

## The Gospel According To

# **Matthew**

## **Lesson #4 – Ch.4**

### **The Most Important Spiritual Battle of all Time (Jesus is tested) – Matthew 4:1-11** **Jesus Begins His Ministry – Matthew 4:12-22-25**

We concluded last week's lesson with the baptism of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus with power and authority, and now it was time to step into the ministry His Father had sent Him here to do by the empowered anointing of the Holy Spirit. He had been fully commissioned to begin His task.

The last voice Jesus heard was that of the Father saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* His ministry was about to begin, but He would first have to endure a confrontation with the devil like He had never experienced before, at least as God in human form. He was God, but clothed in human flesh. This flesh would need to be tested and proven to be infallible and perfect: God-like.

The last thing Jesus heard from His Father was a statement of grand approval. What a wonderful phrase to be left echoing in the mind of Christ: "I am pleased with You, My beloved Son." These fatherly words must have lingered in His ears as He was driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to face off with His adversary from the ages, Satan, in one of the most important spiritual battles we will ever see in history!

There was no human being there to observe the battle; there was only Jesus, almighty God in the flesh, ruler of heaven and earth, and Satan, the wicked one, seething with envy and jealousy over Jesus' position and power. This was Satan's opportunity to defeat the only begotten Son. If he could defeat Him here, there would be no redemption through the Son as the perfect sacrifice on the cross.

Jesus Himself would have to tell His disciples what to write in Scripture as He recounted the testing He endured at the hand of the evil one. Wouldn't you have loved to hear the story from Jesus' own lips?! What a show down that must have been! Everything holy against everything evil! The unseen spiritual world was shaken as the battle over evil and good ensued. Our Jesus came through unscathed and without a sinful mark on Him. He arose from that battle perfectly holy, without even a trace of sin. He had endured the lies, the temptations, and every test that the devil hurled at Him, and He proved through His sinlessness that He was truly the Son of God.

As we read the story of this spiritual battle, I'm praying we will learn from Jesus' strategy with the devil. It would be good for us to mimic His patterns for success because our battles with the devil will be ongoing until we shed this body and are with the Lord. In this chapter of Matthew, Jesus reveals His victory secrets!

Pay attention, good friend!

**Pray with me:**

Lord, open my eyes to the secrets of Your Word. Show me how to battle the evil one with godly wisdom and strategy. Help me to not be ignorant of my adversary and his evil ways. Make me a wise soldier in this spiritual battle we fight daily. Help me to learn from our example and victor, Jesus Christ. Give me victory over the tempter, and help me to see through his deceit and cunning alternatives to your plans for my life. Yes, he is the god of this world, but You oh Lord, are the King of Kings and ruler of heaven and earth! There is no God like the God of Israel – my God! All power and authority are Yours oh God, and I worship You with my life. I serve You, my chosen King. Help me to live my days in step with Your voice and close my ears to the deceitful calls of the tempter.  
Amen

We are about to read the story of the most important spiritual battle ever fought. The devil is conquered by the Son of God, and I'm sure Satan squirms and trembles every time a child of God recounts the time Jesus defeated Satan in the wilderness! I know he hates the fact that this account is written here in Matthew Ch. 4 for all to see. His defeat is recorded in the pages of Scripture and recounted over and over by every student of the Word. Praise the Lord that He has the power to defeat our enemy! The God of this world was defeated by the King of Kings that day and forever more!

**→Read Matthew 4:1-11**

Many of your bibles use the word "**temptation**" in these verses instead of "**testing**." The word "tempt" in the Greek is the word "*perazein*." In the original, it actually means to *test* more than to tempt. It includes in the definition: tried and searched, *raised to dignity*; like a genuine diamond is "tested" to prove it is perfect, not to show it's a phony. The English word "tempt" carries with it the thought to entice man to do wrong. The Lord never tempts any man to do wrong. He would never entice anyone to do evil (James 1:13).

For that reason, I prefer the word "test" when referring to the battle in the wilderness between Jesus and Satan; otherwise, I seem to carry in my mind the thought

that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be “tempted,” and that doesn’t square with Scripture or the character of God who would never tempt anyone to sin.


**We do find other places in the Word that people of God were tested.**

1. Read the story of Abraham and his son Isaac. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son for the Lord if that was God’s will. In Genesis 22:1 it says “God “tested” Abraham. Why do you think the Lord did that (v.12)?

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God’s words to Abraham, “Take your son, whom you love, and go and offer him as a burnt offering on the mountain,” were the supreme test of loyalty for Abraham!

 ***God often tests our loyalty to Him through trials and testing.***

James says that testing is in our life for GOOD! It brings us to maturity and completion in Christ (James 1:1-4). It causes us to see where our own loyalties really lie.

2. Have you ever thought you were deeply loyal to the Lord, but then a time of testing came and you were able to see just how shallow your faith really was?

When?

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What was your greatest challenge at that point?

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3. How did God use that trial to test your faith and make it stronger?

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4. Have you ever encountered the opposite? A trial came, and by the grace of God you were able to endure the trial with peace in your heart that all will be well?

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Our trials are good at revealing the depth of our faith. He knows when we need to exercise our faith muscles to bring about maturity.

♥ **Hudson Taylor said, “All our difficulties are only platforms for the manifestation of His power, grace and love.”**

***Platforms are built to raise something up to a higher level for all to see.***

*Has God allowed your personal trial to be exposed in order to bring Him higher glory?  
Are you being raised up as an example of God’s miracle about to happen?  
As uncomfortable as this testing time might be – perhaps part of the reason He’s  
allowing this in your life is to show His power through your struggle!  
Being on stage isn’t always the place one wants to be, but if others can gain strength  
through your story, and God’s faithfulness to us can be exalted, can you endure it?*

This trial may be a unique opportunity for all to watch your life and see how the Lord is going to perform His will in and through you! They are watching your attitude, your faith, and your joy in the midst of the trial and where you place your hope. Glorify God on that platform!!! He has given you an opportunity to *shout* to others: “Yes, God is faithful! Yes, God is dependable! Yes, He is all wise!” when many times our ordinary life is just a whisper.....

♥ **You see, to suffer for Christ is a privilege for the believer; it’s an opportunity to demonstrate beyond mistake where our loyalties lie.**

Use this time as your mega-phone to shout, “We serve an extraordinary God, one who does far more than you’ve prayed or expected!” “Don’t resist His ways, but continue to trust Him!

\*Satan **tempts** us to do evil... **God means testing for good.**

God also uses our struggles as an instrument in His hand to bring us to maturity as Christians. When the pressure is on He exposes ungodliness in our life such as:

Unforgiveness

Selfishness

Pride

Self-sufficiency

Stubbornness

Mediocrity

Negativity

Meddling

*As those ungodly character traits diminish through the process of asking forgiveness and having a willingness to change, maturity rises. God's way is to mature the believer through navigating through struggles.*

Back in Matthew Ch.4:1, we see that Jesus **was led** up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Mark says it a little differently in his account in Mark 1:12 (NKJ). Mark said the Spirit **drove** Him into the wilderness! This tells us that God desired that Jesus undergo testing.

That sounds a little strange, doesn't it? Would God really *desire* His only Son to be tried and tested? Yes, in the same way that He allows us to face the same testings. God knew that it would allow Jesus to be victorious over the devil. He also knew that it would be a prelude to Jesus' greatest triumph over the devil and the victory over all sin at the cross. God knew He could glorify himself through His perfect Son, Jesus.

In the same way, every time we are victorious through the power of the Holy Spirit in our trials, we triumph over the devil, and in Jesus' name, Satan is brought to nothing! God's great name is glorified through our victories in Him, and Satan is seen for what he really is: a liar, and not one with equality with almighty God!

5. Jesus was in the wilderness alone. What did He do while He was there seeking God, and what physical condition was He in (Matthew 4:2)?

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Some things man has to work out alone. Jesus hid away to fast and seek the Lord because He understood His mission was about to begin. He felt the Holy Spirit's empowerment to do the work of the ministry, and He wanted to get direction from His

Father in heaven. He didn't need the opinion of another man; He needed His Father's direction. He needed alone time to hear from God.

6. We often come to a place in our lives that demand alone time with our Father in heaven. We are thankful for friends and the church to support us, but there is nothing like hearing from God Himself. He speaks to us like no one else can speak. Are you weak today like Jesus was after his 40 day fast? Do you feel empty, drained of emotion, and lacking direction? Sit alone with your Father in heaven for just these few moments. Sit quietly; not speaking, only listening. Then respond below what the Spirit spoke to your heart.

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Did He comfort your soul with a thought, a truth, or a promise?  
Share with your group.

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We left Jesus in the wilderness; let's get back there. Satan is about to rise up in battle for the purpose of tempting Jesus to fail.

The tempter comes to Jesus with a weird thought.  
Of course, he did!!! Satan is the Master of confusion, one who loves to breed insecurity in our hearts while he spins fallacious details in our heads!

7. What did Satan try to entice Jesus to do (Matthew 4:3)?

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The wilderness where Jesus had been camped out for the last 40 days was somewhere between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. It was a land of crumbling limestone, yellow sand, and hills of dust heaps. There were jagged cliffs with crags and peeling rocks that stretched to the Dead Sea. It was hot and miserable with no fresh greenery in sight; it was not a very comfortable place. He had been there with no food

for forty days and nights, and even though He was God in the flesh, His flesh was like our flesh: it was weak, it was hungry, and it was needy.

As Satan looked out over the rocks of limestone that were scattered out over the sand in front of Jesus, he simply tempted Him to turn a few of those rocks into bread, something that would quickly satisfy His flesh.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Testing**

**The devil was basically tempting Jesus to *use His own divine powers to serve His own self interest*. He wanted Jesus to prove in a way (that wasn't God's way) that He was truly the Son of God. Jesus had set aside His power in an act of humiliation.**

Satan suggested to Jesus to use His own divine powers to supply what the Father had not (food).

8. Does that thought sound familiar? Does the idea to do things *your way* and not wait upon the Lord sound like something you've heard before? Satan's tricks are old ones. The same thing he tempted Jesus with is what he pulls out of his dirty little sack to entice us with. His suggestion to use our own power to attain is an attempt to get our eyes off the Lord.

When was the last time you bought into that lie? What happened? Did you wait upon God for His provision or did you settle for a quick counterfeit?

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9. Satan wanted Jesus to demonstrate His divine power and serve Himself first. This is exactly opposite of what Jesus was sent here to do: to be a servant and give His life as a ransom for many (Philip. 2:7). If Satan would have been victorious here, Jesus' testimony would have been shattered. What was Jesus' response to Satan (Matthew 4:4)?

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Jesus began with an appeal to God's Word. We can learn from that! We should model Jesus in times of spiritual battle. See how Jesus does battle with our adversary?

He holds God's Word up and swings it like a good right hook: "powey," right between his eyes! It's a knockout! The Word of God is displayed! Satan is on the floor with a 10 count. There is power in the phrase, "**It is written!!!**"

God's response to Satan was, "Scripture says, no one can live on food alone, people need every word God has spoken to them." He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. He gave him the law of the Lord written hundreds of years before.

9. In Deuteronomy 8:1-4, what did the Lord want the people of Israel to remember about their 40 years in the wilderness? Why did God allow this testing and what did He want them to remember?

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Jesus was quoting His Father in heaven. He was swinging around God's Word. The New Testament calls it the sword of the Spirit.

11. Jesus knew His opponent very well. He defeated him with the Word of God. Turn to Ephesians 6:10-16. ***Spiritual battle is non-negotiable for the believer.*** What does the victorious believer trust in according to Ephesians 6:10?

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a. Who is your true enemy? Is it the family member that spoke some unkind words to you, or your insensitive husband, or that friend that didn't stand up for you? Who does your real battle lie with (v.12)? Remember, it isn't your Mother-in-law or the neighbor that pokes fun at your relationship with Jesus.

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b. Have you been fighting the wrong fight lately? Swinging at the wrong opponent? Tell us about your discovery. \_\_\_\_\_

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Understand, believer, that your fight is not with people; it's with the rulers of darkness of



this age! The problem is not with one individual; it's with all the evil spiritual beings in the dark places on earth.

c. What is your deadliest weapon as a believer in battle (v.17)?

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 **Never forget – your Bible is a defensive dagger in a spiritual battle!**

Jesus knew that. He took out the Sword of God's Word and defeated Satan and all his enticing suggestions that would attempt to draw Jesus into sin.

**\*When you stand in truth, the battle is over; it's fought and won!**

d. What promise in Scripture do you need to apply to your battle today?

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Test**

In Matthew 4:5-7, Satan then tries a second trick Jesus our Lord. He takes Him up into the Holy City and sets Him on the pinnacle of the temple and says, "If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning you.'"

Wow... that's interesting. Satan himself is trying to use Scripture (the sword) to come back at Jesus. (I guess he concluded that if it worked for Christ, it could work for him). He twisted the Scripture's meaning, employing a passage about *trusting* God to justify *testing* Him. He was setting Him up with a Scriptural test. The problem was that Satan didn't quote Scripture accurately. He took it out of context. Jesus corrects him in v.7 as He says, "It is written AGAIN, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

12. What is the context of this Scripture found in Psalm 91:9-16? In other words, who is God protecting and why (Hint: see v.9, v.14, v.15)?

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Satan was tempting Jesus to find success through sensationalism and self-confidence. Do something dramatic so that the crowds would follow. Josephus said that the pinnacle of the temple could have been the roof over Herod's portico on the eastern side of the temple, which overlooked the Kidron Valley. The drop from this place to the valley floor would have been 450 ft.

Satan was suggesting that Jesus do something miraculous, like jumping off this high place and allowing His Father in heaven to rescue Him from the fall. This would show that He had to be the Son of God, because who else would be able to perform a miracle like that?

It sounds a little ridiculous to us because we know Jesus had to make His way to the cross. Satan would do anything to avoid the cross, because he knew that is where the real resurrection power would come from.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Test**

Matthew 4:8-11

13. Read v.8. Do you think it's odd that this verse suggests that you can see all the kingdoms of the world from one high mountain? That's impossible. This suggests that this time of testing by the devil was not only physical (not only what He could see), but it was a battle of Jesus' heart, mind, and soul. This third attack was more of a battle within. It was an inner struggle, a test of pride and personal ambition.

Satan was suggesting that Jesus compromise with evil as a means of obtaining His goal. If the goal was worldly popularity and kingdom followers, then Satan suggested, "I can give you the world!" The temptation was to avoid loyalty to the Father in heaven; avoid all the conflict, avoid the tears, pain, and the suffering of the cross. I can give you the crown now! If you demonstrate Your power in a sensational way, people will surely follow You out of fear, and the world can be yours.

a. Jesus' route was to be so different. Write out the description of what lie ahead for our Savior (Isaiah 53:10-12).

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b. How often does Satan suggest we compromise? All the time! That little deceiver always speaks lies of compromise to you and I when things are a little tough, when answers to prayers are coming slow, or when we are tired of waiting for something to happen.

What was the last thing Satan tempted you to compromise with?

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Satan offers us the world on his own corrupt terms. It always costs us our holiness as we accept his compromise. The promise that Satan lays out ahead of us is that we can have what we want now- why wait for what is rightfully yours? All we have to do is to go after the things we want the way the world does with the same selfishness, pride, superior attitude, and "it's all about me" mind-set.

14. Self-will is Satan's will and the opposite of God's will. What is the will of God for us as believers (Matthew 6:33-34)?

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Satan is a counterfeiter. He seems to offer what God does, but his price is much cheaper! The counterfeit is easier up front, but in the end, you find it's really only a counterfeit and nowhere near the result you longed for.

15. Does God delight in allowing us to have nice things (Matthew 7:11)?

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a. Psalm 84:11

NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHHOLD!

“Say that out loud 3 times!” Come on let me hear it at my house!  
We need to know that in our “knower”.

**After all, we are heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven!**

What would you say has been your toughest spiritual battle to date?

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What spiritual victories have you had?

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→ Return to Matthew 4:12-25 – Jesus Begins His Ministry

16. Why did Jesus leave Nazareth, and what city did He go to (Matthew 4:12-13)?

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17. Find the city of Capernaum on your map in the front of your binder. Write next to it “prophesied by Isaiah”. Another prophecy fulfilled in Scripture!

18. Jesus begins His teaching ministry as He began to preach. What was His message (Matthew 4:17)?

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19. Does that message sound familiar to you? It should. Who came before Him, preaching the same message (Matt. 3:1-2)?

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Jesus was calling the whole world to do an about-face. He wanted them to repent of their sin and begin worshipping God once again. His plan was to start a revival with 12 men. He starts by calling two sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew, James and John.

### The Call to be Fishers of Men – Matthew 4:19-22

Jesus called rough-and-tough men like Peter and Andrew to be His disciples. They already knew Jesus and had put their faith in the Savior (Matthew omits that part of the story in his gospel, you can find it in John 1:35-51), but now Jesus was calling them to service.

These men had little education or training. They were the workforce of their world. They were often selfish and inhospitable. They wanted to send the multitudes away when it became late, and Jesus' teaching went long; everyone was hungry. They shooed the children away at a time when Jesus said, "Let the children come unto Me" (Mat. 19:13-14). They were just your everyday folk. He promised to make them fishers of men...true evangelists!

20. One poll said that 95% of believers have never led anyone to Christ. I wonder if that is true. Have you personally led someone to Jesus?

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21. If you never have had that privilege, take a moment and pray for that one you know you would love to see come to faith in Christ, and then pray that the Lord would allow YOU the privilege to be the one to lead them there!

Who are you praying about?

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***Billy Graham once said, "The evangelist harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear the full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities."***

22. Are you using all the gifts God has given you to point people to Jesus?

If every generation is strategic, then that means your life is strategic, too! I wonder who God had intended you and I to witness to in these last few years. Has there been a family member that wouldn't have been prayed over if you hadn't have done it? That's a sobering thought, isn't it?

If you are like me- and I'm sure we have the same tendencies- then you will have had the experience where you pray really hard for someone, and then after time goes by and life gets consuming, we slowly forget. Take the time today to rekindle that passion to pray for those souls once again.

List their names here for a personal reminder:

Oh Lord, \_\_\_\_\_ needs salvation. Bring them to a knowledge and commitment to You!

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

At the end of chapter 4 of Matthew, Jesus goes about all of Galilee, teaching and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing all kinds of disease and sickness. His fame went throughout all Syria (v.24). Great multitudes began following Him. The love for Jesus began to circulate all around the known world.

When we open up our next lesson on Matthew Ch.5 we will see Jesus teaching a huge following of people on many different subjects. These teachings are commonly known as "The Sermon on the Mount." Until then, have a blessed week in Christ!

**Wrapping it up and making it personal!**

As we went through the story of the greatest spiritual battle ever fought between Satan and Jesus, I was reminded of how easy it is for me to be deceived by Satan's cunning lies. I have noticed that some of my greatest lows come after my greatest

highs. Satan knows when to begin an attack. Right after spiritual victories, we are often self-confident and unaware of any spiritual danger. Jesus was tempted right after the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the commencement of His Father in heaven.

Remember Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:1-4)? Elijah had just been a part of an awesome victory on Mt. Carmel. Elijah proved that the God of Israel was the only true God, and the prophets of Baal were extinguished to nothing through a fiery display of God's power.

Just about two verses later we find Elijah full of despair, running from the demented Jezebel that sought to take his life. He had all the faith to stand up to all the hundreds of prophets, but now finds himself fleeing from one woman! He sat under a broom tree and asked God to take his life!

I laugh at that story, but Satan can turn my head faster than anyone else I know. I can have my eyes fully on Jesus and then shift my eyes to the world for just a few worldly hours, and my life shifts to darkness and despair.

If the Lord has used you lately and you have been apart of a great success, be aware of the attack from behind. Be prayerful and watch that the prince of the power of the air doesn't rip you off after a divine blessing. Let's end this lesson with a prayer that the Lord would be our front and rear guard, and that He would keep His ever watchful eyes upon us! Amen!

Have a great week, friend!