you and do you come to me? But Jesus answering said to him, Permit it at this time for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he permitted Him.

There are many lessons that we can learn from the baptism of Jesus Christ. We know from the earlier part of Matthew 3 that John the Baptist was baptizing people who had repented of their sins and baptism was a public acknowledgment by them, not only that they were sinners but also that they had repented. But it was certainly a confession of the fact that they had lived in sin and that they were now turning.

And for Jesus to stand in the same queue with others to be baptized reason would say would be out of place for Jesus had never sinned in all those 30 years that He had lived on earth. Never sinned in thought, word, deed, attitude, motive, in no area. His life was sinless.

And reason would have suggested to Jesus, First of all, there is no need for you to be baptized. Second, if you go and stand in that queue with sinners, people will misunderstand. They will think you also have some secret sin.

But Jesus did not go by the voice of reason. He went by the witness of the spirit in His heart. And the spirit told Him that the Father's will was that He should identify Himself with sinners and be baptized even though He had not sinned.

So many people live by reason when it comes to water baptism. They don't follow the simple teaching of God's word. And certainly in this area, like in many other things that we have seen in Matthew chapter 1, 2 and 3, reason is a very dangerous guide.

We are to go by what God's word teaches. In baptism, the immersion of a body completely in water is symbolic of burial, we read in Romans chapter 6. And for Jesus, it was a public testimony, not of the fact that He had repented from sin, but rather of this fact that throughout His earthly life, He had buried His own will, never done His own will. He had died to Himself, His choices, His opinions and His own will and done only the will of the Father.

And that was what He was testifying to, that His coming up out of the waters was a testimony that He was living for the Father before the Father's face. And He said this was to fulfill all righteousness. And notice, John tried to prevent Him, but Jesus said no, He insisted.

He was not going to be turned away from baptism even by the advice of a man of God like John. He had heard God and He was even willing to disregard John because He saw that John didn't probably have light on it, that Jesus needed to be baptized. But Jesus had heard His Father and He decided to obey His Father.

A good example for us to follow. Not to go by our own reason and not even to go by the advice of certain men whom we may respect who may not have light on this subject. Jesus said thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

And notice the way that the Father endorsed this baptism of Jesus. It says immediately after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water. And there is something mentioned in Luke's Gospel chapter 3 as to what Jesus was doing at the time of His baptism.

We read in Luke chapter 3 verse 21 that when Jesus was baptized, He was praying. He prayed. What was He praying for? We know that Jesus' prayers were always answered immediately, instantaneously.

And we read the very next thing that happened was that the Holy Spirit came upon Him. He who was going to baptize other people in the Holy Spirit needed to be anointed with the Holy Spirit Himself by His Father first. And what was He praying for then? No doubt He was praying that He might be anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to His disciples, How much more shall your Heavenly Father, Luke 11 verse 13, give the Holy Spirit, not to anyone and everyone, but to those who ask Him? There is a need for prayer to receive the anointing or the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself sets an example for us. He prayed and He received that anointing.

And He came up out of the water and we read three things that happened. The heavens were opened. And He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove.

And a voice from heaven said, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Three things that were to characterize all the rest of His life, every moment of the rest of His earthly life. The heavens would be continually open over Him.

He could have constant access to His Father at any time. The Spirit of God resting upon Him. And the voice of approval from the Father.

Never mind what men think about you. I am well pleased with you. Dear friends, there are three things that should characterize all of our earthly life.

These three things. The heavens must be open over us. The Spirit of God must be upon us.

And the voice of approval from heaven must always be there over our lives. If we have these three, that we have open access to heaven any time in prayer. The Spirit of God all the time upon us, anointing us.

And the voice of approval. God Himself saying, I am well pleased with you. The voice of assurance.

You are My son. My daughter. Then we are all right.

It is not enough that earth's doors are open to us. That we have an earthly degree or the approval of men. This is what Jesus had and this is what we need.

And we can ask ourselves, what was it that made the Father so well pleased with Jesus? Jesus hadn't healed any sick person so far. He hadn't raised the dead yet. He hadn't even preached a sermon as far as we know.

What had He done then for 30 years that had made the Father so happy with Him? Very often we think that the thing that makes the Father happy with us is the fact that we serve the Lord so much. Or we sacrifice so much. We give so much up.

And we go here and there doing service for the Lord. The fact is, as far as we know, Jesus hardly moved out of the town of Nazareth during His life. What did He do? He was a carpenter.

He made stools and benches for most of the 30 years of His life. He grew up at home. He hadn't done any great earth-shaking thing.

And yet the Father was pleased with Him. In contrast, we read of another group of people in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. The Israelites who came out of Egypt and lived for 40 years in the wilderness.

It says about them in 1 Corinthians 10.5 that God was not well pleased with them. See the contrast? God was not well pleased. And 1 Matthew 3.17, God was well pleased.

What is it that makes the difference? For 40 years in the wilderness people saw miracles. Yet God was not happy with them. For 30 years Jesus never did or saw a miracle.

But God was well pleased with Him. What was it that Jesus did for 30 years? One verse of Scripture tells us. Hebrews 4.15. He was tempted in all points as we are.

And yet He did not sin. For 30 years He had been tempted through the lust in the flesh. And He did not sin.

He faithfully fought against temptation. And He overcame. This is what pleased the Father.

It's not doing miracles or seeing miracles or serving Him or sacrifice. But overcoming sin in our private life. This is what will finally open the heavens over us.

This is what the baptism testified for Jesus. And this is what baptism in the new covenant should testify as far as we are concerned. For Romans chapter 6 where baptism is explained is the very same chapter where we read about being free from sin.

It's a testimony that I have finished with sin. For Jesus it was a testimony that He never did His own will. He never sinned.

His rising up from the waters is a testimony that He lived to please God alone. Dear friends, this is how we are called to live today as well. Being faithful in the moment of temptation when no one sees us.

Buried to our own choices. And alive only to the Father and His will in our life. Then we too can experience.

The heavens open over us all the time. The Spirit of God descending upon us that we can have power if we go this way. The way of the cross of death to self.

And the voice of approval from heaven. The day we leave this path and go some other way. We cannot have the power of God or the approval of God or open heavens over our lives anymore.

May God help us to follow Jesus in this way all our lives. Matthew's gospel chapter 4. Verse 1. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. In our last study we were considering how when Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan.

The Spirit of God came upon Him. The voice of approval from heaven. Came saying this is my beloved son and the heavens were opened over Him.

And it's very significant to see that immediately after God has done that. The very next thing we read is the devil coming to tempt Jesus Christ. We see something similar in Genesis chapter 2 and chapter 3. Immediately after God created man and woman and united them as husband and wife.

The very next thing we read in Genesis 3 is that the devil comes to tempt them. And there man failed. Now here was the second man.

Jesus Christ. Also coming with the approval of God. The anointing of the Spirit.

This time being tempted by the devil. Not in the garden where circumstances were so good. The situation was so pleasant like it was for Adam.

But out in the wilderness. And after he had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. And we read in Luke's gospel chapter 4 in the parallel passage for this.

That Jesus was tempted throughout those 40 days. Luke 4 verse 2 says. He was tempted by the devil for 40 days.

And so what we read of here in Matthew 4 verse 2 onwards is. The concluding part of that temptation. The three final temptations in the wilderness.

No doubt the devil came back again. Because it says here that the devil left him. And Luke 4 it says he left him for a season.

He came back again. And so we see that God permits temptation. We read in James 1 that God himself doesn't tempt anyone.

But yet we know that he permits temptation. And there must be a very good purpose. Because if in God's perfect plan for Jesus Christ.

Temptation was also necessary. We can be sure that it has a very good purpose. We know from Hebrews in chapter 4 and verse 15.

That Jesus Christ can sympathize with our weaknesses. Because he was tempted in every point exactly as we are. And so we know that the temptations of Jesus.

Are similar to the way we are tempted. No doubt what we read here was temptation at a far higher level. But he had been tempted for 30 years already.

And it was his faithfulness and temptation in those 30 years. That brought the approval of the father upon him. As we read in Matthew 3.17. And now the temptations continue.

For there are higher degrees of temptation. As we are more faithful in the lower degrees. And here the devil comes to Jesus and tempts him.

After he has fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. And he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him.

If you are the son of God. Command that these stones become bread. When God has said something.

The very first thing that the devil tempts us with. Is to doubt what God has said. God had just said in Matthew 3.17. This is my beloved son.

And the devil comes with his if. If you are really the beloved son of God. And we can see that this is how the devil will come to us too.

For when we have the assurance of our salvation. And the spirit of God is born witness with our spirit. That we are the children of God.

And we know on the basis of God's word. That we are God's children. We can be sure that Satan will come and say.

Are you really a child of God? And it's interesting to note that the tempter came even to Jesus. And said if you are the son of God. Command that these stones become bread.

And here was a temptation. We can say a twofold temptation. First of all to give much importance and value to material things.

And to one's physical need. To the needs of one's body. And the other was a temptation to use one's power.

God given power to meet one's personal needs. Here he had just been anointed with the spirit. As we saw in Matthew 3.16. Which brought to him the power of the spirit of God.

And the devil was saying. Why don't you use that power for yourself? Use it. And that's a temptation that comes to us too.

That when God has given us power. To use that power for personal gain. And many Christians have fallen a prey to that.

There are people who use the God given gift of preaching or healing. To make money for themselves. Or to get honor for themselves.

It's basically the same temptation. Use the power of the spirit which God has given you. To get something for yourself.

And it's very interesting to see here. That Jesus did not use that power. A principle that we need to bear in mind.

That when God gives us the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not for our personal gain or honor or benefit. It is to be used for the glory of God.

We know on another occasion. That Jesus used his supernatural power. That he received through the Holy Spirit.

To turn five loaves of bread. Into sufficient bread. To feed five thousand men.

Plus a large number of women and children. He would use that power for others. But he did not use it for himself.

This is such an important principle. Because many who have neglected this principle. And who have used the power that has come through the anointing.

For personal gain. Have ended up as backsliders. God may not always withdraw the gift he once gives.

But certainly grace departs from a life. That misuses God's power for himself. If there is anything God has given us.

We are not to use it for ourselves. And that is something that Jesus recognized. It may not be a gift of preaching or healing.

It may be some material gift. Whatever God gives is to be used for God's glory. If God gives us money.

It is not meant to be used for ourselves. It is meant to be used for the glory of God. We see here also that another part of this temptation is.

As we were considering. Just now. If you are the son of God.

Command that these stones become bread. He was tempted. To consider whether he was really the son of God.

And to act as the son of God. But Jesus refused to act as the son of God. He says it is written man.

Not the son of God. Notice he takes his position as a man. He had come to earth.

Emptying himself. Of his privileges and prerogatives as God. As we read in Philippians 2.5. And now he takes his position not as a son of God.

But as a man. And says man shall not live on bread alone. But on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Here was the second aspect of this temptation. What shall man live by? By his spiritual requirement first. Or his physical material requirements first.

And that is another temptation that comes to us all the time. To put the material and the physical above the spiritual. And Jesus turned down that temptation.

He said the spiritual is first. The need of the spirit is more important than the need of the body. This is where Esau fell.

He had been given a birthright which was essentially a spiritual blessing. Because through the seed of the one who had the birthright would come the Messiah. But he despised that.

Because he wanted that potage which Jacob had cooked. He wanted to meet the needs of his body. He placed the material and the physical above the spiritual.

The same thing we see in the matter of Adam and Eve. They were tempted in the garden. There was God's word calling them to a spiritual life.

And there was the fruit which was attractive to their eyes and to the needs of their body. And in the same point here Jesus is also tempted in the matter of food. The Bible speaks in Philippians 3 about those whose God is their belly.

Who value material things above spiritual things. Jesus also was tempted and he said no. Man shall not live by bread alone.

No doubt man needs bread to live. Jesus was not unrealistic. He didn't say that man doesn't need bread to live.

But he says man shall not live on bread alone. But on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. In other words the first requirement man has is to listen to what God has to say.

Have you realized this? That the most important thing in your life is to hear what God has to say. Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And this is why it is so important for us day by day.

If we pray give us this day our daily bread. We must also remember that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. We also need to pray that every day we will also receive that daily word that proceeds from God's mouth.

And here is where we can fail if we think our material and physical necessities are greater than the spiritual. Do you realize the importance of listening to every word that God speaks every day? This is man's most important requirement. And if we keep our sense of values right, only then will we be able to overcome the temptation that comes to us through Satan from every side in these days.

To be materialistic and to place the physical above the spiritual. Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel chapter 4 and verse 6. We were considering in our last study the first temptation with which Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Here we read of the second temptation.

This time we read in verse 5, the devil took him into the holy city and he stood him on the pinnacle of the temple. The first temptation was in the wilderness. We can say the wilderness refers to the difficult dry areas of life.

Times when we are depressed and discouraged could be considered as the wilderness. And the devil tempts us there. The holy city could be considered the religious areas of our life.

And the devil tempts us there too. The devil took Jesus to the holy city and he stood him on the pinnacle of the temple. It's very interesting to see how there is no area where the devil doesn't tempt us.

And as we were considering in our last study, Jesus has been tempted in every point exactly as we are. This is why he can sympathize with us because he has felt the pull of temptation exactly like we feel it. The word of God says in James chapter 1 that every man is tempted when he is enticed, carried away and enticed by his own lust.

We need to distinguish between temptation and sin. And James 1.13-15 is very important in this connection. No one can say when he is tempted, James 1.13, that he is being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself does not tempt anyone. When Jesus was equal with the Father in heaven, he could not be tempted by evil. James 1.13 is very clear on that.

God cannot be tempted by evil. How then was Jesus tempted when he was on earth? Because of Philippians 2.5 that he had emptied himself of those privileges and prerogatives that he had as God equal with the Father. He did not consider equality with the Father as something to be held on to, but emptied himself, gave up that equality so that he could be tempted now.

And that's how he was tempted. And we considered in Hebrews 4.15 that he has been tempted in every point exactly as we are, yet without sin. How are we tempted? James 1.14 says, We are tempted when we are enticed by our own lust.

And because Jesus came in our flesh, he was tempted by the same lusts that we have in our flesh too. Otherwise he could not have been tempted like us. And when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin.

This is what never happened in the life of Jesus. Lust was never permitted to conceive in his life, either in thought, word, deed, attitude or motive. In no area.

And so he never sinned. When we are tempted, if our mind agrees with that temptation, the lust is permitted to conceive, and then sin is born, and sin when it is accomplished brings forth death. We can then ask ourselves, how is it that it says in Matthew 4 that the devil tempted Jesus? It's the devil who tempts us too, but through the lusts in our flesh.

In other words, he creates a circumstance outside which he knows that the lusts in our flesh will respond to or be attracted towards. Just like in the Garden of Eden, there was something outside that drew Adam and Eve. Here, the devil offered Jesus a temptation on the outside, to which Satan knew that Jesus would find in his flesh an attraction towards.

Otherwise there would be no temptation. There cannot be a temptation where there is no attraction towards something. Just like in Genesis 3, if the forbidden tree was ugly and smelly and repulsive, there wouldn't have been any temptation.

It's because it was so attractive that there was a temptation. And so we see here, again, the question that Satan comes with. If you are the Son of God, a second time, he didn't succeed the first time.

Again, the doubt he tries to put into his mind. Are you really the Son of God? If you have that supernatural power which you have received through the anointing, why don't you do this? Satan realized that Jesus quotes God's word the first time, so Satan also quotes God's word to Jesus. It's very significant that we notice this.

That if the devil could quote a scripture to Jesus Christ to try and lead him astray, we can be sure that the devil will try to quote scripture to us to try and lead us astray. He says, it is written. Since Jesus has said it is written, the devil says it is written.

He will give his angels charge concerning you. He is quoting from Psalm 91, verse 11 and 12. And on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

What was the temptation? The temptation was, we can say, one, to move without God's leading and then to expect God to supernaturally protect us. That is something that we also are often tempted by. A person wants to do something badly and so he goes ahead and does it and then says, Oh God, please protect me.

Well, the angels have been ordered to protect us if we move in God's ways. The quotation in Psalm 91 begins with verse 1 where it says, about the man who is hidden in the secret place of the Most High, who will abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The one who is moving in God's will.

For such a person, it says, he will give his angels charge concerning you to guard you in all your ways. That part, in all your ways, was left out by Satan. Satan usually conveniently leaves out sections of Scripture when he quotes Scripture to us.

And one could think of many heresies that have come through a partial use of a verse of Scripture. The angels have been given charge to keep us in all our ways when our ways are in God's will. But if we move on our own, we are tempting God if we ask Him to protect us.

Many a person has stepped out without seeking the will of God, without seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and then expected that God would protect him. But God doesn't do that. If Jesus had stepped off the temple, He would have crashed to His death beneath.

The second temptation here is to do something spectacular in the name of the Lord, to get some honor for oneself. The temptation here is that if He had jumped off the top of the pinnacle and ascended unhurt down to the courtyard below, the people there would see the spectacular display of spiritual power and accept Jesus as the Messiah. And that was underlying the temptation here.

That's another thing that comes to us very often from Satan. Do something spectacular to prove that you are a man of God. How often that temptation comes.

Why don't you command this dead body to rise up when you're attending a funeral? Or to do something equally spectacular. And there may be no leading of God there. We can't just do anything without the leading of God.

And Jesus realized this. To act without God's leading and to do something spectacular for personal honor are temptations that we need to beware of constantly. And Jesus was on His guard.

He knew that the angels had not been given charge to help and protect a person who was acting in presumption, doing whatever he felt like, but only for those who are moving in God's will. If we move in the will of God, we can be absolutely sure that God's angels protect us. Protects us from accidents on the road and from many, many other things we'll discover in eternity.

How many things and how many dangers and accidents God's angels have protected us from. But not the man who moves in presumption. People have moved in presumption and made fools of themselves and some have even killed themselves in this way.

But the Holy Spirit is very faithful to warn us. And the Holy Spirit gave Jesus that appropriate scripture that would counter what Satan had said. Very often we must remember that when there is one scripture quoted, there is another scripture that balances it out.

When Satan said, it is written, Jesus said, on the other hand, it is also written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. And this is why it's important for us to know the scriptures completely and thoroughly if we are to be balanced. Satan can say it is written and if you act on that, not only can you go astray, you can go into heresy.

It is also written is the thing that balances it out. One could think of many verses in scripture like this on which people have gone astray because they have not balanced it out with other verses of scripture. Consider a very well-known verse, 1 John 1.7, which many people quote as, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, it is written.

No, that's not what's written there. What's written there is, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. It's a promise only for those who walk in the light.

All things work together for good, not for everyone. Romans 8.28 says, for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose. And one could think of many, many verses like this.

We are to be very careful that we don't get deceived by Satan when he tries to lead us astray by quoting one verse of scripture. Be on your guard, and if you are sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and we have taken time to meditate on God's word, you'll find that in that moment of need, the Holy Spirit brings to your mind that word of scripture, the one with which the devil is seeking to lead you astray.

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