

The Material Kingdom

by Anton Bosch

The sermon warns against building the Kingdom on materialism and instead emphasizes the importance of focusing on spiritual needs and salvation.

Scripture: Matthew 4:1, Matthew 6:19, Matthew 16:4, John 6:26, Romans 8:5, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Colossians 3:2, 2 Timothy 4:3, James 4:4, 1 John 2:15

Topics: "Temptation Of Christ", "Materialism Vs Gospel"

Description

Anton Bosch delves into the temptations Jesus faced by the Devil before starting His ministry, emphasizing how Satan targeted areas aligned with Jesus' mission and purpose. The temptations revolved around gratifying fleshly desires, building a kingdom on miracles, and bypassing the Cross for a political kingdom without redemption. Bosch warns against preachers who focus on meeting people's 'felt needs' rather than addressing their real spiritual needs, highlighting the danger of building a following based on materialism and entertainment rather than the transformative power of the Gospel.

Transcript

Before Jesus even began His ministry He was tempted by the Devil (Matthew 4). The first of these temptations was for Him to turn stones into bread. The shallow interpretation of this temptation is to say that Jesus was hungry (He had been fasting for forty days) and that the temptation was for him to gratify His fleshly hunger.

While that interpretation certainly is not wrong, there is a deeper issue at stake here, as there is with the other two temptations. Satan knew that it would be very difficult to tempt Jesus on the purely carnal level and so he tried to find an area where Jesus was potentially vulnerable. Satan also knew how committed Jesus was to establish the Kingdom of God and he tried to tempt Jesus in areas that lined up with His purpose. Thus the temptations centre on Jesus' mission and purpose. Each temptation would create the appearance that it would help Jesus to fulfill His purpose.

Let's look at the second and third temptations before we return to the first. The second temptation was a temptation to do something spectacular and jump from the pinnacle of the Temple. Satan's purpose behind this was to entice Jesus to build His Kingdom on miracles and the spectacular. If Jesus had jumped and landed safely, the whole nation would have instantly crowned Him as their king. Sadly, there are many preachers today who have chosen to build their kingdoms on the spectacular. This would seem to be quite legitimate because Jesus (and the Apostles) did perform many miracles. But Jesus knew how

superficial a kingdom based on miracles would be and later He declared "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" (Matthew 16:4). People need to follow Him for deeper reasons than just entertainment.

Jesus had come to redeem the world by dying on the cross, and while popularity and fame may have given Him a following and a nation, the lost would still not be redeemed. It was for this reason that Jesus frequently told people not to speak about the miracles they had received. Satan is very happy for people to follow Jesus, as long as they follow Him for the wrong reason and are not saved. The history of the church is filled with examples of times when churches were popular and when thousands joined the churches without being born-again. Today there is a whole generation of people who follow signs, wonders, miracles and Christian entertainment, but who have never been transformed by the power of the Gospel.

The third temptation was a blatant temptation for Jesus to bypass the Cross. He had indeed come to redeem the world, and Satan offered Him exactly what He had come for, but without the Cross. The Devil would probably have ensured that the world, its kingdoms and its people followed Jesus, if Jesus had just bowed to him. Obviously Jesus would be second to Satan in the kingdom, since He would have bowed to Satan. But more importantly, Satan would not be defeated at the cross and the human race would still be condemned. Satan's offer was a political kingdom without redemption for the lost human race. Once again, Satan is not afraid of people becoming religious, or even "Christian" as long as they are not born again and as long as they remain under his control.

Now, as we return to the first temptation, we will see that this one was based on the same premise as the other two - allowing Jesus to feel he was accomplishing God's plan, but by a means that God had not prescribed and in a way that did not deal with the heart of the issue. Satan also knew how ripe the people of Israel were for a messiah who would fulfill their material aspirations. Satan knew that if Jesus would just meet the "felt needs" of the people, they would follow, no, they would mob Jesus. This mob would follow Jesus because He fed them and met their material needs, not because they loved Him, believed in Him, or were true disciples.

More seriously, if they followed Him for the things He could provide, their real needs such as sin, self-centeredness, and rebellion towards God would not be dealt with.

People throughout history, will follow a messiah who meets their material needs. This is especially true in areas of the world where materialism is god, but also where people are poor. If tomorrow a man rose up in a Third-World country who could start turning stones into bread, he would immediately be made the president of that country and the savior of the world. Jesus did feed the multitudes because He had compassion on them, but later He clearly told them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6:26-27).

Since that time Satan has tempted and seduced many preachers to build their following and congregations on meeting people's "felt needs" and not on the message of the Gospel. A search of the internet for the term "felt needs" will produce a myriad of sites that justify using "felt needs" as a means to get through to people. The problem with this is that the sinful human nature thinks that his needs are for material things when its real need is for spiritual things. As humans we are not very good at understanding the difference between our felt needs and our real needs. We think we need entertainment when we need a relationship with the Lord. We think we need money when we really need forgiveness. We think we need

physical healing when our deeper need is for spiritual healing.

There are fundamental differences between felt and real needs. Our felt needs are material and physical, while our real needs are spiritual. Our felt needs revolve around ourselves, when our real need is to be God-centered. Material things are temporal, while spiritual things are eternal. But man is short-sighted and only sees the here-and-now, while God sees things from an eternal perspective.

The prosperity message meets (or at least promises to meet) people's "felt needs". Thus many follow Jesus today not because He can save them or died for them, but because they think He will bless them in material ways. This is building the Kingdom on materialism and not on the work of redemption accomplished at the cross of Calvary. But what makes it even worse is that nowadays the prosperity message has gone way beyond needs and has focused on greed. It is no longer about bread but expensive motor cars, big houses and lavish lifestyles.

The Devil could not entice Jesus to exchange His gospel that deals with the real needs of people for a message that revolves around their felt needs. Sadly, the Devil never gave up on his scheme and has succeeded in seducing many preachers to fall into the same trap Jesus showed us to avoid.

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