



Theological Reflections on the Temptation of Christ based on a comparative study between the Accounts of Matthew and Luke

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the theological implications of the temptation of Christ as depicted in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Through a comparative study of these accounts, the paper examined the nuanced differences and similarities. The paper conducted a textual analysis of key expressions in the text to arrive at a theological conclusion. The analysis examined the significance of Christ's temptation in relation to his identity, mission, and the broader narrative of salvation history. The study revealed variations in the narrative placement and structure of the temptation accounts in both Matthew and Luke due to their different motifs. The study also revealed the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in the temptation accounts in both Matthew and Luke, with different nuances. Again, the study also revealed that the nuanced differences in the duration, the nature of the fast and the temptation contents in Matthew and Luke highlight various theological emphases and narrative strategies. By juxtaposing the perspectives presented in Matthew and Luke, this paper seeks to deepen understanding of the theological insights conveyed through the temptation narrative, highlighting its relevance for contemporary Christian reflection and spiritual formation. The paper concludes by asserting that the temptation accounts in Matthew and Luke emphasized the sovereignty and providence of God and the authority of scripture. It also stressed the interplay between pneumatology and human experience during temptation periods and placed Jesus ahead as the model for spiritual dependence on God.

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INTRODUCTION

The temptation narrative of Jesus Christ is found in all the synoptic gospels. Though there seem to be some macro differences in the accounts in the content of the narratives, the micro context is the same. Mark, a theologian in his own right, presents a deep and comprehensive account of the temptation story in two verses (Mark 1:12-13) and he theologizes using the wilderness experience as the fulcrum of the temptation narrative. Thus, Mark's Gospel makes it clear that without the wilderness experience, one cannot experience the glory of God. Mark introduces the temptation account in the first chapter of his Gospel in comparison to Luke and Matthew, who both insert the infancy narrative before their temptation stories. Despite the Matthean and Lukan accounts being very similar, there seem to be some fundamental

differences. The goal of this write-up is to expound the temptation accounts found in the Gospel of Luke and Matthew. Specifically, to compare and contrast the temptation accounts in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke and raise the necessary theological issues where necessary.

Luke 4:1-13 is sandwiched between the baptism narrative and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry at Nazareth. The narrative is interrupted just prior to the temptation narrative by the genealogy (Luke 3:23-38), which connects Jesus with Adam, reflecting the Lukan Gentile focus. This order is slightly different from Matthew's, which proceeds directly from the baptism and temptation through to the beginning of his public ministry. The genealogy (which occurs first in Matthew), then, is the primary difference. Why did Luke place it where he did? Green writes:

As an episode of transition, Luke 4:1-13 is concerned with finalizing the establishment of Jesus' performative competence prior to his actual assumption of public ministry in the service of God's salvific aim. Luke 3:21-38 was in its own way integral to the demonstration of his competence, indicating his possession of the requisite credentials, power, and authority to set forth on his mission. But these are not enough. They must be matched with Jesus' positive response to God's power. Hence, here Jesus will signal his alignment with God's will in a way that surpasses the evidence already provided by his display of submission to God at his baptism.¹

In other words, Luke 4:1-13 functions together with the baptism and genealogy of Luke to legitimate Jesus' public ministry. The three units are thus transitional in nature and serve to introduce the rest of Luke's gospel.

Matthew 4:1-11 also begins with the adverb of subsequent time τότε, translated as "then," which marks a direct succession of the events previously described at the end of Matthew 3, specifically the baptism and divine affirmation of Jesus' identity. This affirmation of Jesus' Divine Sonship by God in 3:17 is of critical importance for understanding the nature of Satan's upcoming challenges, as will be seen below. The use of the title "Son" in 3 vv. 17, echoed in 4 vv. 3 and 4 vv. 6 cohere the account and strengthen the use of τότε as a conjunction which denotes a direct succession of the events described in the author's narrative.

Historical Jewish Views of Satan

The Hebrew word from which "Satan" originates occasionally refers to human adversaries (1 Sam. 29:4; Psa. 109:6) and once denotes the angels of the Lord who opposed Balaam (Num. 22:22).² However, whenever this term is employed as a proper name in the Old Testament, it designates the formidable superhuman adversary of God, humanity, and righteousness (1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1—2).³ In the Old Testament, it served as both a noun, appearing twenty-six times, and a verb, occurring six times, conveying the notions of slander or accusation.⁴ This dual usage suggests a nuanced understanding of its significance predated the New Testament. Notably, the term 'devil' or 'diabolos' is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term, found in both the Septuagint (LXX) and the New Testament.

In First Temple Judaism, angels acted as intermediaries between heaven and earth, and Satan was among them.⁵ The Old Testament depicts Satan as one who tested or opposed humanity in their quest to keep true allegiance to God—such figures include Adam, Eve, and Job. However, Satan is portrayed as subordinate to God, unable to act upon mortals without divine permission. The interaction between God and Satan in Job highlights Satan's role in testing individuals, with his actions subject to divine approval.⁶

During the later Second Temple era (539BCE-70CE), Jewish beliefs regarding Satan underwent significant transformation due to experiences of exile and shifts in religious thought.⁷ New stories emerged to provide explanations for the origins of demons and the devil. One of the earliest accounts, detailed in 1 Enoch 6-16, suggests that angels, referred to as the sons of heaven, engaged in illicit relationships with

¹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke, The New International Commentary on The New Testament*, Gordon D. Fee, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 191.

² Ronald F. Youngblood (ed.), *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1131.

³ Youngblood (ed.), *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1131.

⁴ Zoe Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," *Spectrum* Issue No. 5, 2020:1-10, 2.

⁵ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

⁶ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

⁷ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

mortal women.⁸ As a result of these unions, the women bore offspring known as giants, as depicted in 1 Enoch 7. These giants were believed to share a similar nature to the Nephilim mentioned in Genesis 6:6, who perished in the deluge during Noah's flood.⁹ These stories attributed the emergence of giants to the union between angels and mortal women, with figures like Asazel or Beelzebub leading them.¹⁰ This narrative had an impact on accounts like Luke 11:15, where individuals accused Jesus of casting out demons through the authority of Beelzebub.

The second narrative, found in 2 Enoch 29, appears to have been informed by passages in Isaiah (14:4-20) and Ezekiel (28:11-19).¹¹ It recounts that on the second day of creation, an archangel named Lucifer entertained the audacious notion of elevating his throne above the clouds and equaling the power of God: "thought up the impossible idea, that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to [God's] Power" (2 Enoch 29).¹² Consequently, the Lord expelled him and his followers from heaven, causing Lucifer to soar "above the Bottomless" (29). Thus, Lucifer became known as the devil or Satan. This account introduces the significant theme of idolatry, echoing in the gospel accounts of the third temptation, where the devil once again seeks to be worshipped like God.¹³ By the time the gospels were written, conceptions of the devil or Satan had amalgamated from various sources. While the aforementioned narratives notably influenced the gospels, they were not the sole narratives circulating at the time.¹⁴

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

Setting (Luke 4:1-2/Matthew 4:1-2)

Verses 1-2 provide a circumstantial setting for the narrative which follows. In verse 1, Luke and Matthew both speak of the Spirit "leading" Jesus into the wilderness. This echoes Israel's wilderness wanderings with eschatological connotations as well. Israel's exodus journey came to symbolize not only their travels through the wilderness but also their struggles with God.¹⁵ Between leaving Egypt and reaching the Promised Land, God utilized the wilderness as a testing ground for both spiritual growth and national identity. Contrary to being a place of safety and abundance, the wilderness was often portrayed as a hostile environment, characterized by hunger and the presence of malevolent spirits (Psalm 107:4-5; Matthew 12:43).¹⁶ Despite its challenges, the wilderness served as a necessary stage for the formation of covenantal bonds and the anticipation of entering the promised inheritance, fostering dependence and trust in God (Psa. 107:4-5; Matt. 12:43).¹⁷ Matthew's Gospel portrays the wilderness as a significant backdrop for Jesus' ministry, representing a space where his divine calling is put to the test. While Israel struggled in the wilderness, Jesus, in contrast, relied solely on the provision and protection of God. However, the imagery of the wilderness also evokes associations with the scapegoat ritual (Lev.16), suggesting a cosmic dimension to Jesus' ordeal.¹⁸ Furthermore, the wilderness setting is rich with symbolic connotations, encompassing themes of both trial and divine encounter.

Matthew used the passive aorist verb ἀνέχθη, while Luke used the middle or passive imperfect verb ἦγετο to describe the leading of the Spirit. Both Luke and Matthew mentioned the Spirit (πνεύματος), in the discourse in verse 1, but Luke qualified "the Spirit" with the neuter genitive adjective "αγίου" (Holy). Thus, giving a clear impression that this is no other Spirit but the Holy Spirit himself.

In effect, Luke portrays that Jesus, having been baptized in the Jordan and confirmed as God's Royal Son in Luke 3:21-23 by the corporeal descent of the Holy Spirit, was now led by means of the same Spirit into the wilderness. Thus, the ἦγετο, a passive imperfect form from αγω, conveys continuing action in the past. By Implication, Luke is saying that the Holy Spirit did not simply lead Jesus into the desert,

⁸ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

⁹ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

¹⁰ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

¹¹ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

¹² Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

¹³ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

¹⁴ Saulnier, "A Literary and Theological Exploration of the Temptation Account in the Gospel of Luke," 2.

¹⁵ Andrew Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," *Ashland Theological Journal* 2008:15-42, 21.

¹⁶ Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," 21.

¹⁷ Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," 21.

¹⁸ Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," 21.

but that the Holy Spirit was with him throughout the duration of his temptation. Arthur Just writes: “The Spirit always accompanies Jesus in his work for our salvation.”¹⁹ This is understandable given Luke’s deep theology of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore not surprising that in Luke 4:1, the Lukan account used the adverbial phrase “full of the Spirit” (πλήρης πνεύματος) to describe how he was filled with the Holy Spirit at baptism. This is not common with Matthew. Thus, unlike Matthew, it is Luke who clearly interprets the impact of the descent of the Holy Spirit and its influence on the other aspects of Jesus’ life. Thus, the Holy Spirit did not leave him after the baptism as seen in the use of the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (That is, by means of the Spirit into the wilderness), rather he carried him to the next level of his life. Thus, the Holy Spirit led Jesus from the Jordan to the wilderness for the temptation and the Holy Spirit was also present with him throughout the period of the temptation is evident in Luke’s account. It can be inferred from the passage that being filled with the Holy Spirit in one scene of life, requires that the Holy Spirit leads one to the next scene of life. Again, believers have also seen the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit at every point in ministry, whether at the Jordan or in the wilderness; thus affirming the need for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. It is also important to note that being filled with the Holy Spirit does not in any way exonerate believers from temptation, but since the Holy Spirit is with the believers, he will help them to go through, if they depend on him.

Again, Luke’s use of ἐν plus τῷ πνεύματι, which is an instrumental use of the dative ἐν of concomitant circumstance (or “sociative ἐν”) is worth noting. The prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ πνεύματι may likely convey agency. It must be admitted that the common Greek construction for expressing agency is ὑπο plus the genitive (that is, ὑπό plus genitive indicates direct/ultimate agency). Matthew, therefore, used the preposition “ὑπό” plus genitive twice in verse 1 to indicate a sense of agency. That is, ὑπό του πνεύματος (by the agency of the Spirit) and ὑπό του διαβόλου (by the agency of the devil). In each case, there is a sense of agency. One is in the positive sense (the agency of the Spirit) and the other is in the negative sense (by the agency of the devil). The verse is clear that the devil, τοῦ διαβόλου, “the slanderer” is the controlling noun for ὑπό, showing that this testing was to be performed under the control of the devil, though on behalf of God’s express purpose.

Hence, there are two reasons why ἐν τῷ πνεύματι here may be understood as agency. First, Matthew clearly understood the Spirit as the active agent leading Jesus into the wilderness (ὑπο του πνεύματος), though this raises the question of why Luke altered the construction. Nolland suggests the change is due to Luke’s Christological reflection: Jesus is not subject to the Spirit (a possible implication of agency) but only to the Father.²⁰ Second, some believe ἐν plus the dative can convey agency.²¹ For example, Wallace allows for this use but seems to think it is unusual, citing Blass and Debrunner’s observation that the agency usage of ἐν plus the dative is limited to usages with a perfect verb, not an imperfect, and only one such example exists in the New Testament (Luke 23:14).²²

At the risk of blurring a minor distinction between Matthew and Luke’s accounts, it is best to understand from Matthew’s text that Jesus was voluntarily led by the agency of the Spirit in willing submission to the will of the Father, but that Luke, wishing to carefully present Jesus’ subjection to temptation as willing rather than coerced, softened Matthew’s construction by the use of ἐν plus the dative. Stein concludes: “Thus Jesus was not portrayed as passively being dragged out by the Evil One to endure temptation, for the initiator of this event was not the devil but God. The picture is that of the Anointed of the Lord on the offensive and led by the Spirit to confront the devil.”²³

In verse 2 of Luke 4, the problematic adverbial accusative phrase, ἡμερας τεσσαρακοντα (“forty days”) and πειραζομενος υπο του διαβολου (“being tempted by the devil”) is also seen. The question is whether the former, the latter, or both ought to be taken with ηγετο or with υπο του διαβολου. A. T. Robertson suggests the construction is purposefully ambiguous, and that both may be taken with ηγετο.²⁴

¹⁹ Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture, Dean O. Wenthe, gen. ed. (Saint Louis Concordia, 1996), 170.

²⁰ John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, vol. 35a, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), 178. To avoid the sense of subordination, Nolland’s conclusion, following Conzelman is that ἐν τῷ πνεύματι should be translated “by means of the Spirit” rather than “by the Spirit”.

²¹ Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville, B&H, 1994), 98.

²² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 372.

²³ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, New American Commentary, David S. Dockery, ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 145.

²⁴ A. T. Robertson, *A Translation of Luke’s Gospel* (New York: George H. Doran & Co., 1923), 157-158.

Plummer agrees: “As the temptation by Satan was simultaneous (present Participle) with the leading of the Spirit, the sense will be the same, whichever arrangement be adopted.”²⁵ The implication is that not only was the Spirit present with Jesus during his 40 days, but that the temptation itself lasted the duration of the 40 days as well. Regardless, ηγετο functions as either a descriptive or durative imperfective.²⁶ The former has a visceral impact, “[painting] a picture of the unfolding, progressive nature of a past event,” while the latter restricts the event to a specific interval of time.²⁷

Again, in verse 2, both Matthew and Luke mention the duration of the fast as being forty days, yet Matthew’s account adds forty nights. Matthew’s emphasis on the forty days and forty nights (ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα καὶ νύκτας τεσσαράκοντα) perhaps may be due to his Hebraic influence of the fast of Moses and Elijah and the author’s utmost desire to portray Jesus as the new Moses to his Jewish readers. Nevertheless, the number “forty” stands for “comprehensive” or “wholeness” hence it may not be taken literally as forty. Hence, Matthew may be demonstrating that the fast was not a limited fast but a comprehensive fast.

Again, Luke was emphatic that Jesus ate nothing at all during those days, καὶ οὐκ εἶφαγεν οὐδέν; compared with Matthew 4:2, which simply states that Jesus had “fasted” forty days and forty nights. Luke seems to lay emphasis on the fact that the fast was a dry fast and that Jesus ate nothing in the period. Additionally, in Luke’s account, the temptation seems to be interspersed with the fasting period unlike Matthew (4:3a) who puts the temptation at the end of the fast. Luke, on the other hand, states that the temptation went alongside the fast. This is obviously the case because in personal Christian experiences, it is during the period of fasting that temptations abound. The διαβολος would not wait for the Christian to get through fasting before bringing in temptations. For as “βάλλω”, the root word of “διαβολος”, implies “the διαβολος is the one who throws things out of gear”. The “διαβολος” wanted to throw Jesus’ life out of gear and to confuse him yet the joy is that the Holy Spirit was with him throughout the period of the temptation. At times in ministry, Christians become their own διαβολος because of the focus on the self and not on the ministry and the one who is called into ministry. In becoming materialistic and self-seeking in the ministry, the διαβολος is given the chance to throw the Christian’s life and ministry out of gear. Thus, the temptation story teaches moderation instead of being materialistic and this is evident in both the Lukan and the Matthean accounts.

Again, both Matthew and Luke put the “hunger” (ἐπείνασεν) after the fast, unlike Mark who does not add that at all. Jesus’ hunger is foregrounded, not merely for the purpose of underscoring his vulnerability to the first temptation to turn a stone into bread, but also to remind the reader that Jesus faces the entire ordeal as a weak human being. The Greek construction καὶ συντελεσθαισων αὐτῶν in reference to the completion of the 40 days in Luke 4 verse two also points forward to its occurrence at the end of the narrative (Luke 4: 13a) in reference to Satan’s completion (συντελεσας) of the temptations.

Temptation One: Luke 4:3-4/Matthew 4:3-4

Unlike Mark which does not give the content of the temptation, Luke and Matthew give vivid descriptions of the content of the temptation. Two exegetical issues will be considered here: 1) the twice-repeated formula (here and in v. 9) εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ; and 2) Jesus’ use of the LXX of Deut. 8:3 here and the important textual variant that accompanies it.

The clause “εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ” calls into question Jesus’ identity as the Royal Son of God publicly designated at his baptism (Luke 3:22 and Matthew 3:17). In the Lukan account, ἵνα γένηται, substitutes the ἵνα clause (or “direct object clause/content ἵνα clause”). The direct object [λίθῳ] follows the command verb εἶπε (Luke 4:3). The ἵνα clause thus gives the content to the main verb and in this respect answers the question, what? εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, conditional adverbial clause (or “conjunctive clause”). It is the protasis of this conditional clause that introduces the content of the temptation in the apodosis: εἴπε τοῦ λίθῳ ἵνα γένηται. Wallace lists three different approaches to the understanding of conditional clauses: 1) the structural/formal, which is concerned with the particular particle, moods, and tenses employed in the protasis and apodosis; 2) the semantic, which is concerned with the meaning of the protasis and apodosis

²⁵ Alfred Plummer, *St. Luke International Critical Commentary*, Charles Augustus Briggs and Samuel Rolles Driver, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1906), 107.

²⁶ Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 113-116.

²⁷ Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 113.

and their relation to one another; and finally 3) the pragmatic, which is concerned with what the speaker actually intends to communicate by means of the conditional clause (i.e. veiled threat, request, command, etc.).²⁸

The structural approach. Black notes two basic types of conditional sentence structures: 1) those whose protasis contains an indicative verb, and 2) those whose protasis contains a non-indicative, or subjunctive, verb.²⁹ Clearly, *εἰ υἱὸς εἰ τοῦ θεοῦ*, with its use of the indicative *εἰ* (Present Indicative Second Person singular of *εἶμι*) falls into the first category. This broader category, according to Black, is then subdivided into two subcategories. The first is a “simple condition,” which is often employed when “the speaker assumes the reality of the premise. If the premise is objectively true, “since” rather than “if” is a more appropriate rendering. Black provides an example of Gal. 5:18, which reads: “But if (*εἰ*) you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Clearly, the protasis is assumed by Paul to be true. The verse, then, could be translated as, “Since you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”³⁰ It should be noted carefully that a simple condition can be one in which the premise is merely assumed as true by the speaker but is not in fact objectively true. The viewpoint of the speaker is of paramount importance. The second is a “contrary-to-fact” condition, where the premise is assumed to be false.³¹ Like the text, this type of condition employs a secondary verbal form (*εἰ*) in the protasis but requires the contingent particle *ἄν* in the apodosis. This is lacking in Luke 4:3.

It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that Satan did in fact know or, at least for the purposes of dialogue, assume that Jesus was the Son of God. However, Wallace has noted that the first-class conditional (the designation he prefers over “simple”) merely assumes the truth of the protasis “for the sake of argument.”³² Commenting on Luke 4:3, he writes: “The force of this is “If – and let’s assume that it’s true for the sake of argument – you are God’s son, tell this stone to become bread.”³³ In this sense, the speaker assumes for the sake of argument that the state of affairs indicated in the protasis (the “if” clause) is true. The condition(s) of the apodosis (the “then” clause), therefore are seen to follow logically from the aforementioned condition (example, *εἰ* plus indicative). In rhetorical use, it is frequently the case that the protasis is in fact not true, but is rather maintained by the speaker for the sake of the argument. Thus, the *διαβολὸς* is saying “if (indeed) you are the son of God”. The upshot of this observation is that Satan is not willing to concede the point of Jesus’ divine identity either way. Arndt rightly notes that he is “non-committal.”³⁴

The second textual issue in this section concerns Jesus’ use of the LXX of Deut. 8:3. A few brief remarks are in order. First, his quotation of OT Scripture in this verse is spot-on; both Luke’s Gospel and the LXX have the same wording and syntax (*οὐκ ἐπ’ ἀρτῷ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος*). Here, we see the case of syntax thus *ἐπὶ* plus dative which connotes “the basis” on which one is to live³⁵). Thus, *οὐκ ἐπ’ ἀρτῷ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος* seems to suggest that bread is not a basis on which one is to live.

However, some peculiarity is seen in the Matthean account which adds the fuller quotation [*ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ*] and some textual traditions, including the Byzantine text-form.³⁶ Here in the fuller quotation, there is a clear case of syntax, that is, *ἐπὶ* plus a cluster of datives “*παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ*” and “*διὰ*” plus genitives “*στόματος θεοῦ*”. The major authorities in which this longer reading is preserved include a number of uncials (including A and D), a number of minuscules, lectionaries, and others. Plummer notes that it is absent in the “best authorities” and explains its presence in A and D by virtue of its presence in Matthew’s account of the temptation, which also preserves the longer reading. Thus, perhaps Luke chose to leave that part out because from the beginning he has already indicated that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is clear that Matthew was giving out an important

²⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 681.

²⁹ David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 181-182.

³⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 690-692.

³¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 182.

³² Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 692.

³³ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 693

³⁴ William F. Arndt, *Luke*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1956), 130.

³⁵ M. Zerwick, S. J. and M. Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, Unabridged, 3rd (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 185; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of the New Testament*, 2nd (Cambridge University Press, 1959), 50.

³⁶ Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, eds., *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine, Textform*, 2005 (Southborough, MA: Chilton, 2005)

truth that man is to live on the primacy of what God has revealed through his word. In other words, man is to live on the basis of the “rhema” which is the word spoken by God Himself.

Again, unlike the Lukan account which pluralizes the stone, it is singular in the Matthean account. With this, it can be imagined that maybe in the Matthew text, there was a particular stone that the διαβολος was referring to. Here, it can be inferred that the objects of temptation like the stones are just around, in close proximity. The διαβολος tempts with the things around and not with abstract things. Additionally, it can be seen that both Matthew and Luke’s use of the ὁ ἄνθρωπος, the generic article (Luke 4:4/Matthew 4:4), in this case, denotes “humankind.” The generic article distinguishes simply the class of humans rather than particularizing any individual person.³⁷

Temptation Two: Luke 4:5-8/Matthew 4:8-10

This section will concern itself with Satan’s address to Jesus in the second temptation, and Jesus’ use of the LXX of Deut. 6:13. Satan’s address to Jesus in the second temptation contains not a few grammatical points of interest, chief of which is the emphasis placed on the personal pronouns (Σοι, εμοι, ω, συ, εμου, σου). This is an instance of what linguists refer to as “marked prominence,” defined by Young as the author’s employment of “various devices in the surface structure to highlight portions of the discourse.”³⁸ Here, the διαβολος says: “To you, I will give all this authority and their glory³⁹, for to me it has been handed over and to whomever I wish will give it. You therefore bow down before me, and it will all be yours (lit. “of you”).”⁴⁰ The most obvious question to ask is, “Is the devil’s confession that all the authority and glory of this world has been handed over to him, true? If it is so then who handed it over to him? Or was it Adam who handed it over to him as some commentators perceive or the world systems itself, thus may be by its choices and actions have become aligned to the διαβολος. Now the devil’s claim of ownership of the world and its systems seems to be consistent with scripture. Jesus called him “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30). A discourse that has taken an eschatological dimension as expressed in the “Halleluyah chorus” [“The Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15)] in which Christ would finally redeem the kingdoms of the world.

Also, despite Luke’s use of οἰκουμνη (4:5), “the inhabited world,” rather than Matthew’s more general κόσμος (4:8), Luke uses the clause “showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a ‘moment of time’ or ‘flash of time’”. This raises questions as to whether the temptation is a mental struggle or corporeal engagement between the διαβολος and Jesus. The Matthean rendition which says “then he took him” makes it a corporeal engagement while the Lukan rendition carries with it a certain visionary experience that makes it look like a mental struggle.

In Luke 4:7 σὺ οὖν ἐὰν προσκυνήσῃς ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ, here ἐὰν plus subjunctive (προσκυνήσῃς) refers to future action or an “eventual” condition. It expresses a mood of doubtful assertion. Here, the devil says “If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours”. It can be seen that even the διαβολος does not compel people but rather lures them. The real battle therefore lies with the power of free will to choose what is right; meaning the enemy is within and not the διαβολος. The text shows that the διαβολος seeks for personal worship. But worship is God’s own prerogative and not the devil’s. Today, all kinds of things are worshipped, including money and other worldly idols. Jesus was very focused. He did not allow the glories of this world and the pleasures of this world to sway him away from his ministry. God is indeed the only one who deserves glory and Christians need to ascribe it to him or else fail in this ministry.

Once again, Jesus responds with OT Scripture, this time from the LXX of Deut. 6:13. However, Jesus substitutes προσκυνήσεις for φοβηθήσῃ (LXX). Προσκυνήσεις... λατρεύσεις (Luke 4:8), commands and prohibitions expressed by the future indicative (for example, “thou shalt”), indicate Semitic influence as expressions in this form reflect normal Hebrew construction.⁴¹ The Hebrew (BHS) has תִּירָא, for which

³⁷ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 227.

³⁸ Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 263.

³⁹ Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 172. He notes that this is an allusion to Daniel 7:14 and Psalm 2:8.

⁴⁰ Stein, *Luke*, 145.

⁴¹ Moule, *An Idiom Book of the New Testament*, 50; C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, Revised Edition (Nashville: Abington Press, 1995), 207-210.

φοβέω is the more common translation.⁴² Nolland observes that this reading is closest to the A text of the LXX and suggests that it is employed in direct response to Satan's use of the same term in the previous verse. Stein, noting that Matthew preserves the same reading, attributes this to both evangelists' dependence on a common source (Q?).⁴³ Both are possible and even likely. The concept of worshipping and serving God only is what Jesus points out in this second temptation discourse. Thus, here the concept of Monotheism expressed in the Jewish Shema in Deuteronomy 6:13 is being affirmed by Jesus as the first and the most important of all the commandments.

Third Temptation: Luke 4:9-12/ Matthew 4:5-7

This section contains the third and final temptation in the Lukan narrative, unlike Matthew which captures this as the second temptation narrative. In Matthew 4:5, it is observed that the action is being taken by the διαβόλος. He takes Jesus to the πτερύγιον. The primary concern here is the meaning of πτερύγιον. The setting for this temptation was the temple. The ancient Israelite "temple" served as the epicenter of Jewish faith, symbolizing the supremacy of YHWH above all rival deities and intricately linked to political authority (Psalm 95:3).⁴⁴ Within its sacred precincts, the pinnacle or "little wing" (as expressed in Matthew 4:5) held significant symbolic resonance, echoing the refuge and protection found in the "wings" of divine shelter as described in Psalm 91, a passage invoked by the devil during his encounter with Jesus (compare verse 4, 11-12).⁴⁵

At its essence, the temple fulfilled a crucial role in facilitating worship, providing a tangible manifestation of YHWH's presence to all who entered its sacred space. This central function of worship was underscored by Solomon in his profound dedicatory prayer, emphasizing the temple as a place where prayers and supplications would be heard and answered by the divine (1 Kings 8:12-13, 22-53). Moreover, the temple held cosmic significance as the spiritual "center" of the world, representing the axis around which order, justice, and life itself revolved. This cosmic centrality is echoed in various Psalms, such as Psalms 46, 48, 84, and 87, which celebrate the splendor and holiness of God's dwelling place.⁴⁶

The most that can be said is that it was a very high point on the temple edifice ("throw yourself down from here), so high that to jump from it would be to test God's promises of protection (Luke 4:10-11). Nolland concurs: "Certainly a very high point is meant, such as the "royal colonnade" which Josephus (Ant. 15.412) tells us overlooked a deep ravine from a giddy height."⁴⁷ The translation "pinnacle" or "highest place" is certainly justified. The devil said to him "if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down". The Greek clause used in the Lukan account seems to say "decide yourself that from hence forth or there upon I am throwing myself down". The devil cites Psalms 91:11 and the clause used in the Lukan account "δια plus infinitive "φυλάξαι" here denotes completion of the task: "to guard successfully" or "to preserve from danger or harm." It suggests the comprehensive of the guarding (that is; they would guard you through and through). In other words, the διαβόλος tells Jesus "you would get perfect protection just throw yourself down." The Greek word "οὐκ ἐκπειράσεις, thus οὐ plus future indicative active used in Luke 4:12 and Matthew 4:7 constitutes a categorical prohibition. The ἐκ attached to the verb (πειράσεις) is meant to intensify the idea of tempting by pushing to the wall or being stretched to the last limit.

It is important now, to look at Luke's reversal of the order of the second and third temptations. More important like the meaning of πτερύγιον is the significance of Luke's deviation from the order of Matthew's temptations, a question which has occasioned no small scholarly discussion. Matthew has the following order: 1) turn stones into bread, 2) throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and 3) bow down and worship Satan. Luke, by contrast, reverses the order of the second and third temptations, so that the final temptation occurs on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. Bovon lists three possible factors motivating Luke to make this reversal: 1) Jerusalem, in particular the temple, plays a very significant salvation-historical role in the final days of Jesus; 2) the issue of political authority (the second

⁴² G. Abbott-Smith, *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, reprint 2010 (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1922), 470-471.

⁴³ Stein, *Luke*, 147.

⁴⁴ Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," 21.

⁴⁵ Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," 21.

⁴⁶ Schmutzer, "Jesus' Temptation: A Reflection on Matthew's Use of Old Testament Theology and Imagery," 21.

⁴⁷ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 181, rightly observes that Luke is less concerned with identifying this precise location and more concerned with narrating the event.

temptation) is “awkward” for Luke and thus does not take the place of prominence; 3) the temptations are graded in terms of seriousness, and testing God takes pride of place.⁴⁸

Of these three possible explanations, the second and third seem more speculative and have little textual or contextual support. The first explanation, the prominence of Jerusalem in Jesus’ last days, is most likely. The importance of Jerusalem in Luke’s Gospel has been well documented. In fact, from Luke 9 until the end of the work, Luke is at pains to portray Jesus as inexorably bound for Jerusalem. “Luke seems more intent on stressing the journey motif than in giving precise locations. He is making the point that Jesus moved consistently forward on his way to Jerusalem for the consummation of the work he came to earth to accomplish.”⁴⁹ Bovon takes this explanation further and compares each temptation to a major stage of Jesus’ life in Luke’s gospel: “It is important for Luke that the devil clothes his greatest temptation in scriptural citations (vv. 10-11), and that, as in Jesus’ life as a whole, the first temptation takes place in the wilderness, and the last in Jerusalem.”⁵⁰

The Concluding Part of the Temptation: Luke 4:13/ Matthew 4:11

The temptation discourse neatly concludes in Luke 4:13 and Matthew 4:11. Luke says the διαβολος finishes “every temptation” (παντα πειρασμον) and leaves Jesus, for the time being (αχρι καιρου, “until an opportune time”). Two implications may be drawn from Luke 4:13. 1) That the three temptations recorded in the Synoptics are not exhaustive but representative; and 2) There is no break time to temptation - the διαβολος may come again and again. Thus, temptation is an ongoing experience that is evident in Luke’s account. Temptation will always be present. These two statements vividly summarize Luke’s theology of temptation. Matthew, unlike Luke, does not make it explicit that the devil will come again. Here, in Matthew, it is observed that temptation is not permanent. It is temporal. Again, Matthew concludes with angelic ministration, where angels came and worshipped Jesus at the end of the temptation. Thus, Jesus having passed the test experienced veneration at the end. Here, Matthew’s veneration motif gives an indication that there would be times of testing but God would send us periods of refreshing at the end of it. This gives the assurance that life would not always be so gloomy, there would surely be light at the end of the tunnel.

Theological Issues concerning the temptation accounts in both Matthew and Luke The Sovereignty and providence of God

The temptation accounts in both Matthew and Luke teach about the Sovereignty of God. Thus, God is in control of all things and rules over all things and decides all things by his will. This is established by the phrase “led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness” (v. 1). This also points to the fact that temptation is part of God’s plan. At Jesus’ baptism just prior to the passage, God the Father had just publicly confirmed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Davidic Son of God promised in the Old Testament by way of a divine pronouncement as well as the bestowal of the Holy Spirit in visible, “bodily form” as a dove which descended on his head. Now the same Spirit led him into the desert where he would be tempted, and was with him throughout the entire ordeal. Clearly, Jesus’ temptation was God’s will. The Sovereignty of God calls for total submission so that like Jesus believers would always be in God’s will.

Jesus had been fasting for forty days and was hungry. He genuinely desired bread. But in obedience to the Father, he voluntarily refused to make use of his divine powers to provide for himself, and instead trusted God’s promise to provide. The devil tempted Jesus to distrust his Father’s care of him, and to set up for himself, and shift for provision for himself in such a way as his Father had not appointed for him. Matthew Henry’s commentary paraphrases the devil’s words as “I counsel thee to do it; for God, if he be thy Father, has forgotten thee, and it will be long enough ere he sends either ravens or angels to feed thee.” (p. 1462) Jesus did not give in to the thought to distrust God’s providence or to be independent of God. Hence, he quoted Deut. 8:3 “man shall not live on bread alone” to give credence to the eternal provision God has made for man aside bread and physical pleasure. Christians must recognize that in thinking of themselves as their own carvers, and of living by their forecasts, without depending upon divine

⁴⁸ François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, Helmut Koester, ed. and Christine M. Thomas, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 139.

⁴⁹ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 200.

⁵⁰ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 139.

providence, they fall into the temptation of the devil; it is the devil's counsel to think of independence from God.

Pneumatology and the Temptation

The temptation of Christ offers a profound insight into the interplay between the Spirit and human experience. Before facing the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus was led by the Spirit into solitude, highlighting the Spirit's role in guiding and preparing individuals for significant challenges (Luke 4:1). This suggests that the Spirit plays a crucial role in shaping spiritual journeys, leading believers into moments of testing and growth. During the temptations, Jesus relied on the power of the Spirit to resist the devil's schemes. He countered each temptation with Scripture, affirming his reliance on God's Word (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). This underscores how the Spirit empowers believers to withstand temptation by providing them with spiritual discernment and the wisdom found in Scripture (Matt. 4:4). Jesus' example illustrates the importance of aligning our responses to temptation with the truth of God's word, relying on the Spirit for strength and guidance in the face of adversity.

Following his victory over temptation, Jesus emerged from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit, prepared to begin his public ministry (Luke 4:14). This signifies how reliance on the Spirit leads to spiritual growth and empowerment, equipping believers for the work that lies ahead. Jesus' experience demonstrates that triumph over temptation is not merely about personal strength but about the transformative power of the Spirit working within individuals.

Moreover, the Spirit's guidance is evident throughout the temptation narrative. It was the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness and sustained him during his time of testing (Luke 4:1). This highlights the Spirit's constant presence and leading in the lives of believers, guiding them on the path of righteousness and empowering them to overcome the snares of the enemy. Just as Jesus relied on the Spirit for guidance and strength, believers are called to depend on the Spirit's leading in their own lives, trusting in his wisdom and empowerment to navigate the challenges they face.

The Authority of Scripture

The authority of scripture is strongly affirmed in Jesus' temptation in the wilderness as depicted in the Gospels. In this event, Jesus confronts and overcomes various temptations presented by the devil, relying on the authority of scripture as a guide and defense against spiritual attack. Firstly, the authority of scripture is evident in Jesus' responses to the devil's temptations. Each time the devil tries to deceive or entice Jesus, he responds by quoting scripture, saying, "It is written..." This demonstrates Jesus' reliance on the authoritative word of God to discern truth from falsehood and to resist temptation. By appealing to scripture, Jesus affirms its authority as a source of divine guidance and moral instruction.

Moreover, the authority of scripture is reinforced by Jesus' refusal to compromise its teachings for personal gain or worldly power. When the devil tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger, Jesus replies, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4 cf. Deut. 8:3). This statement highlights the primacy of God's word over physical sustenance and highlights Jesus' commitment to obeying God's commands above all else.

Furthermore, Jesus' rejection of the devil's offer to gain authority and dominion over all the kingdoms of the world by worshiping him (Matt. 4:8-10) reaffirms the authority of scripture in guiding moral choices and ethical conduct. Jesus responds by quoting scripture again, saying, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matt. 4:10), echoing the first commandment in Exodus 20:3. At the same time, Jesus used this text to emphasize that only God deserves worship.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while Luke and Matthew provide vivid and detailed accounts of Jesus' temptation, Mark's brief presentation should not be overlooked. Mark, also offers a theological perspective, using the wilderness experience as the focal point of his account. Despite the similarities between Matthew and Luke, Luke's concise narration, characterized by economized language, offers unique insights into his theology of temptation which is premised on the phrase "until an opportune time". Matthew, on the other hand, portrays temptation as temporal. Both Luke and Matthew emphasize Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's journey, succeeding where they failed and embodying the true essence of Israel. Through faith in

Jesus, believers enter into a profound union with him, where his righteousness and obedience become theirs, and their guilt and sin become his, illustrating the transformative power of faith in Christ.

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