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The Character Of The King

We've come tonight to Matthew 4. This is the last chapter of narrative before the first discourse. It's a good time to briefly recollect that Matthew structures his book with narrative followed by discourse then a return to narrative followed by another discourse and so on. Of course, Matthew is famous for his discourses. But the preceding narrative sets the context for the discourse. Matthew 1-4 is the first narrative section and it sets the context for Matthew 5-7, the first discourse, which is the Sermon on the Mount, a critical discourse. What narrative material has Matthew selected in order to set the context for the Sermon on the Mount? First, he has selected the legal genealogy of Jesus. Why? To show that He is the King. Second, he has selected the account of the supernatural conception of Jesus. Why? To show that Jesus fulfilled Messianic prophecy. Third, he has selected events in Jesus' early childhood. Why? To show that Jesus fulfilled more Messianic prophecy. Fourth, he has selected Jesus being preceded by John. Why? To show that Jesus fits the OT pattern of a prophet preceding a king. Fifth, he has selected the account of Jesus being baptized by John. Why? To show that the King identified with the message of the righteous 'at hand' kingdom. And finally, he has selected the event where the Spirit descended upon Him and the Father's voice made the pronouncement, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."¹ Why? To show divine approval of Jesus and to authorize John to present Him to the nation. This was the beginning of Jesus' ministry which lasted between three and a half to four years.

Up to this point Matthew has shown that Jesus has the right credentials of the Messianic King. But now that His ministry is beginning the question is does He have the character of the Messianic King? Matthew 4 is recorded by Matthew to answer this question. If Jesus really is the King then He has to have a perfectly sinless character. And how is character proven? Through

testing. Gold is tested to determine if it is pure and genuine but the test does not alter the makeup of the gold. The gold remains gold. In the same way, Jesus is being tested to see if His character is pure and genuine but the test does not alter His character. Jesus remains Jesus, we just see His character manifested through the testing. So the main point of Matthew 4 is to reveal the character of the King. The Holy Spirit is the one pressing the point. He is the one leading Jesus out into the wilderness. Jesus wasn't just stumbling around and fell into temptation. He was led by the Spirit. Satan is involved, of course; he is the one tempting the King. But what's the Holy Spirit doing? Testing the King. Is there a difference? Yes. What's the difference? God tests but He does not tempt. Satan tempts. Fairbairn says, "trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin."ⁱⁱ Thus Glasscock seems correct when he says, "God would demonstrate through this series of enticements by Satan that His servant Jesus is righteous and trustworthy."ⁱⁱⁱ The key is that it is the Spirit of God leading the way with the intent to prove the King's character. Satan is more of a pawn in this scene and may have actually been trying to avoid the confrontation altogether. As J. Dwight Pentecost notes, "Since Christ was under the full control of the Spirit, and since the purpose of the temptation was to demonstrate His sinlessness and thus prove His moral right to be Savior-Sovereign, we must recognize that Jesus was the Aggressor in the temptation. He forced Satan to put Him to the test so that His true character might be revealed."^{iv} Satan was just a means to Jesus' sovereign ends of demonstrating His sinless character.

A further introductory remark. What's the bigger picture of what's happening? Looking beyond the Gospels to God's whole plan for history what is going on? Who's the god of the world at this time? Satan. How did he get the reins? Adam had originally been given the right to rule this world but what did he do at the Fall? He forfeited that right to Satan. So in that context what is Jesus doing? He's pressing His rights to regain the right to rule from Satan. So it was critical that Jesus in this account be successful. How would he be successful? First, by identifying with us in our temptations. Jesus as King needs to be able to identify with the subjects of His kingdom. If He doesn't really know what we're going through then can it be said that He really knows us? The temptations show that He can identify with you. Second, to demonstrate that His character was sinless. If Jesus isn't sinless then how can He pay for our sins and be our Savior. Impossible. He would

have to pay for His own sins. The temptations show that He is sinless and therefore qualified to pay the penalty for our sins. Third, to demonstrate constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit for victory. In other words, to be a test pilot for the Christian life; to show us that dependence upon the Holy Spirit really works. If Jesus depended instead upon His own deity then what evidence do we have that dependence upon the Spirit is sufficient to be victorious over Satan? The temptations show that dependence upon the Holy Spirit does work.

If we look at Matt 4:1, Matthew just says **Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit**. The adverb **then** as we've pointed out means a change of scene. Matthew is not as specific as Luke as to when this happened. Luke's account says it occurred "immediately" after His baptism by John. So Jesus didn't stick around at the Jordan. Jesus **was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness**. Up because the Jordan valley is far below sea level so any direction you go is **up** in elevation. The surrounding region was a **wilderness**. The distinction between Adam's place of testing and Jesus' could not be more stark. "...the first Adam was tested in the perfect world of God's garden, the second in the harsh fallen world of the wilderness."^v The traditional location of the testing is about 6 miles west of the traditional site of the baptism, on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. The high place is known as Mt Quarantia and there are monasteries built into the side of the mountain. From this mountain you can see the surrounding areas in all directions.

It should be pointed out again, did Jesus haphazardly walk into temptation? No, He **was led up by the Spirit**. Luke says he was impelled. This is the concept of control. Jesus was under the control of the Spirit. He was not self-directed, He was Spirit-directed and obviously He was yielding to the Spirit's direction. He's trusting that the Spirit has His best interests in mind. And what is the Spirit doing by leading Him out into the wilderness? Taking the fight to Satan. He's taking him right into Satan's turf. Why do I say the wilderness is Satan's turf? Because the wilderness is a desolate place and Satan is the desolator. So the Spirit is directing and Jesus is submitting. What's the purpose? For Jesus **to be tempted**. The temptation is the means by which the Spirit tested the sinlessness of Jesus' character. It's the most extreme test because who is the tempter? **The devil**, the chief adversary of God, not some lower ranking demon.

Verse 2, **And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.** What's the emphasis in Matthew? Jesus' sensation **after** the **forty days and forty nights** of fasting. In other words, He only became hungry after the forty days and nights, not before. Morgan explains, "Notice carefully that it was after the lapse of the forty days that Jesus was hungry. It would seem as though during their passing, He was unconscious of His physical need. His thoughts had been of things within the spiritual realm, and the demands of the physical had been unrecognized. At the close of forty days the sense of need swept over Him. He was hungry."^{vi} Note that Morgan noted that the reason Jesus was not hungry until then was because He was preoccupied with spiritual matters. What spiritual matters? Luke reports that Jesus was being tempted for the entire forty days and not just afterwards. This would explain Jesus' preoccupation with spiritual matters until that time. Satan had been bombarding Him to some extent during those 40 days. However, the pressure of hunger reached its peak after the 40 days and nights.

What is the significance of the 40 days? 40 is always associated in Scripture with the period of testing or judgment. The wilderness generation spent 40 years wandering as a judgment. Both Moses and Elijah spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting. Jesus too was tested for forty days. At the end of the forty days He was hungry.

What difference does it make whether Jesus became hungry? In other words, what does it demonstrate? It demonstrates that Jesus was a true human. The Docetic claim that Jesus was just a phantom, appearing to be a human is denied by the fact that He **became hungry**. Ghosts don't become hungry; only genuine human beings become hungry. Did Satan question whether Jesus was a true human? No. Instead Satan seized the natural limitations of His true humanity and used them as a point of temptation. Was it sinful for Jesus to become hungry? There was nothing sinful about Jesus becoming hungry. Hunger is a natural, God-created sensation for humans. Nor is there anything sinful about satisfying one's hunger. God created food for man to satisfy his hunger. Therefore Jesus eating food would be entirely in keeping with God's purpose for Him. However, what is the issue? How Jesus attained the food to satisfy His hunger. That and that only is the point of the first temptation.

Before we look at the three temptations it is notable that they have been classified a number of ways. Toussaint, in his commentary, suggests that the most accurate way to classify them in order to show their pertinence to Matthew's argument is to see "the attacks of Satan as being personal, national, and universal in their implications."^{vii} The temptation to turn stones into bread was *personal* because it would satisfy His personal hunger. The temptation to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple was *national* because He was taken by Satan to the national city and the national temple. The temptation to worship Satan was *universal* because by doing so He would receive all the kingdoms of the world without having to go to the cross. As tempting as this classification is it is perhaps better to follow Pentecost's suggestion that "there are three avenues through which Satan can assault an individual; through "the lust of the flesh," through "the lust of the eyes," and through "the pride of life" (1 John 2:15 KJV). Satan approached Christ through these three channels...On the basis of this threefold temptation, the writer to the Hebrews said He "has been tempted in every way, just as we are" (Heb. 4:15)."^{viii} Not incidentally it was through these three avenues that Satan tempted Eve; through "the lust of the eyes" he incited her to satisfy her hunger, through the "pride of life" he suggested she would not die and through "the lust of the flesh" he promised she would be like God. According to this three-avenue approach we will look at the three temptations.

The first temptation, in verses 3-4, is a temptation according to the avenue of the "lust of the flesh." Jesus did not have a sinful flesh so the appeal was not to sinful flesh but to satisfy His human flesh. It was not sinful for Him to satisfy His human flesh by eating but to satisfy it in the manner suggested by Satan. Note the manner suggested in verse 3; **And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."** What fundamentally is the temptation? To make stones into bread by utilizing His divine nature independent of God. Jesus is without question **the Son of God**. The Father just verbally authenticated him as **His Son** in 3:17. Nor does Satan doubt that Jesus is **the Son of God**. The **if** is a first class condition. He is **the Son of God**. So what Satan is tempting Jesus to do is demonstrate that He is **the Son of God** by doing a miracle independent of God in order to satisfy His human craving. Was the temptation real? The temptation was real because Jesus as a man really was

hungry and because as God He really could turn stones into bread. The question is not whether He was hungry or whether He could turn stones into bread but whether it was the will of God for Him to do so. He was in the wilderness by the will of God. He fasted forty days and nights by the will of God. He was now hungry by the will of God. Would it be in the will of God to succumb to Satan's suggestion to now abandon the will of God by substituting His own will in order to satisfy His appetite? To do so would be to succumb to the lust of the flesh.

How did Jesus respond in verse 4? By quoting Scripture. **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"** Where do we find the will of God? In **THE MOUTH OF GOD**.

Where do we find **THE MOUTH OF GOD**? In Scripture! We don't find the will of God by having a feeling or getting an impression. Jesus had a feeling of hunger. If He had followed His feelings He could have concluded that God sent Satan to satisfy His feelings of hunger. We don't follow feelings, impressions or what we interpret as signs or indicators of the will of God. We follow Scripture! What Scripture did Jesus cite? Deut 8:3. What's the context of Deut 8:3? The generation of Israelites who wandered in the wilderness. There are many parallels between that generation of Israelites and Jesus' situation here. First, God led Israel into the wilderness just as the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. Second, God allowed Israel to be hungry in order to test whether they would follow His commandments or not just as the Spirit had allowed Jesus to become hungry in order to test whether He would follow the commandments or not. Third, God fed Israel with manna in due time just as God would provide angels to feed Jesus in due time. The lesson was clear. Israel was to learn that man does not live by bread alone but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Jesus shows that He had learned that lesson in His humanity and was now applying it. He was meeting the temptation as a genuine human. Toussaint points out that two words are critical in this quotation. First, the word **ALONE**. "Jesus is saying that man shall not live apart from the will of God; he is to walk in dependence upon God."^{ix} Since the Scriptures are the will of God then when we trust in the Scriptures we are walking in dependence upon God, just as Jesus did. Second, the word **MAN**. "By it Jesus as Messiah identifies Himself with the human race." Jesus was being tempted to solve his human need by depending upon His divine nature. However, if He had done so He would have cut

Himself off from the assets we as believers have available to solve our problems. We could then say that Jesus does not know what we are going through. However, Jesus does know what we are going through because He dealt with this temptation as a genuine human, trusting in the Scripture which puts Him in dependence upon God.

Essentially then Satan was tempting Jesus to use His divine nature in order to meet His human need. This would be self-dependence rather than God-dependence. To depend upon Himself would have been contrary to the will of God. Jesus teaches us how to answer Satan; by trusting the word of God which brings us into dependence upon God and not ourselves. The lesson here is powerful. We must meet Satan in the same way that Jesus met Satan, by trusting the Scripture which brings us into dependence upon God. When we do so victory is inevitable. So much for Satan's appeal to "the lust of the flesh."

The second temptation, in verses 5-7, is a temptation according to the avenue of the "pride of life." It was an appeal to Christ's spiritual nature, an appeal to spiritual pride. Verse 5, **Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple.** This describes the location of the temptation. Scholars debate whether this was the location in vision or in reality. There is no reason from the language not to conclude that this was in reality. Thus, Satan has the ability to physically transport Jesus from the wilderness to Jerusalem and place Him on **the pinnacle of the temple.** The word **temple** refers to the entire temple compound and not the temple proper. The **pinnacle** refers to the highest location above the ground. At the time, according to Josephus' descriptions this was somewhere along the southern wall where Herod had built the beautifully columned Royal Stoa. If so, **the devil took Him** there. The transport to this location was meaningful since the rabbis suggested, on the basis of Malachi 3:1, that the Messiah would suddenly appear on the roof of the temple. Edersheim says, "Our Rabbis give this tradition: In the hour when King Messiah cometh, He standeth upon the roof of the Sanctuary." For Jesus to leap from the sanctuary and be unhurt would certainly identify Him as the King of Israel. As Pentecost says, "Such a descent by Messiah into the midst of the worshipers would have led to their immediate acclaim of the One who made such a spectacular descent."^x Since the Jews were always looking for signs that Jesus was the King the location of the temptation itself already betrays

Satan's intent. What's his intent? To appeal to Jesus' spiritual pride as the Son of God in order to prove that He is the King.

Verse 6 states the temptation itself, having placed Him on the pinnacle he **said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down;** again, this is a first class condition, Satan didn't question whether Jesus was **the Son of God**. He knew Jesus was **the Son of God**. What He was inciting Him to do was demonstrate to the nation that He was **the Son of God**. But with this temptation what's different in Satan's approach? He uses Scripture. He saw that Jesus responded to the first temptation with Scripture so now he uses Scripture. Isn't that interesting? Satan knows Scripture; Satan can quote Scripture. The question is not can Satan use Scripture but how is Satan using Scripture? Let's look at what he uses, **for it is written, "HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU"; and "ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE."** What passage is Satan quoting? Ps 91:11-12 and he's quoting from the LXX version, the same version Jesus quoted when He responded to the first temptation. So he's chosen the same Bible version as Jesus. What's the subject of Ps 91:11-12? The security of the one who trusts the LORD. As one trusts the LORD the LORD watches over him and protects him. So what's Satan saying to Jesus? If you trust the LORD then the LORD will watch over you and protect you. So go ahead and hurl yourself down so the nation can see that the LORD will rescue you. Now is it a right usage of Ps 91:11-12? Is Satan using the passage properly? Is it the intent of the passage to say that as long as we trust the LORD He's going to protect us? What is Satan challenging Jesus to do? Something daring, something dangerous, something reckless. Is the Psalm telling those who trust the LORD that even if we do something reckless the LORD will rescue us? No. It's a misuse of Scripture. Satan knows Scripture but he's misusing Scripture. Jesus knew the context did not authorize reckless behavior. To throw Himself down would be to test God. Verse 7, **Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"** So Jesus answers Scripture with what? Scripture. By doing so what does Jesus show us about Scripture here? That it's self-consistent; that every passage is consistent with every other passage. If Satan was rightfully quoting Scripture then no Scripture could contradict it. The fact that Jesus quoted Scripture to refute Satan shows that Satan was misusing the Scripture he quoted. To interpret

Ps 91 to mean we can act with reckless abandon as long as we are trusting the LORD would contradict the Scripture Jesus quoted to the effect we should not put the LORD to the test. What verse is Jesus quoting? Deut 6:16. What's the context of Deut 6:16? A place called Massah where the people had tested the LORD. It was the Exodus generation who was led out of Egypt and went into the wilderness. When they got thirsty they presumed upon God by saying to Moses, why have you brought us out to die of thirst? They were presuming upon God's abilities, a clear indication of lack of trust. What would Jesus have been doing if He hurled Himself from the Temple? On one hand it would appear to be great trust in the LORD. However, on the other it would evidence lack of full confidence. If one has full confidence in another no test is necessary. Jesus' trust was so perfect that He saw no need to put God to a test. Jesus believed God because of His word. If Jesus had fallen for Satan's temptation He would evidenced lack of trust in God and consequently would have been out of the will of God. Being out of the will of God He could not expect God to rescue Him. Satan was trying to get Jesus to commit the sin of presumption; overstepping His bounds and taking liberties that were not rightfully His to take as the Son of God. If He had committed the sin of presumption it would have shown spiritual pride in Jesus. However, Jesus had no spiritual pride. He overcame this temptation by evidencing His absolute trust and dependence upon God. No test was necessary. So much for Satan's appeal to the "pride of life."

The third temptation, in verses 8-10, is a temptation according to the avenue of the "lust of the eyes." In this temptation Satan appeals to Jesus' ambition to rule the kingdoms of the whole world. As in the second temptation the location is given first. **Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;** from this vantage point Jesus was given the ability to see **all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.** As with Satan's transport of Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple is it impossible that he could show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world? If language means anything then, no. Verse 9, **and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."** Did Satan have the kingdoms of the world to give? In other words, did he have the right to give the kingdoms to Jesus? Could he make that offer? Yes. On what basis? On the basis that Adam originally was the king of all the kingdoms of the world and he handed them over to Satan at the Fall. Satan currently has several titles that express his rights and

power over the kingdoms of the world. He is called the prince of the power of the air, the god of this age and the ruler of this world. All that Jesus needed to do to receive **all the kingdoms of the world** was to **fall down and worship** Satan. This was perhaps the greatest temptation so far seeing that the Son of God was destined to rule over all the kingdoms of the world but by way of the cross. The devil implied that Jesus might have what the Father promised by a route that avoided the cross. A kingdom without a cross! The only condition was that he **fall down and worship** Satan. It has always been Satan's ambition to be as God and receive the worship of God. His "desire to receive this worship was so great that he was willing to surrender the entire realm over which he ruled as a usurper in order to gain the end."^{xi} How did Jesus respond to this third temptation? By quoting Scripture. Verse 10, **Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'**" That this is indeed the last temptation is seen by the fact that Jesus commands **Satan to Go!** Luke places this temptation second in the order but his intent was not to give the order; Matshew gives us the correct sequence. The fact that Jesus commands **Satan to Go** shows that Jesus has authority over Satan even though Satan was presently the rightful ruler of all the kingdoms of the world. What passage does Jesus quote this time? Deut 6:13. All three defenses used Scripture. The Scripture is the end of all discussion. It is the ultimate authority to deflect any temptation. Three times Jesus showed that the proper response to temptation is to go to Scripture. It would seem then that there is no other proper response. In Scripture we have the repository for deflecting every temptation Satan can offer. The Scripture is totally sufficient. The quotation of Deut 6:13 comes from where? The Ten Commandments. It is the first and the greatest commandment. "Thou shalt worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." Jesus as man worshipped God. He would not allow Satan to usurp His worship. God alone is the One who is great and deserving of His worship and service. Jesus would rather wait to receive the kingdoms of the world on His Father's terms than submit His worship to Satan which would make Him Satan's servant. So much for Satan's greatest temptation, "the lust of the eyes." Jesus did not have selfish ambition; He waited and depended completely upon His Father.

Verse 11, **Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.** The verb **begin to minister** is the imperfect tense. The imperfect emphasizes the ongoing nature of the angelic ministry in past

time. The NASB chose to add the word *began* in order to emphasize the beginning of their ministry.^{xii} The clear point is that they ministered to Him at this time by providing food. He had fasted for forty days and nights and was hungry. He had not taken it into His own hands to provide for His hunger but waited until it was God's will to provide for His hunger. Just as ravens brought Elijah food so the angels brought the Messiah food. Jesus had defeated Satan and proved His character to be genuine. This was the Spirit's intent from the beginning. It was the Spirit who led Jesus out into the wilderness to confront Satan. His objective was met. As Pentecost said, "The temptation demonstrated the perfection of the Son and thus authenticated the Father's approval."^{xiii}

Because Jesus successfully navigated this treachery of temptations there are a number of results that issue forth. First, Jesus can identify with us when we are tempted. Hebrews 4:15 states that He "has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." By this the author of Hebrews does not mean that Jesus went through each and every circumstance of life that we go through. The "all things" means that Jesus went through the three avenues of temptation that are available to Satan; "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life" (cf 1 John 2:15). He has no other avenues. Jesus, having been tempted by all three avenues, is now our sympathetic high priest. He knows in an intimate manner the kinds of temptations you and I face and He is able to sympathize with us in those temptations. This means we are never at liberty to say that Jesus had it easier than us. He was genuinely tempted. Second, Jesus consistently depended upon the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who led Him into the wilderness. It was the Holy Spirit who led Him to fast for forty days and forty nights. It was the Holy Spirit who wanted Him to become hungry. And it was the Holy Spirit whom He depended upon through the temptations. Jesus did not take matters into His own hands to satisfy His desires. He constantly depended upon the Spirit. We too have to depend upon the Holy Spirit through our temptations. We should not take matters into our own hands. God wants us to depend upon His Spirit. Third, Jesus consistently used Scripture to meet each temptation. He quoted Scripture after Scripture after Scripture. There is no substitute for the ultimate authority of Scripture. To use Scripture we must know Scripture. To use Scripture properly we must interpret it correctly. To interpret it correctly we must follow the most cardinal rule Jesus taught us; context, context, context. Words are properly understood by

their context. When Scripture is properly understood it is the final word and it defeats Satan.

Finally, several implications related to Christ's person are clearly involved in this passage. First all agree that Jesus never sinned. The question is whether the temptations to sin were genuine. Those who claim that He was *able to sin* claim that Christ was like Adam as he was originally created and had what is termed *peccability*. Those who claim that He was *not able to sin* claim that Christ also had a divine nature and therefore had what is termed *impeccability*. But if Christ was *impeccable* then were the temptations really genuine. Second, all agree that Jesus was tempted as to His person. This is plainly stated in Heb 4:15. "He was tempted in all things as we, yet without sin." Yet James 1:13 says that "God cannot be tempted." How then, if Jesus is God, was He tempted? Walvoord says, "The ultimate solution of the problem of the impeccability of Christ rests in the relationship of the divine and human natures. It is generally agreed that each of the natures, the divine and the human, had its own will in the sense of desire. The ultimate decision of the person, however...was always in harmony with the decisions of the divine nature. The relation of this to the problem of impeccability is obvious. The human nature, because it is temptable, might desire to do that which is contrary to the will of God. In the person of Christ, however, the human will was always subservient to the divine will and could never act independently. Inasmuch as all agree that the divine will of God could not sin, this quality then becomes the quality of the person and Christ becomes impeccable."^{xiv} If we isolate the discussion to His divine nature then, of course, His divine nature was not able to be tempted because God cannot be tempted, James 1:13. If we isolate the discussion to His human nature then his human nature was able to be tempted. On these points all can agree. "The question is, then, Can such a person as Christ is, possessing both human and divine natures, be tempted if He is impeccable? The answer must be in the affirmative."^{xv} The question is simply asking, is it possible to try the impossible? It is possible to try to jump over the moon but it is conceivably impossible to jump over the moon. In the same way it is possible for Satan to try to tempt Christ to sin but it is conceivably impossible for him to be successful. W. G. T. Shedd illustrates, "A person who cannot sin, it is said, cannot be tempted to sin. This is not correct; any more than it would be correct to say that because an army cannot be conquered, it cannot be attacked."^{xvi} The human nature of Jesus Christ was open to being tempted but the possibility of Him being

overcome by the temptations depended upon the amount of resistance He could bring against them. Since His human nature is inseparably connected with His divine nature he had infinite resources to resist sinning. Therefore as a person it was impossible for Him to sin. He was impeccable and yet temptable. Put another way, "If the human nature had been unsustained as in the case of Adam by a divine nature, it is clear that the human nature of Christ might have sinned. This possibility, however, is completely removed by the presence of the divine nature."^{xvii} What happened in Matthew 4 was Satan attempted the impossible. This is probably why the Spirit took the fight to him; he did not want to fight. Forced to fight he did his best but the conclusion was foregone.

In summary, in verse 1 the Holy Spirit led Jesus onto Satan's turn with the intent of Satan tempting Him in order to prove Jesus' character as the Messianic King. In verse 2, due to the constant spiritual battle it was only after the forty days that Jesus became cognizant of His hunger. In verse 3 the tempter used this genuine human need to incite Him to use His divine nature in order to satisfy the lust of the flesh. The satisfaction of His hunger was not wrong, merely the suggestion that He satisfy it Himself without regard to God. In verse 4 Jesus responded with Scripture citing the fact that man does not live apart from God but in dependence upon God. In verse 5 the devil took Him to Jerusalem and put Him on the pinnacle of the temple in view of the nation Israel. In verse 6 the temptation was to take pride in His spiritual life, showing that He had special favor with God; He could hurl Himself to the ground and God would rescue Him. However, in verse 7 Jesus responded with Scripture citing the fact that such a reckless behavior was not trusting the Lord but putting Him to the test. In verse 8 the devil in similar manner took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. In verse 9 he promised to give all these to Him if He would only meet one condition, fall down and worship him. This would satisfy the lust of the eyes. Jesus responded in verse 10 by quoting Scripture to the effect that there is only One who is to be worshipped and served, that is the Lord God. With full authority He commanded Satan to Go and in verse 11 he obeyed Jesus and left. At that time it was the will of God for Jesus' hunger to be satisfied and so God sent angels to minister to Him. The conclusion is obvious. Jesus did indeed have a perfectly sinless character. He is the King.

George Peters has this interesting conclusion, “In the first temptation Jesus does *not deny* that He is hungry and able to make bread; in the second, He does *not deny* that He is the Son of God, and under special protection; and in the third. He does *not deny* the Kingdom or dominion which is to be given to Him, but only rejects *the mode* by which it is to be obtained.”^{xviii}

Several implications from Christ’s person also issue forth.

Matthew 4 records the evidence that Jesus did successfully navigate Satan’s temptations and so is the fulfillment of the promised seed of the woman who would finally defeat Satan. The background of Matthew 4 is Genesis 1-3. God, when He created Adam, created Him to rule the creation. However, it was not good for man to be alone so God created the woman. Husband and wife together were to rule a garden kingdom and spread it over the face of the whole earth. However, Adam sinned, thus relinquishing his right to rule and turning the rule over to Satan who is now the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air. The incarnation of the second Adam was designed to restore the right to rule to a genuine member of the human race. The exercise of His rule is conditioned on Israel’s acceptance of Him as their King. In light of their rejection the Messiah began building the Church to acquire a wife who would rule with Him in the kingdom to come.

ⁱ What is Matthew trying to prove with this narrative material? That Jesus is the King. Matthew is building a case in the first half of his Gospel that Jesus is the King and rightful heir to the throne of David in the kingdom. Matthew 4 contributes more evidence that Jesus is the King and rightful heir.

ⁱⁱ Fairbairn cited by Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 99.

ⁱⁱⁱ Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 82.

^{iv} Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 97.

^v Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 82.

^{vi} G. Campbell Morgan cited by Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 97.

^{vii} Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 75.

^{viii} Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 105.

^{ix} Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 76.

^x Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 102.

^{xi} Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 105.

^{xii} An inceptive imperfect.

^{xiii} Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 106.

^{xiv} Walvoord quoted by Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 98.

^{xv} Walvoord quoted by Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 98.

^{xvi} Walvoord quoted by Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 98.

^{xvii} Walvoord quoted by Pentecost, *Words and Works*, p 99.

^{xviii} George N. H. Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, 1:700.

