

The Kings Inaugural: A Greater Service

Presidential inaugurations are important, but mostly ceremonial. The first 100 days in office are what the nation is really looking for in determining what kind of leader the new president will be once the election and inauguration are finally behind them. Young King David's inauguration/anointing, though secret, was followed in the very next chapter by going forth in his anointing and slaying Goliath, Israel's fiercest enemy. Jesus' anointing and mission was a near repeat performance, with exception of the stakes being infinitely higher. Jesus was "led by the Spirit out into the wilderness" to face our world's greatest enemy and Jesus defeated him by listening to and obeying God's word. This week's study reminds us of Jesus' mission and provides some clues of what discipleship with Jesus is all about.

Journey Together:

- 1). What is one of the greatest responsibilities you have ever been given?
- 2). How did you prepare for it?
- 3). What was most difficult about it and how were you able to accomplish it?

Road Map: Matthew 4:1-11

- 4). Why does Matthew include the account of Jesus' baptism? What is unique about the baptism of Jesus? How is his baptism connected with Jesus being sent out into the wilderness?
- 5). How does Jesus' baptism help prepare him for the Devil's temptations?
- 6). What is the first temptation - turning stones into bread about? What was the Devil tempting Jesus to prove? How has the Devil tempted you like this?

7). What was involved with the second temptation of jumping from the temple? Why didn't Jesus accept Satan's challenge here since he was the Son of God? What was Jesus being tempted with here? Has the Devil ever tempted you in this way and how?

8). The third and last temptation was less subtle, but perhaps the hardest for Jesus since it was a similar struggle to the one at the end of his life in the garden of Gethsemane. It was the struggle of surrendering to God's will by personal suffering instead of the less painful and easier way of bowing to the Devil. In what way have you been tempted with the easy way instead of paying the price of obedience? Why does bowing to the "Prince of This World" always seem easier?

9). What is the first competency in discipleship with Jesus? What is Matthew teaching us about discipleship in the very beginning of Jesus' mission? What spiritual resources does Jesus receive at his baptism that we too must have if we are going to overcome temptation?

Discipleship challenge: God is challenging us to go beyond belief and acceptance to joining his mission. Ask God to clarify his mission in your life and help you understand what you most need to accomplish it.

10). How can this group pray for you right now?

My Journey:

- 1). How has God been using journey in your life this week to do *Great Things* for Him?
- 2). How has God been speaking about his mission for you?
- 3). How can this group pray for you today?

Backstory:

The first discipleship competency for Matthew is surrendering to Jesus as king. The goal of this week's group study is to see how faithfully Matthew presents Jesus as Lord, the long awaited messianic king! Even the devil must acknowledge Jesus by default as the rightful king of the world. As king Jesus must have our full and complete allegiance -if we are to begin the journey of discipleship we must submit to His authority and recognize His reign in our life.

The temptations that Jesus is hit with are the very ones that we are most vulnerable to. The first temptation is not so much about turning stones into bread, but the implicit doubt about His identity as the son of God. "If you are the son of God, turn these stones into bread." Being good or acting like we are God's sons and daughters is no more possible for us than turning stones into bread, but our first temptation is to "perform" like we belong to God instead of resting in God's word that we are His beloved. Unlike us, Jesus could have performed a miracle. Instead He rested in God's word to Him, "This is my beloved son. Listen to Him." Jesus did not have to prove He was the son of God. God had already clarified this at His baptism. All Jesus had to do was rest in God's word to Him. Proving His identity to Satan by performing the miracle would have stripped the pronouncement of God of its meaning. Jesus was the son of God because God said so, not because He worked miracles. Any miracles of Jesus only affirmed what God had already made so. Likewise, "Man does not live by 'turning stones into bread – bread alone', but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." God's word to us is no less than it was to Jesus. We are God's beloved sons and daughters because in Jesus Christ, God has said so.

The second temptation was similar, but slightly different. Again, the Devil tempted Jesus to prove He was the Son of God by throwing Himself off the temple. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself off the temple and let God send His angels to catch you for the scriptures say that 'the angels will bear you up.'" In this case God was expected to intervene in Jesus fall, which is

understandable given Jesus was the Son of God. This temptation revealed the difference between faith and presumption. Faith knows what God can do. Presumption demands God prove it. Presumption asks God to prove He is real and active in our life. Jesus quoted scripture back to the Devil, "We should not put God to the test." We often require God to demonstrate His love for us by getting us out of situations that we might have avoided if we had not presumed that God would rescue us from the crises in the first place.

The last temptation was the most obvious. The Devil openly claimed power and authority over this world. He offered to give his position as supreme world leader to Jesus if Jesus would just acknowledge him and bow down to him. Of course, bowing to the Devil would have given him just he wanted and established him as the supreme leader of this world. If Jesus was already king, He would not need to bow to anyone. Jesus again quoted scripture, "We must serve God only."

The truth is, every time we do not bow to Jesus we give allegiance to Satan and surrender to his place of authority in our lives. Full and complete surrender to Jesus is the first step in discipleship. It begins by rejoicing in the freedom and salvation Jesus has already provided, and taking the further step of honoring and serving Him as Lord. This is a call to find our full identity in Christ. It is the call to a mature faith that trusts the love of God for us fully as already demonstrated by sending Jesus into the world for our deliverance from sin. This is a call to full and complete surrender to Jesus the rightful king of this world. This is where we echo Jesus prayer in the surrender of our own life to "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

"Unless we take up our cross and follow Him, we cannot be His disciples."