

Series: ID: King of Kings

December 6, 2015

## **Title: The Desert King**

**[Slide 1]**

**Text: Matthew**

### **The Temple**

**Dancing Before the LORD:**

**[Slide 2]**

It must have been a strange sight: A procession wound its way up a steep hill to the gates of the king's city, Jerusalem – the City of David. The music of trumpets, harps, tambourines, cymbals and castanets reverberated in the narrow winding streets of the city, mingling with the sustained shouts of joy from the people. Priests carried an ancient gold-covered throne by means of poles run through rings on its sides. It was the Ark of the Covenant that Israel had built at Mt. Sinai to serve as Yahweh's earthly throne. And there at the front of the Ark was King David, dancing "before the LORD with all his might."

God was at last coming to once again dwell in the midst of His people Israel as *Immanuel, God With Us*.

Bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem had not been easy. David had tried 3 months before and failed. One of the men accompanying the Ark as it was carried in an oxcart had reached out to steady it when the oxen stumbled. His irreverence cost him his life. David was so angry and shaken that he refused to bring the Ark into Jerusalem.

He refused, that is, until he began to hear strange reports about the house where the Ark rested.

**[Slide 3]**

*2 Samuel 5:1-12a NIV*

*The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.*

*Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God."*

David had an immediate change of heart.

#### **[Slide 4]**

*2 Samuel 5:12b NIV*

*So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.*

It was time for God to dwell again with His people. *Immanuel – God With Us!*

#### **A King's Duty!**

#### **[Slide 5]**

This little story shows us just how important it was that Israel's king guarantee the Presence of God in the midst of his people. Every one of Israel's good and successful kings had done just that:

- Moses, Israel's first and greatest leader, had constructed a movable temple or "Tabernacle" in the desert at God's command so that God would dwell with and lead his people.
- David, as we have seen, brought the Ark of the Covenant to the royal city. It was his lifelong dream to build a temple for the Ark in his royal city, but it would fall to his son Solomon to actually do the construction.
- Good, reformer kings, like Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah had restored and even rebuilt the Temple when it had become polluted by pagan practices or had fallen into disrepair. The high points of their reigns had been those times when the entire nation gathered to re-dedicate the Temple – and themselves – to their God.
- The evil King Herod rebuilt the temple on the grandest scale imaginable in order to secure the title, King of the Jews.

If Jesus were to be the long awaited Messiah King, He too would have to *build the Temple. He would have to bring to His people those blessings that can only come when God is in the house.* So how would King Jesus fulfill this challenge?

## The Test

### “Come to the Temple”

It turns out that the Devil had an answer to this challenge. Coming again to Jesus as He faced the test of His calling as King in the desert, Satan made his move.

#### [Slide 6]

*Matthew 4:5-6 NIV*

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:*

*“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*

What about a super-dramatic apparition at the Temple in Jerusalem? Hadn't the prophet Malachi predicted a shocking and unexpected arrival of the King?

#### [Slide 7]

*Malachi 3:1 NIV*

*“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.*

The rabbis interpreted this prediction by saying, “When the king, the Messiah, reveals himself, he will come and stand on the roof of the temple.” (Talmud – Pesiqta Rabbati, as cited in Hagner, [Matthew 1-13](#), p. 66).

#### [Slide 8]

Standing on the *pinnacle* of the Temple, a ledge 450 feet above the Kidron Valley, Jesus could in an instant establish Himself as that long-awaited Messiah King. A miraculous descent in front of thousands of worshipers would certainly do the trick!

*If you are the Son of God – the King – make your move. Make it happen in the Temple. Show that you are the Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord they are seeking. Surely your Father won't let you get hurt in the process!*

### **This is *not* a test:**

But Jesus would have none of it. He responded in the same way that He had answered Satan's first temptation of turning stones to bread. He quoted God's own words back to the Tempter.

### **[Slide 9]**

*Matthew 4:7 NIV*

*Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

In other words, "This is *not* a test!" Once again, Jesus quotes God's Word:

*Deuteronomy 6:16 NIV*

*Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah.*

This warning refers back to an incident in the Exodus Journey where the Israelites had become thirsty and complained to Moses about the lack of water. God told Moses to take his staff and strike a rock. When he did, water flowed out. Moses called this place "Massah" and "Meribah," which mean "Testing" and "Quarreling."

Jesus refuses to go down that path. He refuses to put God to the test by throwing Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple. God will provide in God's own way and in God's own time. Jesus will let God set the agenda.

## **The Builder King**

### **The Sign of Messiah:**

In John's Gospel we see Jesus coming in an unexpected and shocking way to the Temple. He made a whip out of rope and emptied the temple courtyards of its merchants and moneychangers. The temple authorities demanded to know what gave Him the right to act in such a way:

**[Slide 10]***John 2:18 NIV**The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"*

Ah, the demand for a sign. This would have been the time to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple if He were truly the Messenger of the Covenant. But Jesus refuses to answer their question, just as He refused to argue with Satan in the desert. Instead, He gives them a riddle.

**[Slide 11]***John 2:19-23 NIV**Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.**They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*

How would they know that He alone was the long-awaited Messiah King who would finally bring God to dwell with His people?

John unpacks the riddle for us. "But the temple he had spoken of was his body." This King came to do more than temporarily restore true worship to a physical building. He came to *rebuild* the human race and *make human beings God's Temple – starting with Himself!* To do so, He would not demand that God rescue Him from the Temple pinnacle, but would trust that God would restore and raise Him from the grave.

Immanuel – God With Us!

**Living Water:**

Just a few chapters after telling the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple, John tells another story in which Jesus and Temple come up. This time Jesus has a conversation with a foreign woman who has a checkered past – not the kind of person a rabbi was supposed to talk to. After asking her for a drink from the well, He makes her an astounding offer:

**[Slide 12]**

*John 4:10, 13 NIV*

*Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

*"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

Another riddle.

As they continue to talk, Jesus reveals to her that the time has come when God will be present *not* in a Temple in a particular city. Not even in Jerusalem. God's Messiah has come and will now live *inside everyone who puts their trust in Him*.

Immanuel – God With Us!

**The Builder King:**

And that's why Jesus is our Builder King. When He took the journey to the Cross, He was building a *new Temple* in which God will dwell. When He was raised after three days in the grave, He became *Immanuel – God with Us!*

There will always be a temptation to "put God in a box" of our own making. There will always be a temptation to try to hold God to some kind of deal, or to demand that God meet our time-table. There will always be a temptation to assume that God must meet our expectations.

And to all those temptations there is only one answer:

*"Do not put the LORD your God to the test."*

**[Slide 13]**

Instead of testing and quarreling with God, let Him bring you the Living Water from the Rock – the Rock Who is Christ.

Let Him *dwell in you*. He's closer than you can ever imagine – right now.