

The Temptation of the Son of God

¹ Luke 4:1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness

² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,

⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.

⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,

¹⁰ for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'

¹¹ and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

¹² And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

(Luke 4:1-14)

Hallelujah

Originally released in 1984 by Canadian singer **Leonard Cohen**, the song at first achieved little success. It is said that Cohen wrote 80 drafts of the song and it was rumored that during one writing session he was reduced to sitting on the ground in his underwear, banging his head on the floor. With over 300 covers of the song to date, it became omnipresent in pop-culture only after it appeared in the movie *Shrek*. **People find it to be a love song**, which is ironic. The reality is, “**it’s a cold and it’s a broken...**” Its chorus is a single word: “**Hallelujah.**” It begins with **a biblical hero**.

*Now I've heard there was a secret chord
That David played, and it pleased the Lord
But you don't really care for music, do you?
It goes like this, the fourth, the fifth
The minor falls, the major lifts
The baffled king composing Hallelujah*

Who is this baffled king? Is it the king of **mighty faith** who subdued the giant with a slingshot and stone? Is it the king “**after God’s own heart?**” Or is it that “other” David? The lyric continues,

*Your faith was strong but you needed proof
You saw her bathing on the roof
Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew her*

Temptation. This would be the king who gave in to temptation. And while he did it, the man of God sang Hallelujah and worshipped. And then it ate him alive.

The song continues with **another biblical hero**, one that seems much more to have that darker side, though Hebrews tells us by faith he put foreign armies to flight, became mighty in war, and most interestingly was made strong out of weakness (**Heb 11:32-33**).

*She tied you to a kitchen chair
She broke your throne, and she cut your hair
And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah¹*

Temptation. **Samson** gave in to temptation. And as he did it, the man of faith sang Hallelujah and worshipped. And then he paid for it with his eyes and then his life.

Each of us has been tempted, many times to do many things. Some are tempted over and over and over, falling many times the temptations come, often with the same temptation.

¹ **Leonard Cohen**, "Hallelujah," *Various Positions*, Columbia (1984).

They can't understand it. They hate it. But it is the story of our race.

Adam and Eve were tempted in the Garden. Three temptations. “When the woman saw that the tree was *good for food*, and that it was a *delight to the eyes*, and that the tree was to be *desired to make one wise*” (Gen 3:6). John summarized them even more famously: the *lust of the flesh*, the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life* (1Jn 2:16), or in just one word the verse before, “*the love of the world.*” And she ate. And our first parents fell in their temptation.

It wasn't just them. The moment Noah got off the ark, he fell into temptation. He grew a vineyard, got drunk, and let his son steal the birthright. When Abram was sojourning in Egypt, he fell into temptation. He lied about his wife to save his life. But he didn't learn his lesson, for he fell into the same temptation again with Abimelech king of Gerar. When his brothers saw their father's love for Joseph, they fell into temptation. They threw their brother in a pit, left him for dead, and lied to their father about it. When Moses saw two men fighting, he murdered one of them. When he heard the people grumbling, he hit the rock twice, falling into temptation. He led the people into the desert where they fell, many times, into temptation. And I don't have time to tell

you about **Gideon** and **Jephthah** and **Saul** and **Solomon** and **Ahab** and **Ananias** and **Sapphira** and **Paul** and **Peter** and so many others. Self-preservation, depression, envy, lust, greed, gluttony, sloth, pride, wrath, all become excuses as we fall into temptation. And while we do it, we sing hallelujah. And while *Christians* do it, we hate it and ourselves. What can be done for such a pathetic race of beings as us?

Luke 4:1-14—Context and Structure

In **Luke 4:1-14**, we move to the famous Temptation of Jesus by the Devil in the wilderness. It is a supernatural story that many do not understand and others simply want to ignore and pretend doesn't exist. It famously has **three temptations** followed by **three rebuttals** from the Lord. What is much less understood is the rich biblical-theological backdrop onto which Matthew and Luke paint their story.

It is very important that you notice the sequence of the following events. First, Jesus has just come out of the waters of *baptism* (**Luke 3:21**) where the voice of the **Father** gives his everlasting approval as the **Holy Spirit** of God descends upon him like a Dove (**22**). Then, we learn about his genealogy in a passage of Scripture that both begins and ends with

Jesus being called “*the Son of God*” (22, 38). Continuing into our passage, we now find our Lord, “*full of the Holy Spirit,*” returning from the Jordan where he was baptized and being led “*by the Spirit*” into “*the wilderness*” (4:1). While here, he will spend “*forty days*” “*being tempted by the devil*” (2).

I first came to an understanding of what I’m about to tell you around 2001 in my last semester of Seminary. It was quite unintentional on my part, but very intentional on God’s. I was in a class that I truly could not stand—a class on spiritual disciplines. To me, the entire thing was naval gazing, the exact opposite of how sanctification is supposed to work. But alas, I had to make the best of it. I decided to read a book by John Piper on *fasting* (a spiritual discipline). I wasn’t expecting what I read. But through that book, my eyes were opened for the first time to *the importance of something I wasn’t even looking for. Biblical theology.*

Biblical theology is *the discipline of the big picture, reading the Scripture with other Scripture, telling the whole story of the Bible as the Bible tells it.* Often, it will *trace a theme* or themes from Genesis to Revelation in order to better illuminate that story. In this case, because Luke tells us that Jesus

“ate nothing during those days” (2), Piper went to this passage that showed me something I’ll never forget.²

Let’s notice again several important things: baptism, led by the Spirit, into the wilderness, forty days, to be tempted. What’s so special about that? This is precisely the order of events after the Exodus from Egypt in the days of Moses. Moses and the people were led through the waters of the Red Sea (Ex 14). In 1 Corinthians 10:2, in a passage we will return to later, Paul calls this a baptism. Immediately after this, Moses led Israel into the wilderness of Shur (Ex 14:22). They had no water and they began to grumble. God gave them water, but he wasn’t happy. They then came to a place called Elim (אֵילִם) where there were seventy palm trees and twelve springs of water. Curiously, twelve is the number of the tribes of Israel and seventy (matching the number of descendants from Enoch to Jesus) is the number of nations and of the gods that were given to the nations. Even more curiously, those gods are often called *elim* (אֵילִם; cf. Ex 15:11). These are the same entities people often call fallen “angels,” and I will show you later that I believe the Devil is one of them. At any rate, this was their calm before the storm where

² See John Piper, *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), Ch. 2. The reality is, nearly every commentary recognizes this.

they are then immediately **tempted in the wilderness** of Sin (16:4),³ they **fail their temptation**, and they must spend the next **forty years** wandering in the desert (Num 14:33-34), “**a year for each day**” that the spies went into the land and came back with a bad report.

This is **the backdrop** behind the introductory stories of Jesus in Luke 3-4. Essentially, **Jesus is being set up** by Luke (and even more by Matthew⁴) as **the new Israel**. He stands now representing them, even as they represented the world. Israel was his son (Ex 4:22). Jesus is his Son. Israel is baptized. Jesus is baptized. Israel is led into the wilderness to be tempted for forty. Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted for forty. Jesus is reliving Israel’s life. The question will be, what will happen? Will he fall like all those who went before him?

Importantly, however, **it isn’t just Israel**. What we are going to see is that the three temptations are themselves the very same temptations that John tells us about. Moreover,

³ The Hebrew word used here is and is *nasab* often translated as “test.” The LXX uses *pairazō*. This is the same word used in Luke 4:2 (cf. Matt 4:1, 3) where it is translated “tempted.” It is also the same word used by James, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”

⁴ For example, in Matthew, like Moses, Jesus is under two when a king tries to kill him. He is led out of Egypt. He is baptized. He is tempted for forty in the wilderness. He then goes to a mountain where he gives the Law.

these are the same three temptations that Satan used to lure **Eve** when he told her that the fruit was “**good for food**” (lust of the flesh), “**pleasant to the eyes**” (lust of the eyes), and “**desirable to make one wise**” (pride of life) (**Gen 3:6**).⁵ In fact, they are the same three temptations that Israel also underwent in the wilderness.⁶ As such, just as Adam represented the human race, so now will Jesus.

Our passage is very easily identified by a **structure** that begins with “**And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned...**” (**Luke 4:1**) and ends, “**And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit...**” (14). Obviously, the work of the Spirit in his life is not a one-off at the baptism. And most certainly, this is not like that old hymn “Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us” that says, “**Lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert thou didst go.**”⁷ Jesus was most certainly *not* alone. Rather, **the Spirit continues guiding him** throughout his ministry in all that he does.⁸ This is going to have parallel in the church in the book of Acts, for the church is Christ’s body on earth after his ascension.

⁵ I first read this in **Craig Blomberg**, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 223.

⁶ For a great summary see **Nick Batzig**, “[How Does Jesus’ Temptation Link Him to Israel?](#)” *TableTalk* (Jan 2020).

⁷ “Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us,” **James Edmeston** (1821).

⁸ In the other accounts, Jesus is also with the wild beasts and the angels attend him.

Luke tells us that Jesus is led by the Spirit to be “*tempted by the devil*” (2). When the temptation is all over, he tells you, “*And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time*” (13). More parallels. This leaves us with a *three-temptation middle*. Curiously, the first and last temptation both have the devil asking, “*If you are the Son of God*” (3, 9), while the second temptation does not. This makes *the second temptation unique* and the center or bulls-eye of our passage. In it, we get the repeating word “*worship*” (7, 8), which telegraphs for you the heart of the matter, not about you per se, but about your Lord and what he did for you when you and all others fell short.

- A. “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned...” (4:1)
- B. “... being tempted by the devil” (2)
- C. “The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God...’” /reply with Scripture (3-4)
- D. “**Worship me, it will all be yours**” (5-7)
- D’. **Reply with Scripture: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve” (8)**
- C’. “If you are the Son of God...” plus two Scriptures; reply with Scripture (9-12)
- B’. “When the devil had ended every temptation...” (13)
- A’. “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit...” (14)⁹

⁹ Caleb T. Loudon, “[The chiastic Arrangement of the Lukan Temptation Narrative](#),” *Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 4.2 (Summer 2017): 129-54. See also [Christine Miller](#) and at [Biblical Chiasm Exchange](#) (this one goes two steps deeper and centers on what the devil will “give.” It is quite interesting).

Luke 4:1-2—Prologue

Luke introduces us to the story in **vv. 1-2**. “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.” We’ve already discussed the parallels with the nation of Israel after the exodus. So let’s think more about the build-up here.

This is **the Christian version of the greatest battles of the ages**. Hector vs. Achilles, David vs. Goliath; three-hundred Spartans vs. a quarter million Persians; Lee vs. Grant; Federer vs. Nadal. Lakers vs. Celtics. Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant. Except unlike these battles, the **stakes** are not sports, not land, but **souls**. The consequences are not losing a match or a game or a life, but losing eternity itself.

The first thing to see is that **Jesus is the one who enters the arena first**. Jesus is led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. The devil did not start this battle. Jesus did. In fact, Jesus is playing an away game. *The wilderness*, the place Adam was kicked after sinning in Eden. This is the home of the demons and of the dead. It was in the wilderness that the

goat to the fallen angel Azazel was sent on the Day of Atonement (**Lev 16:10**).¹⁰

Here I think it is important to look at who Jesus is facing. Luke calls him the devil. “Devil” simply means “slanderer.” Many times, the word is used of humans, because we can slander (cf. **1Tim 3:11; 2Tim 3:3; Tit 2:3**; etc.). Here, it is clearly a supernatural entity. Besides calling him “Devil,” Matthew also calls him Satan (*satana*; **Matt 4:10**) and the Tempter (*periazō*; **4:3**). “Satan: is like the other two words in that it really describes a function, not a name. Satan means “accuser” or “adversary.” Once in the Bible, even the Angel of the LORD is called *satan* (**Num 22:22**), because he stands as an adversary to Balaam. Who is this character in our story?

We haven’t seen him before in Luke, and we will see this title only one other time (**Luke 8:12**). Christian tradition has said that he is the entity that was present in the Garden, though the Bible only ever calls that creature “the serpent” (**Gen 3:1; 2Cor 11:3**). “Devil” is *not* his name! Frankly, neither is Satan. Those are functions. I recently heard a man talk about how the Bible never actually names him, like Voldemort, he is “he shall not be named.” *Perhaps*. A curious Jewish

¹⁰ See the discussion in Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 276-79.

tradition at the time of Jesus identifies him as someone I just mentioned. We read, “Who is the one who seduced Eve? ... Behind the tree was standing something like a dragon in form, but having hands and feet like a man’s on his back six wings on the right and six on the left ... *Azazel*” (ApocAb 23:1, 7, 11). Azazel in the wilderness to whom the scapegoat is sent.

A later (written) tradition (which is surely much earlier than it was written) identifies Azazel as *the Rider of the Serpent*. The same book gives him another name: *Samael*.¹¹ Samael means “Venom of God” and this creature is often said to be the “chief of the Satans.” Satans? *Plural*? Yes. We’ve just seen that this is a word that refers to a function. In those days, Samael was called Samael-Satan and was said to be a power over many angels and hosts (e.g. Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:2), the same idea we find in the NT about the figure we simply call Satan. Perhaps they are the same entity.

Importantly, for what we will see later, *Samael is called the Prince of Rome* by the Jews. Here we are using language found in Daniel 10 for the supernatural *Prince* of Persia and *Prince* of Greece (**Dan 10:13, 20**). These are *supernatural entities* that the Bible calls “sons of God” that were put over

¹¹ This is found in the Zohar. See **Andrei A. Orlov**, *Heavenly Priesthood in the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), 151-52 and the Appendix at the end of the sermon.

the nations (**Deut 32:8**). Given that the chief deity of Rome was **Jupiter** and that Jupiter is the Roman version of the Greek **Zeus**, it is safe to say that *they are all* the same creature. In fact, Revelation tells us that **Satan is Zeus**, as it tells the church at Pergamum that they dwell “**where Satan’s throne is**” (**Rev 2:12**). This refers to the so-called Throne of Zeus that was later taken to Berlin and you can go and visit it to this day. Think about the implications of this. Satan is real. Satan is Zeus. It puts Greek mythology in a little different light, doesn’t it? The point is, this is **an extremely ancient and powerful creature**, indeed, the very power that holds the whole world in darkness through the Roman Empire. And this is why Jesus calls him “**the Prince of this world**” (**John 12:31**).¹² And this sets the stage for **the showdown** that comes in the next verses.

Luke 4:3-4—First Temptation

At the end of **vs. 2** we learn that Jesus “**ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.**” This parallels Moses on the top of Mt. Sinai who also did not eat for **forty days** (**Ex 34:28**; Moses also drank nothing!), and

¹² In the John-Revelation parallel, this is the very center of John’s Gospel and it exactly mirrors Revelation 12’s Satan-Devil-Dragon-Serpent. See my sermon on Revelation 12: [Michael and the Dragon](#). I have a whole paper on these connections called [Satan, Zeus, Baal, and the Prince of Rome](#),” *Academia* (May 24, 2019).

this will help explain the responses that we get from Jesus in the temptations. One more point might be made here. When a person goes this long on only water, it is like the veil between the worlds grows thin. This may help explain how Jesus was able to be so “in tune” with the devil coming to him.

It is this hunger-fast that becomes the occasion for **the first temptation**. “The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread’” (Luke 4:3). The temptation makes sense, because **Jesus is hungry**. It also presupposes something. It presupposes that **Jesus is able** to turn stones into bread, otherwise, it is no temptation. Jesus is a prophet, and miracles are the works of prophets (think Elijah and Elisha). You could not tempt me with such a thing, because I do not have the power to carry it out. It is not a temptation if you do not possess the power to give in to it.¹³

At its root, this is a temptation of *the flesh*. **God does not grow hungry**. Only creatures with flesh get hungry. Jesus

¹³ Going Deeper: Some have said that at this point in time, **the devil did not know** if Jesus was the Son of God and so this temptation is to get him to prove it (see especially Origen). The idea is that he had *heard* that he was the Son of God, especially at the baptism, but he wasn’t sure himself, because God had hidden the incarnation from him. This is rather strange, because the host of heaven knew who Jesus was when they sang to the Shepherds. In my opinion, **the devil knows Jesus has this power**, so he tempts him to use it on the stone. So the question is not inquisitive, “*Are you really the Son of God, then prove it!*” It is rhetorical, “*You know you are the Son of God. Since you are hungry, use your power and eat.*” This is more subtle than “prove to me that you are really the Son of God,” as if in doing this, Jesus would be provoked and offended at such a suggestion” (per Origen and Ambrose below).

has been withholding his flesh from food and he not only wants it, he very desperately needs it! So this is a temptation to use his deity to overcome the weakness of the flesh. In a word, it's **cheating**! And if Jesus gives in, how could he possibly claim to be the son of man, for no man could do this. And **if Jesus is not a man**, well, we'll deal much more with as we continue.

The Church Fathers here have sometimes identified Jesus in this temptation as **the Second Adam**, which is fitting in more ways than one, especially if it is the same entity tempting on both occasions! Ambrose said, **“The first Adam was cast out of Paradise into the desert, that you may observe how the second Adam returned from the desert to Paradise”** (**Ambrose**, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* 4.7). He also notices how that temptation originally dealt with food. As we have seen, It is **“good for food”** (**Gen 3:6**). As Origen puts it, Satan tempted *the first Adam in the same way*, **“through gluttony”** (**Origen**, *Fragments on Luke* 96).¹⁴

But if Adam brought death through food, Jesus **brought life through not eating of the food**. Jesus replies, **“It is writ-**

¹⁴ The Fathers are in **Arthur A. Just**, *Luke*, vol. 3, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 3. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 74.

ten, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’” (Luke 4:4). It is interesting to think of this in relation to Jesus calling himself the Bread of Heaven (John 6:51) and Bread of Life (35) and the Tree of Life (Rev 2:7). When the Manna was given as bread to the people in the wilderness because they were hungry, Paul says, “they ate the same spiritual food” which was Christ (1Cor 10:3-4). It is just as interesting to think of how the devil calls him the “Son of God,” but Jesus replies by calling himself *a man*.¹⁵ “Yes, devil, I am a man. *Man* shall not live by bread alone.”

Truly, **Jesus is a man**. Yet, though he was truly hungry, the Devil didn’t understand who he was dealing with. Jesus’ response comes from **Deuteronomy 8:3**. In fact, all three of Jesus’ replies will come from Deut 6-8. That means the context of this section of the Bible is important.

These chapters are where we find **the stipulations of the covenant** that God made with Israel, his covenant partner.¹⁶ In it we find **the Shema**” Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your

¹⁵ As pointed out brilliantly by Ryken, 156.

¹⁶ See David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 283–284.

might” (Deut 6:4-5). We find all kinds of allusions back to the Exodus, including, importantly, how Israel put God to the test and how this new generation must not do that (6:16). Near the end of it, we read, “Like the nations that the LORD is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God” (8:20).

Thus, God is looking for a faithful covenant partner to carry out his will. A human partner, because the covenant was given to man. He originally gave that duty to Adam (Man), but he failed. Then he gave it to Israel, but he failed. Now, Jesus is being tempted with the same temptation. But Jesus Christ alone overcomes! In quoting the Scripture back to the devil, the devil gets a slap across the face from the very Person who inspired Moses to write in the first place. No matter how hungry he was, Jesus knew and believed that God would provide for him, and that he would do so even as he fought his way through this very temptation. As he gave the word that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God, the Lord Jesus found new life in that wilderness of hunger. He had passed the first temptation. No one else had ever gotten this far.

Luke 4:5-8—The Second Temptation

Luke's **second temptation** begins, “**And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time**” (**Luke 4:5**). It is important here to see that Luke begins this **not with a temporal clause** like Matthew, “then” (*tote*) and “again” (*palin*), but simply with the word “and” (*kai*). This is because **Luke has changed the order** of the second and third temptations from Matthew (see *Appendix 1: Harmony of the Temptation*).¹⁷ Why might Luke do this? It is because he is **framing the first and third temptations** with the “**son of God**” and thus centering his story on this second temptation. This becomes the center of his story.

The temptation is the **temptation of the eye**. The *lust of the eyes*. He “**showed him**.” Jesus got to **see** it. He beheld their glory, their riches, their power. Like Eve, he certainly had to realize that it was “**a delight to the eyes**” (**Gen 3:6**). Indeed, it is such a delight that **it has consumed and overtaken nearly all emperors** and kings and warlords and politicians and celebrities who have ever lived. From **Nebuchadnezzar's**, “Behold the glory of my kingdom” to **Alexander** to

¹⁷ An interesting discussion that does not take into account the literary devices is **Ian Paul**, “**Why are Jesus' Temptations in a Different Order in Luke?**” *Psephizo* (March 8, 2019).

Genghis Khan to Napoleon to Hitler to the World Economic Forum and Klaus Schwab, this lust has created more violence, more wickedness, more death and destruction than any other temptation.

In this temptation, Jesus is taken “up.” Matthew is more specific—“to a very high mountain” (Matt 4:8). Matthew uses this language only one other time, of the Mt. of Transfiguration (17:1). We have every reason to believe that this mountain was Mt. Hermon, and if Jesus is in the wilderness of Bashan, as I believe he is (see Appendix 2), then this is the same mountain, the highest mountain in Israel, x3. Hermon is also the most notorious mountain in Bible, if not the ANE, for it is the site where Azazel descended with Semiaza in the book of Enoch (we saw this book in the last chapter with the genealogy), to commit the great sin that brought about the Flood.¹⁸

Whether they climbed the mountain or not, we know that the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world “in a moment of time.” This lends itself to Jesus seeing this all in a vision, perhaps not unlike we might get from watching a movie. (I’ll leave the metaphysics of movie watching and

¹⁸ Semiaza is mentioned as the leader (1En 6:3) and Azazel is one (the tenth) of the others (7). In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Azazel is the main instigator (4Q180.1.6-8). See also [Legends of the Jews](#) 1:4.

seeing “visions” to you, but I think there are definitely links to one another). But whether a vision or a seeing it with his own eyes in body, unlike any other mountain in Israel, from the summit of Hermon you can see Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and almost Egypt. It makes for the perfect location.

But the real point of interest is what the devil says next. “To you *I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will*” (Luke 4:6). Wait a minute, *I thought God ruled the world*. Where could the devil get such authority and power? Until you ask this question and understand the answer, this temptation won’t even make sense. How can the devil tempt Jesus with a power he doesn’t even have? The answer is, he has it and he isn’t lying, otherwise, it isn’t a real temptation.

So *where would this come from?* My understanding is that this takes us back to *the prince of Rome* and Samael. You see, God gave to the nations a heavenly being to rule over each. This is precisely what Moses says. “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of *the sons of God*” (Deut

32:7-8). The sons of God are those fallen heavenly beings in Genesis 6, like Azazel. Elsewhere, they are called the “host of heaven” (whom we sing about in the Doxology, “Praise him above you heavenly host”¹⁹) Moses says, “Beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, *all the host of heaven*, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, those that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven” (Deut 4:19).

Moses tells us that these gods were allotted to the nations, but Israel “went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom *he had not allotted to them*” (Deut 29:26). Plato knew about this and virtually repeats Moses saying this. “In the days of old *the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment ... Hephaestus and Athena ... took for their joint portion this land [Greece] ... Poseidon took for his allotment the island of Atlantis*” (Plato, *Critias* 109c, 113c). Whether you believe him or not, the point is, and this has been made by Church Fathers and Puritans, this uncanny similarity demonstrates that Plato somehow (probably through his ancestor Solon)

¹⁹ “You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you” (Neh 9:6); “Worship him, all you gods!” (Ps 97:7). “Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!” (Ps 148:2).

came into contact with the Jews and the books of Moses.²⁰
This is God's worldview, not theirs.

The Jews called them “the seventy angels, the *princes of the nations*” (TgJon Dt 32:8). This is language that comes out of Daniel 10 with the Prince of Persia and the Prince of Greece. These were entities that were fighting against Michael and Gabriel, preventing him from getting to Daniel with his message (**Dan 10:13**). They are heavenly beings, fallen angels, *elohim*, created lesser gods, all the same thing.

The way I understand this is a lot like the way I understand the machinations of the nations in the old world. Once, it was the *prince of Egypt* who ruled all. Then it was the *prince of Assyria*, then *Babylon*, then *Persia*, then *Greece*, now *Rome*. As on earth, so in heaven. The Roman Empire completely conquered the known world. As such, both the Emperor (Augustus and Tiberias) and their heavenly counterpart, are said to rule the world. If the creature tempting Jesus is really the prince of Rome, then this makes perfect sense. He was a truly powerful entity that had accumulated vast amounts of power and land through his proxy, the ruler of Rome.²¹

²⁰ For example, **Peter Allix**, *The Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church Against the Unitarians*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), 2; **Justin Martyr**, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 25).

²¹ A good discussion of this is **Timothy Alberino**, *Birthright: The Coming Posthuman Apocalypse and the Usurpation of Adam's Dominion on Planet Earth* (Bozeman, MT: Alberino Publishing, 2020), ch. 4. Tim talks about this in *Blurry Creatures* podcast, ep. 67, “Satan's Domain” (in the second half of the show).

But you must understand something here. It isn't like these princes somehow depose the Most High of his Sovereign rule over the earth. No. Instead, **God is the great Suzerain King of all**, but who rules through vassal servants, both human and angelic in nature. If they step out of line, they are in trouble. This is the whole point of God making a covenant with Adam and giving him dominion over the earth. It isn't that God is somehow no longer the Most High, but rather, he gives proximate rule and authority to whom he chooses. Adam blew it and paid with his life.

So the devil is now telling Jesus that he will give this to him on one small condition. **"If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours"** (**Luke 4:7**). *Worship*. The **chief end of man**. All the devil wants is worship, and he will give to Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. It is a promise he still holds out to humans, and many have taken him up on his offer and they have become very powerful in the world of men. If you don't think there is real power in Satanism, you haven't been paying attentions these last three years. Try last week's Grammys for starters. It was **pure Luciferianism** held on a public stage before the eyes of everyone by our so-called celebrity elites.

This is a truly malicious yet subtle temptation. The Son of God as man (in line with **Psalm 8**) was himself promised that he would be given the nations, in a series of prophecies best summarized in Psalm 2, “The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession’” (**Ps 2:7-8**).²² But the promise would only come *through suffering* (**Ps 22; Isa 53**; etc.). Jesus knew that he had to fix his eyes *on the cross*, not on immediate glory that bypassed it. Timothy Alberino hits the nail on the head when he asks, “Could he not avoid the suffering by bending his knee to Satan, and so gain the prize that rightfully belonged to him? Yes. But this would amount to rule without redemption. He had not yet come to rule over the sons of Adam but to redeem them ... Christ would indeed rule the nations, but not at the pleasure of the fallen cherub prince.”²³ I need to make one last point here, this rule would come only to a man. That’s why Jesus must be both **son of God** and **son of man**.

²² The Son had already taken Israel as his possession in the next verse of Deuteronomy (32:9). Now he is being promised that he will inherit all the nations, in line with the promise given to Abraham and his Seed (Gen 17:4; cf. 12:7; Gal 3:16). Finally, in Psalm 82:8, after God judges the sons of God for their evil rule of the nations, the promise goes out, “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!”

²³ Alberino, *ibid*.

So Jesus responds again, “It is written, ‘You shall *worship* the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve’” (Luke 4:8). Again, this comes from Deuteronomy, this time 6:13. It is worth pointing out the next verse in Deuteronomy. “You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you” (Deut 6:14). Jesus holds fast to the First Commandment even though it means he must undergo an ordeal the likes of which no mortal can ever truly comprehend. He does it while he faces one of those very entities that Deuteronomy warns him about.

In vv. 7-8 you need to see how worship is repeated twice. “Worship me,” the devil says. “You shall worship the Lord your God,” Jesus responds. This is the central thrust of our entire passage and it is why Luke has organized the temptations as he has. We will return to this in a moment, but first, we must go to the last temptation.

Luke 4:9-12—The Third Temptation

Jesus has now passed the second test. So, for a third time we read, “And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here’” (Luke 4:9). Was

this in a vision? Was Jesus actually there, on top of the Temple? I don't have a problem with either. The point is, we have now moved from prophets and miracles to Kings and nations to priests and temples. Prophet, king, priest, the three offices of Christ are put to the test. This third is the climactic temptation, and Luke, as we have seen, is very interested in Jesus as our Great High Priest.

What is behind this temptation? Several things. First, this is a spectacular miracle that the devil is promising God (rather than Jesus) will perform. Jesus is either on the roof over the sanctuary, which is itself quite high, or he is at the royal portico that soared five hundred feet above the Kidron Valley. “From that dizzy height he challenged Jesus to throw himself on God's mercy. If Jesus jumped, then surely his Father would save him.”²⁴ And thus, the temptation here is testing the faithfulness of God.

But unlike the other two temptations, the devil had learned something. Jesus was always quoting back the Scripture to him. Jesus lived by the word of God. It was his bread. Has there ever been a greater evidence for *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture Alone, than this? Jesus didn't come back with his

²⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 160.

own words, even though the Scripture is his words! He didn't go using philosophy or psychology or science or great godly authors of the day. He went to God's word.

So the devil would too! He will now quote the Scripture back to Jesus. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Not just once, but twice. “For it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’” (Luke 4:10-11).

These are, of course, interesting verses in and of themselves. But they become infinitely more so when you understand the context from which they arise. The devil is quoting Psalm 91, first vs. 11 and then vs. 12. What's so interesting about that?

In my book *Giants*, this is the Scripture I end with. This is because this Psalm is perhaps the most supernaturally supercharged psalm in the Psalter. It begins with El Shaddai (Ps 91:1), “God of the Mountain” or “God of the Wilderness,” both ideas fitting to the temptation. It then talks about God's protection (not that you would know it from many English translation) against night demons, the vampiric Lilith (5), ghosts, demons (6), and lion-headed demons and

dragons (13).²⁵ To put this another way, Satan couldn't have gone to a better passage to prove that God would protect Jesus at that very moment, for Satan is the evil supernatural being personified. Everything about that Psalm since days past counting has been to help God's people pray prayers to protect themselves from ... *him!* To put that yet another way, Satan is *not* taking this out of context. Now *that* is truly cunning.

So the temptation thus becomes, “*God's word tells you that the Father will protect his people from the likes of me. How much more if you are his Beloved Son? So throw yourself down and prove the word of God true!*” Amazingly, after this is all over, Matthew tells us that the angels did come and attend to him (Matt 4:11). But Luke doesn't mention it, perhaps to highlight the incredible nature of Jesus' response. It's as if Luke is saying that Jesus didn't need the Psalm to be proven true to withstand this onslaught.

The Lord gets to the point by quoting a third passage from Deuteronomy, this time vs. 6:16, just two verses after the previous quotation. “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Luke 4:12). The rest of that verse says, “...

²⁵ See Douglas Van Dorn, *Giants: Sons of the gods Tenth Anniversary Edition Revised and Expanded* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2023).

as you tested him as Massah” (Deut 6:16). This was the place of quarreling, where “they tested the LORD by saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’” (Ex 17:8).

Eve saw that the fruit would make her wise ... *the pride of life*. Jesus could call down his Father to save him; that’s the kind of power he has as the Son of God. But that would be the most arrogant of things to do. *The pride of life*. Jesus would not budge an inch, even in that weakened and most susceptible of conditions that he was in. Truly, as Hebrews says, “He was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). It says this in the context of our high priest who sympathizes with us in our weakness. That this is the context of the temple in which this temptation takes place. Jesus has now withstood the pride of life. He has faced and fought and won all the temptations, at great cost.

Luke 4:13-14—The Prowling Lion and How We Shall Then Live

Jesus endured to the end. He had won the greatest battle for the ages up to that point (until the cross). He alone stood where all others had fallen. He withstood the onslaught of

all the temptations that men endure. He did it with the Holy Spirit. He did it with God's word. He did it as a man. He did it as the Son of God who had the power to do what Satan said.

So Luke concludes, “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). The devil leaves, but will come back later. Though Luke does not call him this (Matthew does), it reminds me of the movings of the *satan* in Job 1 and 2. “The LORD said to Satan, ‘From where have you come?’ Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it’” (Job 1:7). And it reminds me of Peter. “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1Pet 5:8).

The devil is always on the move. His desire to see humanity stumble into hell knows no bounds, nor his scheming no limits of the temptations that we can face. He hates our race, for God has given to *us* dominion of this planet, and not himself. Each of us has fallen and continue to fall into temptation. “We all stumble in many ways” James says (Jam 3:2), even after he tells us to withstand temptation. He knows the truth, and the good news is not in you looking to

yourself as a Christian to overcome. For the moment you do this, that's the moment you fall all over again in your pride.

The good news is that *Jesus overcame these temptations for us*. Indeed, for *me*. As Origen says, “*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, is led into the desert for a purpose, in order to challenge the devil. If he had not fought, he would not have conquered him for me.*” This story is about Jesus. *Jesus obeyed and so Jesus is glorified*. Jesus obeyed and so I may live. When I fall short, Jesus did not. When I sin and stumble in my imperfect flesh, the Lord Jesus knows of my temptation, but rather than judge me because I didn't do what he did, *he advocates for me* before the throne of heaven as my Great High Priest so that God will not look upon me as a sinner, but as one forgiven of my sins. For this is why Christ came. Not to get the glory from the devil giving him the kingdoms of the world, but to get the glory from his Father, having done all things that were necessary to accomplish my redemption through his ultimate suffering and death on a wooden tree, the cross, my Tree of Life.

If you have not turned to Christ, then you must run as fast as you can into his arms, trusting in his perfect life that has obeyed the law and did not fall into temptations. Do not

look on him as some terrible mean deity, but as one who underwent such temptations at such great cost to himself so that you might have forgiveness of your own sins when you have fallen into the same.

When you do this, you worship him. “Worship the Lord your God.” Trusting in him is true worship. Not trusting in him, even if you go to church and sing and go through the motions is hypocrisy. It is anti-worship; singing “Hallelujah” to your sin, worshiping your own heart or worse. The heart of all temptation is worship. Who will you worship? You must worship God. You must start *and end* here. For you will fall again, and when you do, your only hope continues to ever be Jesus Christ who did not fall and who offers himself to you though you do. So worship him ongoingly. Worship him as you are tempted, and don’t give in. If you fall, get up, then fall on your knees and worship him again. Worship him and the Triune God for upholding Christ, for they are worthy of all praise and honor for this great salvation that they undertook for your salvation.

Only then can you understand this last piece. The Apostle Paul is very clearly thinking about all of this in 1 Corinthians 10. In that passage, as we have seen, the people of Israel were baptized in the Sea (1Cor 10:1-2). They are and

drank the same **spiritual food and drink, which is Christ** (3-4). But with most of them, God was not pleased and they were overthrown in the *wilderness* (5).

He says, “**These things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did**” (6). Therefore, we are **not to be idolaters** as they were (7). We are **not to indulge in sexual immorality** as they did (8). We must **not put Christ to the test** ... as they did (9)! Our sinning is the reliving of the Temptation of Jesus all over again. He underwent this for you so that you might stand, in him.

Only when you see that **it is never about you** and only about God’s power and grace in you can you then heed the words, “**Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry**” (14). Then you will never again say Hallelujah when you fall into temptation. Your Praising God will be reserved only for saving you through Christ’s overcoming all temptations that you might be saved.

Appendix 1: Harmony of the Temptation

.	Mark 1:12-13	Matthew 4:1-11	Luke 4:1-13
I n t r o	12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts...	1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.	1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.
T # 1	x	3 The tempter came and said to him, “ <i>If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.</i> ” 4 But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” (cf. Deut 8:3cd)	3 The devil said to him, “ <i>If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.</i> ” 4 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’ ” (cf. Deut 8:3c)
T e m p t # 2	x	5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple , 6 saying to him, “ <i>If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’</i> ” (cf. Ps 91:11-12) 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘ Do not put the Lord your God to the test. ’ ” (cf. Deut 6:16)	5 And the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world . 6 And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me , it will all be yours.” 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘ Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him. ’ ” (cf. Deut 6:13)
T e m p t # 3	x	8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me. ” 10 Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘ Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him. ’ ” (cf. Deut 6:13)	9 And the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple , saying to him, “ <i>If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here</i> , 10 for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ 11 and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’ ” (cf. Ps 91:11-12) 12 Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘ Do not put the Lord your God to the test. ’ ” (cf. Deut 6:16)
E n d	13d – and the angels waited on him.	11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.	13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him <i>until an opportune time</i> .

Appendix 2: The Wilderness of Temptation

Synopsis

In this Appendix, I want to make a case for a specific location for the wilderness in which Jesus was baptized. I make this case using the language of the Gospels combined with the idea of sacred geography which Jesus also incorporates in his ministry at the other end, especially at the Transfiguration.

Geography of John's Baptism

Many scholars don't attempt a guess at where Jesus might have gone during his temptation. Heiser suggests it is "most likely the wilderness of Judea²⁶ based on Matthew 3:1, "In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea." Today, Mt. Quarantine (Jebel Quruntul), just west of Jericho on the edge of this wilderness, is the traditional site of the temptation. However, this tradition only goes back to the fourth century. Two points about this can be made about this "wilderness of Judea."



First, this is the region Matthew tells us John was doing his *baptism* in. It does not say that this was the wilderness Jesus went to, though clearly that is possible. Now, while most will say that this



Judean wilderness is south of Jerusalem, this is not taking into account the Roman province of Judea. This province is not identical to the old kingdom of Judah. Rather, it incorporated the regions of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea making for a "much larger territory"²⁷ (see map left). This territory could take you within twenty miles from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee.

Second, Luke tells us that John was baptizing in "all the region around the Jordan" (Luke 3:3). This is important, because it means that John was baptizing all the way up to the Galilee, and perhaps even north of it. This in turn has several important points of contact with Luke's geography at this point in the book.

First, let's give the big picture of this. Luke-Acts has been understood by many scholars to be framed as a large chiasm based on geography. Luke begins in the broad kingdom of the Roman Empire, narrows down to Galilee, then Samaria, Judea (that is old Judah), then Jerusalem, while Acts begins in Jerusalem, move outward to Judah, Samaria, and the Roman Empire. So geography is obviously important to Luke.

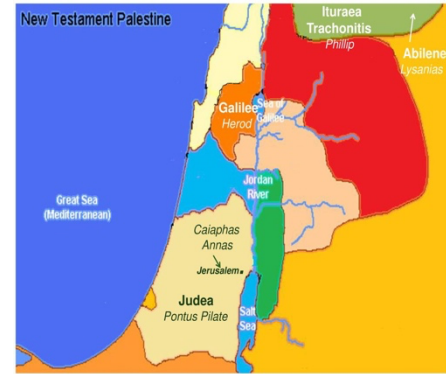
- A. Birth of Jesus in Context of Roman Rule (Luke 1-2)
- B. Jesus in Galilee (Luke 3:1-9:50)
- C. Jesus in Samaria and Judea (Luke 9:51-19:40)
- D. Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-24:49)

²⁶ Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 277.

²⁷ "Judaea (Roman Province)," Wiki, LA 2-7-23, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaea_\(Roman_province\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaea_(Roman_province)).

- E. Ascension (Luke 24:50-51)
- E'. Ascension (Acts 1:1-11)
- D'. Jerusalem (Acts 1:12-8:1a)
- C'. Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:b-11:18)
- B'. The Gentile world (Acts 11:19-28:10)
- A'. Rome (Acts 28:11-53)²⁸

The Galilean ministry of Jesus technically begins in Luke 4:15. However, Luke has said a couple things previous to this that point to the region of Jesus' baptism as being near Galilee, rather than south near Jerusalem. First, he brought the parents back to Nazareth at the end of ch. 2 (2:51). Second, he begins ch. 3 by mentioning seven names: Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, his brother Philip, Lysanias, and the priests Annas and Caiaphas. Of these, only Herod and Philip (without the name) appears again anywhere nearby, in vs. 19. As such, because Herod is tetrarch of Galilee and Philip is tetrarch of Ituraea, and because the parents were back in Galilee, the context lends itself much better to a Galilean rather than south Judean proximity (see map).



This is further enhanced by John's Gospel, which is the only one to name the place "Bethany" as the sight of Jesus' baptism. "These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing" (John 1:28). Scholars have attempted to identify this "Bethany" as a village, probably somewhere east of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea (see first map). However, it makes much more sense that this "Bethany" is not a village, but a region—the region of Batania, known as Bashan in the OT (Bathan [btm], the place of the serpent, as understood by the Phoenicians and Romans).²⁹ This is exactly the geography Luke is pointing to, in fact, John the Baptist calls those coming to him "a brood of vipers," harkening to the word Bashan (Luke 3:7).

Furthermore, in John's Gospel, the day after Jesus' baptism (35), Jesus called two of John's disciples, one of whom was Andrew, the brother of Peter (40). We know that they were from Bethsaida on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee (John 1:44; see first map). The next day, Jesus called Philip to be a disciple. Philip is also from Bethsaida (44). A northern location for the baptism makes good sense of the calling in such close temporal proximity to the baptism.

In both Matthew and Luke, the temptation follows as the very next story after the baptism. While John's Gospel seems to allow for a bit of time in between (at least a week), we know that Jesus spent that time in Galilee. Furthermore, as soon as Jesus' temptation is finished, the next place we see him is back in Nazareth in Matthew (Matt 4:12) where he then head to Galilee, or Galilee in Luke, where he then goes to Nazareth. This further seems to indicate that the wilderness would have been east of Nazareth and Galilee, which is the region of Bashan. There is no indication in any of this that Jesus was going back and forth between southern Judea and Galilee.

Is it possible to harmonize this with Matthew's "wilderness of Judea?" Yes. As mentioned previously, the term Judea, while usually meaning roughly that area that paralleled the OT region of Judah, was viewed by the Romans as a much larger region. A good case study of this is Luke 4:44 which tells us that Jesus was preaching in the synagogues of *Judea*. However, there is a textual variant that reads, "*Galilee*." Which is it? Clearly, "Judea" is the harder reading, since Jesus is only in Galilee throughout this part of Luke, so it is probably original. While it seems clear that a copiest tried to

²⁸ This is my modification of [Kenneth R. Wolfe](#), "The Chiastic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship" *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 30 (Spring, 1980): 60-71, combining it with the one we've seen in Blomberg.

²⁹ See [Rainer Riesner](#), "Bethany Beyond the Jordan (John 1:28) Topography, Theology and History in the Fourth Gospel," *Tyndale Bulletin* 38 (1987): 29-63.

harmonize this with Matt 4:23 and Mark 1:39 by changing Luke's (or some previous copiest's) "mistake," it is likely that Luke uses "Judea" in the Roman sense to include "Palestine as a whole, including Galilee."³⁰ Therefore, Luke is not making a mistake. If Matthew uses the term the same way, everything works beautifully.

"Wilderness"

The common translation of the place Jesus went is "wilderness." However, a few translations say "desert." It is very clear that the majority of Bashan is not a desert, though, perhaps some of its most southernly land could be considered that. Rather, it is usually described as pastureland (Joshua 21:27). So we need to investigate the meaning of *erēmos*, the Greek word used here.

The LXX uses *erēmos* to render 241 of the total 345 occurrences of Heb. *midbār*, desert (which also means a steppe, grassland, e.g. Gen. 37:22).³¹ Thus, the word can mean desert. However, the word "has not been clarified with precision."³² Its etymology suggests *era*, *ra*, *ar*, to separate. Hence, the word often has as a definition, "desolate, lonely, solitary" (*LSJ*). *BDAG* has "Isolated, desolate, deserted, desert, grassland, wilderness." So we can see that it does not have to be a desert. In fact, it can be grasslands or pasturelands. One dictionary says, "Throughout the NT ἐρημία and ἔρημος focus primarily upon the lack of population rather than upon sparse vegetation."³³ So long as the place is solitary, it works. We see this when Jesus, curiously, left the boat in Galilee and "went to a *lonely place* by himself" (Matt 14:13 ESV). Therefore, Bashan does in fact fit this definition, and rather quite well actually. It is a sparse, deserted place if ever there was one.

Finally, it is important to note here that, generally speaking, Bashan is included as "wilderness" in the OT. Remember that Israel was in the wilderness for forty years. This includes, of necessity, the days when they defeated the giant Og, whose territory was Bashan. Thus Nehemiah says, "Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness [*erēmos*], and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. And you gave them kingdoms and peoples and allotted to them every corner. So they took possession of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon and the land of Og king of Bashan. (Neh 9:21-22). This occurred during their days in the wilderness. Thus, some have called it "the wilderness of Bashan"—"Among the peoples holding the land before them were the Rephaim, who had sixty strong towns in what is now the wilderness of Bashan; there were also the Emim, the Zamzummim, and the Anakim."³⁴

The Temptation

³⁰ Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 114. Also citing Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, pp. 557-58; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 198-9; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, p. 216.

³¹ O. Böcher, "Wilderness, Desert, Lay Waste, Mountain, Plain," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1004.

³² O. Böcher, "Wilderness, Desert, Lay Waste, Mountain, Plain," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1004.

NT New Testament

³³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 16.

³⁴ Charles Dudley Warner, "IX.—Along The Syrian Coast," in *The Levant Twenty Fifth Impression* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1876),

Jesus' temptation is a reenacting of the forty years of Israel in the wilderness. Many scholars have understood that both Matthew and Luke frame their story in such a way that Jesus becomes the new Moses and new Israel (boys under two killed, flees to Egypt, returns from Egypt, baptized [Red Sea/Jordan], led into the wilderness to be tempted, goes up on a high mountain and teaches the law, etc.). If Nehemiah is allowed into this mix, then would not the defeating of the devil, ala the defeating of the giant offspring Og, be allowed into that mix? For it is precisely because the spies went into the land and were terrified of the giant inhabitants that they were not allowed to enter and had to wander for forty years (see Num 13; 14:33). Bashan is the epicenter of the giant's land-holdings. And, it is the center of serpent worship, as the serpent mound, the Wheel of Rephaim, and the largest dolman field in the world in its cult for the dead all indicate.



As we move into the temptation, we see that the devil begins his temptation by calling Jesus the “Son of God” and tempting him with the flesh. Specifically, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread” (Luke 3:3). “Stone” becomes the grounding of both this first and the third temptations. When you look at nearly any place in the wilderness of Judea, you get the same impression—a vast wasteland of rolling hills and that’s about it. It is certainly possible, especially reading Matthew, that “these stones” (Matthew uses the plural) could be

just any field of stones on the ground.

Luke reads the singular: This stone. What stone? If we were in Bashan, perhaps it would be the central tumulus as the Wheel of Giants, for instance (this also works for “these stones”), or perhaps the great capstone at the Shamir dolman field weighing 50 tons.³⁵ Obviously, that would be overkill, and why would Jesus be roaming around the dolman fields (places of death)? But maybe that’s just the point? Turn death into life for yourself. The point is, this area is renown for its megalithic stones, while there’s no counterpart to this in the wilderness of Judea.



The “Son of God” also has connection to something we will see later, in the previous genealogy at the end of Luke 3. This section both begins (vs. 22) and ends (38) with Jesus as the “Son of God.” In between we find a list of 77 names. These names can be divided into seven (Adam to Enoch) and seventy (Enoch to Jesus). In the book of Enoch (and Jude), Enoch is called the “seventh from Adam” (1En 60:8; Jude 14). In this same verse, Jude actually quotes from 1En 1:9 and alludes to that same book positively many more times.³⁶

In 1 Enoch 10:12, there is a prophecy about the fallen watchers who are judged and locked up in Tartarus for “seventy generations,” after which they will receive their final judgment. Scholars have

³⁵ “The Shamir Dolmen Field in Israel,” *Novo Scriptorium*, <https://novoscriptorium.com/2019/11/17/the-shamir-dolmen-field-in-israel/>.

³⁶ George W. E. Nickelsburg and Klaus Baltzer, *1 Enoch : A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2001), 83-86; 123-24. For a chart of this see Douglas Van Dorn, *Giants: Sons of the gods Tenth Anniversary Edition Revised and Expanded* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2023), 261.

argued that Luke in this genealogy is saying that the time for this judgment has now come.³⁷ Importantly, this includes the fallen angel Azazel (1En 10:4) whom we will see later.

The second temptation has the devil taking Jesus up and showing him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time (Luke 4:5). Matthew is a little more specific. “The devil took him to a very high mountain” (Matt 4:8). What high mountain? There is no question that the traditional mountain is not a “very high mountain.” It isn’t even the highest mountain around it. And while it does have a great view of the Jordan Valley, this hardly gives one a view of *all the kingdoms of the world*. Even more, this mountain is right next to Jericho, perhaps the oldest continually occupied city in the world. This makes it difficult to call it part of the “wilderness.”

It can be noted that Matthew refers also the Mt. of Transfiguration as “a very high mountain.” He uses this language only one other time—of the Mt. of Transfiguration. Many scholars have identified this mountain as Mt. Hermon,³⁸ as Jesus has just been at Caesarea Philippi at its base. John Beck notes, “Because Matthew uses the phrase ‘high mountain’ in referring both to the mountain of temptation and the mountain of transfiguration, we may presume that he is referring to the same place, Mount Hermon.”³⁹ Importantly, in both places, there is a link to the devil. Jesus commands, “Away from me, Satan!” (Matt 4:10). Immediately following the transfiguration, Jesus sharply criticizes Peter: “Get behind me, Satan” (Matt 16:23).⁴⁰ The two stories are thus intertwined in several ways.

Beck also explains something else about this mountain.

We know this temptation happened [at Mt. Hermon], even though Matthew makes the geographical connection a little harder to see. He is not in the habit of providing proper names for mountains, only descriptions . . . There are many mountains in the Promised Land, but only one fits that description [showed him all the kingdoms of the world].

To illustrate how Mount Hermon stands out, consider this: Mount Meron, the second-highest mountain in the region, rises 3,963 feet in elevation. But that is a distant second to Mount Hermon, soaring to an elevation of 9,232 feet. Just as important is the fact that Mount Hermon is not a single peak but a sprawling ridge covering more than 350 square miles and dominating the horizon. The ‘very high mountain’ of Matthew must be unique from other mountains in this land.”⁴¹

While Luke shows us that this was clearly a vision that was seen in an instant, are we to assume that he really only went to this mountain in his mind? Perhaps.⁴² However, if he really went there, it makes much more sense that he was already in the region. Why presume Jesus had to travel all that extra distance from south Judea up the most northern recesses of Israel, when he was like already in that region, because this was the “wilderness?”

This second temptation is also important because in it, the devil says he will give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world for they have “been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will” (Luke 4:6). In my mind, this necessitates that the devil is the Prince of Rome. To understand this, we have

³⁷ See Isaac W. Oliver, “Lukan Eschatology and Genealogy in Light of Enochic Tradition,” *Academia* (Seventh Enoch Seminar, Camaldoli, Italy, 2013), https://www.academia.edu/40703897/Lukan_Eschatology_and_Genealogy_in_Light_of_Enochic_Tradition; Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 315–64.

³⁸ Cf. Heiser, 285–86.

³⁹ John A. Beck, *Discovery House Bible Atlas* (Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2015), “Jesus in Galilee.”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ John A. Beck, *Along the Road: How Jesus Used Geography to Tell God’s Story* (Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2018), “Ch. 17: Walking with Jesus to the Decapolis.”

⁴² I grant that the third (Luke) temptation sees Jesus in Jerusalem, so my question here could apply in reverse to this temptation. However, did Jesus really climb to the top of the Temple? How was he not seen? It is possible that both were visions, but also possible that only one was.

to know that in those days, many identified the prince of Rome (the supernatural prince, like the prince of Persia and prince of Greece (Dan 10:13, 20), as a figure named Samael.⁴³

Satan, the Devil, Samael, and Azazel

Samael means “venom of God.” He is often called the “chief of the Satans.”⁴⁴ In fact, in Greek, Satanael is the equivalent of Samael.⁴⁵ In the Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:2 it tells us that Manasseh abandoned the service of the LORD and served “Satan, and his angels, and his powers.” But later in the same book this becomes “Sammael and his hosts.” There is more than one *satan*; in fact the Angel of the Lord is once called “satan” (Num 22:22). Satan is technically function, not a name. Satan means “adversary” or “accuser.” Matthew calls the figure in the wilderness with Jesus Satan (*satana*; Matt 4:10), the Tempter (*periazō*; 4:3), and the devil (*diabolis*; 4:1, 5, 8, 11). Devil means “slanderer,” but sometimes translates the Hebrew word *śātān*.

This Sammael is considered the prince of Rome.

SAMAEL AS PRINCE OF ROME. We have already seen instances where the belief in the heavenly patrons of the Gentiles is combined with the belief in Satan as the arch-fiend. Satan-Samael thus becomes the patron angel of Edom, that is, Rome.⁴⁶ Just as the Armilus legend suggests that the Roman power is the Antichrist, so this other fusion of originally independent myths makes Rome the earthly representative of all the powers of evil, and her *sar* [prince] their heavenly embodiment.⁴⁷

This is important, because in the heaven-earth mirror that makes us the relationship between the sons of God over the nations and the nations themselves, at this time in world history, Rome is king. As such, the prince of Rome would have all the nations of the world to give to whomever he wanted. This could not be said of the prince of Persia or Greece.

Curiously, in a few places, Samael is identified as Azazel. The Zohar 1.35b calls Samael/Satan the “rider” of the serpent: “R. Isaac said: ‘This is the evil tempter.’ R. Judah said that it means literally a serpent. They consulted R. Simeon, and he said to them: ‘Both are correct. It was Samael, and he appeared on a serpent, for the ideal form of the serpent is the Satan. We have learnt that at that moment

⁴³ On this and what follows see the references in Douglas Van Dorn, “Satan, Zeus, Baal, and the Prince of Rome,” *Academia* (May 24, 2019), https://www.academia.edu/39252068/Satan_Zeus_Baal_and_the_Prince_of_Rome.

⁴⁴ Cf. Deut. R. 11:9; Jellinek, “B. H.” 1:125. As Ginzberg says, “On the twenty angels enumerated in Hekalot 175, (Sammael, the head of all the Satans, is described as ‘the greatest of all the angels’; ... comp., however, *Seder Rubot*, 179 [also 3En 26:12], where Satan is distinguished from Sammael, ‘the prince of Rome’; see also DR 11.9, which reads: Sammael, the head of all the Satans.” Louis Ginzberg, Henrietta Szold, and Paul Radin, *Legends of the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 130, n. 61.

⁴⁵ “The name Satanael in the Slavonic is probably secondary to the name Samael in the Greek version. Samael became a centralizing figure in the later rabbinic literature, incorporating the functions of several angels. Yet Diabolos, or Satan, functioned in the same manner among Christians, and we find little record of Samael in Christian literature. The first four archangels in the two lists are each paralleled in early Jewish and Christian sources (see n. to 4:7[S]). The name Samael is very common as the chief of evil angels in rabbinic literature and some apocryphal works.” H. E. JR. Gaylord, “3 Baruch: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 658.

⁴⁶ How does “Edom” become identified with “Rome?” First, Samael was said by some to have been the patron angel of Esau, brother of Jacob (Bamberger, 139). From here Mark Reasoner explains, “While Jews of the first century might think of Idumaeans [Edomites] such as the Herod family as Esau or Edom, from at least the second century CE on, they also called the Roman Empire ‘Edom,’ the nation descended from Esau, because of Isaac’s words to Esau in Gen 27:40: ‘By your sword you shall live.’ ... In the rabbinic literature of the Tannaitic period, Esau or Edom is routinely used to designate Rome ... The connection between Edom, who lives by the sword, and Rome in Jewish thinking is significant for readers of the New Testament because Paul describes the sword as a threat in his Letter to the Romans (Rom 8:35; 13:4).” Mark Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 179-80.

⁴⁷ Bernard J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels: Soldiers of Satan’s Realm* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 139.

Samael came down from heaven riding on this serpent, and all creatures saw his form and fled before him.” But the same book depicts Azazel as the “rider” of the serpent.

Now observe a deep and holy mystery of faith, the symbolism of the male principle and the female principle of the universe. In the former are comprised all holinesses and objects of faith, and all life, all freedom, all goodness, all illuminations emerge from thence; all blessings, all benevolent dews, all graces and kindnesses – all these are generated from that side, which is called the South. Contrariwise, from the side of the North there issue a variety of grades, extending downwards, to the world below. This is the region of the dross of gold, which comes from the side of impurity and loathsomeness and which forms a link between the upper and nether regions; and there is the line where the male and female principles join, forming together the rider on the serpent, and symbolized by Azazel. (The Zohar 1.152b–153a)⁴⁸

This Azazel is said in the Apocalypse of Abraham to be the creature that tempted Eve in the Garden (ApocAb 23).

Azazel shows up in the OT on the Day of Atonement, in the ritual where a “scapegoat” is sent “to Azazel” (Lev 16:8,10) ... in the wilderness! Curiously, Azazel’s main worship was centered at the foot of Mt. Hermon in Banias.⁴⁹ This again puts us in Bashan, the wilderness of the serpent.

The third temptation includes two quotations of Scripture used by the Devil (Luke 4:10, 11). Twice he cites Psalm 91, one of the most supernaturally supercharged texts in the entire Bible. It begins with El Shaddai (Ps 91:1), “God of the Mountain” or “God of the Wilderness,” both ideas fitting to this temptation. It talks God’s protection against night demons, the Lilith (5), ghosts, demons (6), and lion-headed demons and dragons (13). Angels (11) also will come to aid. This last piece is precisely what happens after the temptation (Matt 4:11), exactly as promised, after the evil entity left the Lord alone.

As for the demons, it is important to understand that perhaps more than any other area in the Bible, Bashan was the land of demons. The ancient mind universally understood that demons were the disembodied souls of the dead giants, giants like Og, whose land this is. This helps explain the chthonic cults of the dead, the serpent mound, the dolmens, the megalithic structures and houses, the tribe of Dan as a serpent, and much more that has always been associated with this land.

Conclusion

We’ve seen several points of reference from Matthew, Luke, and John that Jesus is being baptized up north rather than in the wilderness of Judea. The geography of Luke’s gospel especially lends itself to this in its chiasmic structure. Each temptation includes references that point us towards Bashan as the place that Jesus was in. The central figure in the temptation makes great geographical sense as well, if this is where Jesus went. The conclusion of the matter is that we have many lines of evidence pointing to a wilderness of Bashan region as the place where Jesus went to fight and conquer the Devil. Perfectly fitting for such a demonic place as Bashan—the land of the serpent.

⁴⁸ This discussion is in Andrei A. Orlov, *Heavenly Priesthood in the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), 151-52.

⁴⁹ See Judd Burton, *Interview with the Giant: Ethnohistorical Notes on the Nephilim* (Burton Beyond Publications, 2009).

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