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Led Up Into the Wilderness (Matthew 4)

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Jesus is tempted in the wilderness and calls his first disciples.

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Transcript

Welcome back to this, the fourth in my series on the Gospel of Matthew. Today we're looking at chapter 4 of the Gospel, in which Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and wherein he calls his first disciples. Each of the three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record the events of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness.

They all do so in slightly different ways. They're framing it within their broader narrative and within the more immediate context in different ways. They're also introducing it with different expressions.

And then, finally, the ordering of the temptations and the events that are involved in the temptations are recorded differently. So if we're going to understand Matthew, it might be worth thinking about the different ways that this story was and could be told, to consider why Matthew chose to tell the story in the particular way that he did. So first of all, let's consider some of the differences between them.

First of all, in Matthew, it's introduced with the expression, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness. In Mark, Jesus is cast out by the Spirit into the wilderness. In Luke, Jesus being filled with the Spirit is led in the Spirit into the wilderness.

Now, each of these Gospels are recording the same fundamental events. Jesus, at the instigation of the Spirit, is brought into the wilderness. But they're recording it in ways that bring different aspects of biblical background and other notions of how the wilderness space is operating within the framework of the story.

They're bringing those things to the foreground. So Jesus is led up into the wilderness in the case of Matthew. That's language that we might find in association with the Exodus in places like Isaiah 63.

Israel is led up by the pillar of cloud and fire as God leads them up into the wilderness and towards the promised land. You might think in the case of Mark, the wilderness is not somewhere that you're led up into, that you're going to pass through. Rather, it's a realm outside.

It's the realm you're cast out into. And in that case, it's a different way of seeing the wilderness as a space. It's language that might be associated with exile.

Israel cast out of the land. Or we might connect it with stories like the story of David fleeing from King Saul. David flees and ends up wandering in the wilderness with the wild beasts.

In the case of Luke, there's a different language that's used. Jesus is filled with the Spirit and he's led in the Spirit into the wilderness. That's language that we'd associate with prophetic journey narratives.

It's the language that we find in somewhere like the book of Ezekiel. The hand of the Lord was upon me and I was led in the Spirit to the Valley of Dry Bones, for instance, or to the high mountain, or later on to various extremities of the temple. Which helps us to understand, in part, why Luke tells the temptations in the order that he does.

Also, Luke is drawing upon that background of Ezekiel more generally in the way that he's telling his story. Jesus is baptized, being around 30 years of age. He's by the river.

He's with the people who have gone out of the land, who have recognized the need to be restored to the land. To cross over the Jordan and to re-enter the land in some sort of symbolic way in the ministry of John the Baptist. And so, in that condition, he's with them.

And he's about 30 years of age. And then he sees the heavens opened and the Spirit descending in the form of a dove. Now, when you read that description, it might bring to mind the beginning of the book of Ezekiel.

Because in the beginning of the book of Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel has a very similar experience. It begins with, it's around the 30th year, and Ezekiel is by the Sheba Canal. In the 30th year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the Sheba Canal, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

And so there's this great vision of a chariot and God's throne chariot. And then later on in the chapters that follow, chapters 2 and 3, he's called and commissioned and he's given his role as a prophet. And he's given a scroll.

He has to eat that scroll. And that scroll will be his vocation that he speaks forth. He speaks forth God's word from within himself.

Now, is that theme taken up in Luke? I think it is. Luke tells his story in a way that's framed by what immediately follows it. So there are a series of three temptations in Luke.

And notice that they are told in a different order from that of Matthew. Matthew begins with turning stones into bread. Then Jesus is taken up onto the pinnacle of the temple and asked to cast himself down.

And then he goes to the high mountain. In Luke, Jesus is told to turn a stone into bread. Notice stone, singular, not plural.

And then he's taken up to the up. We're not told it's a mountain. And then he sees the kingdoms of the earth.

And then he's taken to the pinnacle or the wing of the temple. And at that point, he's called to cast himself down. Now, his answer to the first temptation is man shall not live by bread alone.

He doesn't complete the citation as we see in Matthew. In Matthew, Jesus says man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And what we see in Luke is that the conclusion of that citation is not present.

But yet it is present, at least alluded to, in what follows. Jesus preaches in the synagogue at Nazareth. He's handed the scroll.

He takes the scroll, opens the scroll to the prophet Isaiah, part of the prophet Isaiah that he's reading and talks about the spirit of the Lord being upon me, etc. And he declares his vocation from within the scroll. So these are the words of the scroll.

But the words are coming from within Christ himself. He's talking about these words, not just the words of some character of the servant within the prophet's writing. But these are his words.

The scroll has become part of who Christ is. And then he takes the scroll and he hands it

back. And the people marvel at the gracious words that proceed from out of his mouth.

Now Luke, by framing his account in the way that he has, has encouraged us to read the story of Jesus' temptations against the backdrop of the story of Ezekiel. And what we do when we see that, we'll see the order of the temptations are similar to the order of events of Ezekiel. Ezekiel is taken to the Valley of Dry Bones, a sort of wilderness.

Then he's taken to, and the bones are made alive. There's a transformation that takes place. Then he's taken to the high mountain and then he's taken to various extremities of the temple.

It's the same order as we see within the temptations of Christ. Satan is taking him on a false apocalypse, a false revelation of how things could be if he followed the way of Satan rather than the way that God has set before him. Likewise, we see a similar order in the book of Revelation.

Now when we look at the events in Nazareth, we'll see the frame there is, again, there's a diptych. So there are parallels between these two frames. This frame of the temptations and this frame of the events in Nazareth.

Jesus will not turn the stone into bread. He says, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word. He doesn't actually say that second part.

But what we see is that second part is present within Jesus taking of the scroll. What is his food and drink? To do the will of the one who sent him. And so as he takes that scroll, he implicitly takes it into himself like the prophet Ezekiel and declares forth that word.

And the people marvel at the gracious words that proceed from out of his mouth. It's a very strange way to talk about speaking. But he's talking about speaking, it talks about speaking that way because it's alluding to the prophecy from Deuteronomy.

Or that statement from Deuteronomy against the backdrop of the prophecy of Ezekiel. Now, do we see any other parallels to the temptations of Christ in Luke? Yes, we do. We see the immediate thing that follows that is Jesus saying to the people that they will say among themselves, Physician, heal yourself.

Do these great miracles for us. Serve us and we might serve your kingdom project. And what we see is Jesus refusing that.

And there is a similar temptation to the temptation to serve Satan. All the kingdoms of the earth will be given to him if he'll only bow down. A similar thing.

If he will only serve his fellow countrymen, they will serve him. But Jesus resists that too. And then finally they seek to cast him down from a high place.

And he walks away in the midst of them. Now, that's a similar thing to Jesus casting

himself down from the wing of the temple. And we'll see why a bit more later on.

But these help us in the framing of the narrative to read what's taking place. Because there are two stories juxtaposed with each other. And in that juxtaposition we're having some unpacking of what the temptations mean.

What I think we see, among other things, in that juxtaposition is that Jesus is being diverted from his mission. Or at least that's the attempt of the devil to divert Jesus from his mission. These aren't just regular temptations of our human sins that lead us, our sinful natures that lead us from one direction or another away from what God would have us do.

This is a very concerted and targeted effort to divert Jesus from his true calling. To divert Jesus from the way of the cross. He's offering Jesus rule, kingdoms, apart from the way of the cross.

He's offering Jesus an easy way out. Now, as Jesus is led into the wilderness, this is, as I've noted, Exodus language. Israel is tempted for 40 days in the wilderness.

And we're seeing a similar thing taking place here. Jesus is tested. After 40 days in the wilderness he's tested by Satan.

Israel was tested as God's son in the wilderness. Israel is my firstborn son. That's how God describes Israel in chapter 4 of Exodus.

And God tested his son in the wilderness to see whether his son would be obedient. Here we have the same sort of thing playing out. Note, one of the other differences between the account in Matthew and the accounts in Mark and Luke is the reference to 40 days and 40 nights.

The other ones reference 40 days, but this references 40 days and nights. Which might recall the story of Moses in chapter 34 verse 28 of Exodus and Deuteronomy chapter 9 verse 9. Where Moses fasts for 40 days and 40 nights. Jesus is a new Moses.

He's also in some ways like a new Elijah. Elijah goes for 40 days and nights without eating in the wilderness after he has food provided for him by the angel. And he goes towards the Mount of God and deals with God there.

So there are different ways of telling stories that bring different aspects of Old Testament background to the foreground. So there are things that you can think of in the Old Testament that would be good count. That would be fairly good.

If you're thinking about some background, these are the sort of cases that would come to mind. So Adam and Eve in the garden. I think that there is some degree of playing upon that.

Think about the different forms of temptation. It's the forbidden fruit is good for food. Delight the eyes desirable to make one wise.

In some ways that parallels with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. So good for food, lust of the flesh, feeding your hunger. Lust of the eyes, that thing that's shiny that you want.

And then pride of life, this desire to have a station that has not yet been given to you. That pride to rise up and place yourself above others. So those sorts of temptations are seen within the garden.

And we can see similar things presented to Christ here. Forbidden food. He's hungry.

He needs food. He's not eaten for 40 days and he has a terrible hunger. And so he's offered the opportunity to turn these stones into bread.

And by doing that, he would feed that hunger. Then he's told to, offered the opportunity to move beyond the protected realm. To take the easy way out.

Not to take the route that God has given to him, that's sheltered by God's wings. But to go out and take his own route. That's something that's desirable to his eyes.

Something that would be appealing to him. Not just his appetites, but something beyond that. It's the most appealing route to take.

And then finally, to claim authority that's not been given to him yet. He's going to be given all the kingdoms of the earth. All authority in heaven and earth is going to be given to him by his father.

And yet, that will require taking the route of the cross. It will require waiting. And he doesn't want to do that.

And so, or he may not want to do that. Adam did not want to wait. Adam and Eve wanted wisdom straight away.

They wanted the status to be like God's. Knowing good and evil. To have that authority as judges within the earth.

And that promise of the fruit that was desirable to make one wise. It would open your eyes. You would become like one of the gods.

You would rule within the world. That was the promise held out to them. And so within this, we're seeing Jesus going through a very similar series of temptations to that of Adam.

Now Luke brings this to the foreground even more when he presents the genealogy of

Christ. All the way back to Adam. And he presents it in a reverse order.

So you end up with the son of Adam, the son of God. And then you have Jesus presented if you are the son of God. So he's paralleled with Adam at that point.

Now Matthew is paralleling Jesus with Adam in a number of ways here. But he's doing so maybe in a slightly less pronounced a way as Luke is. We can think about Israel in the wilderness.

That's another aspect of Old Testament background that I've commented on and will comment on a bit more. Esau selling his birthright for food. David and Goliath, 40 days.

Goliath stands against Israel. David has been anointed by the Spirit as Jesus was anointed in his baptism. And then 40 days this great enemy stands against Israel.

And then he's defeated by David and crushed in his head. Think about the relationship between David and Saul. That David is not going to take the kingdom before the proper time.

He does not grasp it when he could do. He waits and he bides his time and God gives it to him in due time. That could be another background.

We talked about the background of Ezekiel. Think also of Nebuchadnezzar. I think that's part of what's going on in Mark.

It's a bit more subtle what's taking place there. But in Nebuchadnezzar's vision in chapter 4 of Daniel, he sees a Holy One come down from heaven. And the Holy One drives him out from among men.

And driven out from among men, he ends up living with the beasts as the Jew of heaven comes upon him for a period of time. And then he's restored to humanity later on. But it's a statement of God's authority over all the kingdoms.

Now what might be going on there, I think, is a judgment upon Israel and its kingdom. And Christ taking that upon himself. And he takes on the part of Nebuchadnezzar.

As John the Baptist has been preaching, as Nebuchadnezzar sees in his vision, the axe is laid to the root of the tree. This great tree is going to be brought down. John the Baptist has been preaching against the axe laid to the root of the trees.

And Jesus, summing up the people, identifying with the people, takes that upon himself. And goes out from among men. Dwells among the beasts.

And suffers the consequences of the pride of the people that have lifted themselves up, as Nebuchadnezzar did. Thinking himself the one that had all this great authority. No, he's going to humble himself.

And he will receive the authority from God. Not by vaunting himself over others. So all of these may be aspects of Old Testament background.

That the different gospel writers are playing with in very subtle and more musical ways. To bring certain things to our attention. And to throw certain aspects of the Old Testament background into sharper relief.

The tempter, note, is using God's words against Christ. He's using God's words, twisting them, and trying to use them to get his way. We saw the same sort of tactic being used in the Garden of Eden.

The deception of Eve, where there's a very subtle twisting of God's words. That insinuate that God is a God that's primarily defined by withholding good things from his children. That God is a God who will give his children stones rather than bread.

And that may be something similar here. Turn these stones into bread. Look what God has given you.

God has given you stones. You want bread. God is not a God who gives you good gifts.

Turn these stones, what God has given you, into bread. Now that may be part of what's going on. But there is fundamentally a temptation to abandon his mission and the way of the cross.

And the devil comes to him, as the devil tends to come to people, at their weakest points. He comes to Christ when he's hungry, he's not eaten for 40 days, and he has a terrible hunger at this point. Satan, also note, comes on the scene in person.

When Satan tempts people, he usually tempts people through their own flesh, through various other means, and instigating temptation in a less direct manner. Whereas here, Satan comes directly to Christ. And he challenges him on the basis of his identity as the Son of God.

If you are the Son of God. It's a conflict between spiritual powers. Note that in the beginning of this gospel, we've already seen a number of allusions to Christ's identity as the Son of God.

This is not necessarily divine language at this point. But there's something that's moving in that sort of direction. So we've seen the language of Emmanuel, God with us.

We've seen the language of, out of Egypt I have called my Son. Israel, as God's Son. Now Christ, as God's Son.

And then of course in the baptism. This is my beloved Son. It's language that recalls a number of events in the Old Testament.

It recalls Psalm 2 verse 7. It recalls things like the binding of Isaac. And that story in Genesis chapter 22. And so this is a very significant figure who's come on the scene.

And in the first part of the gospel, we'll see Jesus referred to as the Son of God on a number of occasions. Invariably from spiritual or heavenly sources. So voice coming from heaven, prophetic witness, or the voice of Satan himself or the demons.

They recognise who Christ is. Christ is this great champion who has come on the scene. He's the one who is in the divine council.

He's the one who rules and the one who has authority in that realm. And he's come down to earth to battle in person. And so Satan comes on the scene in person too.

There's a great conflict of spiritual powers coming about here. He knows who Jesus is. If you are the Son of God, Jesus is being challenged as the new king.

And as an Adamic figure. Adam was the Son of God. And David was the Son of God.

In the sense of being the king that was established. As I will be to him a father and he will be to me a son. That status of the Davidic king was an important part of the Davidic covenant.

That sonship relationship with God. And Jesus is a new David. He's a new Adam.

But he's something more than that. He is the one who is the Son. Not just a son.

He's the Son. Harrington suggested that the order of the temptations in Matthew. Is paralleled with some of the larger themes in Matthew.

Where you have a movement from miraculous feedings. And multiplication of the bread. And the fish.

And then the transfiguration. And then finally the conclusion. As Jesus is on the mountain.

And he's about to depart. And he has received all authority in heaven and on earth. There would seem to be some loose parallel to be observed there.

The central element I'm not so sure about. So I wouldn't put too much weight upon that. But there are other ways in which the gospel does return to this threefold pattern.

Note that Jesus withdraws from his disciples three times in chapter 26 to pray. And talking about being led into temptation. The danger of that.

Warning Peter at that point particularly. Peter of course is tested three times. That threefold temptation.

Threefold testing is important. Note the recurrence of these questions at the cross as well. And then at the end the confirmation.

Truly this was the Son of God. Spoken by the centurion. So the first occasion is in chapter 26 verse 63.

And the high priest stood up and said. Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him.

I adjure you by the living God. Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Now at that point Jesus is given the fundamental choice.

Is he going to accept the cup? Or is he going to reject it? Is he going to accept what God has put before him? Accept this judgment? Is he going to put himself in the position of being condemned by that court? Or is he going to opt out? Is he going to reject that statement? Is he going to deny who he is? And he doesn't. He accepts the calling that has been placed before him. There is a second one.

A second statement. Again note three statements concerning his identity as son. In chapter 27 verse 40.

Those who pass by deride at him, wagging their heads and saying. You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Save yourself.

If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. So again there is reference to the temple. And coming down from the cross.

Cast yourself down from the cross. And there I think we are having an allusion to the second temptation. The temptation to abandon the mission.

The temptation to in connection with the temple. That the temple be destroyed. Jesus is going to abandon the mission.

Go out from God's protective guidance. God's protective wings. And also importantly to remove his protective wings.

We will get into that in a moment. And then the next one is seen a few verses later. So also the chief priest with the scribes and elders mocked him saying.

He saved others. He cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel.

Let him come down now from the cross. And we will believe in him. He trusts in God.

Let God deliver him now if he desires him. For he said I am the Son of God. Note again it is a challenge about his kingdom.

This is a way that he will be believed. If he is going to come down from the cross.

Demonstrate his power and his strength.

They will accept him as the king of the Jews. And on those terms he will be recognised. His kingdom will be established.

But it won't be the way of the cross. It will be a way that requires following the way of Satan the tempter. This is a way of avoiding his calling.

Rather than actually submitting to it. So we can see threefold parallelism there. The choice between accepting what God had given him or not.

Accepting the way of the cross. And that pivotal moment is how does he respond to the charge of the high priest. The second one in reference to the temple and the temple being destroyed.

If you are the son of God come down from the cross. Cast yourself down. And that connection with the temple is important.

And then a reference to kingdom being the king. If you are truly the king we will believe you if you come down. If you prove your power.

And so we see there are ways in which this is a structuring device. That recurs later on in the gospel. Whether Harrington's suggestion is right or not.

These elements suggest that there is some sort of theme being followed through here. Jesus' identity then is at stake. And so we see him being tested if he is indeed the son of God.

And then at the end that identity being confirmed at the appropriate time. As he has died on the cross. As he has followed all this path through.

It's at that point. It seems a strange point to have it confirmed. But it's at that point.

Truly this was the son of God when he has died. Now that's not the point you would expect to find it. But it's very much in keeping with what's being discussed here.

This is what it looks like to be the true son. Now Jesus in some ways is like Moses. Moses had a hunger to enter into the land.

He wanted to enter into the land. He wanted to have that opportunity to see the place that God had been leading the people to for 40 years. He could not go into the land.

He was not permitted. He had to die. And the people then entered into the land.

There was the temptation to move out beneath God's wings. God's protective guidance. And to go into the land without God's permission.

He could have done that. That was a real temptation. And Moses pleads with God to allow him to enter into the land.

And he's forbidden. We see in Deuteronomy chapter 3 that this is something that he has earnestly sought. That good hill country in Lebanon.

But he can't. He's held out. He has to die.

In the same way, David wants the temple. He wants to build the temple. But he has to die.

And so I think a similar thing is happening with Christ here. Christ has to die. He can't just enter into the kingdom his own way.

Or he could do. He could rest that for himself as Adam did. But he doesn't.

He takes only what God has given to him. And as he follows that faithfully through, he proves himself to be a righteous, obedient son where the others had failed. Now, note the different temptations.

First of all, there's the temptation to turn stones into bread. Think about some of the background that that might be working upon. I think it's important to look at the answer that Jesus gives here.

Because I think it gives us a clue as to what background is being referred to. And how this statement might mean something. What this particular temptation might mean.

Jesus answers, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Where does that come from? That comes from Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 3. And in that surrounding passage, I think you get the fundamental background for what's happening to Jesus here. Reading from verse 1 of chapter 8 of Deuteronomy.

The whole commandment that I command you today, you shall be careful to do. That you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness.

Note the words that come up. Led, 40 years, wilderness. That he might humble you, testing you, test.

To know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger, hunger again. And fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know.

That he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone. But man lives by

every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you.

And your foot did not swell these 40 years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land. A land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs flowing out in the valleys and hills. A land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates.

A land of olive trees and honey. A land in which you will eat bread without scarcity. In which you will lack nothing.

A land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full. And you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given to you.

If you listen to that passage carefully, you'll see word after word reminding you of the story of Christ in the wilderness. Jesus is replaying that event and he's quoting this in response to the first temptation to alert us to that background. Note that when Jesus quotes the Old Testament or when the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament, often what they want you to do is not just pay attention to the specific citation in abstraction.

But to bring to mind the entire context in which that quotation comes. It helps you to understand exactly what aspect of biblical memory sheds light upon the present experience or the present event. Now, Jesus, as he's drawing attention to that, he's presenting himself as experiencing what Israel experienced.

Just as Israel was tested in the wilderness as a man tests his son, so Christ, as the son of God, was being tested in the wilderness that he might learn obedience, that he might learn what it is to live by the word of God. And God provided manna for his people in the wilderness. They wanted to return to the bread of Egypt, but God fed them manna, bread from heaven.

And this was a vexation for the Israelites because they really wanted the food of Egypt. But God gave them something different. God gave them wilderness food.

And as they ate that wilderness food, they'd be led to a land whose stones would be, it describes the stones of iron out of whose hills you can dig copper, a land you can eat bread without scarcity. This is a land that will give forth bread. This is a land, there are stones will be turned into bread.

But those stones are going to have to wait. You have to wait for God to give you this

land, not take what you want in the wilderness. Wait for the proper time.

And so Jesus, in his response to this temptation, is recognizing the parallel between his experience and that of the Israelites. He's recognizing the importance of waiting for what God will give. That God is a father who gives good gifts to his children.

If his children ask for bread, is he going to give them a stone? No. But you may have to wait for the bread, for the proper time. Submission to God's word and will is primary.

Bread is promised, but you must wait for it. Now also note that there is a broader change that's taking place in history. The dead stones of the law are being replaced by the bread of the word.

Jesus has the words of life. What Jesus speaks is not connected so much with things carved on tablets of stone, but words of eternal life that you can eat and live forever. And so Jesus is presented with the one as the one who is the bread from heaven, the one who will give something to eat.

And that what Jesus gives to eat, the words that he provides will enable you to live forever. And that contrast there, I think, is important for understanding part of the underlying theme that's at work here. James Jordan's series on the test temptations of Jesus in the Biblical Horizons newsletter has been incredibly helpful in my thinking through this.

I recommend, if you can get a hold of those, look into those. They will give you a lot more details of the test temptation stories more generally. So there is this temptation to go back, have the bread of Egypt.

They were cut off from the bread of Egypt. The yeast was cut off or the leaven was cut off and they were starting with new bread. They had to live with the bread of the wilderness and then they would get new bread in the land.

So there's a movement here that is anticipated, but they must wait until God gives the bread that is going to be given. The second, if Jesus had listened to the devil, it would have been like Adam falling and eating from the tree of life. Now, in that situation, Adam would have lived forever in a sinful state.

So Jesus could have continued just eating, turning the stones into bread and getting life that way. But it would be life from a dead world. He had to make things new.

And so that movement is a movement into the promised land of the new creation. But it requires taking this path of hunger, this path where you're not actually eating and filling your appetite, your human appetite. You're waiting for the thing that really matters, what God has promised, the age that he has ahead of you.

And so Jesus addresses temptation on all these different levels, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And he shows us what it looks like to resist temptation and doggedly to stick to the calling that God has given. Now, the next temptation is one that is a bit more confusing.

The temptation is one that has a reference to the pinnacle of the temple. Now, literally, the temple pinnacle is the little wing of the temple. And I think that helps us to understand part of what's going on here.

Because Satan gives a verse to Christ, he will command his angels concerning you. And on their hands, they will bear you up, lest you strike your feet against a stone. This comes from Psalm 91.

And in Psalm 91, we'll see part of the background for this. It's the temple as sanctuary, as the wing of God's protection. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge.

His faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. Now, this is a psalm about God's protection of his people.

And his protection of his people with his wings, with his shelter, with his shadow, with his refuge. And all of this is presented around the temple, among other things. So God protects his people with the wing of his protection in the temple.

And this is part of what the temptation means. Depart from that protection. Depart from the realm of God's presence.

There's something else going on here. Jesus is a sanctuary. Jesus, as he is present among the people, he gives sanctuary to them.

And Jesus can talk about that imagery of wings. How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers its chicks under the wings. And you would not.

Jesus is the one who wants to provide shelter and sanctuary under his wings. Now, he's tempted to come out from God's protection. To come out from that position that God has established as the realm where he is protecting his people.

Now, he knows God is going to protect me if I leave. But part of what that will involve is removing his protection from the people of Israel. If he had allowed the people of Nazareth to cast him down from the high place, he could have just gone his way.

He could have forsaken them completely. And they would have been lost as a result. They would not have had his protection.

By remaining with them and not being prepared to go, Jesus protects them. Now, think about the temptations that Moses faced. Moses had this hunger to enter into the land.

Moses also had this temptation to leave the people. To cast himself down, as it were. To leave the protection and to stop providing protection.

So the people were protected by Moses' presence. On two occasions, God says, just abandon the people. Leave them to me.

I'll destroy them and I'll make you into a great nation. And Moses resists on both occasions. The temptation that Jesus is facing here is something similar.

The temptation to leave the people and the temptation to just allow Satan to destroy them. Allow the people to be destroyed by God's judgement. It would be an easier route for him.

But it would be unfaithful to his father. So then the final temptation is the... And you can think of another example of this in the premature attempt to get into the land in Numbers chapter 14. In Numbers chapter 14, the people are judged as a result of their failure to enter into the land the first time.

Their resistance to the... as a result of the bad report given by the spies. And then the people then want to enter into the land. They don't want to wander in the wilderness.

And so they go out from God's protection. The way that God had provided for them. The route that he had set before them.

And they want to get into the land themselves. And they end up being destroyed as a result. They suffer a significant defeat.

And that's part of the judgement. In the same way, Jesus is being tempted to enter prematurely. To leave this situation.

To go out and to take the easy route. Like Moses could have done. He could have left the burden of the people behind.

He could have abandoned the people to their fate. He could have gone out and he could have become a great nation himself. But he resists.

He stays with the people. In the same way, Jesus sticks with the people. Now, why does Matthew's account end with Jesus in the high mountain? I think because Moses' story ends with Moses on a high mountain.

Moses is brought up to the high mountain of Mount Nebo, Pishka. And he sees from there the land set before him. The mountain is important here.

It's just up in Luke. And he's brought up to a high place. But mountains are a visionary point at various parts of scripture.

We see that in Ezekiel. We also see it in Revelation. Think about it in a more literal way.

A more concrete form of visionary point. In the case of Abraham. Abraham brought to the mountain.

And from the mountain he can see the land stretched out before him. He can see it is a good land. And God says that he will inherit all that territory.

As Moses is brought to the high mountain in Deuteronomy chapter 34, he sees the territory before him. The kingdom, as it were. And he could have all that kingdom, perhaps.

That's what he thinks. I could enter into this. But no, he has to die.

And in the same way, Christ, he can look out. He can see all the kingdoms of the earth. But before he can inherit them, he has to die.

Satan offers him another way. Satan offers him an alternative. If he would only serve Satan, if he would only fall down and worship him, he would be able to inherit all of those kingdoms.

But yet, he resists. He resists because he's going to receive them from the God who truly gives these things. Satan has authority that he has been given to some degree.

He's been given a free reign at that point. And he keeps the nations under his sway. But he's not the rightful owner.

He's someone who is the rebellious steward, whereas God is the one who disposes kingdoms. He's the one who gives kingdoms to those he desires. And at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, we'll see that theme recurring, that Jesus is going to receive the kingdom that's received from the hand of his father.

So, as we see all of this, it patterns very closely with the temptations that Moses himself faced. Jesus is a new Moses. Jesus is a new Israel in the wilderness.

There's a desire for bread on human terms. There's temptation to abandon the people, to leave behind the wings of protection, and to forsake Israel in removing the wing of protection from them. And then there's the temptation to enter into the inheritance prematurely apart from death.

And in each one of those, Christ is tempted and he proves faithful. Jesus' answers also all come from the book of Deuteronomy. From the same chapters, from Deuteronomy chapter 6 to 8. But they work backwards through Deuteronomy.

From chapter 8 to chapter 6 verse 16, to chapter 6 verse 13. And note what it's moving towards. It's moving towards the Shema.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Now, this is the fundamental commandment.

The commandment that encapsulates the whole purpose of the law. And the second commandment derives from it. Love your neighbour as yourself.

And this is, I think, what Jesus is leading towards. Richard Hayes points this out in his Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels. There is then, I think, a programmatic statement and expression of Jesus' calling here.

His resistance of temptation to divert from his calling at every single point. So he's tested at each area. He's tested with the lust of the flesh.

He's tested with the lust of the eyes. And he's tested with the pride of life. He's tested in each one of these respects.

And in each respect he proves faithful. And we'll see these things repeated again in association with the cross. This is a testing at the beginning of his ministry.

And then there's a testing at the end of his ministry too. He proves faithful in both. And in both cases there is a book-ending with a testimony to him being the Son of God.

This, I think, helps us to understand part of what's taking place in Matthew. Matthew is a very structured text. And the way it's structured is structured according to the history of Israel.

It's structured with book-ends and with chiasmic structures. And here, I think, we're seeing part of the theological import of that. That the story of Matthew is about, among other things, testifying that this one is the Son of God.

Not just the Son of God in a son of God with a small s, but the Son of God. The one who will inherit all authority and power. The name above all other names.

What does it mean to inherit the name above all other names? It's the name of God himself. It's the one, this is the one who bears God's name. Who represents God among his people.

He's God with us. And so, in all of these ways, we're seeing a bigger picture emerging of

who Christ is. We've already seen the genealogy.

The way that the Gentiles are present in that. And the Gentile kings coming. Representing the importance of Jesus as the one that the Gentiles will come and bring their gifts to him in fulfillment of prophecy.

We've seen Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's identity. We've seen that heavenly voice declaring Jesus to be the Son in the baptism. And the voice of one calling in the wilderness who declares the way of the Lord.

This is the Lord coming to visit his people in Jesus Christ. And then in this chapter we see the great conflict with Satan himself. Satan who's squaring off against his great adversary.

The Son of God. The one who will ultimately destroy his work. And then at the end of these temptations, angels come and minister to Christ.

Just as they do later on in chapter 26 after his time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus then moves back to Galilee from the Judea area when John the Baptist is arrested. So John the Baptist is arrested around this sort of time.

And then he leaves Nazareth for Capernaum. Note that his presence in Nazareth reminds us of Luke chapter 4. Where Jesus goes to Nazareth and the synagogue there immediately after his time in the wilderness. And we see other allusions to that in John chapter 4. Where Jesus talks about the fact that a prophet isn't without honour except in his home country.

And then goes to Capernaum. And so these other gospels are presuming, I think, that you have some knowledge of the Gospel of Luke. Or at least there is a framework within which the Gospel of Luke can be easily harmonised with what's being described here.

There's a chiasmic structure that follows that talks about the significance of the location of Galilee as a place of mission. So note Galilee, the way of the sea, the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. Zebulun and Naphtali, the way of the sea, Galilee of the Gentiles.

So there's a loose chiasmic structure there. As Jesus goes to this particular territory it's described then in prophecy. This prophecy comes from Isaiah chapter 9 verses 1 and 2. This should be a familiar passage for people primarily because it is another one of the messianic prophecies of the book of Isaiah.

As we are most familiar with the verses from 6 onwards. This is the introduction to that chapter. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

We've already seen allusions to the exile. Israel sent into exile, Rachel weeping for her children in Ramah because they are no more. And this was the great site from which the

people were deported.

You can also think about the fact that the people of Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to fall to the foreign nations. Jesus beginning his ministry at this particular point. It's in that point where Israel was first brought down into death.

This is the place where he's going to bring new life. The first regions to be taken captive to Babylon or to the nations are the first to see the light of the Messiah as he dawns upon the people. Again, language of Jesus as the light dawning, as the sun rising.

Galilee was an area with Hellenistic city regions. It was on important trade routes. And so Jesus in this area of ministry, he was interacting with Gentiles.

Galilee is associated with the Gentiles in this prophecy. It's a realm that has affiliation with the nations. It's associated with the Gentiles and it anticipates later mission to the Gentiles.

Bear in mind all the Gentile themes that we've seen to this point. This is not the first time that Gentiles come across our path within this gospel. It's a message that Jesus brings a message of repentance and declares the kingdom of God.

From that time Jesus began to preach saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of heaven, God's reign is about to come to pass. And this is something that you need to be prepared for.

You need to repent. You need to mend your ways. You need to return to the Lord.

This is the message that we have in the ministry of John the Baptist in the preceding chapter. Jesus' message continues from that of John the Baptist. It's very much the same thing.

This message of the gospel, as we'll see, is one that is firmly rooted within the message of the prophets. They anticipate this later deliverance of God of his people. Jesus then calls his first disciples.

He calls two sets of brothers, Simon, Peter and Andrew and then James and John, the son of Zebedee. These are two paralleled accounts. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And he said to them, follow me and I will make you fish as a man. Immediately they left their nets and followed him. So that's the first account.

Note how similar the second account is. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother. In the boat was Zebedee, their father, mending their nets.

And he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Some things to notice here.

There are two paralleled accounts. It's similar to the call of Elisha by Elijah. If you go back in your Bibles to 1 Kings chapter 9, 19, in verses 19 following we read.

So he departed from there and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him. And he was with the twelve. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him.

And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you. And he said to him, go back again, for what have I done to you? And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and bore their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

Some things to notice here. In the case of Elijah and Elisha, Elisha is called in the practice of his everyday work. In the same way, Peter, Andrew, James and John are called in the practice of their everyday work.

This is quotidian activity for them. Fishing and then mending their nets. It's a distinctive way that they're called.

They're called to be disciples. It's a prophetic call. It's not just the sort of calling that you might find from a rabbi.

A rabbi might have disciples who gather around him and listen to what he says. They cluster to him. But Jesus calls.

He takes the initiative. He goes out and calls them in this case. And they must make a break with their everyday life.

They must leave behind what they're doing. Elisha has to leave behind his plowing of the field. And James and John and Peter and Andrew have to leave behind their fishing.

But in each case, there is some sort of anticipation of what they're going to do in the future. Elisha is plowing with 12 oxen. Why 12 oxen? Why mention that particular number? He mentioned that number because it's connected with Israel.

And there's a fate for those oxen as well. They're sacrificed and the people eat them. In the case of Elisha, Elisha is going to be plowing Israel, preparing it for the seed that will survive God's judgment.

He's forming a new people. And that's part of preparing for a harvest. And this sacrifice is also part of the preparing of Israel.

12 oxen representing priests are represented by oxen. And Israel is a priestly nation being prepared as a pleasing sacrifice for the Lord. This may be part of what's symbolised in the manner of Elisha's call.

Now what might we learn from the calling of Peter and Andrew, James and John? They're involved in fishing. And they're told by Christ that they will become fishers of men. Now in the New Testament, we see an emphasis upon the sea and fish and fishing and the movement from activities of the land.

There are still references to activities in the land. There are still shepherds. There are still people plowing and planting.

But there's a lot more emphasis upon the sea now. And the primary ministers within the church note that these will become in many ways the four corners of the apostles, the three key disciples, Peter, James and John. And along with Christ as the chief cornerstone, these will be the other keystones within the building of the church as the new temple.

Now that calling is important. It occurs while they're fishing. And they are involved in an activity that already has some sort of symbolic importance within Scripture.

In Jeremiah chapter 16, verse 16, we read, And behold, I am sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill and out of the clefts of the rocks. For my eyes are in all their ways.

They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes. But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols and have filled my inheritance with their abominations. Now that's a message of judgment.

Fishers are men, are agents of judgment. God's going to fish his people and he's going to bring them into exile ultimately. Here we're seeing people being fished from the nations, from the Gentiles.

And there is a sort of judgment that this sets up. Later on we'll see the parable of the dragnet, that there is a testing of the fish that have been caught. Gentiles and Jews who have been in exile perhaps.

God is bringing together a new people. And this new people is being brought together by these fishers that he sends out. Fishers as means of bringing the people back to the land or as means of judgment.

Note also that Jesus' ministry is focused around the Sea of Galilee, his earlier ministry. This is symbolically important. The earlier ministry of the Old Testament is focused on

shepherds.

We think about people like Jacob. Jacob is a man who keeps sheep. Moses defeats the Egyptians with a rod, a shepherd's rod.

He keeps sheep in the wilderness. He leads Israel like a flock through the wilderness. Later on we'll see David called from the flock to lead the people.

A number of the prophets are called from leading the flock. We'd see the language of shepherds being brought up in the prophets on a number of occasions. God is like a shepherd for his people.

In all of these cases the language of sheep and shepherds provides the fundamental paradigm for thinking about God's relationship with his people. And now as the message goes to the Gentiles the sea becomes important. Note the Lake of Gennesaret is a really small lake by comparison with some other lakes in the world.

It's not a big place but yet it's described throughout Matthew, Mark and John as the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias. It's a pretty grand name for a small body of water but symbolically it represents larger seas. And Jesus' ministry centring around this, Galilee of the Gentiles, gives us a sense of why it is important.

It represents this movement out from the land into the seas, out from the land towards the Gentiles. It's a region that's connected with boats. The church is like a boat.

It's part of the land that goes out to sea. And it's a formation of the sea as connected with the land. Jesus will end up walking on the sea.

The land and the sea and the division between them is being broken down in various ways. And part of this is seen in calling and sending fishermen. Now is there any significance in the different activities that they were doing? That Peter and Andrew were casting nets and that James and John were mending them? Perhaps.

Maybe the second one is referring more to pastoral ministry or the ministry of leading and upholding doctrine, mending the nets. And then the other one is reference to leading a mission, which Peter really does in the mission to the Gentiles. There may be something of that.

I think there's part of that symbolism. The symbolism connected with the particular sort of labour that's being done in chapter 21 of John. So I wouldn't be surprised if that is there.

But if it is there, I wouldn't put that much weight on it. It's a fairly speculative reading one way or another. Jesus then goes to these different parts and he teaches in the synagogues and performs miracles.

Goes throughout all Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and every affliction among the people. And his reputation is spreading at this point. Now Jesus is going to synagogues.

Synagogues would generally be led by prominent lay people from the area or they'd be led by a priest. And they would have visiting speakers from time to time. Jesus is going throughout that region.

And as a prophet, he's following the pattern of a prophet here. He's teaching from place to place as a peripatetic figure. Someone who's wandering around on foot and he's someone who's ministering in different locations.

He's not settled in just one spot. He declares the gospel of the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom. This language of the gospel is something that comes from the book of Isaiah.

In chapter 40 of Isaiah, we encounter it in verse 9. Christ declares the message of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom. The good news is that God is coming to reign. And that is a message that has connotations of judgment and destruction upon those who reject.

But also deliverance and the sweetness of restoration for people who have been in darkness, who have been left in a position of alienation and who have felt themselves to be existing in the wilderness and needing to be restored to God's presence. This is the gospel of the kingdom. Now we use the language of gospel in a way that is fairly migrated some way from its biblical significance.

We tend to talk about it often as a sort of pattern of salvation. Whereas within the scripture, particularly in the gospels, it is language that's focused upon kingdom. It's a language that refers to God coming to reign in the midst of his people.

We see the same sort of language in Isaiah chapter 52. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation. Who says to Zion, your God reigns.

The voice of your watchmen, they lift up their voice. Together they sing for joy, for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing.

You waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his arm before the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

So think, a voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. God is coming back to his people as if this plume of dust in the wilderness and the watchmen spying out from the battlements and they're seeing this great procession coming towards them.

And they know it is God returning to Zion, returning to rule in the midst of Israel.

And the people rejoice and celebrate. This is what the good news is. Your God reigns.

Your God you thought had left you, had abandoned you. He's returning to you. He's going to be in your midst once more.

He's going to show you his salvation. He's going to deliver you from all who would oppress you. And he's going to establish you as his special possession.

His fame is spreading throughout the region. This is something that is a region that includes Gentile places, through Syria, other regions that are not just Jewish regions. These are regions where there would be significant Jewish populations but ruled over by Gentiles.

He demonstrates the power of the kingdom with healing and with demonstrations of his power over natural forces, over demons, over all these spiritual forces that are oppressing Israel. Note that this is again part of the conflict that's taking place. Jesus is going throughout the synagogues of Israel.

And in the synagogues of Israel he's meeting with lots of demon-possessed people. We shouldn't necessarily presume that this is the norm for all societies throughout history, that there's this sort of constant level of demon possession. We don't actually see much demon possession in the Old Testament at all.

The only real occasion where it might come to mind, apart from judgments where we're told that certain places will become the haunts of demonic-type forces, we're told the evil spirit that oppresses Saul. And that says the spirit comes upon David. Now I think that might be part of what's taking place here.

The spirit comes upon Christ at his baptism. Then he is opposed immediately by Satan. And throughout Israel, Israel is oppressed by evil spirits.

This is the relationship between David and Saul. David, the spirit, comes upon him. And then he brings relief to Saul, who is oppressed by this evil spirit, as he plays a musical instrument.

And the question is, will Saul accept David? Will he give himself to David as the true successor? As David is the one who is anointed by the spirit. Will he resist him? In the same way, Israel faces a similar question. Israel faces the question, will they accept the one who is anointed by the spirit, the one who is the true Davidic king, or will they seek to retain the rule for themselves in a way that aligns them with Satan and prevents them from being delivered from the evil spirits that are oppressing them? Thank you very much for listening.

Lord willing, I'll be back in a few days' time with discussion of chapter 5. If you have any questions, please leave them on my Curious Cat account. If you'd like to support this and other podcasts and videos like it, please do so using my PayPal, my Patreon, or my Amazon book list. Thank you very much for listening.

God bless.