

# *Truth for Today*

## **The Bible Explained**

---

For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

**Broadcast:** 10/11 September 2022

**No.:** T1267

**Speaker:** D Pulman

---

## **Matthew's Gospel chapter 4 Temptations**

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

### **Introduction**

Welcome to our Truth for Today talk on Matthew's Gospel chapter 4. This chapter can be easily divided into two sections. First, we have the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness and second the commencement of His public ministry. Scriptures quoted will be from the English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

### **The Temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4: vv.1 -11).**

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

There was a purpose with the Spirit of God in bringing Jesus into the wilderness. The wilderness was a hostile environment, with nothing to sustain a person, and Jesus was a man in every way. Also, He was exposed to the devil who was going to test this blessed person to try to make Him fail. As we go down the verses, we find it had the very opposite result as Hebrews 4:15 reminds us.

“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.”

Scripture reminds us that Jesus is both God and Man in one person. The manhood of Jesus was totally real, but He was sinless in every way. Forty days and nights is a long time to be without

food, so it is not surprising that at the end the devil comes to Him with the temptation to change stones into bread. Jesus was hungry and the devil makes the challenge, "If you are the Son of God." Now we are sure that Jesus could make bread from stones, but Jesus had no need to rise to the challenge as to who He was simply to satisfy Himself with food. He does not need to justify Himself to the devil, Jesus turns to the Scriptures and said,

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8: v.3).

There is more to life than food and drink. It is God's word that gives life in all its fulness. Neither does the Lord Jesus need to follow the dictates of the devil.

In John 4 verses 31-32 we find that the Lord Jesus was sustained in doing the work of His Father. He had been in conversation with the woman from the city of Samaria, and while the disciples had gone to purchase food, the Lord had remained sitting on the well. During this time the Lord had a long conversation with a woman from the city. As a result, the woman was blessed and others from the city also because of her testimony. So, by the time the disciples returned the Lord was less interested in natural food having been occupied with doing the will of His Father.

"Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about.""

In the second temptation, the devil changes tactics next and takes Jesus to a pinnacle of the temple and again challenges Him as to whether He is the Son of God to throw himself down. This would surely be a very dramatic way to appear in the temple court whilst being rescued by angels. The devil had selectively quoted from Psalm 91:11-12. But once again Jesus responds with Scripture,

"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deuteronomy 6: v.16).

This verse refers to Exodus 17:1-7, where Israel complained about the lack of water and raised a challenge as to whether the LORD was among them? The book of Exodus records the journeys of the nation of Israel including all their complaints, but the LORD was true to His promise to lead them into the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That being said: when the spies, 10 out of 12, brought a discouraging report after spying out the land and caused in the people a desire to return to Egypt, then a whole generation felt the judgment of the LORD in that they all died in the wilderness during their 40 years of wandering.

The third temptation from the devil involved taking Jesus to a very high mountain to show Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. The devil would give all these to Jesus if He would bow down and worship him. There are two other names associated with the devil, Satan and Day Star. In Isaiah, Lucifer is referred to as a heavenly creature, and probably at one time the highest-ranking angel ever created. His name means, 'light bearer' or 'day star.' However, from Isaiah 14: vv.12-14 we learn, Lucifer decided that he was not content to serve but wanted to be like God. As a result, he lost his place of prominence in the courts of heaven and became an adversary of God and took the character of Satan and the devil, meaning adversary and deceiver respectively. Although the devil would give the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, because of his influence over mankind for evil as he controls their daily activities, he does not have the ultimate control, that solely belongs to God. In this third temptation what the devil really wanted was worship to put himself on the same level as God. Again, Jesus replies with Scripture and banishes Satan, stating clearly from Deuteronomy 6: v.13,

'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'

Jesus made reference to Deuteronomy 6: v.13, where the word is fear and not worship. Fear has the meaning of reverence or standing in awe of the Lord your God, an alternative expression to worship.

With this third temptation Satan is banished from the Lord. No more temptations allowed. Although only three temptations are documented for us to consider it is clear from the three synoptic Gospel accounts, especially Mark and Luke, that there were more temptations throughout the forty days and nights.

### **What do we learn?**

The most obvious lesson is the reliance upon the Word of God. If Jesus as the incarnate Man relied upon Scripture, then it is also important that we, as believers, also rely solely upon the Scripture. As we face the challenges that this world throws at us daily, so also we will learn the right course of action from God's word. In verse 11 we learn something else about this blessed person, once Satan was banished, angels came and ministered unto Him. He the sinless One valued their ministration after such a testing time. It is Hebrews 1: v.14 which gives an extra dimension to the work of angels today,

“Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”

We might not see them, nevertheless angels are active and an unseen support to believers today.

### **The public ministry of Jesus (Matthew 4: vv.12-17).**

“Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.””

Matthew quickly passes over the work of John the Baptist after the Lord's baptism in Jordan mentioning only that John had been arrested. Jesus commences his public ministry in the land of Galilee, and at the same time moves from his home town of Nazareth, where the Lord Jesus had spent most of his life, to Capernaum. The Lord Jesus in so doing fulfils (Isaiah 9: vv.1-2.)

“But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”

Also, the Lord Jesus came and spoke of Himself as the light of the world (John 8: v.12).

“Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.””

So, the Lord's message to the people who were in spiritual darkness was to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand or present among the people in the person of Jesus, the long-

promised Messiah. Therefore, by faith the blessings that come through repentance were available to the people in darkness.

### **What do we learn?**

Just as when the Lord Jesus was here, the people of the world are in darkness; spiritual darkness without Jesus, and it is not confined to that tiny area of land known as Galilee. The solution is the same today, repent and believe the Gospel message, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord commenced in the land where He lived. We might not all be preachers of the Gospel, but we could be those who post Gospel literature through letter boxes. Maybe in this technology driven age the Gospel messages could be spread on social media platforms and be the way forward for reaching a wider audience quickly.

### **Calling of disciples, Peter and Andrew (Matthew 4: vv.18-20).**

“While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

In the Gospel of John, chapter 1, we have additional information regarding the disciples coming to the Lord Jesus. In this chapter John the Baptist had not yet been arrested and put in prison but was still preaching. When Jesus was baptised to identify Himself with those who believed John’s message of repentance, which called out a people to live a different kind of life, two of John’s disciples heard him speaking of Jesus, and as a result they left John and followed Jesus. Having listened to Jesus for a good portion of the day, Andrew went and found his brother Peter, and brought him to Jesus. Jesus then seeks out Philip and Philip eventually seeks out Nathaniel. So, we have five who are now associated with the Lord Jesus. These contacts may well have proceeded the temptations as found in the other three Gospels.

This may well account for the fact that both Peter and Andrew responded immediately to His call to follow Him in Matthew 4. Having had a previous encounter and knowing something of the Lord’s teaching, they were willing to leave the family fishing business. Additionally, the Lord replaces their normal occupation with a new and better occupation, that of being fishers of men. They were to become soul savers.

### **Calling of disciples, James and John (Matthew 4: vv.21-22).**

“And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

It is possible that one of these two brothers had been with Andrew who left John the Baptist and followed Jesus having heard John speak of Jesus as the “Lamb of God.” Now the Lord Jesus seeks out both brothers and calls them to follow Him. As with Peter and Andrew, they too leave the family fishing business and immediately follow the Lord Jesus.

### **What do we learn?**

We do not have the Lord Jesus here in this world nowadays as He was when He called His disciples to Himself. But it is evident that some Christians become convinced in their souls that the Lord would have them follow a particular line of service which may involve them leaving their secular employment. This could be a complete break to become preachers of the Gospel or teachers of Scripture. It may not be to distant lands but in the country where they live. Alternatively, the calling may be part-time, with them still maintaining secular employment but

active for the Lord as time allows. The calling can take many different forms, youth work, summer camp work, etc.

The challenge would be, are we listening for the Lord to call us to some specific service. For the majority the calling is to serve in our home country. The need is just as great if not greater at home rather than abroad when we consider the state of our own nation.

### **The Lord Jesus as preacher and healer (Matthew 4: vv.23-25).**

“And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So, his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.”

From an earlier verse we know that the Lord Jesus had made His home in Capernaum having moved out of Nazareth. It is from here the Lord travels all around Galilee teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. Additionally, the Lord did acts of healing on every disease, and affliction among the people. Now when something wonderful like this happened, news spread throughout all Syria, the country north of Galilee. So, out of that land people came bringing family, friends, and neighbours, to the Lord Jesus, all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains and the Lord healed them all. [They did not need to book a doctor's appointment and go on a NHS waiting list. Our health service is always under pressure, and this has been exacerbated with the current COVID pandemic. Additional to the normal health problems there were the specific serious conditions of people; oppressed by demons, epileptics and paralytics. Again, these were dealt with immediately. No wonder great crowds came out of the surrounding countries. Not all came with ailments, others came to hear what the Lord Jesus was preaching. His words captivated His hearers, so much so that sometimes they stayed a few days listening to the Lord speaking as we find in chapter 14 when 5000 men plus women and children were fed using only 5 loaves and 2 fishes.](#)

### **What do we learn?**

We do not have the Lord Jesus down here in this world speaking and healing, but we do have the Scriptures. The Scriptures contain all we need to know for daily living as believers, how to function in our local fellowships and Christian service to reach out with the message of salvation to a world that desperately needs the blessing of sins forgiven. As the Holy Scriptures are God inspired, we are listening, as we read, to what the Lord Jesus wants us to hear.

[Regarding the acts of healing that we read about, mainly in the Gospels, these do not happen in that way anymore.](#) Healing is the exception rather than the rule, nowadays it is more like Paul who had an affliction but was told distinctly that God's grace was sufficient to enable him to bear with the infirmity. In the same way we do not have the ability to take 5 loaves and 2 fishes and feed 5000 plus people.

### **To conclude**

As we have considered this chapter, we have discovered an important truth - that the Scriptures are important for our daily living. When I was younger and active in Sunday School work one chorus was often sung to remind the children about the Scriptures, “Read your Bible pray every day.” A simple chorus but with an important message. The reading helps us to be prepared for

whatever the world and Satan would throw at us. Praying shows, amongst other things, that we are dependent upon our loving Father to help us meet the challenges of each day.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians chapter 6: vv.10-18 we have these wonderful words of encouragement.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”

Paul uses the description of the armour of a soldier to graphically display the truth that was necessary for believers to be well protected in a hostile world opposed to God and His people. It is at the end of this description that Paul mentions the word of God and likens it to a sword – the sword of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God in the believer that guides the use of the word of God. So, we see how essential it is to read the Scriptures daily so that they become embedded in our hearts and minds. In this way the Scriptures are ready for use. Lastly, praying at all times in the Spirit. Again, it is the Spirit of God who directs our thoughts to know what to pray about.

As believers we have been called to follow and serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus called the disciples of old so we have been called to be active for the Saviour. There are plenty of fields of service, gospel work, teaching the truth of the word of God, weekly youth work, summer camps, visiting fellow Christians, especially those who are unwell or elderly – the list is almost endless. Prayer warriors and generally helping where we can, is something we can do for believers and our unbelieving neighbours. The Scriptures remind us in (Galatians 6: vv.10),

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Jesus showed this kind of compassion to all who came to Him. He did not limit Himself to the people of Judea and Galilee, as we have noticed at the end of Matthew chapter 4.

May the Lord Jesus bless you in your service that you undertake for the Lord’s glory and that you be preserved day by day from the attacks of Satan.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on The Gospel of Matthew, and chapter 4, talk number T1267.

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.