

Lesson #5- Matthew Chapter 4 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

Moving from his introduction of Jesus as the promised Messiah in the first three chapters, Matthew now enters the core section of this gospel, and we see Jesus beginning to declare that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and to call out a new people, his disciples, that will believe and obey His commandments.

1. Verses 1 through 11 gives the account of Jesus in the wilderness, where He fasts forty days, and is then tempted of Satan. Based on these 11 verses, here are a few questions.
 - a) Why did Jesus go out into the wilderness and what do you think is important about that?
 - b) Do you think Satan timed his attack, or was it just random?
 - c) What was one shocking thing that Satan used as the basis of his attack and what frightening truth should this alert us to?
 - d) What was the weapon of Jesus' defense and what should we learn from that?

Help for Teachers:

- a. Matthew and Luke both report that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, whereas Mark writes that "the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness". In either case, all three gospel writers were inspired to record that Jesus went into the wilderness at the direction of the Holy Ghost and here in Matthew, the stated purpose is to be "tempted of the devil". This follows the Exodus story. Immediately after escaping Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea, Moses finds himself in the wilderness and faces temptation. The children of Israel first complain that they have nothing to drink and are going to die (a sin of unbelief). God makes the bitter waters sweet and then brings them to a place where there are twelve wells of water. Next, they murmur that Moses has brought them out of Egypt to die of starvation, to which God graciously responds with bread that rains down from heaven. Jesus, as the promised better Moses, comes out of the waters and is led by the Spirit into the wilderness and is tempted forty days. He also suffers hunger and thirst and any other temptation known to man. The big difference? He does not fail. He is "yet without sin".
- b. The Israelites, immediately after being delivered by an incredible miracle of the parting of the Red Sea and seeing their enemies destroyed by the closing of that same sea, sang a song of praise and triumph to God who had delivered them. But it seems they had no sooner closed their hymnals before they found themselves tempted because of their not as comfortable as they would like conditions and sinned against this God of their salvation by disbelief. As soon as God identified with Jesus at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased", the attack began. As soon as a sinner puts their faith in Jesus

Christ for salvation, the enemy will attack. We also see that Satan's temptations, both, of the children of Israel and of Jesus, were engineered to take advantage of their circumstances (hunger, thirst). In similar fashion, a new believer can expect that Satan will soon attack and that he will take every advantage of our circumstances.

- c. Satan knows the Scriptures and can use them to tempt us as he did Jesus. This should make us feel the necessity of rightly dividing the Word of Truth. In almost every letter from the apostles, warnings are given concerning false teaching and the requirement to reject those teachings and teachers. Twisted Scripture is much more dangerous than any sort of outright attack against the church. The scope becomes apparent when we realize that many professing Christians lack Biblical and doctrinal depth, and thus are easily "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine".
 - d. The Word of God was Jesus' Weapon of defense against Satan. If Jesus, who is the Word, used the Word to counter the attack of the enemy, certainly that is how we will successfully defend against the enemy's attacks also. Notice that in every recorded temptation, Jesus used Scripture to counter. An important point to be made here is that to use Scripture, you must know Scripture.
2. As Jesus began to preach in Galilee, His message was about "repent" and "gospel" and "kingdom" (verses 17 and 23).
- a) What did Jesus mean that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"?
 - b) Why is Jesus' preaching described as "the gospel of the kingdom"?

Help for Teachers:

- a. The kingdom of heaven is not a realm that is gradually developing. The kingdom of heaven is not a select group of followers, although God's elect certainly is included. Psalms 103:19 declares, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all"! The "ruleth" is all-inclusive; all time and all things. Many scholars refer to the kingdom of heaven as "already, not yet". God is transcendent and sovereign. Notice that we find in Scripture that Jesus is "the lamb slain from the foundation of the earth". Pay attention to how many times you quickly read over N.T. statements from Jesus and the apostles and other writers that refer to us as, "chosen", "called", "predestined", "elect". God is firmly in control no matter what it looked like to the disciples during His time on earth, and no matter what it seems like to us today. Jesus' statement about the kingdom of heaven being at hand meant that the embodiment of the kingdom, the King of the kingdom, was in flesh and standing before them, more revealed than He (and the kingdom) had ever been, "already, not yet". Now was the kingdom more visible than ever before. But more is to come! At the coming again of Christ, He will begin the final phase of the process of full revelation!

- b. A rich but simple answer. The “gospel” is the good news that though we were already condemned to a Godless eternity of punishment because of what we do and who we are by nature, God the Father lovingly had compassion for us and sent God the Son to suffer the wrath that we deserve. He has called us from among men to be a chosen people that He refers to as His elect, to be His recipients of grace. God the Holy Ghost regenerates our wicked hearts and enables us to respond to His call with faith and makes us citizens of His heavenly kingdom.
3. In verse 21 Jesus begins calling men to follow Him. Discuss how Jesus went about doing this and the response from those He called. What are some things we can learn from this text?

Help for Teachers:

- **Jesus’ example of going-** Jesus came to those He called. He went where they were. Some, such as Nicodemus, in a secondary sense “came to Jesus by night”, but that was in response to the fact that Jesus had first *came* into the world, to seek and save that which was lost. Furthermore, Nicodemus had obviously heard Jesus’ teachings as Jesus *came* where Nicodemus was, and now convicted of his undone condition, approached Jesus for help.
- **Jesus simply calls-** In the case of these four disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, we read that Jesus, with very few words, gave them a personal call. Thinking ahead to other records of Jesus calling people, there is Matthew, sitting at the tax booth. Jesus simply says to Matthew, “Follow me”. To Zacchaeus, “make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house”. To the rich young ruler, “sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.” (It could be argued that Jesus saying to the rich young ruler, “follow me”, was not a call in the same sense that Jesus called the other aforementioned examples, but an answer to the young man’s question of “what good thing shall I do?”.)
- **Those that are His will follow-** in the case of the four disciples on the seashore, Matthew at his tax stand, and Zacchaeus up in the tree, their immediate reaction upon hearing the call was that they left everything. They left jobs and family and money and security..., to follow Jesus. Some, like the rich young ruler, did not follow, but went away. What happened? Jesus explains it in John 10:7-30, which you should read in its entirety. To this question specifically is verse 14- “ I am the good

shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”, verse 26- “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”, and verse 27- “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:”. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:3-5, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,”.

- **Application to us-** Jesus left us with a commission (Matthew 28) to continue building His kingdom by proclaiming the gospel, bringing those that believe into community with His people, and training and equipping them to serve Him. We are to follow the pattern He set. “Go” is our command, into all the world. The lost are lost, they don’t know where to go, they aren’t out seeking God. God comes seeking them through us taking the gospel message, as Jesus did, to them. When we proclaim the gospel, God will call to himself those that are His and they will respond in faith. The parable of the Sower will be a story we look at in detail later, but in overview for now, the Sower casts the seed all over the place, not trying to predict the results. When the seed lands on good ground, there is a harvest.