

Luke 4:5-8

Sermon: **Jesus' second temptation**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Before we move on to Jesus' second temptation, let us recall what Satan wanted to achieve in the first temptation of Jesus and what applications we today can draw from that event. Satan's goal was to make Jesus unrighteous; he wanted to overthrow and nullify God's promises. To succeed in that, he had to create division between God the Father and His Son. If Jesus fell, He would not become the king whom God had promised to Israel, and Satan would cancel the plan — the purpose — of God the Father, or at least seriously shake it. Likewise, what is Satan's main strategic move when he approaches Jesus with temptation? His main move is to portray God as "not a good God." He wants to bring Jesus to the conclusion that His Father is not a good God: *"See, Jesus, the goodness of your Father is of no use to you here in the wilderness, starving and exhausted."* Satan uses the situation in which Jesus finds Himself (possibly on the verge of death from starvation) and tells Him: *"You, who are the Messiah, the Son of God — of all people in the world, at least you deserve better treatment from your Father than this. Where is your Father to take care of you?"* But Jesus recognizes that lie. He knows that God owes Him nothing.

1.1. Satan also wants to convince Jesus that, as the Son of God, He has the right to take care of Himself, to separate Himself from God's will. Jesus recognizes that this too is a lie. He wants to remain obedient to the Father's will. He wants to fulfill the role for which God predestined Him.

1.2. Satan likewise wants Jesus to pity Himself. He wants to convince Him that the suffering He is going through is meaningless and unnecessary. He wants to convince Him that he (Satan) knows a better and easier way for Him: *"Jesus, you don't need to be hungry, you don't need to suffer. Why does your Father want you to suffer pointlessly here in the wilderness? Maybe He isn't such a good*

God after all? If He were good, He would feed you. You see you cannot rely on your Father's goodness." If Jesus had believed Satan's temptation and thought: *"Yes, really, what's the point of this suffering? I'm a victim here, I'll die of hunger. What kind of Father are you if you let your Son starve in*

the wilderness?” — if He had thought that even for a few seconds, He would have wanted to turn the stone into bread. But Jesus recognizes the lie and does not do it. Of course, Jesus is unique — none of us is and can be like Him. Yet He gives us a model of how to recognize in our own lives the lie that our sinful nature or Satan constantly tries to serve us.

1.3. What applications can we draw today from Jesus' model?

- a) Very often we take the stance that God is not good. This happens mostly when we experience some kind of suffering in life or when we witness injustice done to someone. We believe God is good only when everything in life goes the way we want it to. Jesus recognizes that this is a lie. He accepts suffering into His life because He knows it is His Father's will for Him at that moment. Jesus accepts the role for which the Father predestined Him. If that means He must suffer and die, then so be it.
- b) Often we believe that God “owes” us what we want. And we view our relationship with Him through that lens. Jesus did not have that perspective. Even though, as the Son of God, He deserved good treatment from His Father — for His Father to care for Him — Jesus did not view His relationship with God in that way. He was fully ready, for the greater purpose of His Father, to do whatever God asked of Him. Although He deserved good treatment from His Father, He did not demand it. His desire was primarily to serve His Father, not Himself.
- c) Often we believe that the purpose of our existence is the opposite of what God wants for us. We are mostly driven by the desire for perfect health, fame, money, entertainment — “my best life now and here.” Again, we must look to Jesus. He unwaveringly believed that the purpose of His existence was to fulfill the role for which God the Father had predestined Him.
- d) Very often we believe the lie that we have the authority to decide in which direction we want our lives to go, that we are the authors of our lives. Again, Jesus wants to show us that such belief is a lie, a deception of our sinful nature. Our life will always go in accordance with the purpose and plan of the only Author of our existence. And the key is to recognize this as the truth — and, like Jesus, we must believe it in the deepest core of our being: *“I believe, Father, that You are a good God, that You want what is best for me. Into Your hands I commit my life and accept Your will. I want to fulfill the role You have set for me. Why? Because You alone know how to bring me home, You alone know how I can attain eternal life. And that is what I want most — I want to be Your child who will one day be a morally good and perfect being like Your unique Son, Jesus Christ.”*

1.4. Okay, now let us move on to Jesus' second temptation. It is important to understand that all the implications I mentioned in the first temptation still stand and are still offered to Jesus. The second temptation is interconnected with the first and with all its implications.

HE HAD IT, NOW HE DOESN'T

2. (Luke 4:5) **“Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world...”**

2.1. We see in the text that Satan took Him up. In **(Matthew 4:8)** it says that he took Him to a very high mountain. What Luke wants to convey here is this: when Satan took Jesus to the high mountain, he wanted Jesus to see with His own eyes the vastness and power of the Roman Empire at that time. But all Jesus actually saw was the horizon — a horizon that symbolized the scale and might of the Roman Empire over which Satan claimed to have authority. And if we know anything about the history of the Roman Empire, we understand what an extraordinary phenomenon it was. They began as a small, obscure state, and over time became one of the greatest powers known to humanity. They possessed vast territorial, military, and economic strength. At the very moment when Satan offered Jesus that kingdom, the Roman Empire was at the height of its power and glory. I believe Jesus was very aware of this fact. And Satan tells Him: *"The Roman Empire is my puppet on strings, I control it as I will — but I want to hand it over to you. I am ready to do it."*

2.2. **(Luke 4:6)** *"And he said to him: 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority...'"*

2.2.1. The question arises: did Satan truly have authority over the world at that time? In **(Ephesians)** Paul clearly states that Satan is "the god of this world¹." What did he mean by that? At that time, before the arrival of Jesus Christ on the scene, all kingdoms, all cultures, and all people were under the influence of the "prince of darkness." The prevailing worldview of the ancient world was a product of Satan's dominion. So yes — Satan did have authority and dominion over the ancient world, and his offer to Jesus was legitimate.

2.3. The apostles themselves gradually realized that Jesus' coming was not only significant as light and wisdom for attaining eternal life. His coming and the widespread growth of Christianity brought about enlightenment. People all over the world began to change their worldview in every respect. They began to understand how one human being should treat another.

2.4. Historians and theologians agree that with Jesus' coming the world experienced major changes. Christianity introduced a new vision of humanity and society — emphasizing love for one's neighbor,

care for the poor and marginalized, and the creation of institutions such as hospitals and schools. This profoundly shaped the civilization we know today.

2.5. Until then, polytheism and pagan belief systems prevailed, often marked by rituals and mysticism. While pagan philosophical schools had rational elements, Christianity offered a unique blend of reason and faith, grounded in God's self-revelation in Christ.

2.5.1. Of course, history also shows tensions: the spread of Christianity was accompanied by conflicts and sometimes repression of older religions. Yet overall, the Christian message brought a bright vision of human dignity and God's love, which laid the foundations of Western civilization.

2.6. In other words, Jesus Himself told His disciples: *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven²."* With His coming, Satan, in a sense, lost the authority he once had. Jesus knew that His Father would

¹ Ephesians 2:1-2

² Luke 10:18

now bind Satan's hands, reduce his power — not eliminate it, but limit it. Satan's influence is still very much visible in our time, but he no longer has the same strength or authority that he held over the world before Jesus came on the scene.

2.7. In this case, when Satan declares to Jesus that he has authority over everything, he is speaking the truth. God had not yet bound Satan's hands.

2.8. But Satan speaks only half the truth. Yes, he has authority — but he does not have the right to hand that authority over to anyone! When he said to Jesus, "and I give it to whomever I please," that was a lie! He does not possess that kind of authority. God alone is the one who casts down kings from their thrones. God alone, in His sovereignty, decides who will rule and who will not³! No one can change God's sovereignty. No one can alter even a second of history that God predestined before the foundation of the world. That is the biblical perspective. To repeat — Satan was lying to Jesus when he said he could hand His authority over to Him.

PERFECTLY PRESENTED OFFER FROM SATAN

3. (Luke 4:7) *"So if you will worship me, it will all be yours."*

3.1. What is Satan asking of Jesus here? Perhaps something like: *"Jesus, if you shift your loyalty to me instead of to God, you and I together can rule this reality."* We saw in the first temptation that Jesus' loyalty belongs to the Father. So I do not believe Jesus would ever give a positive answer to such a direct offer. What we can see in this case — and in the others — is how insidious, well-crafted, and perfectly presented Satan's offer actually is. Jesus, the wisest of all creatures, is confronted with a temptation that would be incredibly attractive for any human to accept.

3.2. Satan knows that Jesus' loyalty belongs to the Father, and with that in mind he approaches Jesus in the second temptation: *"Jesus, you are hungry. I know your Father has promised you that one day you will be King, Messiah, ruler of the whole world. But I don't want you to suffer any longer. I don't want you to starve. Obviously your Father has prepared a path of suffering and loss for you before your glory comes. But must it really be that way? You yourself know He has given me authority over this world, and because of that I don't want you to continue suffering. I'm ready to hand over all my authority to you. I want to speed up the process — you can become King now if you want. I ask of you only one small, trivial thing: for a few seconds show me respect; bow down to me as your benefactor. Do this and your suffering will end. Your reign as King will begin. Just a moment — that's all I ask."* In other words: *Jesus, you can receive the kingdom God's way — a way that includes suffering — or you can receive the kingdom the easy way, without pain. I will give it to you; just show me a little respect."*

3.3. If Satan presented a similar offer to us, and if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that without God's wisdom we would easily fall for such temptation. Jesus recognizes the lie and answers Satan from **(Deuteronomy)**. If you remember, I said this is not a debate between Satan and Jesus. Jesus is primarily answering Himself here. Through the internal sermon He gives to Himself, Jesus arrives at the truth and wisdom — what must be done in that situation. After He confirms that truth

³ Daniel 2:21; Daniel 4:17; Romans 13:1; Psalm 75:6-7

to Himself, He answers Satan — rejecting his temptation. The idea Moses wanted to convey to Israel, Jesus now appropriates for His own moment. That idea leads Him to the true wisdom — how to face His temptation.

3.4. I will read (**Deuteronomy 6:1–19**) before we continue. But first a brief introduction to the book: Moses gives his final instructions to Israel before they enter the Promised Land. He encourages them but also warns: “Israel, never forget who gave you that land — Yahweh gave it to you; He alone is the true God. Do not forget your God, Israel!”

FORCES OF THAT WORLD

4. What does the word “God” actually mean? Today Christians know that God is a person, the Creator of all reality. That is the name of the one for whom everything was made. But the name carries a concept. If we study polytheism we know that people of that age believed in many gods — independent powers that affected daily life. In the ancient world there were gods of the sun, gods of money, gods of war, gods of sex, gods of fertility — and these gods decided whether a person would get what they wanted. They decided whether a harvest would succeed, whether a woman would conceive. These forces — these gods — were unseen, yet everyone of that time believed their life

and success also depended on them. So a person’s life looked chaotic and unpredictable, because these gods had wills of their own.

4.1. Because of that, individuals often lived in fear and confusion. The only thing people could do was to appease as many gods as possible so that they would be favorable to them.

4.2. In the Roman Empire there were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of gods worshiped across the lands. From our perspective this seems absurd, but for them it was normal.

4.3. Into that world the biblical message brings a revolutionary idea: there is one Person — one God — the Power who ultimately governs the direction of reality. He decides every second of existence: past, present and future. With that said, the Bible does not deny the existence of other “powers” or “gods” within reality — the god of economy, the god of politics, the god of money, the god of power, the god of fertility, the god of natural disaster. But the Bible teaches that those powers cannot do anything unless the one true God permits it.

4.4. That was a radical and revolutionary change for ancient thinking. It was unimaginable in a world of polytheism.

4.5. Back to Moses and Israel, Yahweh tells them: *“You must have to do with me and no one else. You know why? Because I am the one who ultimately decides the course of your life. It may appear that other gods influence you — and that is true in appearance — but they cannot do anything unless I, the one true God, have determined it. I decide whether there will be famine, where wars will occur, how economies will move; I decide whether earthquakes or storms will happen. Therefore, Israel, you must reverence only me. Keep me on your good side!”*

4.6. Moses reminds the people before they enter the Promised Land: *"When you enter the land filled with vineyards, houses and olive groves — the land Yahweh your God gives you — never, never forget that Yahweh your God gave you that blessing. Do not presume otherwise. Yahweh is the one who accomplished this for you."*

4.7. Why did Moses insist on this? We know that Israel later forgot Yahweh and began to worship other gods — believing those powers had won success for them. We today often do the same, though we do not call them gods; we say: *"I did it myself; I achieved success; I healed myself."* We often forget that every blessing comes from the one true God. In other words, Moses knew that within every human being there is a voice urging them to forget the true God, and that is why he warned them to continually remind themselves of the truth and not to listen to the lies of Satan or their sinful nature.

4.8. What does this have to do with Jesus' temptations? Satan says to Jesus: *"See, your Father's goodness is not taking care of you. You suffer, Jesus. Let me be your benefactor. Bow down to me and I will give you glory and the treatment you deserve."*

4.9. **(Luke 4:8)** „Jesus answered him. 'It is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

4.9.1. Jesus, reminding Himself of Moses' final charge to Israel, understands how wrong it would be to worship any other power. If Jesus let Satan be His benefactor, He would cease to reverence the one true God — the only real benefactor. Why? Because other gods, other powers, cannot do anything unless Yahweh decides. Jesus comprehends that truth and rejects Satan's proposal. He tells Satan: *"Although you claim to have authority over all, you can never legitimately hand over true sovereign rule. Only my Father can give me authority. He is my only benefactor. What He has promised, He will give. No one can overturn my Father's faithfulness. If I must suffer, if I must die here, then so be it. I know what awaits. I entrust myself to the Father."*

I AM THE BETTER GOD

5. To conclude my analysis: Satan's strategy is to portray God as not a good God. He wants to say: *"I am the better god. I don't ask people to suffer. I will give a person glory, wealth, health... I will give him everything. In return I only ask a little worship. I am a good god."*

5.1. So Satan lies to Jesus when he tells him that he has the authority to give him rule. If we understand what Moses taught the people of Israel, we realize that only Yahweh has the authority to give rule to whoever he wills. Had Jesus accepted Satan's offer, God would very likely have disqualified Jesus as the future King. I believe Jesus understood that. He understood that the only way he would attain his glory was by being obedient to the Father's will, by walking God's way—not by Satan's way, not by his own way. There is only one path at the end, and that is: "God's way." And he told himself: *"If I must suffer and die to achieve this, then so be it."*

5.2. Thus we must never forget that our only benefactor is God the Father. If we are struck by loss, poverty, illness... we must seek comfort only in him. For his comfort is magnificent and he alone has the authority to fulfill it.

5.3. Throughout our lives, Satan has tried — and will try again — to present his “better proposal.” Satan, posing as a “good god,” will offer to be our benefactor. If we change our perspective and accept Satan’s temptation, we lose reverence for the one true God.

5.4. We may seek help from those powers (to provide for ourselves), but we must always remember that it is God the Father who ultimately decides whether we will receive blessing through those powers. If, over time, the blessing we desire does not come, then that means God the Father does not will it to come.

5.5. Many Christians today believe in biblical principles (a “god-force”) that, if followed literally, guarantee success in everything we desire. There are many seminars, both in America and Europe, where successful Christian businessmen and “healers” teach other Christians how to live in abundance. They teach biblical “principles” (a god-force) that, they claim, will inevitably produce everything you want. The mistake of these teachers is this: they believe they achieved success by themselves; they have forgotten the truth Moses taught and the model Jesus demonstrated. If God does not will your fame, you will not be famous. If God wills that you receive a blessing, you will receive it. Your success does not come because you follow biblical “principles”; your success comes because it is God’s will. And that is what people should be taught. We cannot obtain anything unless God wills it. The Israelites were warned: *“This is a gift from God. You will eat the grapes, drink from cisterns, sleep in houses you did not build because that is Yahweh’s will. It is his gift to you, Israel!”*

5.6. Similarly, parents who believe that mere application of “biblical principles” will make their children God-fearing are mistaken. We can raise our children to be good citizens. We can give them wisdom to cope with the troubles life will inevitably bring. We are obliged to give them biblical wisdom to help them understand why they are here, who they are before God, and what God’s plan is for this reality. But only God can change their hearts; only he can ultimately decide, through their free will, the direction of their lives. Only he can give them the gift of eternal life. We cannot accomplish that by applying “biblical principles” (a god-force).

5.7. Therefore we must fear only the one true God. In life he has shown us many times that things do not always go the way we want. God leads our lives according to his plan, not ours. Moses understood this, and our Lord Jesus understood it. Too often we Christians use biblical “principles” to avoid God’s will. That is idolatry. We will never be able to change his will. Therefore only he is worthy of our reverence and our loyalty. We must be on good terms with our God.