

## Matthew 4B

- The ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu, author of the book, “The Art of War,” famously wrote that you must know your enemy
  - Victory on the battlefield begins with an understanding of the strengths and tactics of your adversary
    - Military experts have studied and fought according to Sun Tzu’s principles of war for thousands of years
    - But his advice doesn’t just apply to wars fought on the field of battle between soldiers and tanks
  - It also applies to the spiritual battle that every Christian knows or will know during a life spent walking with Christ
    - We all experience spiritual warfare in one form or another
    - Some of us experience a greater degree of attack, some of us suffer greater losses, some of us resist with greater strength
  - But regardless of these differences, we all struggle against the enemy
    - And therefore, we can all benefit from learning more about the enemy we face, his strengths, his tactics, and his goals
    - And by that knowledge, we will be better prepared to respond to his attacks in the right ways
- Of course, the enemy I’m talking about is Satan, along with his legion of demons who do his bidding
  - Last week, I taught an introduction to Jesus’ temptations in Chapter 4, by explaining Satan’s backstory from various Scriptures
    - We looked at how Satan was created, the duties he performed for God in the heavenly realm, how he fell into sin
    - I said that Satan is now on the prowl, always ready to oppose God and His people
  - Secondly, I explained the reason Jesus had to face this adversary in a series of temptations
    - Fundamentally, Jesus came to earth as a man to solve the problem of sin

- He came to be our New Adam, to restart the human race
- All of us are born with a sin nature, which we inherited from Adam
- And Adam's sin was the direct result of a temptation offered by the great tempter, Satan
- So now, Jesus has come to start things over, to hit the reset button on humanity, so to speak
  - To do that, Jesus must live the life Adam should have lived, but didn't – the life none of us can live, because we share in Adam's fallen nature
  - Having lived the perfect life, Jesus could then die to pay the price for our sin
  - So that as we place our faith in that payment, we may be born again spiritually in His image and nature
- So Jesus, as our New Adam, must correct the chief mistake Adam made, the one that plunged humanity into sin
  - He must prove that He is different than Adam, that He has a different nature
    - He must face the same situation Adam faced, yet triumph where Adam failed
    - But to demonstrate Jesus was truly qualified to be our new Adam, the Father required Jesus to endure temptation far beyond what Adam faced
  - Jesus will face three temptations, not just one
    - And He will face them in a greatly weakened physical state, with his body desperately seeking relief
    - And He will be alone, without the ability to rely on His supernatural power, fully vulnerable to temptation as Hebrews told us last week
    - As one commentator wrote,

**“Just as metal has to be tested far beyond any stress and strain that it will ever be called upon to bear, before it can be used for any useful purpose, so Jesus has to be tested beyond limits before God can use him for His purposes”**

- So now, as we turn to Chapter 4, and read the first of Jesus' temptations, we want to learn three things tonight
  - First, we want to understand the enemy's tactics, his goals
  - That is, how he works to corrupt our spirit and deny God our obedience
  - Secondly, we want to understand the specific nature of each temptation, the offer Satan made to Jesus
  - Finally, we will study Jesus' response to the temptation so we might learn how we too should resist
- Satan's first temptation is linked to the opening verses of the chapter, so let's reread those as we start in the text tonight

**Matt. 4:1** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

**Matt. 4:2** And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

**Matt. 4:3** And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

**Matt. 4:4** But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

- Following His 40-day fast, Jesus became ravenously hungry, which is the usual pattern for people who pursue this kind of extended fast
  - The body has consumed all available fat stores and is now desperate for a new source of energy
    - And so Jesus' hunger response came roaring back
    - The instinct to eat after so long is so all-consuming, that a person has a hard time contemplating anything other than eating
    - Your brain is slow and easily confused for lack of fuel
    - You feel drugged, like you have taken too much cold medicine
  - And it's in this severely debilitated state that Jesus must now face the most powerful created being in all the Universe
    - Remember, we learned last week that Satan was the wisest, most beautiful thing God created

- And also that Satan is a member of the highest class of angelic beings, called “cherubim”
- But about now, some of you are saying, “Yeah, but Jesus is God so Satan doesn’t stand a chance”
  - But you’ll remember that Hebrews told us that when Jesus took the form of man, He became for a little while lower than the angels
  - And Paul told us that when Jesus took the form of man, He voluntarily emptied Himself of His form as God
- So if Satan is the most powerful angelic being, and Jesus is lower than the angelic realm at this time...
  - Then we must conclude that Satan has more power than Jesus, more guile, more strength, at least right now
  - And so this is truly a David vs. Goliath moment in Scripture, with Jesus playing the role of David, not Goliath
- Now that seems backward to us, I know
  - But it’s important to understand this situation from that perspective
  - Because it means Jesus’ only defense in this situation is to draw upon the same resources every believer has in this battle
  - We have our faith in the Word of God and its power to guide us away from harm
  - And we have our personal determination to obey it
  - As we’ll see, Jesus depended on these things alone to fight Satan
- So in v.3, the enemy brings his first temptation
  - Before we look at the specific nature of this temptation, let’s make sure we know our enemy, specifically what’s Satan’s goal
    - Satan’s goal is to lead Jesus to disobey the Father
    - Back in Chapter 3, the Father had just declared that He was well-pleased in Jesus, His beloved Son

- So now, Satan meets Jesus in the wilderness hoping to corrupt that testimony
  - Satan wants to make God eat His own words, no pun intended
    - It's the same thing Satan tried to do to Job when the Father gave Satan access to that man for a time
    - Satan assumed that given enough motivation, he can make Job (or Jesus) eventually disobey the Word of the Lord
    - In Job's case, Satan used trial; in Jesus' case, Satan uses temptations
  - Ultimately, this is always Satan's goal when he attacks God's people
    - He puts pressure on us in the hope we will rebel as he did, either of one kind or the other
    - He wants us to follow his path of rebellion rather than continuing on the path of righteousness
    - He's fighting God through us
- This fight is all about who gets the glory...
  - Because whom you obey, you glorify
    - When we obey God, we give God glory

**[Matt. 5:16](#)** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify** your Father who is in heaven.

- By our good works, we're giving testimony that God is the One Who is worthy to receive honor and obedience
  - Conversely, when we disobey God by giving into Satan's temptations, or to our flesh, we give Satan glory at God's expense
    - We are testifying by our sinful works that we agree with Satan's lies, rather than with the truth of God's Word
  - Perhaps you haven't thought of your sin in that way before
    - But truly there is no in-between, it's either one way or the other
    - As the Lord told Israel

[Ezek. 20:39](#) "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord God, "Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.

- Now Satan knows our new spirit in Christ wants to obey God, to please Him
  - So if he is going to pull us off track, he needs a hook, some distraction or motivation that he can use to move us away from obedience
    - And that leads us to a study of his tactics
    - Satan has two primary tactics to cause us to disobey God, and both are evident in his temptations of Christ
  - First, Satan discredits the Word of God
    - Notice how he begins speaking to Jesus by saying "If You are the Son of God..."
    - This is similar to the statement he used to deceive Woman in the Garden

[Gen. 3:1](#) Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

- As he did in the Garden, Satan calls into question the trustworthiness of the Word of God
  - In this case, Satan wonders if Jesus is truly the Son of God promised in the Word, probably thinking of Psalm 2

[Psa. 2:7](#) "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:

He said to Me, 'You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.

[Psa. 2:8](#) 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

[Psa. 2:9](#) 'You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
You shall shatter them like earthenware.'"

- The Word says the Messiah will be the Son of God
  - And the Father has just declared at the baptism of John that Jesus is that long awaited Son of God

- So now, Satan casts doubt on that Word, asking if it's really true
- In other words, perhaps the Father was lying at the river, or maybe He lied back in Psalm 2
- Either way, we can't be sure the Word of God is correct, can we?
- Now if Satan's victim doesn't have a firm grasp on God's Word, then that person is going to be deceived by Satan's deception
  - After all, he's the wisest creature God ever made
  - As soon as he has a person disconnected from a reliance and trust in the Word of God, that person's fall is virtually unstoppable
  - Satan is well on his way to gaining the person's allegiance
- Which then leads us to Satan's second major tactic: tempting us to disobey
  - Satan uses temptation to motivate us to act in disobedience
  - Having already placed a seed of doubt in our minds concerning God's love or His forgiveness or His fairness or something else in His Word, all that remains is to give us a reason to take up sinning
  - So if Satan's first step was untethering us from the anchor of God's Word, then his second step is giving us a little push in the direction of sin
- Satan's temptations can be classified into three categories, according to John

**[1 John 2:16](#)** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

- John says that everything that is of the fallen world can be grouped into one of these three categories
  - First, we may be tempted in lusts of the flesh
  - The lusts of the flesh are any desire of our physical body for gratification
  - Principally, we're talking about things like food, drink, sexual pleasure, chemical addictions, anything that stimulates our body

- Certainly, our body has basic needs that we must give some attention to just to be healthy
  - But when the desires of our physical body overwhelm or interfere with our spiritual objectives in life, then our body has become our own enemy
  - And at that point, we are called to discipline it, restraining its desires
  - Placing them in subjection to the Spirit's counsel, so that we can remain obedient to Christ
- Secondly, John says we may be tempted by the lust of the eyes
  - Even though John uses the word lust again, and even though our eyes are a part of our physical body, this is actually a different category
    - The lust of the eyes doesn't refer to satisfying a physical need of our eyeballs, for your eyes have no physical need as such
    - For example, you don't feed your eyes
  - Instead, the lust of the eyes is a euphemism meaning a desire for novelty, excitement, intrigue, spectacle, titillation, and the like
    - In today's language, we might call it "chasing the shiny object"
    - It's a distraction of the heart triggered by something that caught our eye
    - Lusts of the eyes would include preoccupations like shopping or hoarding material things
    - Or various obsessions or fixations, like hobbies that consume all of our available time, etc.
    - It's any tendency to let the things of this world distract and consume us
  - Now here again, we all have stuff and we all have interests and hobbies
    - These things are not evil in themselves
    - The question is, do they interfere with your spiritual walk?
    - And when they do, then it means they have become a tool of the enemy to bring you into disobedience



- Finally, John says we can be tempted by the boastful pride of life
  - This category includes anything that enflames our ego or our vanity or magnifies our sense of self-worth beyond what is due
    - Our pride of life can be enflamed when we receive accolades or it can be provoked when someone diminishes us
    - And in those moments, our sin nature will come to life, soaking up the accolades like a drug
    - Or else rushing to defend our ego in the face of the attack
  - While some self-esteem is healthy, generally, we all have too much self-esteem
    - What we really need is a lot less self-esteem and a lot more Christ-esteem
    - When our pride leads us to defend our desires or interests or reputation more than Christ's, we're vulnerable to the enemy
- Now all three of these categories of temptation target our physical body in some area, whether our body, mind or emotions
  - And therefore, we could label these three areas of temptation as temptations of the body, the mind and the soul (emotions)
    - Satan entices our body by feeding its lusts
    - He distracts our mind with worthless obsessions
    - He enflames our soul with delusions of grandeur
  - Satan's goal, remember, is not merely to manipulate us, but to lead us into disobeying the Father, leading to an end of what God is building
    - As James said

**[James 1:13](#)** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

**[James 1:14](#)** But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

**[James 1:15](#)** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

- So in Jesus' case, Satan's first temptation takes the form of a test

- Satan proposes a way Jesus can prove that the Word of God is true concerning His identity
  - Satan asks Jesus to reproduce the miracle that God performed for Israel during the Exodus, summarized in Psalm 78

[Psa. 78:17](#) Yet they still continued to sin against Him,  
To rebel against the Most High in the desert.

[Psa. 78:18](#) And in their heart they put God to the test  
By asking food according to their desire.

[Psa. 78:19](#) Then they spoke against God;  
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

[Psa. 78:20](#) "Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,  
And streams were overflowing;  
Can He give bread also?  
Will He provide meat for His people?"

[Psa. 78:21](#) Therefore the Lord heard and was full of wrath;  
And a fire was kindled against Jacob  
And anger also mounted against Israel,

[Psa. 78:22](#) Because they did not believe in God  
And did not trust in His salvation.

[Psa. 78:23](#) Yet He commanded the clouds above  
And opened the doors of heaven;

[Psa. 78:24](#) He rained down manna upon them to eat  
And gave them food from heaven.

[Psa. 78:25](#) Man did eat the bread of angels;  
He sent them food in abundance.

- The Word says that the Lord provided miraculous bread for God's people while they lived in the wilderness
  - They were in desolate surroundings, and the Lord sent bread from heaven
  - So Satan proposed that should Jesus repeat this miracle now, He could show that the Word of God was accurate concerning His identity
- Now it's no coincidence that Satan has proposed this specific miracle, of course
  - Obviously, Satan is attacking Jesus at His weakest point

- Jesus hasn't eaten in 40 days, so naturally the desire to eat food would be a major temptation
- We honestly can't appreciate how much Jesus would have felt the urge to succumb to this temptation, to find food at this point
  - Just think how hard it is for you to stop yourself driving through a fast food restaurant on your way home when you're hungry
  - How much harder would it be if you were fasting?
  - Now imagine how great the temptation would be if you could turn stones into tacos on demand?
- Satan knew that food would be Jesus' greatest temptation at this point, but he's so wise that he knows our weaknesses even when they aren't so obvious
  - He knows those weaknesses you're hiding from others
    - He sees us in our secret moments, he knows our heart's desires
    - So he's always ready to hit us at our weakest point
  - In this case, he's trying to stop Jesus' fast because it was not a voluntary act
    - Jesus was commanded by the Father to fast 40 days as a part of this trial or test
    - The number "40" in Scripture is the number of testing or trial
  - So Jesus cannot eat without sinning
    - Obviously, the Father is going to permit His Son to eat when this trial is over
    - But Jesus can't cut the trial short without committing sin
  - And I would submit to you that Jesus might have been allowed to make the stones into bread without sinning
    - But what happens to a starving person when you put bread in front of them?
    - If it's hard for Jesus to obey the Father's call to fast now, how much harder will it be if a loaf of bread appears in front of Him
    - And Satan knows this, so he wants to bring Jesus to His breaking point

- So Satan has disguised his temptation as a test to prove the truth of God's Word concerning Jesus' identity
  - Now defending the truth of God's Word sounds like a noble cause, doesn't it?
    - And it is, but this just shows you the supreme craftiness of Satan
    - Satan's suggesting that Jesus can defend the Word of God...*by disobeying the Word of God*
  - Have you ever heard someone justify their desire to divorce and remarry by saying, God wants me to be happy?
    - Or to justify their decision to spend long hours at work and away from their family by saying, God expects me to be a good provider?
    - Or maybe a Christian justify a romantic relationship with an unbeliever by saying, God wants me to bring them to faith?
    - These are examples of how Satan twists God's Word in our minds, so he can then tempt us into disobeying that Word
- So now that we have an understanding of Satan's tactics, let's take a look at Jesus' response in v.4
  - Mustering all His strength and fighting a mind dulled by lack of fuel, Jesus recalls the perfect Scriptural rebuttal from Deuteronomy 8:3

**Deut. 8:3** "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

- Now remember, Satan asked Jesus to turn stones into bread, recalling the miracle God did in the wilderness to bring manna
- Because making bread appear out of nothing in the desert was one of God's calling cards, if you will
- Jesus does it again in John 6 – it was an obvious indication of deity
- But Jesus' response draws on the very same lesson Satan was using – that of the provision of manna in the wilderness – to refute his claims and expose the flaw in Satan's argument

- In Deuteronomy 8:3, the Lord said that before He gave Israel manna, God purposely allowed His people to go hungry for a time
- He delayed their provision of manna for a time, so their stomachs began to growl, and it was a test of their faithfulness
- He did so to teach His people an important lesson
  - God was teaching Israel that their chief concern shouldn't have been sustaining their physical lives
  - Because God could bring them bread out of thin air anytime He desired
  - When God said manna would appear, it appeared
- So the lesson was, heed My Word and good things will follow
  - As Jesus says elsewhere

**Matt. 6:33** "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- On the other hand, continue in your ungrateful, disobedient unbelieving hearts and destruction will follow
- So while Israel was seeking for food for their bodies, they were ignoring their need to nourish their souls
- Now God wasn't asking Israel to chose between physical bread or spiritual bread
  - He was asking them to put these needs in the proper priority
  - We should seek to please God above pleasing ourselves, even in matters of food
  - When we seek to fulfill our physical needs above our spiritual needs, we sin
- Which is why Jesus quotes this verse to refute Satan's request
  - Deuteronomy 8:3 teaches that obedience to the Word is even more important to God than supplying our physical needs

- And since God had instructed Jesus to fast, He could not break it without sinning
- Secondly, that passage affirms Jesus as God's Son
  - Remember, in Exodus and elsewhere, God calls Israel His firstborn son
  - So Deuteronomy 8:3 teaches that God's "son", Israel, were made to experience a fast for a time in the wilderness as a test of their hearts
  - So this verse can also be understood to be an indirect reference to the Messiah Himself
  - That God's Son was made to fast in the wilderness too, as a test of His heart
  - What a perfect response
- Now keep in mind, Jesus brought this Scripture to mind using the same mental faculties God has given to each of us
  - Jesus didn't have His iPad nearby with a convenient search box so He could locate that perfect passage on the fly
    - Jesus would have had the entire Old Testament memorized
    - He had to know it well enough to recall it even at the conclusion of a 40-day fast
  - On the other hand, we know Jesus was uniquely prepared by the Father
    - The Gospels tell us that Jesus was profoundly blessed with spiritual wisdom and insight, even as a young man
    - So clearly, we are not Jesus' equal and that's not my point
  - But what I am saying is, Jesus still had to learn the things He knew as He grew up
    - They weren't downloaded into His head like a software program
    - And He wasn't born knowing them
    - He still had to put in the necessary time and make the required effort to absorb these truths

- For example, Luke ends his account of Jesus' upbringing with these words

**Luke 2:52** And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

- Notice Jesus increased in wisdom and in favor with God
  - And therefore, we must see His brilliant response in this moment not as some superhuman magic trick beyond our grasp
  - Rather, we need to appreciate what a godly, dedicated and faithful man can accomplish when He is thoroughly nourished on the Word of God
- We will never be Jesus, but we can be like Jesus in many things
    - Satan preyed upon the weakness of Jesus' flesh and tried to use it to lead Jesus against the will of the Father
      - And instead, Jesus allowed His physical body to continue suffering, not willing to satisfy it
      - And instead, He made his priority pleasing God by obedience to His Word
    - That's not something beyond our reach
      - We need to understand this account as it was intended to be understood
      - It's an account of a man resisting the enemy by maintaining self-control, while making obeying the Father His highest priority
      - This is about a Man Who knew that in time, the Father would satisfy His body's need for food when the time was right
    - Later in this Gospel, we will hear Jesus teaching these words

**Matt. 6:25** "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

**Matt. 6:26** "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

**Matt. 6:27** "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"

[Matt. 6:28](#) “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,

[Matt. 6:29](#) yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

[Matt. 6:30](#) “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

[Matt. 6:31](#) “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’

[Matt. 6:32](#) “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

- When we study this passage in a few weeks, remember what Jesus experiences in His first temptation
  - And don’t think He couldn’t identify with His own teaching
  - Jesus knew exactly what it’s like to be in desperate need of a meal
  - He understood the temptation to suppose that God wasn’t going to provide
  - That He had to do something for Himself, something that would have been contrary to the will of the Father
  - Something that was contrary to righteousness
- But Jesus lived according to the same Word He preached to His followers
  - Jesus sought first the Kingdom, that is to obtain His rightful place over that Kingdom
  - And He sought for the Father’s righteousness, to obey the Father’s commands even above His own needs
  - Because Jesus knew the other things He needed, like food, would come in time...God would provide them when the test was over
- Last week, as we ended, I mentioned that Jesus’ death on the cross was the moment God made a provision, a payment, for our sins
  - And by placing our trust in that payment, by accepting that payment on our behalf, putting our faith in Jesus, God says He will forgive us our sins



- And by that forgiveness, we will be welcomed into God's presence when we die
- Only our faith in Jesus is required, nothing more
- But I also said that in a sense, Jesus' dying on the cross for us was the "easier" part for Him
  - As horrible as Jesus' death was – and it was truly unbearable – it was an easier task than living 30+ years without committing a single sin
  - But Jesus had to succeed as our New Adam
  - Because if Jesus' death on that cross were to mean anything, to be worth anything, Jesus had to be our spotless, sinless sacrifice
  - He had to resist temptation everyday, not just on this day
- That's what makes Christianity unique and every other religion counterfeit
  - No one else had a solution for the problem of sin, for it is our sin that stands in the way of reaching Heaven
  - Unless God does something to erase your sin, you have no hope to be counted worthy for Heaven because the standard to get into Heaven is sinlessness
  - Muhammad offers no solution to the problem of man's sin
  - Buddha offers no solution, Confucius offers no solution, Mormans, JWs, Scientology, none of them offer a solution
- But Jesus does... He says, let Me take your sin on Me
  - Jesus lived the perfect sinless life you couldn't, as a man who knew temptation, yet never gave in to it
  - And then, Jesus died an underserved death to pay the penalty for your sin
  - And all He asks, is for you to accept the salvation He has prepared for you by placing your faith in Him

**Matt. 10:32** "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

[Matt. 10:33](#) “But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.