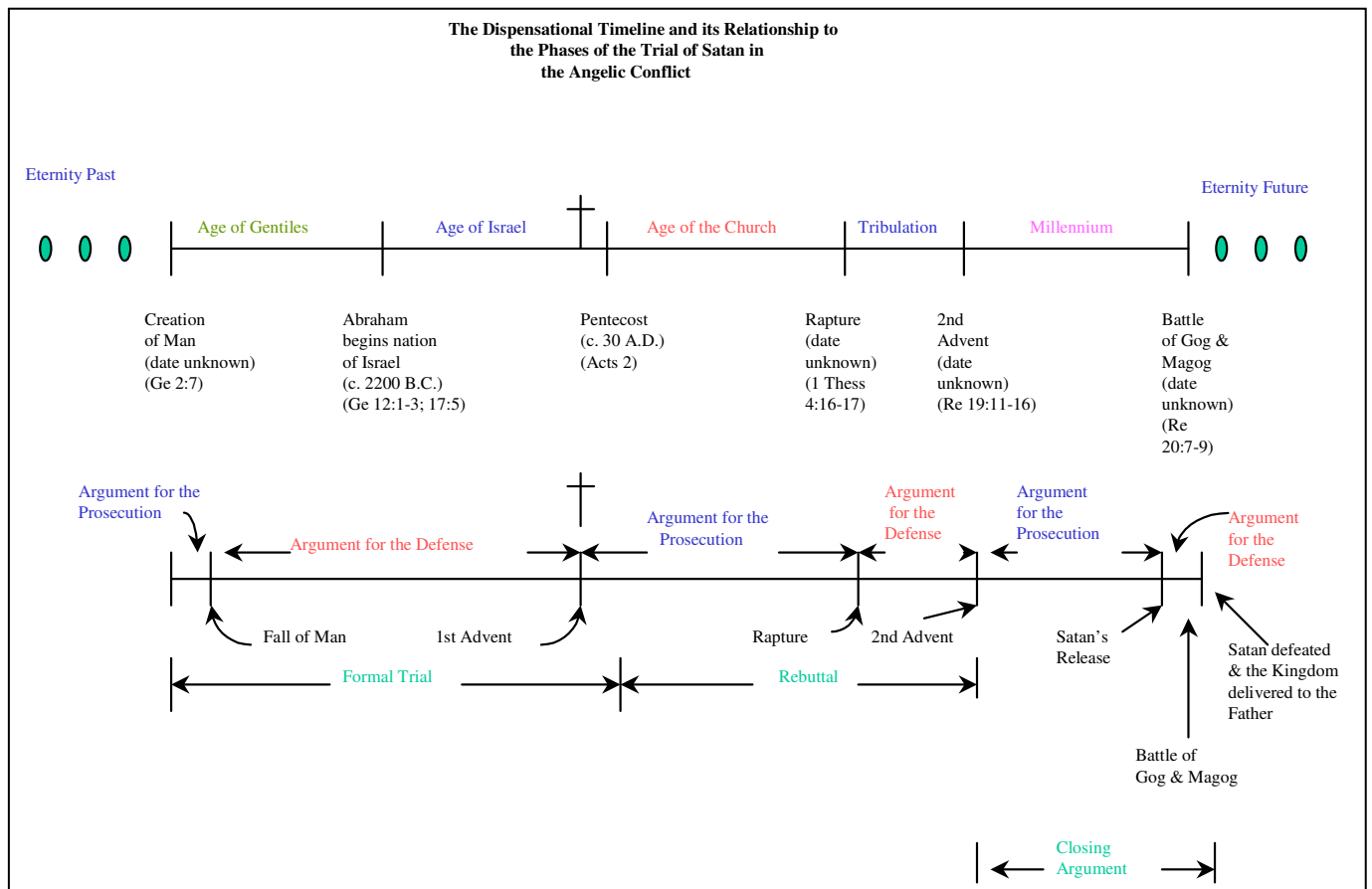


The Church of the Servant King
 Home Bible Study
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
 (Lesson SB-4)
 Matthew Chapter 4

In this chapter, Jesus is tempted by Satan. An understanding of God's greater purpose in human history is vital to understanding all that transpires in not only chapter 4, but in the remainder of Matthew. Therefore, we will review some highlights of God's purpose in human history as it relates to Satan's activities in human history. In the next few chapters, the term *kingdom* will play a very prominent role. This term will be explored in greater depth when we conduct a detailed study of dispensations, so for now an overview will serve our purposes.



War has been declared. The great, governing cherub had become the malignant enemy. Our God was neither surprised nor astonished, for, of course, He knew before it happened that it would happen, and He had His perfect plan ready to be put into effect. Although the Lord had the power to destroy Satan with a breath, He did not do so. It was as though an edict had been proclaimed in heaven: "We shall give this rebellion a thorough trial. We shall permit it to run its full course. The universe shall see what a creature, though he be the highest creature ever to spring from God's Word, can do apart from Him. We shall watch this experiment, and permit the universe of creatures to watch it, during this brief interlude between eternity past and eternity future called time. In it the spirit of independence shall be allowed to expand to the utmost. And the wreck and ruin which shall result will demonstrate to the universe, and forever, that there is no life, no joy, no

peace apart from a complete dependence upon the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth.” (Donald Grey Barnhouse, *The Invisible War*, p. 51)

Why Satan is thus allowed to continue his reign is perhaps but partly revealed. The real Church which is the Bride of Christ, is to sit with Him upon His throne (Rev. 3:21; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Matt. 19:28), and the present age [the Church Age] must continue until that glorious heavenly people are gathered out from the world [Rapture of Church Age believers to rule and reign with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom]. Again, it seems the course of God’s purpose to make a sufficient and final trial of every claim of His adversaries; and when this age, with all its developments, shall have passed by, every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world and Satan will know their own failure and sin before God. They will stand self-condemned, and nothing could accomplish this but the testing, by actual trial, of all the self-sufficient claims of Satan and man. [Italics and bold are mine] (Lewis S. Chafer, *Satan: His Motives and Methods*, p. 24)

The terminology of United States jurisprudence provides analogies for the appeal trial of Satan. The structure of a trial can be superimposed upon the structure of human history. A trial has three phases. First, there is the formal presentation of the case: the prosecution presents its case, followed by the defense. Next is the rebuttal phase: the rebuttal arguments of the prosecution followed by the rebuttal arguments of the defense. Finally, comes the closing argument and summary: by the prosecution and then by the defense. The formal trial in Satan’s appeal trial corresponds to Old Testament history. God created man as a rational creature lower than angels, duplicating at a reduced scale the conditions of the prehistoric angelic conflict. The courtroom is planet Earth. The human race provides evidence, arguments, and precedents in the appeal trial. God entered His evidence by creating man just as the angels were created: innocent (or perfect) with the potential to become imperfect by wrong decisions. Human history provides the same circumstances and options which belonged to angelic history before man’s creation. Satan had been created in perfect innocence; Adam was created in perfect innocence. The angels have free will; man has free will. Adam freely and deliberately chose to follow the pattern of arrogance which characterized Satan’s original revolution. The fall of Adam duplicates the fall of Satan. The rebellion of Satan in the Garden of God resulted in the fall of angelic creatures (Rev. 12:4a); the disobedience of Adam in the Garden of Eden resulted in the fall of mankind (Rom. 5:12a). In angelic history God had provided a decision-making process by which angels could express nonmeritorious positive volition. Likewise, God provided salvation for all mankind so that man can express nonmeritorious positive volition through faith in Christ (John 3:16). Through the exercise of free will, angelic creatures are divided into two categories: elect and fallen (Heb. 2:2; Rev. 12:7). Through free will mankind is divided into believers and unbelievers (John 3:36). With the fall of Adam, Satan became ruler of the world. After usurping Adam’s rule over the earth, Satan presented his case in his many attempts to establish control over his kingdom so that he might create perfect environment on earth. Just as in the prehistorical angelic conflict, his purpose in the historical extension of the angelic conflict is to prove himself equal with God, to be “like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14). Satan wishes to demonstrate that arrogance is not arrogance but a viable alternative to God’s plan. However, Satan lacks the ability, brilliant though he is, to produce the utopia he wishes to establish. The formal phase of the appeal trial includes angelic observation, participation, and interference in the affairs of mankind

(Gen. 6:1-4; Job 1:1-3). These angelic activities continue throughout all phases of the trial. (R.B. Thieme, Jr., *Christian Suffering*, p. 143, 145)

We know from Scripture that Satan fell in eternity past from his position of prominence in spiritual service to God as the highest of created being (Ezek 28:11-19; Isa 14:12-17). We also know the following points:

- The sentence upon Satan was pronounced at a point in time in eternity past; however, its execution has yet to be carried out.
- The restoration of the earth in Genesis 1 and the creation of man are vitally linked to the resolution of the conflict between Satan and God.
- A sizeable number of angels transferred their allegiance from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of Satan in association with Satan's fall in eternity past (Rev 12:7-9).
- When man fell in the Garden of Eden, man as the administrator of the earthly province of the kingdom of God and the earth itself fell with him under the dominion of Satan's rulership. Satan is the ruler of this world under the permissive will of God. See John 8:44; 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Rom 8:19-22; Eph 2:1-2 as examples of passages which support this.
- Satan established a foothold on earth (with the fall of Adam) for his own kingdom in his attempt to fulfill his declaration in Isa 14:12-14 and Ezek 28:11-17 that he would be like the most High God. He would receive the worship of his minions.
- As time passed and human history moved forward through the Ages of Conscience and Human Government, man failed in his designated authority from God. Romans 1 describes the breakdown of conscience and the Tower of Babel epitomized the failure of man to govern over dispersed portions of the earth in accord with God's command in Gen 9:1 to Noah to replenish the earth. Instead, under the leadership of Nimrod, a temple/tower at Babylon was constructed in order for man to exalt himself.
- God created a nation of His own to be the repository of His revelation to man, i.e. Israel through the lineage of Abraham.
- The covenants that God made with the Jews (i.e. the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New) were all made in anticipation of the establishment of God's theocratic kingdom on earth.
 - Abrahamic – Gen 12:1-4; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8
 - Palestinian – Deut 30:1-10
 - Davidic – 2 Sam 7:1-17
 - New – Jer 31:31-34
- The establishment of God's theocratic kingdom on earth in fulfillment of the covenants to Abraham and Israel is vitally related to the resolution of the Angelic Conflict.
- God's theocratic kingdom on earth in the dispensation known as the Millennium is God's closing argument in Satan's appeal trial. Through Christ's reign, the administration of the earth is returned to man as God's rightfully appointed governor/administrator.
- Satan is the ruler of this world under the permissive and sovereign will of God.
- Satan's plan for this world is vitally connected to the attitude he possessed at his fall in eternity past.

Point worthy of contemplation – If Satan could tempt the Son of God to accept a shortcut to ruling over the kingdoms of this earth without going to the Cross first, then Satan would have succeeded in the establishment of a kingdom of his own just as he claimed he could do in his challenge to God in eternity past. God would have been proven incapable of saving mankind from the eternal condemnation of sin and God would not have been able to exert His sovereignty over a portion of His creation. Man would have been at the mercy of Satan and his plan for the cosmos. Man would have continued to procreate perhaps for thousands of years in perpetuation of a realm over which Satan could rule, yet Satan would have had no plan and no concern for the eternal state of man after his physical death. Only a God of absolute love could provide a means of deliverance. Only the God/Man could accomplish the plan. Satan's evident challenge to God in eternity past would be answered by the very attribute that he questioned to exist when his sentence was pronounced. That attribute was love.

Matthew 4:1

- Note that Jesus was led to the temptation by the Spirit, not by Satan.
- The temptation took place immediately after Jesus' baptism.
- Jesus' responses to the temptations all come from Deuteronomy 6-8 in which Israel is instructed in the Law while in the wilderness. In the wilderness, God instructed Israel in the Law. In Matthew 4, the God/Man Jesus is quoting the Law as He fulfills it.
- In Scripture the wilderness was not only a place of demonic activity (Isa 13:21; 34:14; Matt 12:43; Rev 18:2), but it was the place of Israel's greatest testing.
- Israel failed; Jesus was victorious.
- Israel was tempted immediately after a victory and period of exaltation in the world.
- Jesus was tempted after public acknowledgment.
- In Jesus' temptations, God clearly purposed to test Him just as Israel was tested and Jesus' responses from the Old Testament clearly indicated that He understood.

Matthew 4:2

- Israel wandered for forty years.
- Jesus fasted for forty days.

Matthew 4:3-4

- This test related to Jesus' sonship.
- Satan tempted Jesus to act independently of the Father's will for Him.

Matthew 4:5-7

- Satan tempts Jesus to gain public attention through a spectacle rather than through His righteous life and message.
- Satan's temptation related to a common perception from Mal 3:1 that the Messiah would suddenly appear in the sky and come down to His temple.
- In effect Satan was saying, "Why don't you do what the people are expecting?"
- Satan omitted the words from Psa 91:11 & 12 of "to keep you in all your ways."

Matthew 4:8-11

- Satan is presently the "god of this age" per 2 Cor. 4:4 and the "prince of this world" per John 12:31; cf. Eph 2:2.
- Satan's temptation was a legitimate offer.

Note: Satan's temptations correspond to those of Eve in the Garden of Eden:

- They appealed to the physical appetite (Gen. 3:1-3; Matt 4:3)
- They appealed to the desire for personal gain (Gen 3:4-5; Matt 4:6)
- They appealed to an easy path to power or glory (Gen 3:5-6; Matt 4:8-9)
- In each case, Satan altered God's word (Gen 3:4; Matt 4:6)

Matthew 4:12-17

- In Isaiah 9:1-2, the prophet reflects upon the gloom that spread over the land of Zebulun and Naphtali that was caused by the oppression of the Assyrians. He contrasts that situation with the light that will one day shine in the region. Matthew draws upon Isaiah's reference to the future, Messianic reign of Christ and notes yet another instance of fulfillment in an other than ultimate sense. In addition, Matthew creates a veiled reference to the spiritual darkness that pervaded the land in contrast to the spiritual light that Christ provided.
- At the time of Christ, Galilee was no longer under the rule of the Assyrians, but it was still under a foreign yoke of oppression in the form of Rome. Therefore, the historical reference Matthew uses is very appropriate to the current set of circumstances. In addition, Zebulun and Naphtali correspond to Galilee geographically. The population of Galilee is of a mixed Gentile and Jewish character, so the application is consistent from an ethnic standpoint. Given the Messianic overtone of Isaiah 9, Matthew's use of the prophecy is contextually appropriate.

- Matthew's use of the Old Testament in 4:12-16 is probably best grouped in the "literal plus application" fulfillment category. The New Testament event (Jesus settling in Capernaum) has one point of similarity with the Old Testament literal prophecy (which has yet to see its ultimate fulfillment).