

# THE DIFFICULT SAYINGS OF JESUS

Week 4

## ***Introduction- Matthew 4:1-11, Ephesians 6:10-20***

*Read the Scripture passage above and then work through the introduction below to help guide your personal study*

The sermon this weekend examines the existence and activities of Satan and evil spirits. In Ancient times, human cultures erred by seeing a supernatural cause to just about everything. Since the Enlightenment, Western cultures err by explaining everything away by natural causes, even if one can't be found. The Bible indicates that most things have natural causes, as set by the hand of the Creator, but that other supernatural beings can at times control events and people. The sermon and the guide this week will help you and your small group identify where and how Satan is at work.

*For more information on this topic, there is an SJI class on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00, taught by Dr. Jamie Dew on "God, Miracles, and the After Life: explaining the unexplainable." Go to <http://sji.summitrdu.com> for more details.*

The guide for this week will walk through two passages on how to fight against Satan's work. We've studied both of these passages before in small groups, but we will take a different approach to them in this study. By examining multiple passages, and considering what else happened in the storyline of the Bible, we are engaging in a process called "Biblical Theology."

Matthew 4:1-11 describes a time early in Jesus' ministry where Satan tempts him away from obedience to God. Notice two things about the context for this event: 1) this happened right after God declared that he is pleased with Jesus, and 2) the Spirit led him into the wilderness where the temptation took place. Jesus' mission in the world was NOT to avoid the devil at all costs, but rather to face him head on and beat him.

Later in the Gospels' storyline, Jesus is again tempted to veer away from the course God set him on. We examined this story in week 1 of this series. Jesus was tempted in Gethsemane to not go to the cross, but he again proved faithful. Revelation 12 indicates that the blood he shed on the cross won a tremendous victory against Satan. However, Satan has not yet been destroyed and he is still at work in the world.

Ephesians 6:10-20 says that Christians have a part to play in the battle against Satan. Earlier in Ephesians, Paul affirms that Jesus has authority over all spiritual forces (1:21). However, Christians still have to stand against schemes of the devil. Notice that the methods we are to use to fight against evil spiritual forces are common elements of the life of a Christian. There is no magic or potions to help you in the fight against supernatural forces, just the normal means of grace in a Christian's life, aided by the Holy Spirit.

This passage is here to show just how crucial it is that we are obedient to our faith in Christ. We use prayer, truth, and righteousness to fight our most important battle. We do not fight against our friends and neighbors, but we fight to wrest their hearts and minds away from the control of Satan.

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### *Small Group Discussion Questions*

*Work through the questions before you come to small group and be ready to interact with the Scripture and questions below:*

1. What particular points from this weekend's sermon did you find helpful?

#### **Read Matthew 4:1-11**

2. Examine the activity of Satan in this passage. What does Satan do in this passage? How have you faced similar temptations in your life since you've become a Christian?

3. What proved helpful to Jesus in his battle against Satan? How can these things be helpful to you in your own fight against temptation?

4. How does Jesus' victory against Satan (here and at the cross) impact our lives as Christians?

#### **Read Ephesians 6:10-20**

5. What do you learn about fighting against Satan in this passage?

6. Consider that Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. Why do you think that God lets us face the schemes of the devil, as well?

7. List out a few things that you could do in the next week or month that you think would really hurt Satan's cause in the world. Share some of these together in your small group.

Before you pray, consider whether your prayers are the type that strike fear in the heart of the devil. Make sure your requests, if God were to fulfill them all tomorrow, would leave the schemes of the devil wounded and beaten!