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The Gospel According to Matthew

I Will be Like the Most High – Satan's Lust for Worship

March 4, 2018

Sermon Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 14:3-23

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.

Remember again that Jesus, the Son of God, is our Adam as he faces these temptations. He is conquering Satan for His people, succeeding where the

first Adam and the first Israel failed. When it comes to this matter of idolatry (the subject of the very first commandment) Israel very quickly yielded to sin:

Exo 32:1-8 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (2) So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." (3) So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. (4) And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" (5) When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." (6) And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. (7) And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted

themselves. (8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"

They had grumbled about food. They had tested the Lord. All this in spite of having seen the Lord's powerful deliverance from Egypt. And then they worshipped the calf they made.

Let's consider verse 8 again and perhaps indulge in a bit of thoughtful speculation:

(8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Just as the Lord took Moses to the mountain and showed him His glory, instructing him in His law, so this evil mimicker the devil does something similar as he plays the role of god. "Look at my high authority. Look at my glory. Worship me and all this can be yours. You will be my messiah king. But of course, you will bow to me."

This was a real temptation. As a real human being, Christ really felt that temptation and thought he could not sin as God, he could have sinned as

Adam. This is a mystery bound up in the Person of Christ, but we can be assured that – listen to Hebrews state it:

Heb 4:15 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.

How many people have made the wrong choice down through history? The world conquerors who craved to rule the world. The billionaires today who can't have enough and devote their lives to economic conquest. You see it in religion as well – people building towers of Babel and claiming they are doing the Lord's work, all the while really seeking power and glory for themselves.

Now, was this an empty offer? That is to say (we know it was deceitful) were the kingdoms of the world his to give? I think that we can say, "yes." Because when the first Adam fell and obeyed the serpent, Adam lost Eden. Christ's redemption is about bringing Eden back again, removing the curse, destroying the devil, and making all things new.

(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."

The result? Victory. Righteousness. Salvation for us. God's plan of redemption moves on.

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

It is just as James writes:

Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

And Paul:

1Co 10:13-14 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (14) Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Satan and Idolatry

Let's think further about this matter of the devil and idolatry. We know that Satan's fundamental goal is to be like the Most High. To be god. To be worshipped. We see it in the lawless one, the antichrist:

2Th 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God....

2Th 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, (10) and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (11) Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, (12) in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

All false religion in this world, all of it that has ever existed, has the devil at the root of it. You see this in Scripture:

1Co 10:14-22 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (15) I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. (16) The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (17) Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one

bread. (18) Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? (19) What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20) No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. (21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (22) Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

There is also a reference to demons and idolatry in Deuteronomy and in the Psalms:

Deu 32:16-17 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. (17) They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.

Psa 106:37-39 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; (38) they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. (39) Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the whore in their deeds.

Just as Jesus would have been worshipping Satan if He had yielded in this third temptation, so everyone who pursues false religion worships the devil.

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

You have heard people ask, “how can I find a good church?” Scripture’s answer to this question is simple: “test to see what spirit lies behind it.” Either the Holy Spirit or the devil is animating every single visible entity that calls itself a church. The test is, “what is the object of the worship there?” And one very telling sign of a false spirit (ie, Satan) is *where the glory is directed and what its nature is*.

Consider for example, the devil showing Christ “the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” What was that “glory”? Well, it was the magnificence of the Tower of Babel. It was man-glorious. Glory that is glory as measured in the eyes of man.

- Wealth
- Power (size)
- External beauty
- A philosophy that makes sense to the flesh (popularity)

Rom 1:21-23 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

See it? It is not the glory of God that characterizes Satan’s religions, but an earthly glory which is directed at man, and then ultimately to Satan. Don’t be deceived by the “glory” and pomp the devil’s religions put in front of you.

1Co 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. (2) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, (4) and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

It is not paranoia or exaggeration to conclude that much of what puts itself off today as Christianity is in fact the counterfeit, idolatrous at heart, whose spirit is the devil. Just as was true of

Israel in the wilderness, so it is today – all who claim to belong to Christ but who are actually unregenerate inevitably pursue and promote idol worship.

1Co 10:1-12 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, (2) and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, (3) and all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

(5) Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

(6) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

(7) 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.** (12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Conclusion

Think very, very carefully about these things. About the tactics of the devil and the form of the temptations he uses. You can be very sure that *he is going to offer you counterfeit glory if you will only worship him*. He will even let you keep calling yourself a Christian. He will be happy to permit you to continue "going to church." But if you yield to him, if you bow down to him, your title of "Christian" will be false and your "church" will be a counterfeit.

Who will you serve? What answer will you give to Christ?

Joh 6:64-69 But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) (65) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." (66) After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (67) So

Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" (68) Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, (69) and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."