

## Matthew 4A

- Last week, we studied Jesus' baptism
  - And as we did, we focused on the purpose and meaning of that event
    - Specifically, why Jesus came for a baptism of water
    - We said Jesus wasn't coming to receive a baptism of repentance, as were the other people by the river
    - Jesus needed no repentance
    - Instead, Jesus was coming to be baptized for other reasons
  - As I taught last week, Jesus' baptism accomplished several things
    - As Jesus told John, His baptism was fitting to fulfill all righteousness
    - Or we could say Jesus' baptism was a public act of obedience to the Father, necessary for righteousness
  - First, this moment was the handoff point between John's ministry and Jesus' ministry
    - Secondly, it inaugurated Jesus' public ministry, made possible by the baptism of the Holy Spirit to equip Jesus
    - Finally, it established a pattern for Jesus' disciples to repeat as we follow in His footsteps
  - Then as Jesus was baptized, the Father confirmed His pleasure in Jesus' obedience
    - The Father said Jesus was His beloved Son in Whom He was well-pleased
    - A ringing endorsement by God of the One sent to earth to redeem mankind from their sins
  - The Father's statement was only heard by John the Baptist, Matthew told us
    - But undoubtedly, John reported it to others so they could know that Jesus was the long-awaited Son of God

- And eventually, John's testimony was recorded in the Gospels for everyone to know
- But as the Father revealed the identity of His Son, there was someone else listening on that day, someone else who heard the Father's words
  - He is a powerful and important character in the story of Jesus, and he too, desperately desired to know the identity of the Messiah
    - He waited nearby that day, watching the proceedings intently and listening to every word
    - He knew the time for the Messiah's arrival was at hand, and he expected John the Baptist to lead him to Him sooner or later
  - But like everyone else, this powerful figure had no choice but to wait by the river until John revealed the Son of God
    - In fact, by the time of Jesus' baptism, this character had been waiting longer – much longer – than anyone else on earth
    - He hadn't just been waiting years or even a lifetime...he had been waiting for *millennia*
  - His name was Lucifer, otherwise known as Satan
    - He had been waiting for the Father to reveal the Messiah so he could destroy that Promised One
    - Because Satan knew this Messiah was coming to destroy him
- Satan first appears in the third chapter of the Bible, when he confronts Woman in the Garden and ultimately tempts her and Man into sin
  - At that point, Satan's already full of hatred for God and speaking nothing but lies
    - So we wonder, how did Satan become this horrible adversary of God?
    - Surely, God did not create Satan this way, for we know the Lord is not the source of evil
  - Satan's backstory is important to understanding what's happening in Matthew 4, so let's take a moment to do some homework
    - Our homework takes us out of the Gospel of Matthew for a little while tonight, back to the Old Testament, beginning in Ezekiel

[Ezek. 28:12](#) "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him,  
'Thus says the Lord God,

"You had the seal of perfection,  
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

[Ezek. 28:13](#) "You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Every precious stone was your covering:  
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;  
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;  
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;  
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,  
Was in you.

On the day that you were created  
They were prepared.

[Ezek. 28:14](#) "You were the anointed cherub who covers,  
And I placed you there.

You were on the holy mountain of God;  
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

[Ezek. 28:15](#) "You were blameless in your ways  
From the day you were created  
Until unrighteousness was found in you.

[Ezek. 28:16](#) "By the abundance of your trade

You were internally filled with violence,  
And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane  
From the mountain of God.  
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,  
From the midst of the stones of fire.

[Ezek. 28:17](#) "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;

You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.  
I cast you to the ground;  
I put you before kings,  
That they may see you.

[Ezek. 28:18](#) "By the multitude of your iniquities,

In the unrighteousness of your trade  
You profaned your sanctuaries.  
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;

It has consumed you,  
 And I have turned you to ashes on the earth  
 In the eyes of all who see you.

[Ezek. 28:19](#) "All who know you among the peoples  
 Are appalled at you;  
 You have become terrified  
 And you will cease to be forever."''''

- This passage describes Satan, called the "King of Tyre," falling from a place of honor to become who we know him to be today
  - Time doesn't permit me to examine this passage with you in depth (that must wait for the resumption of our Ezekiel study later this year)
    - So for our purposes in studying Matthew 4, let's focus on three details from this passage
    - First, in v.12, notice Satan's original created nature
    - Satan was created in perfection, just like everything God creates
  - Ezekiel says Satan was created full of wisdom and perfect in beauty
    - The word "full" in Hebrew carries the sense of completeness or an abundance
    - And "perfect" can mean entirely consumed
    - So Satan was complete in wisdom and completely consumed in beauty
  - That means that no created thing possessed greater wisdom or was more beautiful than Satan
    - Imagine the wisest person who ever lived
    - Consider the most beautiful thing you've ever seen in Creation
    - Satan exceeded both
  - Furthermore, the Lord testifies in v.15 that Satan was blameless in his ways from the day of his creation
    - Satan was without sin, perfectly obedient to the Father from the beginning of his existence

- Which confirms that God did not establish sin – neither the sin of mankind, nor the sin of Satan
- Secondly, in v.14, notice what job God assigned Satan as his service in Heaven
  - The text says Satan was the "covering cherub"
    - Cherubim are the highest order of heavenly beings, and Satan was the wisest and most beautiful of these angelic creatures
    - Scripture says Satan is one of these creatures
    - Moreover, Satan held the most coveted position in Creation, serving God as the covering cherub
  - That phrase may ring a bell for you, because it comes from the instructions given to Moses on how to build the tabernacle
    - Specifically, cherubim were part of the design of the Ark of the Covenant, which we hear about in Exodus

**Ex. 37:6** He made a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide.

**Ex. 37:7** He made two cherubim of gold; he made them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat;

**Ex. 37:8** one cherub at the one end and one cherub at the other end; he made the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at the two ends.

**Ex. 37:9** The cherubim had their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward each other; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.

- The Ark was a rectangular box covered in gold
    - The lid of the Ark was called the mercy seat
    - The lid was called a seat not because someone sat on it, but because the glory of the Lord would rest on it in the tabernacle
- To honor and protect the glory of the Lord, the lid included two golden cherubim standing on either end
  - The cherubim had wings that stretched over the center of the lid, forming a canopy

- That's why the cherubim were called covering cherubim, because their wings covered God's glory
- In the book of Hebrews, we're told that the plans God gave Moses for building the earthly tabernacle were based on a heavenly pattern
- Specifically, Hebrews says the earthly tabernacle was modeled after a heavenly tabernacle that operates in God's presence
  - Which means the design of the Ark for Israel's tabernacle was based on the Ark that resides in the heavenly tabernacle
  - So just like the earthly tabernacle had covering cherubim, so the heavenly tabernacle had a real covering cherub
  - And that cherub was none other than Satan himself
- Thirdly, in Ezekiel 28:16-18, the Lord describes the moment of Satan's fall into sin
  - Scripture says the first sin happened because of the abundance of Satan's trade
    - Because of Satan's lofty position, he was filled internally with violence and then he sinned
    - Satan was personally covering the glory of God in the heavenly tabernacle
    - No created thing was closer to God's presence than Satan
    - Furthermore, Satan knew he was special, beautiful and more powerful than anything else in Creation
  - So one day, Satan's special qualities and his unique place near the glory of God caused his heart to be lifted up (pride) and to be filled with violence
    - Violence is a physical act of force intended to kill, steal or destroy
    - So what violent physical act did Satan perpetrate?
    - He tried to take the mercy seat by force, seating himself in the place of God
    - In v.18, we're told Satan's attempted coup profaned the heavenly sanctuary, leaving it defiled

- At that point, the Lord rejected Satan, casting him from the heavenly tabernacle to the earth, where he later corrupted mankind
  - Notice in v.19, the Lord also declared that Satan would one day be judged for his sin
  - He would cease to be forever
  - Later, after the fall in the Garden, the Lord clarified that Satan's defeat would come at the hands of the Messiah
  - That the Son of God would personally defeat and condemn Satan for his rebellion
- There's a certain irony to all this
  - Under the Law, the mercy seat in the tabernacle was the place of atonement
  - It's called the "mercy" seat because it was the place Israel received mercy from God for their sin
  - But before Satan fell, there was no need for a mercy seat because there was no sin to forgive
  - So I wonder if while Satan stood guarding a heavenly mercy seat, he ever stopped to wonder why does my job even exist?
- So having fallen, Satan goes on the prowl over the whole earth like a lion, full of pride and violence, opposing God and God's people
  - Satan still desires to take God's place, but now, he also has a new goal
    - He intends to destroy that Promised One coming to defeat him
    - He doesn't know Who it will be or when He will arrive
    - But Satan knew that if he could destroy the coming seed or if he could tempt Him into sin, then the Messiah would fail
  - So Satan has remained ever vigilant, taking any opportunity he can to strike against anyone that could threaten him
    - For example, Satan struck at the first generation of the "seed" of Adam and Eve corrupting the first son, Cain, and murdering the second son, Abel

- Later, he tried to corrupt the seed of men by ordering his demons to mate with women to produce the Nephilim of Genesis 6
- But each time, the Lord sidestepped Satan's efforts to preserve the line of the seed
- Later, when the Lord revealed that the Promised Seed would come through the descendants of Jacob, Satan began to focus his hatred against Jews
  - He tried to use Pharaoh to destroy all the male children of Israel
  - But God granted Moses an escape
  - Over the centuries, Satan continued battling Israel, either to destroy them or corrupt their line to stop the coming of Messiah
  - But each time, the Lord has protected His Son to ensure He could arrive as promised
- But now, the time has come for that protection to be withdrawn, for Jesus to face the enemy not as a conquering King, but as a mere man
  - Jesus has lived for about 30 years in quiet and anonymity
    - When His family returned from Egypt and settled in Nazareth, Satan didn't know Jesus' identity
    - No one knew His identity, except Mary and Joseph
  - But now, the Father has announced to the entire spiritual world that Jesus is the One the Father promised to bring
    - The word is out and of course, Satan immediately takes a personal interest in destroying this One
    - For so long, he sought to find and kill this Man sent to destroy him
    - And now he has him, and we can only imagine how eager Satan must have been to kill or corrupt the Messiah
  - That's what we're going to study in Chapter 4, the effort Satan made to compromise Jesus so that he could nullify Jesus' mission



- But now, you also know why it's important to understand the nature of the incarnation, of God taking the form of man as Jesus did
- If you enter into the story of Jesus' temptations thinking that Jesus retained His omnipotent powers, then the temptations seem a bit silly
- Like a child trying to sink a naval battleship by throwing pebbles at its side
- It hardly seems like a fair fight, and we certainly don't perceive Jesus as having been in jeopardy
- For that matter, even Jesus' long period of fasting might seem like much ado about nothing since God has infinite power
- But that's not how to approach Chapter 4 of Matthew
  - As I mentioned last week, in His identity Jesus was fully God, no less deity than He was while in Heaven
    - But as Paul taught us, Jesus emptied Himself, not counting His equality with God the Father something he had to keep
    - Instead, he voluntarily relinquished His form and position, the things that made Him equal with the Father
    - And instead, our God took the form of man, full man, sharing all the same physical, mental and emotional limitations we know
    - Including the ability to experience temptation
  - Remember, Scripture says this about God:

**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.

- God in His heavenly form, His full and true form, cannot be tempted by evil
- So had Satan come before Jesus in His full form as God, Jesus could never have been tempted
- Chapter 4 would have been a completely meaningless chapter of the Bible

- But then, we hear this concerning Jesus while in the form of man in the book of Hebrews

**Heb. 2:17** Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

**Heb. 2:18** For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

- Jesus was made like us, that is, He became a man no different than we are so He could take our place in death as a propitiation
- And along the way to the cross, Hebrews says Jesus was tempted in the things He suffered
- Obviously, that refers to the temptation to avoid the pain of the cross
- We can certainly understand Jesus' feeling that way, because that's the way any one of us would feel if we were in His shoes
  - But that's exactly the point I'm making from Scripture
  - Jesus was just like us...feeling the temptation to do the wrong things, except He never succumbed to that temptation
  - As Hebrews says again

**Heb. 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

- So if God in His eternal form cannot be tempted, yet Jesus in His human form was tempted, then clearly Jesus was not superman, He was just man. His identity was God, but his form was man
  - He did not have superpowers, which is why the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism
    - But that also means Satan's attacks had real effect
    - Jesus was placed in jeopardy
    - Had he succumbed to Satan's attacks, He could have died or been led into sin

- He didn't have any special ability you don't have – He had His will and the Holy Spirit. What do you have?
- And as such, Jesus would have nullified His purpose and mission to be our Savior and Satan's destroyer
  - And yet, these temptations were absolutely necessary for Jesus to accomplish His mission
  - Jesus had to set humanity straight by taking Adam's place as the federal representative of humanity
- Adam chose to believe in Satan's word, which were lies, instead of heeding God's Word, which was the truth
  - When he did this, Adam single-handedly handed Satan dominion over his soul and those of his offspring
  - And by his failure to resist Satan's temptation, Adam put all of us in bondage to sin
- Jesus came to fix that problem, to redeem us from that bondage
  - But to do that, Jesus had to become our federal representative in place of Adam
  - Which is why He had to take the form of man...not merely the appearance of man but our actual form
  - And then Jesus had to face the tempter, as Adam did
  - Only this time, Jesus would make different choices, which qualified Him to be our sinless representative, beyond Satan's reach
- Which brings us, finally, to the opening of Chapter 4 of Matthew, and the story of Satan's efforts to prevent Jesus from qualifying as our sinless New Adam
  - Let's read the opening of the chapter

**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.

- Sometime soon after His baptism, Jesus wanders deeper into the wilderness
  - The Judean wilderness is a barren, hot mountain desert of rocks, sand and a few isolated shrubs or lone tree here or there
  - It's unforgiving land where survival is difficult
- Jesus enters the wilderness because the Spirit leads Him there, Matthew says
  - In Mark's Gospel, the language is more dramatic

**Mark 1:12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.**

- According to Mark, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness
- Here again, this reminds us that Jesus in the form of man, depended on the Spirit to understand the will of the Father
- The Spirit has led Jesus to this desolate place, specifically to make Jesus available to the devil for temptation
  - The enemy is going to have three opportunities to tempt Jesus into disqualifying Himself as our Redeemer
  - Again, these are opportunities for Jesus to chart a new course for humanity, one that is the opposite of the course established by Adam
- And to make sure that we have no doubt concerning Jesus' worthiness, the Father has stacked the deck against Jesus. In fact, it's interesting to compare Him to Adam
  - When Adam fell into sin and brought the rest of us with him, he had everything going his way
    - He lived in literally perfect circumstances
    - He lived in a cool and pleasant Garden, specially designed for Adam, well-watered and full of food
    - Moreover, Adam was not alone, since he had his wife to help him
    - And most importantly, he walked with God in fellowship
  - Furthermore, Adam had only one rule given him by God, only one law

- He couldn't eat of a single tree in the garden
- So long as Adam observed that one rule, he had no cause for concern
- And even that one restriction wasn't much of a temptation, since he had so many other trees to turn to for food
- I'm sure he could barely count all the varieties of fruit available to him
- So the deck was stacked against the enemy
  - Man lived in idyllic bliss, he had an infinite number of ways to remain obedient and only one way he could sin
  - The enemy had the most minimal of temptations to offer and had to find a way to make Adam resent the one and only rule God gave him
  - Despite having all the advantages, nevertheless, Man and Woman fell into disobedience
  - The Lord couldn't have made Adam's test any easier, and still, Adam fell
- But now, as Jesus sets out to prove Himself as our Second Adam, the circumstances will be quite different
  - The odds are stacked against Jesus
  - Jesus will be in a harsh desert, hungry and without friends
  - He will face an enemy who has already won and is fighting to keep what he has gained
  - And Satan will be allowed to tempt Jesus not once, but three times, while He's in a weakened state
  - And Jesus will face these attacks as Adam did, as a mere man, without the Father's protection or the Spirit's supernatural power
  - He doesn't even have the ministry of angels until the temptations are over – He's by Himself
- Notice in v.2, even before the temptations begin, Jesus fasts for forty days

- Now perhaps you assumed Jesus survived this experience because He was God and God can do anything
  - Well, as I mentioned earlier, that's not the case
  - Jesus' body experienced these things in just the same way that our body would, with no extra advantage
- Or perhaps you assumed that the 40-day period was an exaggeration for the sake of dramatic effect
  - You assume Jesus didn't really go without food for that long
  - No one can go that long without eating
  - But that's not true, either
- Under Jewish custom, religious fasting generally took one of two forms
  - Fasts were either a food fast or a food and water fast
  - A food fast meant only drinking water, while a food and water fast meant consuming nothing whatsoever
  - Obviously, a person can't survive without water for very long, so a food and water fast only lasted a few days
  - But the human body can survive a considerable time without food...weeks
- So a food fast could last anywhere from a day up to forty days, depending on why the person was fasting
  - That's the type of fast Jesus endures here
  - He eats nothing for 40 days, and of course, he grows weaker as time goes along
- But the body has a fascinating response to long-term fasts of this type
  - In the first few days of the fast, the body's hunger response increases dramatically and energy levels drop considerably
    - But then, after those early days, hunger fades and strength returns as the body begins converting fat stores to energy
    - And for the most part, for the next 5 weeks, the body continues to function reasonably well, burning fat and losing weight, of course

- I've spoken to people who have endured this very kind of fast
- The person experiences hunger now and again, but not as strongly as you probably assume
- They report having gone to work and lived otherwise normal lives for most of that time
- They were more tired, a little weaker, and they lost a ton of weight, but in general they could endure it
- But then about 40 days into the fast, everything changes
  - After 5 weeks, the body has largely exhausted its fat stores
  - And it realizes it needs a new source of energy very soon
  - So at that point, the sensation of hunger kicks back in...now with a vengeance
- The person gets very hungry...so hungry that all they can think about is food
  - You may have read stories of what people enduring starvation are willing to do
  - They resort to eating dirt or shoe leather or wood
  - Their hunger drive has become so intense, it compels them to do things normal people would never consider
  - That's the state Jesus was in
- So notice in v.2, Matthew remarks that after 40 days, Jesus became hungry
  - This isn't merely a bit of humorous understatement on Matthew's part
    - He's describing what most Jews who had experienced fasting would have understood
    - The 40-day point is the worst possible time to be tempted
    - You're at your weakest physically and you're incredibly distracted by the sudden return of intense hunger
    - The drive to survive is so strong, it can overwhelm every other thought or desire
    - Only our urge to breathe is stronger than our hunger drive

- And it's under these extreme conditions that the enemy steps in to tempt Jesus
  - We're going to wait until next week to examine the three temptations in-depth
  - For now, let's finish tonight considering Satan's goal and methods in these temptations
- First, Satan's goal is to make Jesus disqualify Himself
  - It's not enough for Satan to kill the Messiah himself
    - For even if Satan were permitted to kill Jesus, the Father would simply raise Jesus up from the dead to continue His mission
    - After all, this very thing happens three years later
  - So Satan must find a way to cause Jesus to voluntarily disqualify Himself, by taking an action that is contrary to the will of the Father
    - In other words, as he did with Adam, so must Satan do with Jesus
    - He must bring Jesus to the point where Jesus willingly goes against the Word of the Lord
  - To do this, Satan relies on two key tactics
    - First, he depends on the strength of his lies
    - Secondly, he exploits the weaknesses of our flesh
    - He twists the truth to make his temptations sound reasonable, perhaps even to seem consistent with God's desires
    - And he works to harness our natural desires so that we convince ourselves to take his bait
- He followed this same system with Woman in the Garden
  - He twisted the word of God when he spoke with Woman, questioning whether God's Word could be trusted
    - And then, he provoked Woman to gaze upon the tree's fruit with renewed interest
    - Satan drew her attention to the fruit's enticing appearance



- And he gave her the suggestion of great things to be gained if she ate
- And so she did
- Satan will use similar tactics to lead Jesus into sin
  - Satan will twist Scripture to tell Jesus lies, not just once as with Woman, but three times
  - And he will try to tempt Jesus into sinning, not just one way, as with Woman, but three different ways
- The apostle John offers us a convenient summary of the three ways we can be tempted to sin

[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.

- We can be tempted by the lusts of our physical body, our flesh
- We can be tempted by the lust of our eyes, which refers to desires that captivate us and distract us from following God
- And the boastful or vain glory of life, which is anything that appeals to our pride or sense of self-worth apart from God
- Every temptation we can name fits into one of these three categories, and Jesus will be tempted by all three methods
  - Tempted to give in to His body's demand for food
  - Tempted by a vision of what He could gain without the need to experience the suffering of the cross
  - Tempted by His pride to defend His honor and reputation as the Son of God
- Later this week, we remember Jesus' death on the cross, the moment He gave everything for us by dying in our place to pay the price required for our sin

- I'm sure as you spend time with your family or perhaps in fellowship with believers in a Sunday morning service, you will be thinking about what Jesus did on that day
  - Certainly nothing could be more important than that moment
  - But I hope you may also give a few moments of thought to what Jesus endured even before the cross
  - Of how and why He was even qualified to hang on that cross
- You see, Jesus didn't just save us by His death
  - He saved us by His perfect, sinless life given in place of our worthless, sinful, rebellious life
  - In a sense, we could say dying was the easy part
  - Yes, dying on a cross is truly horrible, but Jesus isn't the only person in history to experience crucifixion
  - In fact, there were two other men experiencing it right next to Him on that day
- No, the truly unique thing Jesus did, perhaps the most difficult thing He did, was living as a mere man yet without giving in to temptation
  - And not just one time...but every day of His life