

It Is Written

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let's turn then again to Matthew's Gospel in chapter 4. To the passage we read, Jesus went out into the desert to face the devil, to face Satan himself, and the outcome of that encounter makes all the difference in the world for you and for me.

Jesus went out into the desert to meet with the devil, to confront the devil and to be tempted by him, and the outcome of that encounter makes all the difference in the world, all the difference in the world.

What is going on in this strange narrative? Because it is strange, isn't it? The Son of God, no sooner having been baptized in the river Jordan by John, goes out on his own, led by the Holy Spirit into this place of testing to meet with the evil one himself.

There hasn't actually been an encounter like this since Genesis chapter 3, where a man is confronted by the devil himself and tempted by him.

Of course, the outcome in that first case was a tragedy because Adam was tempted and succumbed to temptation.

[2 : 1 1] He sinned and with him all of humanity and the whole world was plunged into sin and misery as well.

But Jesus, when he confronted the devil and the devil tempted him to afford a greater degree than Adam was tempted, he fell straight away as it were.

The devil keeps at Jesus, ratcheting it up if you like all the time, but Jesus did not yield. He held fast to the word of God saying, it is written, it is written, it is written.

He remembered his Father's word and he succeeded. But what is also being made very clear here in this amazing encounter in this passage is that Jesus is identifying himself with Israel, with Israel.

With Israel when they were redeemed out of Egypt in the Exodus, but were continually disobedient to God, particularly in the wilderness, such that when they finally were granted entry into the Promised Land, only two of the population were left alive and entered into their rest in the Promised Land, Caleb and Joshua.

[4 : 0 1] I want to invite you to see the striking parallels there are between Jesus here in the wilderness and Israel in the Exodus.

First of all, Matthew has pointed out in chapter 2 verse 15, when Jesus is described as coming out of Egypt, Matthew refers to the prophet Hosea saying, this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, out of Egypt, I called my son, out of Egypt, I called my son.

And if we look at that prophecy from Hosea, which is in chapter 1 verse 11, Hosea speaking, God's word says, when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son. Israel was seen as God's son.

God was a father to them, and they were to be his obedient son, his witnesses in the world who would show the surrounding nations who God was and what he was like, and encourage them to worship him.

[5 : 26] We see that again in Exodus, when God instructs Moses in Exodus chapter 4 verses 22 and 23, he says, then say to Pharaoh, this is what the Lord says, Israel is my firstborn son.

And I told you, let my son go, that he may worship me. God described himself as a father to the nation of Israel, his son.

And after being redeemed from slavery in Egypt, Israel was tested in the wilderness for 40 years.

And even as they were receiving God's law, or as Moses was, they were at the foot of the mountain, making for themselves an idol and worshiping it.

And you might say, it started off badly, tailed off in the middle, and the less said about the end, the better, because they continually failed to keep God's word, to keep covenant with God.

[6 : 37] They were continually disobedient. And here what is happening is, Matthew says, out of Egypt, I called my son, but in this case, it's Jesus. Jesus passes through the waters of his baptism, and Paul tells us that Israel was baptized in the cloud and in the sea, and then spends 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, mirroring, paralleling these 40 years that Israel spent in the wilderness, and what is happening to Jesus?

Israel was tested in the wilderness, and it failed, and it was only as we sang in Psalm 106, by God's grace, that they were still allowed into the Promised Land.

Jesus is going to be the successful son. The son Israel never could be. He is going to keep covenant on behalf of his people, and turn curses into blessing.

It's a wonderful picture. Unless I haven't convinced you yet of that, that that's what Matthew is showing us, that Jesus is doing, identifying himself with Israel, and showing himself to be the successful Israel, every scripture quotation that Jesus gives in this encounter with the devil is from the book of Deuteronomy, and they echo the commands given to Israel, that they were to remember in order to stay faithful to God, but which they continually failed to do.

Not just in the wilderness, but once they were in the land, which resulted in their exile, and even upon their return to the land. But Jesus has remembered them, where Israel has forgotten them. Jesus remembers and succeeds.

[8 : 41] And this is one of the great points of the passage that Jesus begins every single one. Every single one of his responses, he begins each one by saying it is written.

What a lesson that is for us, what a lesson that is for the church, what a lesson that is for the church in Scotland.

It is written. The Bible is not a negotiable thing. It is the sure word of God, and everything we believe is founded upon it. So if the Bible says it, that's what we believe, and that's what we follow. And things so often, and we look down through the centuries of church history, lead to ruin.

When we forget it is written, it is written, it is written, and we start making things up as we go along. It's a disaster.

Jesus shows us the way here. He leads by example. He quotes scripture to the devil.

[10 : 00] And we should remember as well here, he's led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. So the devil isn't thwarting God's plans here and trying to throw a spanner in the works, if you like, in a way that's not being planned by God already.

We always must remember that God is far more powerful than Satan. And it's the spirit that leads Jesus into the wilderness for this time of testing to see if Jesus, unlike Adam, unlike Israel, will be an obedient Son of God. And there are three tests, aren't there? There are three. And as I was saying earlier, the escalate, we start off talking about bread and feeding hunger, and by the end Satan's showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offering them to him. That is often the way he doesn't let up. And the problem for us is that we so easily yield even when we're at the first level of temptation. But the first test, as we read, is about bread. Verse 3, the tempter came and said to him, if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

It's about provision. This is a question of provision. Provide for yourself, he's saying. It's so insidious, because Jesus is hungry. You see, Jesus, of course, is fully God and fully man, and yet without sin. And so every aspect of humanity, he had. And so he was hungry. He'd been fasting. And you imagine how famished he must have been there in the desert. And what does the devil do? Tell these stones to become bread. Because you can do it. You're the Son of God. You have power to do it. But he's trying to tempt Jesus into relying on himself and providing for himself rather than relying on his father and obeying his father.

Because we see at the end of the temptation period, don't we, that once the devil has fled, angels come and minister to Jesus all in the Father's timing. But Jesus sticks to his Father's timing. He doesn't say, that's a good point. Yes, I am hungry and I do have the power to do it because he's trying to separate off the Son from the Father. Jesus is having none of it. Now, this, of course, is something that happened to Israel in the desert. They were kept hungry.

And they were told in Deuteronomy chapter eight, verses two and three. Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart.

[13 : 45] Whether or not you would keep his commands, he humbled you causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna which neither you nor your ancestors had known to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. The hunger is to show who are you depending on. Are you just looking for something to fill your stomach or are you realizing the greater importance of following God's word?

What brings true nourishment? Stuffing your face or God's word? Who do you rely upon when you don't have something? Do you just try and thwart God's timing and God's provision and provide for yourself or do you wait for the Lord's provision?

So often we fail in this regard but Jesus does not and of course in temptation here he answers the devil with scripture and encourages us to do the same. When we are tempted run to the word, find your response to the evil one in the word and Jesus answer then of course sets the tone for his next responses which are also going to come straight from scripture but you know when we see the next temptation Satan has another trick up his sleeve. What's that?

He knows scripture too. This is what happens for the next one. The devil's not giving up that easily and so when after Jesus has resisted him and said no I'm not going to provide for myself I'm going to rely on my father and if that means I stay hungry so be it because it is written you will not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. The devil says okay then when he takes him to this pinnacle on the temple and again it's such a strange story isn't it? It's such a strange encounter.

They're there on the temple and it could be some kind of experience or vision but they're there on the temple and the devil says if you are the Son of God again if you are the Son of God if you're God's firstborn Son throw yourself down for it is written.

[16 : 45] You see how it's obviously stating the obvious but you see how wicked Satan is he dares he has the audacity to quote scripture to Jesus but he says it is written he'll command his angels concerning you and on their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a soul. It's written in scripture so throw yourself off and this is all a question of protection.

Test God's protection over you before it was provision provide for yourself don't trust your father to provide for you this time it's well if you're the Son of God surely he'll protect you even if you were to chuck yourself off the temple it's even written in scripture.

What do we learn from this? Well again we learn from Jesus's response. Jesus says to him again it is written or if you like it is also written you shall not put the Lord your God to the test and what do we learn from that? Well one thing we learn is that a text taken out of context can be twisted to mean all sorts of different things as one Bible professor put it a text taken out of context can just be a pretext for a proof text. A text taken out of context can just be a pretext for a proof text that is here's a text that I've ripped out of the passage and I'm now using to justify a particular argument that clearly isn't scripture at all when we take the whole counsel of God into consideration. What we learn from this is that scripture interprets scripture and it can't possibly mean test God because you are not to put the Lord your God to the test.

See how important it is to know the scriptures to spend time in the Word so that it's not quite enough when tempted to reply with scripture because what if Satan quotes scripture back at you? We need to know the Word of God in order to resist the devil.

Scripture interprets scripture. Now part of we might even say well isn't that fair as well? I mean this does seem to be a promise to protect Jesus from this Psalm 91.

[19 : 52] No, not if it's to force God's hand. Not to create or contrive a situation where you attempt to force God to bless you.

Where we say right Lord it's up to you now to do this for me because your Word promises it and I want it now.

No, God deals with us on His terms and not on ours and so to demand miraculous proof of God's protection is wrong and why does this again give us echoes of the Exodus? Because Israel doubted God's protection over them in the wilderness. Despite, can you imagine this, despite being delivered from disaster upon disaster upon disaster, they still said is God even among us? And they grumbled against God. They tested God. In Jesus' day this was this unbelieving testing of God was still going on with people demanding from him a sign.

Now Jesus performed signs to show who he was and to point to who he was acts of wonder and of power but on his terms not in response to the request for us or the demand for a sign. Show us a sign and then we'll believe you.

If I jump off this building and you save me maybe then I'll believe nonsense. God is not bound to do anything he's not promised to do in the manner in the manner he has promised to do it.

[21 : 54] And so Jesus is drawing on Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 16 and 17. Do not put the Lord your God to the test and it continues as you did at Massa. Be sure to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given to you.

Every heretic can quote scripture and often does but we need to know the scriptures better and to know as the apostle Paul calls it the whole counsel of God the big picture so that we are not led astray or even led into putting God to the test ourselves. That's the second test two down and the devil is getting frustrated. Think of what a pushover in his eyes perhaps Adam was and how he must have delighted in the fall of mankind and how when Israel continually failed he was at work there too but he's up against altogether different competition here and so he has to pull out the big guns. He has to pull out the big guns and what happens now the devil in verse 8 took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and he said to him all these I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.

This test is about power isn't it you got a test about provision provide for yourself don't rely on your father no chance get God to protect you and create a situation whereby he'll have to know.

How about I give you all the kingdoms of the world now before your ministry has even begun and all you have to do is worship me. What's being offered here and why does Jesus here who has tolerated this exchange thus far by responding to him from scripture why is it at this point Jesus says be gone Satan get away from me now what's Satan trying to dangle in front of Jesus here is the crown without the cross. Glory without the mission that he was sent to do. Think of what Jesus sees ahead for himself in some respect or other at this commencement of his ministry after his baptism and knows what he's got to do. He knows what will ultimately result which is his being exalted to the right hand of his father and given a name that is higher than any name but he knows what comes before that and here is someone saying

I'll give you a shortcut to glory. What's Jesus response get away from me now and there is a strong echo of Jesus response to one of his dearest friends and apostles Peter when he says the same thing no sooner has Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ and then Jesus tells him what must happen to him and he must be handed over and crucified and Peter says no way no no no not to you Jesus says to him get behind me Satan because you're speaking Satan's words which is at all costs get this person to avoid the cross at all costs try and thwart this one from fulfilling his mission because his fulfilling his mission means curtains for me this is a last gasp effort on the part of Satan by throwing everything that is temporarily under his dominion in front of Jesus and Jesus says be gone Satan for it is written you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve drawing on Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 13 fear the Lord your God serve him only no cross no crown he is determined to do it the appointed way which is via Calvary because if it's not via Calvary no one will be saved if it is every single person who comes to Christ for salvation will be and Satan is saying please avoid the cross no

[28 : 13] I'm going I'm going to the cross glory that avoids suffering is no glory at all it was an illusion that the devil was dangling in front of him and he refused it because there was been no real glory for Jesus without obedience to the Father and that's what his response shows that he understands and the very fact that he resisted Satan at this point and it's at this point the devil left him we get that foretaste of the victory that we see finally in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the defeat of the devil and we await his ultimate destruction when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead when he is finally cast in to the lake of fire but are we tempted to bypass suffering and just only get the glory just get our crown because we are told by Jesus if anyone not just super involved Christians or particularly spiritual people if anyone would come after me he must deny himself take up his cross and follow me no cross no crown and there are a whole range of it's it's silly to even call them preachers peddlers of the prosperity gospel that say that you should be living your best life now and suffering has no place in the life of a of a child of the kingdom you deserve blessing in every area of your life personal health finances relationships everything should be hunky dory name it and claim it because it's yours by right what rubbish what garbage we follow a crucified master don't we we follow a crucified master and we are to take up our cross and follow him because a crown will be ours also a crown that he has one for us and how do we know that's what satan's driving at what does he keep saying to him what does he keep saying to jesus jesus keeps saying it is written that the devil has a refrain as well doesn't he if you are the son of god where do we hear that again on calvary on the cross when those jeering atom say if you're the son of god come down whose words are they speaking there but this one's the tempter and again in the agony of experiencing god's righteous wrath against our sin

not his he says no and the result of that victory is a victory we can all share in as children of the living god if we trust and believe in the lord jesus christ he won the victory and it's important to see this passage in that respect first of all rather than it being a how-to manual for us to resist the devil because when will we be led out into the wilderness to face the devil as a representative of everyone that will believe in us never this is something jesus did for his people but yes once we grasp that we can then see how to apply what christ did in response to satan so that we may resist the devil and he will flee from us if we're in christ if we're not in christ what a disastrous situation we're presently in because the one who owns us is not this glorious obedient son of god that resisted the devil and one it's the person that was tempting him that's who we belong to that's who owns us and who we're enslaved to but if we put our trust in this one who not just in this encounter throughout his life resisted the devil and never sinned our chains will fall on we will no longer have that master we can say to him get behind me satan and we will be free because when the sun sets you free you will be free indeed you will be free indeed if you trust in this last adam in this new israel the one who obeyed where they failed you have eternal life with him in a new environment a new situation where you will never sin either i tell you i am looking forward to that day where i will never sin either because god will have perfected me in glory by his grace aren't you he won't be there that is the one who is tempting Jesus will he he'll be gone finally and so will death and so will sin and so will temptation praise be to god for his inexpressible gift we're going to sing finally now and we're going to sing from sam 67 all of sam 67 in sing sam's god be merciful and bless us shine upon us with your face that the earth may know your actions and all lands your saving grace we'll stand to sing this sam to god's praise god be merciful and bless us shine upon us with your face the earth may know your actions and all lands your saving grace

oh god may the people's praise you may all people sing your praise for you judge the nations justly rolling over every race may they sing with joy and gladness may they all rejoice as one oh god may the people's praise you as they all unite in song then the land will heal its harvest god will pour his gifts abroad god our god will surely bless us all the earth will fear our god let us pray father we pray that you the god of peace who brought again from the dead our lord jesus the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant may you equip us father with everything good that we may do your will working in us that which is pleasing in your sight through jesus christ to whom be glory forever and ever amen