

# Discerning the Scriptures

## *A Dialogue between Jesus and Satan*

### Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus: 40 days ago

**Satan: Over a month ago**

Jesus: At my baptism

**Satan: At Jesus' coronation**

Jesus: The Spirit came down

**Satan: A dove descended**

Jesus: And God spoke.

**Satan: A voice from high was heard.**

Jesus: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

**Satan: The words of the Psalmist.**

Jesus: The words of Isaiah, the prophet.

**Satan: Psalm 2:7 "You are my [royal] son; today I have begotten you."**

Jesus: Isaiah 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights."

**Satan: Psalm 2:9 "The Son of God shall break the nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."**

Jesus: Isaiah 42:1 "The Son of God will bring forth mercy to the nations."

**Satan: A king. A royal king who will harness God's power on earth.**

Jesus: A servant. A suffering servant who will deliver peace to all.

**Satan: The Son of God – all powerful and omnipotent.**

Jesus: God's Son – a servant, willing to suffer and die for the people.

**Satan:** "If you are this son of God, Psalm 2:7 prove it. Do something spectacular. Feed the people. Command these stones to become loaves of bread."

Jesus: I could. I could be that "type" of Messiah. A miracle-worker. Dramatist. Magician. But my calling is not like that. It is also written, Deuteronomy 8:3, that "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

**Satan:** Every word?

Jesus: Spoken by both psalmist and prophet ... and others.

**Satan:** And be both king and servant?

Jesus: Mixed together.

**Satan:** Merged?

Jesus: One informing the other. Like, a suffering king. Or royal servant.

*(Pause.)*

**Satan:** Then take another example. It is also written, Psalm 91:11-12, that "God will command the angels concerning you." If you're the royal Son of God, again Psalm 2:7, why don't you jump from the pinnacle of the temple and have God save you? "God's angels," it is said, "will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."

Jesus: God could save me, you're right. God could dramatically rescue me. Even if gravity would do its worst.

**Satan:** So, jump!

Jesus: But, it is also written, Deuteronomy 6:16, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

*(Pause.)*

**Satan:** Then come with me to the highest mountain and see the splendor of the world. Pretend, for a moment, that you're Moses on Mount Nebo, Deuteronomy 34:1-4, overseeing the kingdoms of the earth.

Jesus: It is an impressive view from up here. The Mediterranean Sea, the Jordan Valley, the Golan Heights in the distance ...

**Satan:** But do you see the peoples? Their leaders. Heads of state. Who is lord of all this? To whom do the Jew, Samaritan, Syro-Phoenician, Greco-Roman, bow?

Jesus: Well, they ...

**Satan:** All the principalities and powers, Psalm 2:8, could be yours. Imagine. If you fall down and ...

Jesus: Deuteronomy 6:13 Satan, "Worship the Lord and serve only God."

*(Pause – change characterization; become narrator)*

Reader 1: There are many voices in scripture.

**Reader 2: Many traditions in the Bible struggle to be heard.**

Reader 1: How do we discern? How do we meld and mix and merge?

**Reader 2: How do we take the full biblical canon seriously**

Reader 1: And seek the trajectory that reflects the will of God and the vocation of God's people?

**Reader 2: When does Isaiah inform the Psalmist? How does Deuteronomy shed light on Isaiah?**

Reader 1: Jesus struggled with how best to discern scripture; his people also struggled with that.  
They all wanted to be faithful to God.

**Reader 2: What can we learn from the way Jesus interprets the teachings of the Law and the Prophets?**

Reader 1: How do we interpret the voices calling to us in scripture?