

# CHAPTER 4

John Baptist said concerning Christ, He must increase, but I must decrease; and so it proved. For, after John had baptized Christ, and borne his testimony to him, we hear little more of his ministry; he had done what he came to do, and thenceforward there is as much talk of Jesus as ever there had been of John. As the rising Sun advances, the morning star disappears. Concerning Jesus Christ we have in this chapter,

- I.** The temptation he underwent, the triple assault the tempter made upon him, and the repulse he gave to each assault (v. 1-11).
- II.** The teaching work he undertook, the places he preached in (v. 12-16), and the subject he preached on (v. 17).
- III.** His calling of disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John (v. 18-22).
- IV.** His curing diseases (v. 23, 24), and the great resort of the people to him, both to be taught and to be healed.

## ◀☩▶ MATTHEW 4:1-11

### THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

We have here the story of a famous duel, fought hand to hand, between Michael and the dragon, the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, nay, the serpent himself; in which the seed of the woman suffers, being *tempted*, and so has his heel bruised; but the serpent is quite baffled in his temptations, and so has his head broken; and our Lord Jesus comes off a Conqueror, and so secures not only comfort, but conquest at last, to all his faithful followers. Concerning Christ's temptation, observe,

- I.** The time when it happened: *Then*; there is an emphasis laid upon that. Immediately after *the heavens were opened* to him, and *the Spirit descended on him*, and he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, the next news we hear of him is, he is *tempted*; for *then* he is best able to grapple with the temptation. Note,

1. Great privileges, and special tokens of divine favour, will not secure us from being *tempted*. Nay,
2. After great honours put upon us, we must expect something that is humbling; as Paul has a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, after he had been in the third heavens.
3. God usually prepares his people for temptation before he calls them to it; he *gives strength according to the day*, and, before a sharp trial, gives more than ordinary comfort.
4. The assurance of our sonship is the best preparative for temptation. If the good Spirit witness to our adoption, that will furnish us with an answer to all the suggestions of the evil spirit, designed either to debauch or disquiet us.

*Then*, when he was newly come from a solemn ordinance, when he was baptized, *then* he was *tempted*. Note, After we have been admitted into the communion of God, we must expect to be set upon by Satan. The enriched soul must double its guard. *When thou has eaten and art full, then beware*. *Then*, when he began to show himself publicly to Israel, *then* he was *tempted*, so as he never had been while he lived in privacy. Note, The Devil has a particular spite at useful persons, who are not only good, but given to do good, especially at their first setting out. It is the advice of the Son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus 2:1), *My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thyself for temptation*. Let young ministers know what to expect, and arm accordingly.

**II.** The place where it was; *in the wilderness*; probably in the great wilderness of *Sinai*, where Moses and Elijah *fasted forty days*, for no part of *the wilderness* of Judea was so abandoned to wild beasts as this is said to have been, <sup>4013</sup>Mark 1:13. When Christ was baptized, he did not go to Jerusalem, there to publish the glories that had been put upon him, but retired into a wilderness. After communion with God, it is good to be private awhile, lest we lose what we have received, in the crowd and hurry of worldly business. Christ withdrew into the wilderness,

1. To gain advantage to himself. Retirement gives an opportunity for meditation and communion with God; even they who are called to the most active life must yet have their contemplative hours, and must first find time to be alone with God. Those are not fit to speak of the things of God

in public to others, who have not first conversed with those things in secret by themselves. When Christ would appear as *a Teacher come from God*, it shall not be said of him, “He is newly come from travelling, he has been abroad, and has seen the world;” but, “He is newly come out of the desert, he has been alone conversing with God and his own heart.”

**2.** To give advantage to the tempter, that he might have a readier access to him than he could have had in company. Note, Though solitude is a friend to a good heart, yet Satan knows how to improve it against us. *Woe to him that is alone*. Those who, under pretence of sanctity and devotion, retire into dens and deserts, find that they are not out of reach of their spiritual enemies, and that there they want the benefit of the communion with saints. Christ retired,

**(1.)** To make his victory the more illustrious, he gave the enemy sun and wind on his side, and yet baffled him. He might give the Devil advantage, for *the prince of this world had nothing* in him; but he has in us, and therefore we must pray not to be *led into temptation*, and must keep out of harm's way.

**(2.)** That he might have an opportunity to do his best himself, that he might be exalted in his own strength; for so it was written, *I have trod the wine-press alone*, and of the people there was none with me. Christ entered the lists without a second.

**III.** The preparatives for it, which were two.

**1.** He was directed to the combat; he did not wilfully thrust himself upon it, but he *was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the Devil*. The Spirit that *descended upon him like a dove* made him meek, and yet made him bold. Note, Our care must be, not to enter into temptation; but if God, by his providence, order us into circumstances of temptation for our trial, we must not think it strange, but double our guard. *Be strong in the Lord, resist stedfast in the faith*, and all shall be well. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves; but, whithersoever God leads us, we may hope he will go along with us, and bring us off *more than conquerors*.

Christ was *led to be tempted of the Devil*, and of him only. Others are tempted, *when they are drawn aside of their own lust and enticed* (<sup>(304)</sup>James 1:14); the Devil takes hold of that handle, and ploughs with that

heifer; but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, and therefore he was led securely, without any fear or trembling, as a champion into the field, *to be tempted purely by the Devil.*

Now Christ's temptation is,

**(1.)** An instance of his own condescension and humiliation. Temptations are *fiery darts, thorns in the flesh, buffetings, siftings, wrestlings, combats*, all which denote hardship and suffering; *therefore* Christ submitted to them, because he would humble himself, *in all things to be made like unto his brethren*; thus he *gave his back to the smiters.*

**(2.)** An occasion of Satan's confusion. There is no conquest without a combat. Christ was tempted, that he might overcome the tempter. Satan tempted the first Adam, and triumphed over him; but he shall not always triumph, the second Adam shall overcome him and *lead captivity captive.*

**(3.)** Matter of comfort to all the saints. In the temptation of Christ it appears, that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring in his temptations; but it appears withal, that he is not invincible. Though he is *a strong man armed*, yet the Captain of our salvation is *stronger than he*. It is some comfort to us to think that Christ suffered, being *tempted*; for thus it appears that temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only, and such as may be pleased. And we have a High Priest who knows, by experience, what it is to be *tempted*, and who therefore is the more tenderly touch with *the feelings of our infirmities* in an hour of temptation, <sup><3218></sup>Hebrews 2:18; 4:15. But it is much more a comfort to think that Christ conquered, being *tempted*, and conquered for us; not only that the enemy we grapple with is a conquered, baffled, disarmed enemy, but that we are interested in Christ's victory over him, and through him are *more than conquerors.*

**2.** He was dieted for the combat, as wrestlers, who are *temperate in all things* (<sup><4125></sup>1 Corinthians 9:25); but Christ beyond any other, for he *fasted forty days and forty nights*, in compliance with the type and example of Moses the great lawgiver, and of Elias, the great reformer, of the Old Testament. John Baptist came as Elias, in those things that were moral, but not in such things as were miraculous (<sup><3141></sup>John 10:41); that honour was reserved for Christ. Christ needed not to fast for mortification (he had no corrupt desires to be subdued); yet he *fasted*,

(1.) That herein he might humble himself, and might seem as one abandoned, *whom no man seeketh after*.

(2.) That he might give Satan both occasion and advantage against him; and so make his victory over him the more illustrious.

(3.) That he might sanctify and recommend fasting to us, when God in his providence calls to it, or when we are reduced to straits, and are destitute of daily food, or when it is requisite for the keeping under of the body, or the quickening of prayer, those excellent preparatives for temptation. If good people are brought low, if they want friends and succours, this may comfort them, that their Master himself was in like manner exercised. A man may want bread, and yet be a favourite of heaven, and under the conduct of the Spirit. The reference which the Papists make of their lent-fast to this fasting of Christ *forty days*, is a piece of foppery and superstition which the law of our land witnesses against, Stat. 5 Eliz. chap. 5 sect. 39, 40. *When he fasted forty days he was never hungry; converse with heaven was instead of meat and drink to him, but he was afterwards an hungred*, to show that he was really and truly Man; and he took upon him our natural infirmities, that he might atone for us. Man fell by eating, and that way we often sin, and therefore Christ *was an hungred*.

**IV.** The temptations themselves. That which Satan aimed at, in all his temptations, was, to bring him to *sin against God*, and so to render him for ever incapable of being a Sacrifice for the sins of others. Now, whatever the colours were, that which he aimed at was, to bring him,

1. To despair of his Father's goodness.

2. To presume upon his Father's power.

3. To alienate his Father's honour, by giving it to Satan. In the two former, that which he tempted him *to*, seemed innocent, and therein appeared the subtlety of the tempter; in the last, that which he tempted him *with*, seemed desirable. The two former are artful temptations, which there was need of great wisdom to discern; the last was a strong temptation, which there was need of great resolution to resist; yet he was baffled in them all.

1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him.

**(1.)** See how the temptation was managed (v. 3); *The tempter came to him.* Note, The Devil is *the tempter*, and therefore he is *Satan* — *an adversary*; for those are our worst enemies, that entice us to sin, and are Satan's agents, are doing his work, and carrying on his designs. He is called emphatically *the tempter*, because he was so to our first parents, and still is so, and all other tempters are set on work by him. *The tempter came to Christ in a visible appearance, not terrible and affrighting, as afterward in his agony in the garden; no, if ever the Devil transformed himself into an angel of light, he did so now, and pretended to be a good genius, a guardian angel.*

Observe the subtlety of *the tempter*, in joining this first temptation with what went before to make it the stronger.

**[1.]** Christ began to be hungry, and therefore the motion seemed very proper, to turn *stones into bread* for his necessary support. Note, It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition, in that to plant the battery of his temptations. He is an adversary no less watchful than spiteful; and the more ingenious he is to take advantage against us, the more industrious we must be to give him none. When he began to be hungry, and that in a *wilderness*, where there was nothing to be had, then the Devil assaulted him. Note, Want and poverty are a great temptation to discontent and unbelief, and the use of unlawful means for our relief, under pretence that necessity has no law; and it is excused with this that hunger will break through stone walls, which yet is no excuse, for the law of God ought to be stronger to us than stone walls. Agur prays against poverty, not because it is an affliction and reproach, but because it is a temptation; *lest I be poor, and steal.* Those therefore who are reduced to straits, have need to double their guard; it is better to starve to death, than live and thrive by sin.

**[2.]** Christ was lately declared to be *the Son of God*, and here the Devil tempts him to doubt of that; *If thou be the Son of God.* Had not the Devil known that the Son of God was to come into the world, he would not have said this; and had he not suspected that this was he, he would not have said it to him, nor durst he have said it if Christ had not now drawn a veil over his glory, and if the Devil had not now put on an impudent face.

*First*, “Thou has now an occasion to question whether *thou be the Son of God* or no; for can it be, that *the Son of God*, who is *Heir of all things*, should be reduced to such straits? If God were thy Father, he would not

see thee starve, for *all the beasts of the forest are his*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 50:10, 12. It is true there *was a voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son*, but surely it was delusion, and thou was imposed upon by it; for either God is not thy Father, or he is a very unkind one.” Note,

**1.** The great thing Satan aims at, in tempting good people, is to overthrow their relation to God as a Father, and so to cut off their dependence on him, their duty to him, and their communion with him. The good Spirit, as the Comforter of the brethren, witnesses that they are the *children of God*; the evil spirit, as the accuser of the brethren, does all he can to shake that testimony.

**2.** Outward afflictions, wants and burdens, are the great arguments Satan uses to make the people of God question their sonship; as if afflictions could not consist with, when really they proceed from, God's fatherly love. They know how to answer this temptation, who can say with holy Job, *Though he slay me, though he starve me, yet I will trust in him*, and love him as a Friend, even when he seems to come forth against me as an Enemy.

**3.** The Devil aims to shake our faith in the word of God, and bring us to question the truth of that. Thus he began with our first parents; *Yea, has God said so and so?* Surely he has not. So here, *Has God said that thou art his beloved Son?* Surely he did not say so; or if he did it is not true. We then *give place to the Devil*, when we question the truth of any word that God has spoken; for his business, as the father of lies, is to oppose the true sayings of God.

**4.** The Devil carries on his designs very much by possessing people with hard thoughts of God, as if he were unkind, or unfaithful, and had forsaken or forgotten those who had ventured their all with him. He endeavored to beget in our first parents a notion that God forbade them the tree of knowledge, because he grudged them the benefit of it; and so here he insinuates to our Saviour, that his Father had cast him off, and left him to shift for himself. But see how unreasonable this suggestion was, and how easily answered. If Christ seemed to be a mere Man now, because he was hungry, why was he not confessed to be more than a Man, even the *Son of God*, when for *forty days he fasted*, and was not hungry?

*Secondly*, “Thou hast now an opportunity to show that thou art *the son of God*. *If thou art the Son of God*, prove it by this, *command these stones*”

(a heap of which, probably, lay now before him) "*be made bread*, v. 3. John Baptist said but the other day, that God *can out of stone raise up children to Abraham*, a divine power therefore can, no doubt, out of stones, make bread for those children; if there thou has that power, exert it now in a time of need for thyself." He does not say, *Pray to thy Father* that he would turn them into *bread*; but *command* it to be done; thy Father hath forsaken thee, set up for thyself, and be not beholden to him. The Devil is for nothing that is humbling, but ever thing that is assuming; and gains his point, if he can but bring men off from their dependence upon God, and possess them with an opinion of their self-sufficiency.

**(2.)** See how this temptation was resisted and overcome.

**[1.]** Christ refused to comply with it. He would not *command these stones to be made bread*; not because he could not; his power, which soon after this turned *stones* into *bread*; but he would not. And why would he not? At first view, the thing appears justifiable enough, and the truth is, the more plausible a temptation is, and the greater appearance there is of good in it, the more dangerous it is. This matter would bear a dispute, but Christ was soon aware of the snake in the grass, and would not do any thing, *First*, That looked like questioning the truth of the voice he heard from heaven, or putting that upon a new trial which was already settled. *Secondly*, That looked like distrusting his Father's care of him, or limiting him to one particular way of providing for him. *Thirdly*, That looked like setting up for himself, and being his own carver; or, *Fourthly*, That looked like gratifying Satan, by doing a thing at his motion. Some would have said, To give the Devil his due, this was good counsel; but for those *who wait upon God*, to consult *him*, is more than his due; it is like enquiring of the god Ekron, when there is a God in Israel.

**[2.]** He was ready to reply to it (v. 4); *He answered and said, It is written*. This is observable, that Christ answered and baffled all the temptations of Satan with, *It is written*. He is himself the eternal Word, and could have produced the mind of God without having recourse to the writings of Moses; but he put honour upon the scripture, and, to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the law; and he says this to Satan, taking it for granted that he knew well enough what was written. It is possible that those who are the Devil's children may yet know very well what is written in God's book; *The devils believe and tremble*. This method we must take when at any time we are tempted to sin; resist and repel the temptation



with, *It is written*. The Word of God is *the sword of the Spirit*, the only offensive weapon in all the Christian armoury (<sup>4017</sup>Ephesians 6:17); and we may say of it as David of Goliath's sword, *None is like that* in our spiritual conflicts.

This answer, as all the rest, is taken out of the book of *Deuteronomy*, which signifies *the second law*, and in which there is very little ceremonial; the Levitical sacrifices and purifications could not drive away Satan, though of divine institution, much less holy water and the sign of the cross, which are of human invention; but moral precepts and evangelical promises, mixed with faith, these are *mighty, through God*, for the vanquishing of Satan. This is here quoted from <sup>4005</sup>Deuteronomy 8:3, where the reason given why God fed the Israelites with manna is, because he would teach them that *man shall not live by bread alone*. This Christ applies to his own case. Israel was God's son, whom he *called out of Egypt* (<sup>4311</sup>Hosea 11:1), so was Christ (<sup>4025</sup>Matthew 2:15); Israel was then in a wilderness, Christ was so now, perhaps the same wilderness. Now, *First*, The Devil would have him question his sonship, because he was in straits; no, says he, Israel was God's son, and a son he was very tender of and whose manners he bore (<sup>4438</sup>Acts 13:18); and yet he brought them into straits; and it follows there (<sup>4005</sup>Deuteronomy 8:5), *As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee*. Christ, *being a Son*, thus *learns obedience*. *Secondly*, The Devil would have him distrust his Father's love and care. "No," says he, "that would be to do as Israel did, who, when they were in want, said, *Is the Lord among us?* and, *Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread?*" *Thirdly*, The Devil would have him, as soon as he began to be hungry, immediately looking out for supply; whereas God, for wise and holy ends, suffered Israel to hunger before he fed them; to humble them, and prove them. God will have his children, when they want, not only to wait on him, but to wait for him. *Fourthly*, The Devil would have him to supply himself with bread. "No," says Christ, "what need is there of that? It is a point long since settled, and incontestably proved, that man may live without bread, as Israel in the wilderness lived forty years upon manna." It is true, God in his providence ordinarily maintains men by *bread out of the earth* (<sup>4335</sup>Job 28:5); but he can, if he please, make use of other means to keep men alive; *any word proceeding out of the mouth of God*, any thing that God shall order and appoint for that end, will be a good a livelihood for man as bread, and will maintain him as well. As we may *have bread*, and yet not be nourished, if

God deny his blessing (<sup><306></sup>Haggai 1:6, 9; <sup><304></sup>Micah 6:14; for though bread is *the staff of life*, it is God's blessing that is *the staff of bread*), so we may *want bread*, and yet be nourished some other way. God sustains Moses and Elias without bread, and Christ himself just now for forty days; he sustained Israel with bread from heaven, angels' food; Elijah with bread sent miraculously by ravens, and another time with the widow's meal miraculously multiplied; therefore Christ need not turn stones into bread, but trust God to keep him alive some other way now that he is hungry, as he had done forty days before he hungred. Note, As in our great abundance we must not think to live *without* God, so in our greatest straits we must learn to live *upon* God; and when *the fig-tree does not blossom*, and *the field yields no meat*, when all ordinary means of succour and support are cut off, yet then we must *rejoice in the Lord*; then we must not think to command what we will, though contrary to his command, but must humbly pray for what he thinks fit to give us, and be thankful for the bread of our allowance, though it be a short allowance. Let us learn of Christ here to be at God's finding, rather than at our own; and not to take any irregular courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing (<sup><308></sup>Psalm 37:3). *Jehovah-jireh*; some way or other *the Lord will provide*. It is better to live poorly upon the fruits of God's goodness, than live plentifully upon the products of our own sin.

**2.** He tempted him to presume upon his Father's power and protection. See what a restless unwearied adversary the Devil is! If he fail in one assault, he tries another.

Now in this second attempt we may observe,

**(1.)** What the temptation was, and how it was managed. In general, finding Christ so confident of his Father's care of him, in point of nourishment, he endeavors to draw him to presume upon that care in point of safety. Note, We are in danger of missing our way, both on the right hand and on the left, and therefore must take heed, lest, when we avoid one extreme, we be brought by the artifices of Satan, to run into another; lest, by overcoming our prodigality, we fall into covetousness. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than those of despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls. Some who have obtained a persuasion that Christ is able and willing to save them *from* their sins, are then tempted to presume that he will save them *in* their sins. Thus when people begin to be zealous in religion, Satan hurries them into bigotry and intemperate heats.

Now in this temptation we may observe,

[1.] How he made way for it. He took Christ, not by force against his will, but moved him to go, and went along with him, to Jerusalem. Whether Christ went upon the ground, and so went up the stairs to the top of the temple, or whether he went in the air, is uncertain; but so it was, that he was *set upon a pinnacle*, or spire; *upon the fane* (so some), *upon the battlements* (so others), *upon the wing* (so the word is), *of the temple*. Now observe, *First*, How submissive Christ was, in suffering himself to be hurried thus, that he might let Satan do his worst and yet conquer him. The patience of Christ here, as afterward in his sufferings and death, is more wonderful than the power of Satan or his instruments; for neither he nor they could have any power against Christ but *what was given them from above*. How comfortable is it, that Christ, who let loose this power of Satan against himself, does not in like manner let it loose against us, but restrains it, for he *knows our frame!* *Secondly*, How subtle the Devil was, in the choice of the place for his temptations. Intending to solicit Christ to an ostentation of his own power, and a vain-glorious presumption upon God's providence, he fixes him on a public place in Jerusalem, a populous city, and *the joy of the whole earth*; in the temple, one of the wonders of the world, continually gazed upon with admiration by some one or other. There he might make himself remarkable, and be taken notice of by every body, and prove himself the Son of God; not, as he was urged in the former temptation, in the obscurities of a wilderness, but before multitudes, upon the most eminent stage of action.

Observe,

1. That Jerusalem is here called the *holy city*; for so it was in name and profession, and there was in it a *holy seed*, that was the *substance thereof*. Note, There is no city on earth so holy as to exempt and secure us from the Devil and his temptations. The first *Adam* was tempted in the *holy garden*, the second in the *holy city*. Let us not, therefore, in any place, be off our watch. Nay, the *holy city* is the place where he does, with great advantage and success, tempt men to pride and presumption; but, blessed be God, into the Jerusalem above, that holy city, no unclean thing shall enter; there we shall be for ever out of temptation.

2. That he *set him upon a pinnacle of the temple*, which (as Josephus describes it, *Antiq.* 15.412) was so very high, that it would make a

man's head giddy to look down to the bottom. Note, Pinnacles of the temple are places of temptation; I mean,

(1.) High places are so; they are slippery places; advancement in the world makes a man a fair mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. God casts down, that he may raise up; the Devil raises up, that he may cast down: therefore they who would take heed of *falling*, must take heed of *climbing*.

(2.) High places *in the church* are, in a special manner, dangerous. They who excel in gifts, who are in eminent stations, and have gained great reputation, have need to keep humble; for Satan will be sure to aim at them, to puff them up with pride, that they may *fall into the condemnation of the Devil*. Those that *stand high* are concerned to *stand fast*.

[2.] How he moved it; “*If thou be the Son of God, now show thyself to the world, and prove thyself to be so; cast thyself down, and then,*” *First*, “Thou wilt be admired, as *under the special protection of heaven*. When they see thee receive no hurt by a fall from such a precipice, they will say” (as the barbarous people did of Paul) “that thou art a God.” Tradition says, that *Simon Magnus* by this very thing attempted to prove himself a god, but that his pretensions were disproved, for he fell down, and was miserably bruised. “Nay,” *Secondly*, “Thou wilt be received, as coming *with a special commission from heaven*. All Jerusalem will see and acknowledge, not only that thou art more than a man, but that thou art that *Messenger*, that *Angel of the covenant*, that should *suddenly come to the temple* (<sup>301</sup>Malachi 3:1), and from thence descend into the streets of the holy city; and thus the work of convincing the Jews will be cut short, and soon done.”

Observe, The Devil said, *Cast thyself down*. The Devil could not cast him down, though a little thing would have done it, from the top of a spire. Note, The power of Satan is a limited power; *hitherto he shall come, and no further*. Yet, if the Devil *had cast him down*, he had not gained his point; that had been his suffering only, not his sin. Note, Whatever real mischief is done us, it is of *our own doing*; the Devil can but persuade, he cannot compel; he can but say, *Cast thyself down*; he cannot cast us down. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and not forced, but enticed. Therefore let us not *hurt ourselves*, and then, blessed be God, no one else can hurt us, <sup>302</sup>Proverbs 9:12.

[3.] How he backed this motion with a scripture; *For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee.* But is Saul also among the prophets? Is Satan so well versed in scripture, as to be able to quote it so readily? It seems, he is. Note, It is possible for a man to have his head full of scripture-notions, and his mouth full of scripture-expressions, while his heart is full of reigning enmity to God and all goodness. The knowledge which the devils have of the scripture, increases both their mischievousness and their torment. Never did the devil speak with more vexation to himself, than when he said to Christ, *I know thee who thou art.* The devil would persuade Christ to *throw himself down*, hoping that he would be his own murderer, and that there would be an end of him and his undertaking, which he looked upon with a jealous eye; to encourage him to do it, he tells them, that there was no danger, that the good angels would protect him, for so was the promise (<sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 91:11), *He shall give his angels charge over thee.* In this quotation,

*First*, There was *something right*. It is true, there is such a promise of the ministration of the angels, for the protection of the saints. The devil knows it by experience; for he finds his attempts against them fruitless, and he frets and rages at it, as he did at the hedge about Job, which he speaks of so sensibly, <sup><BIB></sup>Job 1:10. He was also right in applying it to Christ, for to him all the promises of the protection of the saints primarily and eminently belong, and to them, in and through him. That promise, that *not a bone of theirs shall be broken* (<sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 34:20), was fulfilled in Christ, <sup><BIB></sup>John 19:36. The angels guard the saints for Christ's sake, <sup><BIB></sup>Revelation 7:5, 11.

*Secondly*, There was a great deal *wrong in it*; and perhaps the devil had a particular spite against this promise, and perverted it, because it often stood in his way, and baffled his mischievous designs against the saints. See here,

**1.** How he *misquoted* it; and that was *bad*. The promise is, *They shall keep thee; but how? In all thy ways; not otherwise; if we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection.* Now this word made against the tempter, and therefore he industriously left it out. If Christ had *cast himself down*, he had been *out of his way*, for he had no call so to expose himself. It is good for us upon all occasions to consult the scriptures themselves, and not to take things upon trust, that we may

not be imposed upon by those that maim and mangle the word of God; we must do as the noble *Bereans*, who searched the scriptures daily.

**2.** How he *misapplied* it; and that was *worse*. Scripture is abused when it is pressed to patronize sin; and when men thus wrest it to their own temptation, they do it to *their own destruction* <sup><GR6></sup>2 Peter 3:16. This promise is firm, and stands good; but the devil made an ill use of it, when he used it as an encouragement to presume upon the divine care. Note, It is no new thing for the *grace of God* to be *turned into wantonness*; and for men to take encouragement in sin from the discoveries of God's good will to sinners. But *shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* throw ourselves down, that the angels may bear us up? God forbid.

**(2.)** How Christ overcame this temptation; he resisted and overcame it, as he did the former, with, *It is written*. The devil's *abusing* of scripture did not prevent Christ from using it, but he presently urges, <sup><GR6></sup>Deuteronomy 6:16, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. The meaning of this is not, Therefore thou must not tempt me; but, Therefore I *must not tempt* my Father. In the place whence it is quoted, it is in the plural number, *You shall not tempt*; here it is singular, *Thou shalt not*. Note, We are *then* likely to get good by the word of God, when we hear and receive general promises as speaking to us in particular. Satan said, *It is written*; Christ says, *It is written*; not that one scripture contradicts another. God is one, and his word one, and he is one mind, but that is a promise, this is a precept, and therefore that is to be explained and applied by this; for scripture is the best interpreter of scripture; and they who prophesy, who expound scripture, must do it according to the proportion of faith (<sup><GR6></sup>Romans 12:6), consistently with practical godliness.

If Christ should *cast himself down*, it would be the tempting of God,

**[1.]** As it would be *requiring a further confirmation* of that which was so well confirmed. Christ was abundantly satisfied that God was already his Father, and took care of him, and gave his angels a charge concerning him; and therefore to put it upon a new experiment, would be to tempt him, as the Pharisees tempted Christ; when they had so many signs on earth, they demanded a *sign from heaven*. This is limiting the *Holy One of Israel*.

**[2.]** As it would be *requiring a special preservation* of him, in doing that which he had no call to. If we expect that because God has promised not to

forsake us, therefore he should follow us out of the way of our duty; that because he has promised to supply our wants, therefore he should humour us, and please our fancies; that because he has promised to keep us, we may wilfully thrust ourselves into danger, and may expect the desired end, without using the appointed means; this is presumption, this is tempting God. And it is an aggravation of the sin, that he is the Lord our God; it is an abuse of the privilege we enjoy, in having him for our God; he has thereby encouraged us to trust him, but we are very ungrateful, if therefore we tempt him; it is contrary to our duty to him as our God. This is to affront him whom we ought to honour. Note, We must never promise ourselves any more than God has promised us.

**3.** He tempted him to the most *black and horrid idolatry*, with the proffer of the *kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*. And here we may observe,

**(1.)** How the devil made this push at our Saviour, v. 8, 9. The worst temptation was reserved for the last. Note, Sometimes the saint's last encounter is with the sons of *Anak*, and the parting blow is the sorest; therefore, whatever temptation we have been assaulted by, still we must prepare for worse; must be armed for all attacks, with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

In this temptation, we may observe,

**[1.]** What he *showed him* — *all the kingdoms of the world*. In order to do this, he took him to an *exceeding high mountain*; in hopes of prevailing, as Balak with Balaam, he changed his ground. The pinnacle of the temple is not high enough; the prince of the power of the air must have him further up into his territories. Some think this high mountain was on the other side of Jordan, because there we find Christ next after the temptation, ~~410~~ John 1:28, 29. Perhaps it was *mount Pisgah*, whence Moses, in communion with God, had all the kingdoms of Canaan shown him. Hither the blessed Jesus was carried for the advantage of a prospect; as if the devil could show him more of the world than he knew already, who made and governed it. Thence he might discover some of the kingdoms situate about Judea, though not *the glory of them*; but there was doubtless a juggle and a delusion of Satan's in it; it is probable that that which he showed him, was but a landscape, an airy representation in a cloud, such as that great deceiver could easily frame and put together; setting forth, in proper and lively colours, the glories and the splendid appearances of princes; their

robes and crowns, their retinue, equipage, and lifeguards; the pomp of thrones, and courts, and stately palaces, the sumptuous buildings in cities, the gardens and fields about the country-seats, with the various instances of their wealth, pleasure, and gaiety; so as might be most likely to strike the fancy, and excite the admiration and affection. Such was this show, and his taking him up into a high mountain, was but to *humour the thing*, and to colour the delusion; in which yet the blessed Jesus did not suffer himself to be imposed upon, but saw through the cheat, only he permitted Satan to take his own way, that his victory over him might be the more illustrious. Hence observe, concerning *Satan's temptations*, that, *First*, They often *come in at the eye*, which is blinded to the things it should see, and dazzled with the vanities it should be turned from. The first sin began in the eye, <sup>(1086)</sup>Genesis 3:6. We have therefore need to make a covenant with our eyes, and to pray that God would *turn them away from beholding vanity*. *Secondly*, That temptations commonly take rise from the world, and the things in it. The *lust of the flesh*, and of *the eye*, with the *pride of life*, are the topics from which the devil fetches most of his arguments. *Thirdly*, That it is a *great cheat* which the devil puts upon poor souls, in his temptations. He deceives, and so destroys; he imposes upon men with shadows and fast colours; shows the world and the glory of it, and hides from men's eyes the sin and sorrow and death which stain the pride of all this glory, the cares and calamities which attend great possessions, and the thorns which crowns themselves are lined with. *Fourthly*, That the *glory of the world* is the most *charming* temptation to the *unthinking* and *unwary*, and that by which men are most imposed upon. *Laban's sons* grudge *Jacob all this glory*; the *pride of life* is the most dangerous snare.

[2.] What he said to him (v. 9); *All these things I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*. See,

*First*, How *vain the promise* was. *All these things I will give thee*. He seems to take it for granted, that in the former temptations he had in part gained his point, and proved that Christ was not the *Son of God*, because he had not given him those evidences of it which he demanded; so that here he looks upon him as a mere man. "Come," says he, "it seems that God whose Son thou thinkest thyself to be deserts thee, and starves thee — a sign that he is not thy Father; but if thou wilt be ruled by me, I will provide better for thee than so; own me for thy father, and ask my blessing, and *all this will I give thee*." Note, Satan makes an easy prey of men, when he can persuade them to think themselves abandoned of God.



The fallacy of this promise lies in that, *All this will I give thee*. And what was *all that*? It was but a map, a picture, a mere phantasm, that had nothing in it real or solid, and this he would give him; a goodly prize! Yet such are Satan's proffers. Note, Multitudes lose the sight of that which is, by setting their eyes on that which is not. The devil's baits are all a sham; they are shows and shadows with which he deceives them, or rather they deceive themselves. The *nations of the earth* had been, long before, promised to the Messiah; if he be *the Son of God*, they belong to him; Satan pretends now to be a good angel, probably one of those that were set over kingdoms, and to have received a commission to deliver possession to him according to promise. Note, We must take heed of receiving even that which God hath promised, out of the devil's hand; we do so when we precipitate the performance, by catching at it in a sinful way.

*Secondly*, How *vile* the condition was; *If thou wilt fall down, and worship me*. All the worship which the heathen performed to their gods, was directed to the devil (<sup><B27></sup>Deuteronomy 32:17), who is therefore called the *god of this world*, <sup><A04></sup>2 Corinthians 4:4; <sup><A10></sup>1 Corinthians 10:20. And fain would he draw Christ into his interests, and persuade him, now that he set up for a Teacher, to preach up the Gentile idolatry, and to introduce it again among the Jews, and then the nations of the earth would soon flock in to him. What temptation could be more hideous, more black? Note, The best of saints may be tempted to the worst of sins, especially when they are under the power of melancholy; as, for instance, to atheism, blasphemy, murder, self-murder, and what not. This is their affliction, but while there is no consent to it, nor approbation of it, it is not their sin; Christ was tempted to worship Satan.

(2.) See how Christ warded off the thrust, baffled the assault, and came off a conqueror. He rejected the proposal,

[1.] With *abhorrence* and *detestation*; *Get thee hence, Satan*. The two former temptations had something of colour, which would admit a consideration, but this was so gross as not to bear a parley; it appears abominable at the first sight, and therefore is immediately rejected. If the best friend we have in the world suggests such a thing as this to us, *Go, serve other gods*, he must not be heard with patience, <sup><B16></sup>Deuteronomy 13:6, 8. Some temptations have their wickedness written in their forehead, they are open before-hand; they are not to be disputed with, but rejected; "*Get thee hence, Satan*. Away with it, I cannot bear the thought of it!"

While Satan tempted Christ to do himself a mischief, by casting himself down, though he yielded not, yet he heard it; but now that the temptation flies in the face of God, he cannot bear it; *Get thee hence, Satan*. Note, It is a just indignation, which rises at the proposal of any thing that reflects on the honour of God, and strikes at his crown. Nay, whatever is an abominable thing, which we are sure the Lord hates, we must thus abominate it; far be it from us that we should have any thing to do with it. Note, It is good to be *peremptory* in resisting temptation, and to *stop our ears* to Satan's charms.

[2.] With an argument fetched from scripture. Note, In order to the strengthening of our resolutions against sin, it is good to see what a great deal of reason there is for those resolutions. The argument is very suitable, and exactly to the purpose, taken from ~~Gen~~ Deuteronomy 6:13, and 10:20. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*. Christ does not dispute whether he were an angel of light, as he pretended, or not; but though he were, yet he must not be worshipped, because that is an honour due to God only. Note, It is good to make our answers to temptation as full and as brief as may be, so as not to leave room for objections. Our Saviour has recourse to the fundamental law in this case, which is indispensable, and universally obligatory. Note, Religious worship is due to God only, and must not be given to any creature; it is a flower of the crown which cannot be alienated, a branch of God's glory which he will not give to another, and which he would not give to his own Son, by obliging all men to *honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, if he had not been God, *equal to him, and one with him*. Christ quotes this law concerning religious worship, and quotes it with application to himself; *First*, To show that in his estate of humiliation he was himself *made under this law*: though, as God, he was worshipped, yet, as Man, he did worship God, both publicly and privately. He obliges us to no more than what he was first pleased to oblige himself to. Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness. *Secondly*, To show that the law of religious worship is of eternal obligation: though he abrogated and altered many institutions of worship, yet this fundamental law of nature — That God only is to be worshipped, he came to ratify, and confirm, and enforce upon us.

**V.** We have here the end and issue of this combat, v. 11. Though the children of God may be exercised with many and great temptations, yet God will not suffer them to be tempted above the strength which either

they have, or he will put into them, ~~413~~1 Corinthians 10:13. It is but for a season that they are in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

Now the issue was glorious, and much to Christ's honour: for,

**1.** The devil was baffled, and quitted the field; *Then the devil leaveth him*, forced to do so by the power that went along with that word of command, *Get thee hence, Satan*. He made a shameful and inglorious retreat, and came off with disgrace; and the more daring his attempts had been, the more mortifying was the foil that was given him. *Magnis tamen excidit ausis* — *The attempt, however, in which he failed, was daring*. Then, when he had done his worst, had tempted him with *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, and found that he was not influenced by that bait, that he could not prevail with that temptation with which he had overthrown so many thousands of the children of men, then he leaves him; then he gives him over as more than a man. Since this did not move him, he despairs of moving him, and begins to conclude, that he is the *Son of God*, and that it is in vain to tempt him any further. Note, If we resist the devil, he will flee from us; he will yield, if we keep our ground; as when *Naomi* saw that *Ruth* was *steadfastly resolved*, she left off speaking to her. When the devil left our Saviour, he owned himself fairly beaten; his head was broken by the attempt he made to *bruise Christ's heel*. He left him because he had *nothing in him*, nothing to take hold of; he saw it was to no purpose, and so gave over. Note, The devil, though he is an enemy to all saints, is a conquered enemy. The Captain of our salvation has defeated and disarmed him; we have nothing to do but to *pursue the victory*.

**2.** The holy angels came and attended upon our victorious Redeemer; *Behold, angels came and ministered unto him*. They came in a visible appearance, as the devil had done in the temptation. While the devil was making his assaults upon our Saviour, the angels stood at a distance, and their immediate attendance and administration were suspended, that it might appear that he vanquished Satan in his own strength, and that his victory might be the more illustrious; and that afterward, when *Michael* makes use of *his angels* in fighting with the *dragon and his angels*, it might appear, that it is not because he *needs them*, or could not do his work without them, but because he is pleased to honour them so far as to employ them. One angel might have served to bring him food, but here are many attending him, to testify their respect to him, and their readiness to receive his commands. Behold this! It is worth taking notice of;

(1.) That as there is a world of wicked, malicious spirits that fight against Christ and his church, and all particular believers, so there is a world of holy, blessed spirits engaged and employed for them. In reference to our *war with devils*, we may take abundance of comfort from our *communion with angels*.

(2.) That Christ's victories are the angels' triumphs. The angels came to congratulate Christ on his success, to rejoice with him, and to give him the glory due to his name; for that was sung with a loud voice in heaven, when the great dragon was cast out (~~GRB~~ Revelation 12:9, 10), *Now is come salvation and strength*.

(3.) That the angels ministered to the Lord Jesus, not only food, but whatever else he wanted after this great fatigue. See how the instances of Christ's condescension and humiliation were balanced with tokens of his glory. As when he was *crucified in weakness*, yet he *lived by the power of God*; so when in weakness he was tempted, was hungry and weary, yet by his divine power he commanded the ministration of angels. Thus the Son of man did eat angels' food, and, like Elias, is fed by an angel in the wilderness, ~~GRB~~ 1 Kings 19:4, 7. Note, Though God may suffer his people to be brought into wants and straits, yet he will take effectual care for their supply, and will rather send angels to feed them, than see them perish. *Trust in the Lord, and verily thou shalt be fed*, ~~GRB~~ Psalm 37:3.

Christ was thus succoured after the temptation,

[1.] For his encouragement to go on in his undertaking, that he might see the powers of heaven siding with him, when he saw the powers of hell set against him.

[2.] For our encouragement to trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to *suffer, being tempted*, and how hard that was, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being tempted, and how comfortable that was; and therefore we may expect, not only that he will sympathize with his tempted people, but that he will come in with seasonable relief to them; as our great Melchizedec, who met Abraham when he returned from the battle, and as the angels here ministered to him.

*Lastly*, Christ, having been thus signalized and made great in the invisible world by the voice of the Father, the descent of the Spirit, his victory over devils, and his dominion over angels, was doubtless qualified to appear in

the visible world as the Mediator between God and man; for *consider how great this man was!*

## Ⓜ MATTHEW 4:12-17

### OPENING OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

We have here an account of Christ's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, for he came into the world to be a Preacher; the great salvation which he wrought out, he himself began to publish (Ⓜ Hebrews 2:3) to show how much his heart *was* upon it, and ours *should* be.

Several passages in the other gospels, especially in that of St. John, are supposed, in the order of the story of Christ's life, to intervene between his temptation and his preaching in Galilee. His first appearance after his temptation, was when John Baptist pointed to him, saying, *Behold the Lamb of God*, Ⓜ John 1:29. After that, he went up to Jerusalem, to the passover (John 2), discoursed with Nicodemus (John 3), with the woman of Samaria (John 4), and then returned into Galilee, and preached there. But Matthew, having had his residence in Galilee, begins his story of Christ's public ministry with his preaching there, which here we have an account of. Observe,

**I.** The time; *When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison*, then he *went into Galilee*, v. 12. Note, The cry of the saints' sufferings comes up into the ears of the Lord Jesus. If John be cast into prison, Jesus hears it, takes cognizance of it, and steers his course accordingly: *he remembers the bonds and afflictions that abide his people*. Observe,

**1.** Christ did *not* go into the country, *till he heard of John's imprisonment*; for he must have time given him to *prepare the way of the Lord*, before the Lord himself appear. Providence wisely ordered it, that John should be *eclipsed* before Christ *shone forth*; otherwise the minds of people would have been distracted between the two; one would have said, *I am of John*, and another, *I am of Jesus*. John must be Christ's harbinger, but not his rival. The moon and stars are lost when the sun rises. John had done his work by the baptism of repentance, and then he was laid aside. The witnesses were slain when they had finished their testimony, and not before, Ⓜ Revelation 11:7.

2. He *did* go into the country as soon as he heard of John's imprisonment; not only to provide for his own safety, knowing that the Pharisees in Judea were as much enemies to him as Herod was to John, but to supply the want of John Baptist, and to build upon the good foundation he had laid. Note, God will not leave himself without witness, nor his church without guides; when he removes one useful instrument, he can raise up another, for he has the residue of the Spirit, and he will do it, if he has work to do. *Moses my servant is dead*, John is cast into prison; now, therefore, Joshua, arise; Jesus, arise.

II. The place where he preached; in Galilee, a remote part of the country, that lay furthest from Jerusalem, as was there looked upon with contempt, as rude and boorish. The inhabitants of that country were reckoned stout men, fit for soldiers, but not polite men, or fit for scholars. Thither Christ went, there he set up the standard of his gospel; and in this, as in other things, he humbled himself. Observe,

1. The particular city he chose for his residence; not Nazareth, where he had been bred up; no, he left Nazareth; particular notice is taken of that, v. 13. And with good reason did he leave Nazareth; for the men of that city *thrust him out from among them*, ~~and~~ Luke 4:29. He made them his first, and a very fair, offer of his service, but they rejected him and his doctrine, and were filled with indignation at him and it; and therefore he left Nazareth, and shook off the dust of his feet for a testimony against those there, who would not have him to teach them. Nazareth was the first place that refused Christ, and was therefore refused by him. Note, It is just with God, to take the gospel and the means of grace from those that slight them, and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. Unhappy Nazareth! *If thou hadst known* in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, how well had it been for thee! *But now they are hid from thine eyes*.

But he *came and dwelt in Capernaum*, which was a city of Galilee, but many miles distant from Nazareth, a great city and of much resort. It is said here to be *on the sea coast*, not the *great sea*, but the sea of Tiberias, an inland water, called also *the lake of Gennesaret*. Close by the falling of Jordan into the sea stood Capernaum, in the tribe of Naphtali, but bordering upon Zebulun; hither Christ came, and here he dwelt. Some think that his father Joseph had a habitation here, others that he took a house or lodgings at least; and some think it more than probable, that he

dwelt in the house of Simon Peter; however, here he fixed not constantly, for he went about doing good; but this was for some time his head quarters: what little rest he had, was here; here he had a place, though not a place of his own, to lay his head on. And at Capernaum, it should seem, he was welcome, and met with better entertainment than he had at Nazareth. Note, If some reject Christ, yet others will receive him, and bid him welcome. Capernaum is glad of Nazareth's leavings. If Christ's own countrymen be not gathered, yet he will be glorious. "And thou, Capernaum, has now a day of it; thou art now lifted up to heaven; be wise for thyself, and know the time of thy visitation."

2. The prophecy that was fulfilled is this, v. 14-16. It is quoted from <sup><390></sup>Isaiah 9:1, 2, but with some variation. The prophet in that place is foretelling a greater darkness of affliction to befall the contemners of Immanuel, than befall the countries there mentioned, either in their first captivity under Benhadad, which was but light (<sup><1153></sup>1 Kings 15:20), or in their second captivity under the Assyrian, which was much heavier, <sup><273></sup>2 Kings 15:29. The punishment of the Jewish nation for rejecting the gospel should be sorer than either (see <sup><242></sup>Isaiah 8:21, 22); for those captivated places had some reviving in their bondage, and saw a great light again, ch. 9:2. This is Isaiah's sense; but the Scripture has many fulfillings; and the evangelist here takes only the latter clause, which speaks of the return of the light of liberty and prosperity to those countries that had been in the darkness of captivity, and applies it to the appearing of the gospel among them.

The places are spoken of, v. 15. *The land of Zebulun is rightly said to be by the sea coast, for Zebulun was a haven of ships, and rejoiced in her going out,* <sup><143></sup>Genesis 49:13; <sup><578></sup>Deuteronomy 33:18. Of Naphtali, it had been said, that he should *give goodly words* (<sup><142></sup>Genesis 49:21), and should be *satisfied with favour* (<sup><533></sup>Deuteronomy 33:23), for from him began the gospel; goodly words indeed, and such as bring to a soul God's satisfying favour. The country beyond Jordan is mentioned likewise, for there we sometimes find Christ preaching, and Galilee of the Gentiles, the upper Galilee to which the Gentiles resorted for traffic, and where they were mingled with the Jews; which intimates a kindness in reserve for the poor Gentiles. When Christ came to Capernaum, the gospel came to all those places round about; such diffusive influences did the Sun of righteousness cast.

Now, concerning the inhabitants of these places, observe,

(1.) The posture they were in before the gospel came among them (v. 16); they were *in darkness*. Note, Those that are without Christ, are in the dark, nay, they are darkness itself; as the darkness that was upon the *face of the deep*. Nay, they were *in the region and shadow of death*; which denotes not only *great darkness*, as the grave is a *land of darkness*, but *great danger*. A man that is desperately sick, and not likely to recover, is in the *valley of the shadow of death*, though not quite dead; so the poor people were on the borders of damnation, though not yet damned — dead in law. And, which is worst of all, they were *sitting* in this condition. Sitting in a continuing posture; where we sit, we mean to stay; they were in the dark, and likely to be so, despairing to find the way out. And it is a contented posture; they were in the dark, and they loved darkness, they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. Their condition was sad; it is still the condition of many great and mighty nations, which are to be thought of, and prayed for, with pity. But *their* condition is more sad, who sit in darkness in the midst of gospel-light. He that is in the dark because it is night, may be sure that the sun will shortly arise; but he that is in the dark because he is blind, will not so soon have his eyes opened. We have the light, but what will that avail us, if we be not the light in the Lord?

(2.) The privilege they enjoyed, when Christ and his gospel came among them; it was as great a reviving as ever light was to a benighted traveller. Note, When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there, ~~AND~~ John 3:19; ~~AND~~ Luke 1:78, 79. Light is discovering, it is directing; so is the gospel.

It is a *great* light; denoting the clearness and evidence of gospel-revelations; not like the light of a candle, but the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. *Great* in comparison with the light of the law, the shadows of which were now done away. It is a *great light*, for it discovers great things and of vast consequence; it will last long, and spread far. And it is a *growing light*, intimated in that word, It is *sprung up*. It was but *spring of day* with them; now the day dawned, which afterward *shone more and more*. The gospel-kingdom, like a grain of mustard-seed or the morning light, was small in its beginnings, gradual in its growth, but great in its perfection.

Observe, the light *sprang up to them*; they did not go to seek it, but were prevented with the blessings of this goodness. It came upon them ere they



were aware, at the time appointed, by the disposal of him who *commandeth the morning, and causes the day-spring to know its place, that it may take hold of the ends of the earth,* <sup><482></sup>Job 38:12, 13.

**III.** The text he preached upon (v. 17): *From that time*, that is, from the time of his coming into Galilee, into the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, from that time, he began to preach. He had been preaching, before this, in Judea, and had made and baptized many disciples (<sup><491></sup>John 4:1); but his preaching was no so public and constant as now it began to be. The work of the ministry is so great and awful, that it is fit to be entered upon by steps and gradual advances.

The subject which Christ dwelt upon now in his preaching (and it was indeed the sum and substance of all his preaching), was the very same John has preached upon (<sup><492></sup>Matthew 3:2); *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; for the gospel is the same for substance under various dispensations; the commands the same, and the reasons to enforce them the same; an *angel from heaven* dares not preach any other gospel (<sup><493></sup>Galatians 1:8), and will preach this, for it is the *everlasting gospel*. *Fear God, and, by repentance, give honour to him,* <sup><494></sup>Revelation 14:6, 7. Christ put a great respect upon John's ministry, when he preached to the same purport that John had preached before him. By this he showed that John was his messenger and ambassador; for when he brought the errand himself, it was the same that he had sent by him. Thus did God confirm the word of his messenger, <sup><495></sup>Isaiah 44:26. The Son came on the same errand that the servants came on (ch. 21:37), to *seek fruit*, fruits meet for repentance. Christ had lain in the bosom of the Father, and could have preached sublime notions of divine and heavenly things, that should have alarmed and amused the learned world, but he pitches upon this old, plain text, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*.

[1.] This he preached *first* upon; he began with this. Ministers must not be ambitious of broaching new opinions, framing new schemes, or coining new expressions, but must content themselves with plain, practical things, with the word that is *nigh us, even in our mouth, and in our heart*. We need not go up to heaven, nor down to the deep, for matter or language in our preaching. As John prepared Christ's way, so Christ prepared his own, and made way for the further discoveries he designed, with the doctrine of repentance. *If any man will do this part of his will, he shall know more of his doctrine,* <sup><497></sup>John 7:17.

[2.] This is preached *often* upon; wherever he went, this was his subject, and neither he nor his followers ever reckoned it worn threadbare, as those would have done, that have *itching ears*, and are fond of novelty and variety more than that which is truly edifying. Note, That which has been preached and heard before, may yet very profitably be preached and heard again; but then it should be preached and heard better, and with new affections; what Paul had said before, he said again, *weeping*, ~~scri~~Philippians 3:1, 18.

[3.] This he preached as gospel; “Repent, review your ways, and return to yourselves.” Note, The doctrine of repentance is right gospel-doctrine. Not only the austere Baptist, who was looked upon as a melancholy, morose man, but the sweet and gracious Jesus, whose lips dropped as a honey-comb, preached repentance; for it is an unspeakable privilege that room is left for repentance.

[4.] The reason is still the same; The *kingdom of heaven is at hand*; for it was not reckoned to be fully come, till that pouring out of the Spirit after Christ's ascension. John had preached the kingdom of heaven at hand above a year before this; but now it was so much the stronger; now is the *salvation nearer*, ~~scri~~Romans 13:11. We should be so much the more quickened to our duty, *as we see the day approaching*, ~~scri~~Hebrews 10:25.

## ~~scri~~MATTHEW 4:18-22

### CHRIST CALLS PETER, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN

When Christ began to preach, he began to *gather disciples*, who should now be the *hearers*, and hereafter the *preachers*, of his doctrine, who should now be witnesses *of his miracles*, and hereafter *concerning* them. Now, in these verses, we have an account of the first disciples that he called into fellowship with himself.

And this was an instance,

1. Of *effectual calling* to Christ. In all his preaching he gave a common call to all the country, but in this he gave a special and particular call to those that were given him by the Father. Let us see and admire the power of Christ's grace, own his word to be the rod of his strength, and wait upon him for those powerful influences which are necessary to the efficacy of

the gospel call — those distinguishing influences. All the country was *called*, but these were *called out*, were *redeemed from among them*. Christ was so manifested to them, as he was not manifested unto the world.

2. It was an instance of *ordination*, and appointment to the work of the ministry. When Christ, as a Teacher, set up his great school, one of his first works was to appoint ushers, or under masters, to be employed in the work of instruction. Now he began to give gifts unto men, to put the treasure into earthen vessels. It was an early instance of his care for the church.

Now we may observe here,

I. *Where* they were called — by the *sea of Galilee*, where Jesus was walking, Capernaum being situated near that sea. Concerning this sea of Tiberias, the Jews have a saying, That of all the seven seas that God made, he made choice of none but the sea of Gennesaret; which is very applicable to Christ's choice of it, to honour it, as he often did, with his presence and his miracles. Here, on the banks of the sea, Christ was walking for contemplation, as Isaac in the field; hither he went to call his disciples; not to Herod's court (for few mighty or noble are called), not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee; surely Christ sees not as man sees. Not but that the same power which effectually called Peter and Andrew would have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible; but, as in other things, so in his converse and attendance, he would humble himself, and show that God *ha chosen the poor of this world*. Galilee was a remote part of the nation, the inhabitants were less cultivated and refined, their very language was broad and uncouth to the curious, their *speech betrayed them*. They who were picked up at the sea of Galilee, had not the advantages and improvements, no, not of the more polished Galileans; yet thither Christ went, to call his apostles that were to be the prime ministers of state in his kingdom, for he *chooses the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise*.

II. *Who* they were. We have an account of the call of two pair of brothers in these verses — Peter and Andrew, James and John; the two former, and, probably, the two latter also, had had acquaintance with Christ before (John 1:40, 41), but were not till now called into a close and constant attendance upon him. Note, Christ brings poor souls by degrees into

fellowship with himself. They had been disciples of John, and so were the better disposed to follow Christ. Note, Those who have submitted to the discipline of repentance, shall be welcome to the joys of faith. We may observe concerning them,

**1.** That they were *brothers*. Note, It is a blessed thing, when they who are *kinsmen according to the flesh* (as the apostle speaks, ~~400~~ Romans 9:3), are brought together into a spiritual alliance to Jesus Christ. It is the honour and comfort of a house, when those that are of the *same* family, are of *God's* family.

**2.** That they were *fishers*. Being fishers,

**(1.)** They were *poor men*: if they had had estates, or any considerable stock in trade, they would not have made fishing their trade, however, they might have made it their recreation. Note, Christ does not despise the poor, and therefore we must not; the poor are evangelized, and the Fountain of honour sometimes gives more abundant honour to that part which most lacked.

**(2.)** They were *unlearned men*, not bred up to books or literature as Moses was, who was conversant with all the learning of the Egyptians. Note, Christ sometimes chooses to endow those with the gifts of grace who have least to show of the gifts of nature. Yet this will not justify the bold intrusion of ignorant and unqualified men into the work of the ministry: extraordinary gifts of knowledge and utterance are not now to be expected, but requisite abilities must be obtained in an ordinary way, and without a competent measure of these, none are to be admitted to that service.

**(3.)** They were *men of business*, who had been bred up to labour. Note, Diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and no hindrance to a holy life. Moses was called from keeping sheep, and David from following the ewes, to eminent employments. Idle people lie more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God.

**(4.)** They were men that were accustomed to *hardships* and hazards; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in *perils by waters*. Note, Those who have learned to bear hardships, and run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

**III.** *What they were doing.* Peter and Andrew were then using their nets, they were fishing; and James and John were *mending their nets*, which was an instance of their industry and good husbandry. They did not go to their father for money to buy new nets, but took pains to mend their old ones. It is commendable to make what we have go as far, and last as long, as may be. James and John were *with their father Zebedee*, ready to assist him, and make his business easy to him. Note, It is a happy and hopeful presage, to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful to them. Observe,

**1.** They were *all* employed, all very busy, and none idle. Note, When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. “Am I in Christ?” is a very needful question for us to ask ourselves; and, next to that, “Am I in my calling?”

**2.** They were *differently* employed; two of them were fishing, and two of them *mending their nets*. Note, Ministers should be always employed, either in teaching or studying; they may always find themselves something to do, if it be not their own fault; and *mending their nets*, is, in its season, as necessary work as fishing.

**IV.** *What the call was* (v. 19); *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*. They had followed Christ before, as ordinary disciples (<sup>413</sup>John 1:37), but so they might follow Christ, and follow their calling too; therefore they were called to a more close and constant attendance, and must leave their calling. Note, Even they who had been called to follow Christ, have need to be called to follow on, and to follow nearer, especially when they are designed for the work of the ministry. Observe,

**1.** What Christ intended them for; *I will make you fishers of men*; this alludes to their former calling. Let them be not proud of the new honour designed them, they are still but fishers; let them not be afraid of the new work cut out for them, for they have been used to fishing, and fishers they are still. It was usual with Christ to speak of spiritual and heavenly things under such allusions, and in such expressions, as took rise from common things that offered themselves to his view. David was called from feeding sheep to feed God's Israel; and when he is a king, is a shepherd. Note,

**(1.)** Ministers are *fishers of men*, not to destroy them, but to save them, by bringing them into another element. They must fish, not for wrath, wealth, honour, and preferment, to gain them to themselves, but for souls, to gain

them to Christ. *They watch for your souls* (<sup><3837></sup>Hebrews 13:17), *and seek not yours, but you,* <sup><4024></sup>2 Corinthians 12:14, 16.

(2.) It is Jesus Christ that makes them so; *I will make you fishers of men.* It is he that qualifies men for this work, calls them to it, authorizes them in it, gives them commission to fish for souls, and wisdom to win them. Those ministers are likely to have comfort in their work, who are thus made by Jesus Christ.

2. What they must do in order to this; *Follow me.* They must separate themselves to a diligent attendance on him, and set themselves to a humble imitation of him; must follow him as their Leader. Note,

(1.) Those whom Christ employs in any service for him, must first be fitted and qualified for it.

(2.) Those who would *preach Christ*, must first *learn Christ*, and learn of him. How can we expect to bring others to the knowledge of Christ, if we do not know him well ourselves?

(3.) Those who would get an acquaintance with Christ, must be diligent and constant in their attendance on him. The apostles were prepared for their work, by *accompanying Christ all the time that he went in and out among them,* <sup><402></sup>Acts 1:21. There is no learning comparable to that which is got by following Christ. Joshua, by ministering to Moses, is fitted to be his successor.

(4.) Those who are to fish for men, must therein follow Christ, and do it as he did, with diligence, faithfulness, and tenderness. Christ is the great pattern for preachers, and they ought to be *workers together with him.*

V. What was the *success* of this call. Peter and Andrew *straightway left their nets* (v. 20); and James and John *immediately left the ship and their father* (v. 22); *and they all followed him.* Note, Those who would follow Christ aright, must *leave all* to follow him. Every Christian must leave all in affection, set loose to all, must *hate father and mother* (<sup><4026></sup>Luke 14:26), must love them less than Christ, must be ready to part with his interest in them rather than with his interest in Jesus Christ; but those who are devoted to the work of the ministry are, in a special manner, concerned to disentangle themselves from all the affairs of this life, that they may give themselves wholly to that work which requires the whole man. Now,

1. This instance of the power of the Lord Jesus gives us good encouragement to depend upon the sufficiency of his grace. How strong and effectual is his word! *He speaks, and it is done.* The same power goes along with this word of Christ, *Follow me*, that went along with that word, *Lazarus, come forth*; a power to make willing, ~~4023~~ Psalm 110:3.

2. This instance of the pliability of the disciples, gives us a good example of obedience to the command of Christ. Note, It is the good property of all Christ's faithful servants to come when they are called, and to follow their Master wherever he leads them. They objected not their present employments, their engagements to their families, the difficulties of the service they were called to, or their own unfitness for it; but, being called, they obeyed, and, like Abraham, *went out not knowing whither they went*, but knowing very well whom they followed. James and John *left their father*: it is not said what became of him; their mother Salome was a constant follower of Christ; no doubt, their father Zebedee was a believer, but the call to follow Christ fastened on the young ones. Youth is the learning age, and the labouring age. The priests ministered in the prime of their life.

## ~~4023~~ MATTHEW 4:23-25

### CHRIST PREACHES IN GALILEE

See here,

I. What an industrious preacher Christ was; He *went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.* Observe,

1. What Christ preached — *the gospel of the kingdom.* *The kingdom of heaven*, that is, of grace and glory, is emphatically *the kingdom, the kingdom* that was now to come; that kingdom which shall survive, as it doth surpass, all the kingdoms of the earth. *The gospel* is the charter of that kingdom, containing the King's coronation oath, by which he has graciously obliged himself to pardon, protect, and save the subjects of that kingdom; it contains also their oath of allegiance, by which they oblige themselves to observe his statutes and seek his honour; this is *the gospel*

of the kingdom; this Christ was himself the Preacher of, that our faith in it might be confirmed.

2. Where he preached — *in the synagogues*; not there only, but there chiefly, because those were *the places of concourse*, where *wisdom* was to lift up her voice (<sup>3002</sup>Proverbs 1:21); because they were *places of concourse* for religious worship, and there, it was to be hoped, the minds of the people would be prepared to receive *the gospel*; and there the scriptures of the Old Testament were read, the exposition of which would easily introduce *the gospel of the kingdom*.

3. What pains he took in preaching; He *went about all Galilee, teaching*. He might have issued out a proclamation to summon all to come to him; but, to show his humility, and the condescensions of his grace, he goes to them; for he *waits to be gracious*, and comes *to seek and save*. Josephus says, There were above two hundred cities and towns in Galilee, and all, or most of them, Christ visited. He *went about doing good*. Never was there such an itinerant preacher, such an indefatigable one, as Christ was; he went from town to town, to beseech poor sinners to be reconciled to God. This is an example to ministers, to lay themselves out to do good, and to *be instant*, and constant, in *season, and out of season*, to preach the word.

II. What a powerful physician Christ was; he *went about* not only *teaching*, but *healing*, and both with his word, that he might magnify that above all his name. *He sent his word, and healed them*. Now observe,

1. What diseases he cured — all without exception. He *healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease*. There are diseases which are called *the reproach of physicians*, being obstinate to all the methods they can prescribe; but even those were the glory of this Physician, for *he healed them* all, however inveterate. His word was the true *panpharmacon* — *all-heal*.

Three general words are here used to intimate this; he healed every sickness, *noson*, as blindness, lameness, fever, dropsy; every *disease*, or languishing, *malakian*, as fluxes and consumptions; and all *torments, basanous*, as gout, stone, convulsions, and such like torturing distempers; whether the disease was acute or chronical; whether it was a racking or a wasting disease; none was too bad, none too hard, for Christ to heal with a word's speaking.



Three particular diseases are specified; *the palsy*, which is the greatest weakness of the body; *lunacy*, which is the greatest malady of the mind, and *possession of the Devil*, which is the greatest misery and calamity of both, yet Christ healed all: for he is the sovereign Physician both of soul and body, and has command of all diseases.

2. What patients he had. A physician who was so easy of access, so sure of success, who cured immediately, without either a painful suspense and expectation, or such painful remedies as are worse than the disease; who cured gratis, and took no fees, could not but have abundance of patients. See here, what flocking there was to him from all parts; great multitudes of people came, not only *from Galilee* and the country about, but even *from Jerusalem* and *from Judea*, which lay a great way off; for *his fame went throughout all Syria*, not only among all the people of the Jews, but among the neighbouring nations, which, by the report that now spread far and near concerning him, would be prepared to receive his gospel, when afterwards it should be brought them. *This* is given as the reason why such multitudes came to him, because his fame had spread so widely. Note, What we hear of Christ from others, should invite us to him. The queen of Sheba was induced, by the fame of Solomon, to pay him a visit. The voice of fame is “Come, and see.” Christ both *taught and healed*. They who came for cures, met with instruction concerning *the things that belonged to their peace*. It is well if any thing will bring people to Christ; and they who come to him will find more in him than they expected. These Syrians, like Naaman the Syrian, coming to be healed of their diseases, many of them being converts, <sup>URS</sup>2 Kings 5:15, 17. They sought health for the body, and obtained the salvation of the soul; like Saul, who sought the asses, and found the kingdom. Yet it appeared, by the issue, that many of those who rejoiced in Christ as a Healer, forgot him as a Teacher.

Now concerning the cures which Christ wrought, let us, once for all, observe the *miracle*, the *mercy*, and the *mystery*, of them.

(1.) The *miracle* of them. They were wrought in such a manner, as plainly spake them to be the immediate products of a divine and supernatural power, and they were God's seal to his commission. Nature could not do these things, it was the God of nature; the cures were many, of diseases incurable by the art of the physician, of persons that were strangers, of all ages and conditions; the cures were wrought openly, before many witnesses, in mixed companies of persons that would have denied the

matter of fact, if they could have had any colour for so doing; no cure ever failed, or was afterwards called in question; they were wrought speedily, and not (as cures by natural causes) gradually; they were perfect cures, and wrought with a word's speaking; all which proves him *a Teacher come from God*, for, otherwise, none could have done the works that he did, <sup><400></sup>John 3:2. He appeals to these as credentials, <sup><400></sup>Matthew 11:4, 5; <sup><400></sup>John 5:36. It was expected that the Messiah should work miracles (<sup><400></sup>John 7:31); miracles of this nature (<sup><285></sup>Isaiah 35:5, 6); and we have this indisputable proof of his being the Messiah; never was there any man that did thus; and therefore his healing and his preaching generally went together, for the former confirmed the latter; thus here he *began to do and to teach*, <sup><400></sup>Acts 1:1.

(2.) The *mercy* of them. The miracles that Moses wrought, to prove his mission, were most of them plagues and judgments, to intimate the terror of that dispensation, though from God; but the miracles that Christ wrought, were most of them cures, and all of them (except the cursing of the barren fig tree) blessings and favours; for the gospel dispensation is founded, and built up in love, and grace, and sweetness; and the management is such as tends not to affright but to allure us to obedience. Christ designed by his cures to win upon people, and to ingratiate himself and his doctrine into their minds, and so to draw them with the bands of love, <sup><300></sup>Hosea 11:4. The miracle of them proved his doctrine *a faithful saying*, and convinced men's judgments; the mercy of them proved it *worthy of all acceptance*, and wrought upon their affections. They were not only *great works*, but *good works*, that he *showed them from his Father* (<sup><400></sup>John 10:32); and this goodness was intended to *lead men to repentance* (<sup><400></sup>Romans 2:4), as also to show that kindness, and beneficence, and doing good to all, to the utmost of our power and opportunity, are essential branches of that holy religion which Christ came into the world to establish.

(3.) The *mystery* of them. Christ, by curing *bodily diseases*, intended to show, that his great errand into the world was to cure *spiritual maladies*. He is the *Sun of righteousness*, that *arises with this healing under his wings*. As the Converter of sinners, he is the *Physician of souls*, and has taught us to call him so, <sup><400></sup>Matthew 9:12, 13. Sin is the *sickness, disease, and torment* of the soul; Christ *came to take away sin*, and so to heal these. And the particular stories of the cures Christ wrought, may not only be applied spiritually, by way of allusion and illustration, but, I believe, are

very much intended to reveal to us spiritual things, and to set before us the way and method of Christ's dealing with souls, in their conversion and sanctification; and those cures are recorded, that were most significant and instructive this way; and they are therefore so to be explained and improved, to the honour and praise of that glorious Redeemer, *who forgiveth all our iniquities, and so healeth all our diseases.*