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## *The Gospel According to Matthew*

### *Christ's Victory Over Satan – for Us*

*February 25, 2018*

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 4:1-11

**Scripture Reading:** Exodus 16

Mat 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (2) And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

(3) And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." (4) But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

(5) Then the devil took him to the holy

city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple (6) 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.'" (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

(8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (9) And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (10) 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.'"

(11) Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

We have seen that Matthew is presenting us with Jesus effecting another exodus of His people from slavery into the Wilderness. And we

saw that Jesus is compared to Moses, presented here as really another “Moses” who, this time, succeeds in victoriously leading His people (that’s us!) out of slavery to sin, through temptation in the wilderness, and ultimately into the Promised Land (the new heavens and new earth).

This is why the Spirit led Him into the wilderness immediately after His baptism by John. Jesus is God’s Son. He is the true Israel (of which the elect are members) and in Him God’s plan of redemption is carried out successfully. These are reasons why Jesus did not simply come into this world, go right to the cross and die for our sins. No. Our salvation not only required atonement for our sins, it necessitated a perfectly righteous life lived in perfect obedience to the Law of God.

Last time we looked at the first temptation:

Mat 4:1-4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (2) And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. (3) And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." (4) But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

And we reminded ourselves that Israel under Moses, in the wilderness, failed at this same temptation. They grumbled when they got hungry. They grumbled against the Lord. They would not even obey Him when manna came from heaven, but insisted on gathering it on the Sabbath. It is not surprising then that the devil hits Jesus with this same test. This time, it didn’t work.

Also remember that Matthew is presenting Jesus to us as the second Adam, doing what the first Adam should have done. Christ, like the first Adam, is the head of the race of people represented by Him. In Adam, all fell and all died. In Christ, all are made alive. Therefore what you are reading about here in this temptation account is nothing less than *Jesus our Lord, our Adam, working out our salvation for us*. There is no other Savior. No other way of being put right with God except by being “in Christ” by faith.

And then we come to the second temptation – the devil tries again:

Mat 4:5-7 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple (6) 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." (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, '**You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.**'"

Israel under Moses put the Lord to the test:

1Co 10:7-11 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." (8) We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. (9) **We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,** (10) nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. (11) Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

And again:

Heb 3:7-11 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, (9) **where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.** (10) Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' (11) As I swore in

my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

What does this mean? What is it to put the Lord to the test? Let's look at two passages that nail it down for us:

Deu 6:16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.

At Massah. What happened at Massah? We have already heard Exodus 16, the record of the Lord providing the people with manna. Now, listen to the very next chapter, Exodus 17, which is the account of the incident at Massah:

Exo 17:1-7 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"

(3) But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (4) So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people?"

They are almost ready to stone me." (5) And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

(6) Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (7) And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, **and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"**

So what is this testing of the Lord? Listen to Psalm 78 and then we will sum it up:

Psa 78:16-21 He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers. (17) Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert. (18) **They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved.** (19) **They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?"** (20) He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?" (21) Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled

against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel,

THIS is the very kind of sin that the devil is working to get Jesus to commit. It had worked with the Israelites the first time around, why not try it again, you see. But Jesus does not fall for it.

Matthew 4:5-7 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple (6) 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.'" (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, '**You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.**'"

Let's state it this way:

*Putting the Lord to the test is to have an evil, unbelieving heart that refuses – no matter how often or how gloriously the Lord keeps His promises, provides good things, protects from enemies – ...a heart that never believes His Word and trusts Him. Putting the Lord to the test is to keep on demanding that the Lord prove Himself. It is a heart that keeps questioning God even after being repeatedly shown God's power and goodness and faithfulness.*

This is what Jesus meant in this confrontation with wicked people:

Mat 12:38-42 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." (39) But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. (40) For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

(41) The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

(42) The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

See it? Testing the Lord is a most wicked sin, often leading to reprobation. It is, we might say, "knowing unbelief." Knowing God's Word is truth. Knowing God is God. Knowing, yet demanding more proof. By that phrase "evil and adulterous generation," Jesus was lumping these religious leaders together with the

unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness.

This sin, this testing of the Lord, is very much akin to the unpardonable sin, if not identical with it. Knowing, yet refusing to believe. Demanding more, even though the Lord has already given a mountain of evidence. You see it in Hebrews 6-

Heb 6:4-8 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (7) For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. (8) But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Let's think very, very carefully about this matter of testing the Lord. First of all, we must all confess that at one time or another WE have been tempted to this thing. In the middle of a trial of some kind. In some type of suffering or grievous time, we questioned, we

challenged, we doubted. And there will probably be times in our lives when this temptation will come again. *But faith always gets the victory!* God's Word warns us to take care that we do not yield to this temptation.

But in the case of an evil, unbelieving heart, an unregenerate heart that knows full well the Lord is good and faithful, a person who has seen and felt and tasted this goodness and faithfulness, but who then still insists on more, more, more from the Lord – that is a different matter from a true saint being tempted in these things.

Have you not seen people like this? People who experienced tremendous blessings from the Lord. Perhaps recovery from some possibly fatal disease, or some providential protection, or God's faithful provision of food and shelter and money, yet they do not give thanks. They want more. They grumble. Always grumbling. Always doubting. The Lord can never ever give them enough. THAT is the sin of testing the Lord.

In contrast:

Heb 11:1-6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (2) For by it the people of old received their commendation. (3) By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of

God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (4) By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (5) By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. (6) And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Finally this morning, let's be certain that we take careful note of this:

***The devil's temptations of Christ all entailed him quoting and perverting Scripture.***

That is to say, the devil is rather predictable. He prefers His time-proven tactics of evil. It worked for him in Eden that first time around:

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Understand? *Indeed, hath God said...?* And that is precisely what he is doing here with Jesus – “Hasn’t God said this....?” Then he twists it and misapplies it. Specifically the devil in this second temptation is quoting from the Psalms:

Mat 4:6 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.'"

Here it is in the Psalm:

Psa 91:11-12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. (12) On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

But God’s Word never contradicts itself. If the Lord has said that we are not to put Him to the test, but are simply by faith to believe and obey His Word, then to throw Himself off the high place would be a wicked sin – *you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*

There is a bit of humor here, or at least I suppose what we might call irony. Listen again to Psalm 91:

Psa 91:11-16 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in

all your ways. (12) On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. (13) **You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.** (14) "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. (15) When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. (16) With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

The devil seems to have stopped short in his quotation of Psalm 91! The very next verse speaks of God’s faithful One trampling the serpent underfoot, treading on the adder. This is no doubt an allusion to the Messianic promise given waaaay back in Genesis 3 that the Seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

And this is the very thing Jesus was doing there in the wilderness for YOU and for ME. For His people. He was smashing the head of that old serpent the devil so that WE might be set free:

Heb 2:11-15 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, (12) saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." (13) And again, "I

will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." (14) Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.