

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MATTHEW LESSON 2 **(Chapter 4)**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“It is written..., It is written..., It is written...” (Mt. 4:4,7,10). Welcome to our study of Matthew 4 (how to overcome temptation). Matthew 4 introduces us to a session in the life of Christ that ought to give each of us tremendous strength. Here, Jesus begins His personal ministry, but as He does, Satan tempts Him sorely in order to try to get Him to fall away and not accomplish all the good that God had planned for Him. As we think about the idea of temptation, we need to realize that this is something that is very practical and relevant for each one of us. In fact, the realization that Satan **is** going to tempt us is something that each of faces every day. In James 1:2-4, James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James urged us to count it a joy when we are tempted because it **is** going to happen—and we need to be ready for it. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul told Timothy, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” Paul did not say “might” or “may.” Rather, he said that we **will** suffer persecution. In Matthew 26:41, Jesus warned His disciples, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” In Luke 8:13, in the parable of the sower, one of the reasons that some of the seed did not flourish was because of temptation and the things of this world that drowned out the seed. So, James said in James 1:12, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Yes, we are going to face temptation. The devil is going to do everything possible to cause us to sin. In fact, I would suggest that right now the devil is actively trying to tempt each one of us. In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus said to Peter, “The Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you.’” Right then, Satan was plotting about how to use Peter against Jesus so he could use Peter for **his** purposes.

Job is also a good example of how the devil is actively plotting against the righteous. In Job 1:7, we learn that Satan, when he came into the presence of God, was asked, “From where do you come?” He responded, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” He was going to and fro upon the Earth in order to find people whom he could cause to fall away from God. Think, too, of the words of 1 Peter 5:8, where Peter said, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Satan is actively trying to tempt each one of us.

But that ought to come as no surprise to us, because throughout Bible history Satan had tried to tempt God’s servants of old in many ways. For example, think of David, who was a great king and an important part of God’s messianic plan. Yet David was tempted when he saw Bathsheba on the rooftop across from his palace. He committed adultery and murder, and he lost his son because of it. Satan used that temptation to cause David to sin. Think also about Job. There was no one on Earth about whom the Bible speaks as being as righteous as Job except for Jesus Christ. Job was an upright and blameless man, yet

Satan was allowed to tempt him and cause him to lose everything he had. Satan still tempts men in such a fashion today. Think about Peter. Peter was tempted by Satan, and he denied the Lord three times. Satan no doubt tempted and tried Jesus sorely in Matthew 4, as we will see in this lesson.

Since temptation is a reality, then we today need to learn how to deal with and overcome temptation. In Matthew 4, the text gives us three motivations to overcome temptation. When we are tempted and tried, what can we do to overcome that temptation? In Matthew 4:1-11, we are going to learn what we can do. In Matthew 4:1-2 especially, we learn that the first way to overcome temptation is to spend our time and our lives preparing for temptation. Notice what the Bible says in Matthew 4:1-2—“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.” Jesus had spent time previously in His life getting ready to overcome temptation. If we will follow that example, and take the good advice of Jesus as seen here, it will help us overcome temptation when we face it. Temptation ought not to come to us as a surprise. We ought to know that it **is** going to happen, and we ought to spend time preparing for it. How did Jesus spend time preparing? And how can we spend time preparing today?

We first need to learn how to grow in Christ. We must grow as Christians, and we must grow as Jesus did. In Luke 2:52, the Bible says that Christ “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Jesus—because of His righteous lifestyle and because He wanted to please His Father—was one Who grew spiritually. We will never be able to overcome temptation if we remain babes in Christ. Until we decide to grow up and mature in Christ, we will never be able to grow spiritually or overcome temptation. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:18 that Christians are to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of our Lord and Savior. Peter described it this way in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” A baby cannot handle the problems of life; but a mature adult can. That is the idea for us as Christians. We should not remain as babes in Christ, but should mature. Did you ever wonder why the church in Corinth had so many problems? The text of 1 Corinthians 3:1-5 informs us that the Christians were still babes in Christ. They had not matured, and as a result there was bickering, complaining, and following various individuals. When temptation came, they were not ready to handle it. Hebrews 5:12ff. is probably one of the sternest rebukes in all the Bible. The writer of Hebrews said, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” The writer’s concern was that the Christians should have been eating spiritual meat, but they were not adequately trained in the Word of righteousness. If we are going to overcome temptation, we must learn to grow in Christ. We must stop acting like a spiritual baby, and must mature. We must learn that, with God’s help, we can face the problems of life.

A second way in which we can spend time in our life (as Jesus did) preparing for temptation is by being about our Father’s business. Once we decide to grow in Christ, then we need to learn to spend time doing God’s will. In Luke 2:49, as Mary and Joseph were looking for Him because He had wandered away from the crowd at the tender age of twelve years old, Jesus said this when they found Him: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Jesus, even as a youngster, was about His Father’s business. He was sitting at the feet of teachers and discussing the Law with them. There is a practical lesson here. Once we decide to grow in Christ, we need to engulf or immerse ourselves in the Father’s business. Here is why that is important in regard to preparing to avoid temptation. As we are about our Father’s business and are doing God’s will,

it will be much more difficult for Satan to tempt us because if we are busy doing what God wants us to do, then Satan will not have as much of a foothold in our lives. As we do God's will, then we learn what we can do to defeat Satan when he tempts us. We need to be working in the kingdom, and be concerned about things in God's kingdom rather than things in this world. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that we need to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord." If we are immersed in God's work, and if we are doing God's will, then we will not have time for many of the times in this world that tempt us. Remember Revelation 14:13? John wrote, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." If we are busy working, we will not have time thinking about many of the things that can tempt us. The writer of Proverbs put it like this in Proverbs 16:3, "Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established." Have you ever thought about what that verse is teaching? If we are busy "committing our works to the Lord" by staying busy in the kingdom, then we will not be thinking about things that we ought not to. We will not be dwelling on things that might tempt us, which means that Satan will not be able to find a foothold in our lives as he would like to. So, we need to mature spiritually as Christ did. And we need to be busy about our Father's business.

And third, we, like Jesus, need to know God's holy Word. In Matthew 4:4,7,10, Jesus overcame Satan by saying three different times, "It is written..., It is written..., It is written..." Every time Satan tempted Him, Jesus said, "It is written..." Satan said, "If You are hungry, turn these stones into food." Or, "All that you see around You can be Yours." Or, "God said that He would not allow You to be hurt, so throw Yourself to the ground to see if You will be harmed." But Jesus said, "It is written..., It is written..., It is written..." Every time Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus knew the Scriptures well enough to recall them and say, "No, here is what God said. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." There is a very practical principle here for overcoming temptation. We have to know the Scriptures well enough to be able to know what God wants us to do when Satan tempts us. And we have to have a good enough heart to be ready to do those things that God wants us to do.

A lot is said in the Scriptures about studying God's Word. For example, Psalm 119:11 says, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." The psalmist understood the importance of knowing the Word of God so that when he was tempted, if he had that Word in his heart, and if he loved the Lord and wanted to do what was right, then that Word would come forth when temptations arose. Scripture would also arise, and the Scripture should defeat that temptation if our hearts are really right with God. We need to know the Word of God. But we cannot know the Word of God without getting ready to know the Word of God or without studying the Bible. We do not automatically learn the Bible; it takes time to do that. A person must spend time studying the Scriptures. This is what Paul said to the young evangelist Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Think of the example of Job. He was tempted; but how was he able to endure all of that temptation? Job said, "I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Job was a man who loved the Lord and His Word. As a result, when he was tempted he recalled what God had said. Acts 17:11 teaches us that we need to search the Scriptures to see if what we are being taught is true to the Word of God. We must be good students of the Word so that, like Jesus, we know what God wants us to do.

There also is a second way in which we can overcome temptation. Not only do we need to spend our lives preparing for temptation, but we also need to realize exactly how Satan works. Satan works in three ways. If we are going to overcome him, then we need to know the methods he uses to tempt us. As Solomon said, "There is nothing new under the sun." Satan still uses the same methods that he used on Jesus, even though the specific details may be somewhat different. For example, Satan may tempt us with the lust of the flesh. He tried to tempt Jesus in a fleshly way because Jesus was hungry. Look at what is said in Matthew 4:3-4 regarding the temptation of Jesus, "Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."'" Satan does not "play fair." Jesus had been fasting, and He had been in the wilderness forty days without food. Jesus was hungry; so Satan seized upon that weakness. He "played dirty" and said "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" to satisfy Your fleshly desires. Satan tried to use what he knew would be a temptation to Christ. He tried, in essence, to get Jesus to deny God. But Jesus said, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." Satan wanted Jesus to focus on the here and now (the fleshly side of things). Often we are tempted with the here and now. "I'm hungry, I need self-gratification, and I need it **now**." Sometimes that's the way we think. Satan tried to use that against Jesus. He will try to use the same thing against us. All of us have different weaknesses—whether it is lust of the flesh in a sensual sense, or whether it is the lust of the flesh in regard to addiction like alcohol or tobacco. Or, it may be lust of the flesh related to food. Satan wants to throw something at us and say, "Here is instant gratification. Take hold of it." But we need to remember that Man does not live by bread alone. It is not the "instant gratifications" that can help us. The important thing is to remember that man survives by the Word of God. If there is not a morsel of food left in this world, but the Word of God remains, we will be OK because even if we lose our lives in service to God, but we remain faithful to Him and to His Word, we will be all right because we stayed true to God. Of course, the Scriptures teach that we will not starve to death. But Satan wants us to think that we will. Satan uses our own weaknesses against us in a dirty, dirty way.

We also need to realize that Satan works not only through the lust of the flesh, but also through the pride of life. Satan tempted Jesus in ways that many people would find very tempting. Notice what Satan used to tempt Jesus in Matthew 4:5-7.

"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."'"

Satan knew what Jesus' mission and goal were in this life. Why do you think he took Him to the holy city and to the pinnacle of the temple? It was because these places were where the kingdom of Christ would begin. Jesus was going to build His church (Mt. 16:18). It was going to start in Jerusalem. And He would be seen as a king. So, here He is on the top of the temple, and Satan quotes two Old Testament passages relating to the fact that God would not allow Jesus to be hurt. Then Satan says basically, "If you are the Son of God, prove it! Let's see just how much God loves you. Let's see if the Scriptures are really true. Jump off, and let's see if God will save you." Sometimes Satan uses these same types of temptations against us today. He uses the pride of life to trick us into seeing if God really loves us. We know, of course, that God **does**! Satan tried to use this against Jesus, and

he will try to use it against us. And here is another important thing to realize. Satan knows Scripture. He may use Scripture in a way that is not right. He may quote it out of context. He may try to use that against us by causing us to hear people who are not teaching the truth so that we are tempted to bring error into our lives. We need to realize that Satan knows Scripture, as is evident from the way he tried to use it against Jesus. The way we can prevent him from using Scripture against us is to know it better than he does. Jesus did. Jesus knew the Scriptures better than Satan. He knew that Satan was merely trying to tempt Him—which is why He said, “It is written....” Look at the Old Testament passage from Deuteronomy 6:16 that Jesus quoted. Jesus is being tempted to throw Himself off the temple, and what does He say? “You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah.” The idea is that the people of Israel, during their wilderness wanderings, tempted God. They asked Him, “Have you brought us out here to starve? We would have been better off by the fleshpots in Egypt. What are You going to do—let us die here?” They had seen miracles. God had opened the Red Sea for them. And now they were worried about food?! Oftentimes it is such difficulties that cause us to doubt God. It is the pride of life that makes us fall away. Satan may sometimes—by the temptations he presents to us—tempt us to think or do things that are not right. But we need to realize that it is not our human pride on which we need to focus. Instead, we need to focus on doing the will of God and not tempting God.

There is a third way in which the devil tempted Jesus—through the lust of the eyes (that is, the things that He could see, and the beauty of this life). Look at Matthew 4:8-10.

“Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’”

Satan showed Jesus all the things around Him, and offered to give them to Him. But could Satan really do that? It is doubtful that he could, but he certainly wanted Jesus to think that he could. To Jesus, this was probably one of the weaker temptations because, in reality, those things were Christ’s anyway. He had created all of those things, and He owned them all. Satan tried to use the lust of the eye to cause Jesus to be tempted. While this may not have tempted Jesus too much, I believe that this is one of the most powerful ways that Satan tempts people today. Satan promises people “the world,” but he can never really give it to them. He promises people happiness through things and pleasures, but they never receive happiness. It is so pathetic to see people spending their lives seeking after money, cars, homes, and other beautiful things—when somehow they think that these things will make them happy. The devil has done a good job convincing them that they will. But history proves that happiness is never found in “things.” It is a great temptation to think like that, though. James said, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4). When we desire the things of this world that will one day pass away, and when we desire those things more than God, then we have become God’s enemies. Satan, in essence, tries to make us worship him through the things that we possess. Have you ever put those facts together? If our lives are spent in worldliness and in the lust of the eyes, then we are simply bowing down and worshiping Satan. I do not think that a lot of people understand the connection between those two things. But the connection is there. If we spend our lives in pursuit of the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh, we are bowing down at the altar of Satan to worship him.

Look at what Jesus says as He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:13—“You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.” The idea from Scripture is that Jesus knew that God was the only One worthy of worship and service. Today, we need to

realize that, yes, we will have temptations. We may be tempted by the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, or the lust of the eyes. But none of that is worth giving up God. We need to know the Scriptures well enough to recall what God says about those things.

Here is a third point. Not only must we spend our lives preparing for temptation. And not only must we realize how Satan works, but we also must realize the rewards of overcoming temptation. When we overcome temptation, there are great rewards to be had for the Christian. Notice what Matthew 4:11 has to say about Jesus' reward as He overcame these temptations. Scripture says that after the final temptation, "The devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him." One good thing to know is that temptation will not last forever. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God "will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." Yes, temptation will occur. But we need to know that there will come an end to that temptation. And Satan will flee. But we also need to know that temptations can make us strong in The Faith. This is hard for us to realize, but we ought to be thankful and have joy in our temptations. James said, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (Jas. 1:2-3). When we think about temptations, let us be sure to think about how our temptations can grow stronger in our faith. Let's also realize that during our temptation, we can make the devil flee if we resist him. Of course, we must not be overconfident. Luke 4:13 says, "When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time." Yes, the devil will cease his temptation. But he will "go back to the drawing board," so to speak, to find a better way to tempt us. When temptation ends, do not think that it is gone forever. It will come again. But the devil can be made to flee from us. He is afraid of Christians and those who do what is right. Do you know what one of the devil's qualities is? He is a coward. He will flee. Temptation will not last forever. The devil may return again, but ultimately we can overcome him. And if we do, Heaven will be our reward. Angels came and ministered to Jesus. We are not suggesting that the same thing will happen for us today. But we do know that there is going to be a heavenly comfort for those who live faithfully to the Lord.

If you are not a Christian, you need to obey the Gospel. Believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Be willing to repent and change your life. Confess that He is the Christ, and then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. That is how you begin overcoming temptation, just as the people did in Acts 2:38. But if you are a child of God, and if the devil has been having his way with you, then you need to spend more time studying how Satan works and coming to realize that there are wonderful rewards for overcoming temptation. May God help each of us to overcome the devil.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW LESSON 2 (CHAPTER 4)

1. What is the overall theme of Matthew 4?
2. According to Matthew 4:4,7,10, how did Jesus Christ overcome temptation?
3. According to 2 Timothy 3:12, why should Christians not be surprised when temptation or persecution comes their way?
4. In James 1:2-4, what did James have to say about how Christians should view temptations that arrive in their lives?
5. What important point do we find in 1 Peter 5:8 that can help us understand the origin and nature of the temptations we will have to endure in this life?
6. What information is contained in 2 Peter 3:18 that should help Christians be able to overcome temptation?
7. In 1 Peter 2:2, what did Peter urge every Christian to do?
8. Hebrews 5:12ff. is very likely one of the sternest rebukes in all the Bible. What is contained in this passage that makes it so serious in nature?
9. According to Luke 2:49, what did Jesus insist upon doing that was able to help Him endure temptation?
10. When the devil tempted Christ in Matthew 4, he used three different means (or modes) of temptation. What were they?
11. According to 2 Timothy 2:15, what should every Christian strive to do?
12. In Job 23:12, Job said that he treasured something "more than his necessary food." What was it?
13. According to James 4:4, what happens to us when we become "friends with the world"?
14. What important piece of information is contained in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that can help every Christian who is tempted by the devil?
15. What important teaching can be found in Luke 4:13 in regard to how Satan works to tempt us today?
16. When Satan asked Jesus to turn stones into bread, what type of temptation was he using against Christ?
17. When Satan offered to give Jesus everything that He could see around Him, what type of temptation was he using against Christ?
18. What is the difference between "the lust of the flesh" and "the lust of the eyes"?