

The Messianic Servant King

The Nature of the Messianic Kingdom As Revealed in the Temptations of Jesus

Matt. 4:1-3

Introduction:

1. Satan said, “If you are the Son of God . . .” (Matt. 4:3; Lk. 4:3).
2. The High Priest asked, “Are you the Christ the Son of the Blessed One?” (Mk. 14:61).
3. Pilate questioned, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (Matt. 27:11).
4. At the cross the mockers said, “Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” (Mk. 15:32).
5. People certainly have their expectations and their demands of the Messianic King. But Jesus’ teaching, His actions and the cross flatly deny their expectations.
6. Who is this Jesus who claims to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews, and the Son of God? Paul said, “He is a stumbling block to Jews.” Why? Because a crucified King contradicts their hopes of a mighty victor who would deliver them from their oppressors. To Greeks He is foolishness. How could an executed criminal be a savior and a benefactor?
7. Jesus turns their thinking upside down!
8. This is evident in the nature of the Messianic Kingdom as revealed in the temptation of Jesus recorded in Matt. 4 and Lk. 4.

Discussion:

- I. The nature of the Messianic kingdom as revealed in the temptations of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13).
 - A. The historical placement of the narrative in Matthew.
 1. Immediately after Jesus’ baptism by John and the descent of the Spirit upon Him.
 2. After the voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”
 3. If there were any lack of clarity about who Jesus is it should be removed by these evidences. Both Jesus and John are clear.
 - B. It is out of this context that the ministry of Jesus begins (Matt. 5:12ff; Lk. 4:14ff).
 - C. The temptation account is placed between the confession from heaven and the beginning of Jesus’ teaching ministry. What is revealed in this temptation narrative about who Jesus is and about the nature of His kingdom?
 1. The temptations are three. The order of the last two are reversed in the two accounts. We will follow Luke’s order in our examination.
 - a. The temptation to turn stones into bread.
 - b. The temptation to fall down and worship satan.
 - c. The temptation to put God to the test.

2. Each of these temptations involve an attempt to “bring in” the kingdom in worldly ways.
 - a. The first says, “Bring in the kingdom by providing earthly sustenance.” “Bring in the kingdom by economic means.”
 - b. The second says, “Bring in the kingdom by worshiping me.” Satan has power and he promises to use it to give Jesus power.
 - c. The third says, “Bring in the kingdom by means of propaganda (misleading information).”
3. All these were methods used in the world’s empires.
 - a. Provide sustenance to the people. Give them what they want and they will follow you. Provide economic prosperity. John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you,” but that is exactly what many want.
 - b. Give your allegiance to another other than the Lord. The ancient rulers were deified, that is, they were regarded as gods. The Roman Imperial cult is a prime example. The preaching of Jesus as King in the first century contradicted the Caesar worship of the ancient world (Acts 17:7). The struggle was between man become god and God become man.
 - c. Political propaganda—“spin doctors.” Truth is glossed over in deceptive ways.
 - d. All of these methods are force driven—dictatorial in nature (cf. Matt. 20:24). They had proven very effective in the Roman Empire (and in the world empires before them). Israel’s shepherds had used the same methods (cf. Ezek. 34:4).
4. Jesus was being invited to bring in the kingdom by such means, the means used by satan and those allied with him. But Jesus’ Messiahship is NOT to be confused with that of a dictatorship.
5. Jesus would engage His mission of “bringing in” the kingdom, but it would not be done by the means proposed by Satan.
 - a. Do we use these means in the church (1 Cor. 6:7; 1 Pet. 5:3)? Denominationalism. Creedalism.
 - b. Do we use these means in our family (Eph. 5:23)?
 - c. Do we use these means in our evangelism? Health, wealth, prosperity, a chicken in every pot.
 - d. Do we use these means in our community activities?

II. This was what the Lord had warned against from the days of Israel’s desire to have a king, to be like the nations (1 Sam. 8:5, 9-22).

- A. It was this approach that had led to the oppressed situation that they had found themselves in in the first century.
- B. This is the approach used by the Jewish elite of the first century that culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus. It continued in the persecution of Christians in the first century.
- C. Is it any wonder that the expectations of the Messianic kingdom would be the same?

III. Jesus rejects the Jewish expectations and turns their expectations upside down.

- A. He will not follow satanic means to bring in His kingdom by economic means—giving bread. He will do it by bringing life through the word of God!! The food of this life will not eclipse the food of God's word.
- B. He will not follow satanic means to bring in the kingdom by domineering force and the deification of men. He will do it by SERVING God. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:5ff.
- C. He will not follow the satanic devices of propaganda and spin-doctors that gloss over the truth in order to gain a following. He will walk by faith in God's word and not by sight, or some twisted interpretation given by satan.
- D. In one way or another Jesus is being invited to take the center stage in one role or another. With each temptation He puts God in center stage. Each time the implication is perfectly clear: The Messiah is God's Servant. He is pre-eminently God's Servant.

Conclusion:

1. So what about you? Are you a servant of God? Who is at center stage in your life?
2. Do you attempt to "bring in the kingdom" by satanic means?
3. What is your understanding of the nature of the Kingdom?